



# *Western Regional News*

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## WESTERN BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION

### **Notes from Annual Meeting in Brighton, Colorado**

WBBA held its 2019 annual meeting September 18-22 in Brighton, Colorado with Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. Approximately 60 people attended the meeting, with a large proportion of participants hailing from the western states, but with representation from Costa Rica, and two Canadian provinces: Alberta and British Columbia. Participants included students, academics, government, non-profit, and non professional banders.

Our meeting was based in Barr Lake State Park, located on the front range of the Colorado Rocky Mountains, boasting a landscape of grasslands with stunning views of the Rocky Mountains in the distance. The riparian corridor of the lake provided fantastic habitat for migratory birds such as Hermit Thrush, Song Sparrow, and Wilson's Warbler, which many participants got great looks at during the banding demonstrations. Morning bird walks on the lake yielded a variety of waterfowl including American White Pelicans and Pied-billed Grebes.

The meeting began on Thursday at the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies headquarters, aptly named the Old Stone House, where the camp hosts prepared a lovely barbeque. Friday morning was kicked off by a banding demonstration with

the highlight for many western banders being a Brown Thrasher. This was followed by two field trips departing later in the morning, one to see the Denver Museum of Nature and Science collections and the other to bird the well-known Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. Friday afternoon was devoted to workshops including: the Wolfe-Ryder-Pyle aging system by Brandt Ryder himself; a guide to online banders resources; a crash-course in R; techniques for banding American Dippers; updates from the bird banding lab; and a bird first-aid workshop. The day was topped off by a fascinating talk by Dr. Kristin Ruegg, an assistant professor at Colorado State University who leads the Bird Genoscape project. Dr. Ruegg discussed her work on species diversity, including results from tail feathers collected by many banders throughout the western hemisphere. Saturday was devoted to the scientific sessions, with talks covering a wide array of subjects. Participants learned about the latest research from Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, including: a variety of conservation projects in both the grasslands of the western US and in Mexico; tips for starting and maintaining a bird observatory; song use and diversity in Canyon and Rock Wrens; how bird populations recover from forest fires; and some results from long-term constant effort data. The night was topped off by a keynote talk from Dr. Lauryn Benedict who discussed her research

on wrens, including some wonderful anecdotes and insights into porch-building behavior and vocalizations. The meeting was concluded by a Sunday field trip to Pawnee Grasslands, led by Amber Carver. The trip started out at the Crow Valley Campground, a known migrant trap in the grasslands of Eastern Colorado. Here, participants

were not disappointed with the variety of both Eastern and Western migrants observed. The field trip then continued into the Pawnee National Grassland, where participants familiarized themselves with the differences between Clay-colored, Brewer's, and Chipping sparrows. Thanks to Bird Conservancy of the Rockies for hosting us!



**2019 WBBA ANNUAL MEETING SCIENTIFIC SESSIONS AND WORKSHOPS,  
20-21 SEPTEMBER  
Brighton, Colorado**

Steven Albert, Danielle Kaschube, Jim Saracco, Peter Pyle, and Rodney B. Siegel - The Institute for Bird Populations. **Long-term banding data are providing surprises and insights into avian biology and responses to climate change.**

Since 1989, the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program has been a source of information on long-term trends in avian population dynamics. This public-private partnership, one of the largest citizen science programs in North America, encompassing nearly every state and Canadian province, produces data that are frequently used by land managers striving to make the best decisions for birds and their habitat. In the past two years, IBP scientists and our colleagues have published several papers generated by the MAPS program. This presentation will describe recent studies that examined long term trends in breeding phenology and productivity in a montane bird community in

response to climate change, and how the network of stations provided surprising insights into post-breeding movements by numerous species.

**Andrew Bankert and Erin Youngberg - Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. Colonization of Baird's Sparrows in Northern Colorado.**

Before 2015, ornithologists considered Baird's Sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*), a rare migrant through Colorado with the nearest known breeding grounds over 500 km to the north. In 2015, point count technicians discovered Baird's Sparrows singing and holding territories in areas of taller grass at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area and Meadow Springs Ranch in Larimer and Weld Counties, Colorado. Over the next five years, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies monitored these sparrows throughout the summer, documenting their colonization of these tall grass patches in northern Colorado. We color banded individual sparrows in 2018 and 2019 to track their movement throughout the summer, and we discovered that