

31ST ANNUAL WFO CONFERENCE, BOULDER, COLORADO: RETROSPECTIVE

The 31st annual conference of Western Field Ornithologists met with tremendous success. In Boulder, Colorado, 21–24 September 2006, the 114 attendees enjoyed four stimulating days of scientific paper sessions, workshops, panels, field trips, and camaraderie.

ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS

The membership approved modifications of the WFO bylaws setting term-limits for directors and increasing their number. The board—especially Bylaws Committee chair Gjon Hazard—had worked for months with diligence and care on these amendments. We hope that the term limits and board expansion will broaden participation, enhance our effectiveness, and further our organizational reach.

Elisabeth Ammon, Carol Beardmore, and Jon Dunn were elected to fill the three new directors' positions. Dave Krueper assumed the role of WFO president; Catherine Waters was elected vice-president. Outgoing president David Yee was thanked for his years of dedicated service to the organization and was acknowledged for his considerable accomplishments as president.

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

The scientific paper sessions, moderated by Jay Withgott, featured 26 presentations by field ornithologists from 10 states and 3 countries. The title and presenter of each talk is listed below. Abstracts (with all authors) of these papers are archived and downloadable at the WFO website: www.wfo-cbr.org/confer_2006_abstracts.doc.

Ammon, Elisabeth M.: *Coordinated landbird monitoring in Nevada: Lessons learned.*

Anderson, Hannah E.: *The effects of internal edges and non-native shrubs on Streaked Horned Lark nest predation.*

Diaz, Luis Adrian: *Long-distance migratory birds as viral agents dispersers: Dogma or fact?*

Farmer, Adrian: *Determining shorebird wintering locations in Argentina using stable isotopes and trace elements: Problems and promises.*

Faulkner, Doug: *Pelagic mega-rarities of Wyoming.*

Francis, Clinton D.: *Avian community nest-site selection within piñon–juniper woodlands in northwest New Mexico.*

Ghalambor, Cameron K.: *Avian parental care under the risk of nest predation: General patterns and exceptions.*

Gill, Robert E.: *Isn't technology grand?: Satellite tracking of Bar-tailed Godwits and Bristle-thighed Curlews between hemispheres.*

Harness, Richard E.: *Development and deployment of a Bird Strike Indicator (BSI).*

Kotliar, Natasha: *Avifaunal responses to fire along a burn-severity gradient in montane and subalpine forests of the Rocky Mountains.*

Mclsaac, Hugh: *Prairie Falcon attack methods and success rates against pigeons.*

Moskwick, Matthew: *Male and female reproductive strategies in the polygynous Bobolink.*

Nemeth, Nicole: *Avian immunity to West Nile Virus.*

Nielsen, Lori A.: *Clear Channel of Northern Colorado Slab Canyon KQLF-FM Avian Monitoring Project.*

Oesterle, Paul: *Cliff Swallows as a sentinel in West Nile Virus surveillance.*

Oyler-McCance, Sara J.: *A rangewide genetic comparison of Trumpeter Swans using mitochondrial and nuclear markers.*

Potter, Kim, and Rich Levad: *Distribution, abundance, and nest-site characteristics of Black Swifts in the southern Rocky Mountains.*

Ryan, Thomas: *Habitat preferences of California Least Terns nesting in a human-dominated landscape in Venice Beach, California.*

Skagen, Susan K.: *Fecundity and juvenile survival in Lark Buntings: Insights into population declines.*

MEETING RETROSPECTIVE

Smithson, Scott: *Breeding biology and habitat use of the Orange Bishop and the Nutmeg Mannikin in southern California.*

Sparks, Rob: *Analysis of vegetation data for monitoring breeding birds in the short-grass prairie (BCR 18): Cassin's Sparrow.*

Swanson, Heather: *Forestry, agriculture, and recreational development effects on birds of Boulder Open Space: Using science to inform management decisions.*

Swanson, Heather: *Defenses of American Robins against brood parasitism along an elevational gradient.*

Tuff, Ty: *Nest defense and nest attentiveness may explain differential parasitism frequencies in two suitable cowbird hosts.*

Utt, Amy C.: *The effects of rearing method on social behaviors of mentored captive-reared juvenile California Condors.*

Utt, Amy C.: *Factors associated with behavioral problems and survival following release of captive-reared California Condors.*

Our keynote speaker, Jessica Young of Western State College in Gunnison, Colorado, gave a fascinating overview of the discovery, behavioral ecology, and management of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse. This grouse was recently named a new species following research by Dr. Young and her colleagues. Dr. Young explained why grassland lekking species may diverge and speciate rapidly yet also be susceptible to extinction, and she illuminated current conservation challenges.

WORKSHOPS AND PANELS

Our three workshops received rave reviews from their participants. Bill Schmoker shared his tricks of the trade in digital photography, while Arch McCallum illuminated *Empidonax* flycatcher identification and the spectrographic analysis of bird vocalizations.

Two expert panels took their best shots at identifying mystery sounds and slides before a rapt audience. Slide-panel moderator Joe Morlan and sound-panel moderator Nathan Pieplow selected challenges that made for fascinating discussion and a valuable learning experience for all.

In a third panel, members from four state bird records committees, moderated by Kimball Garrett, emphasized how the primary role of these committees is not to render judgment on birders' sightings but to archive sightings to help build a better understanding of a state's avifauna.

FIELD TRIPS

The four days of field trips ranged throughout the Boulder region and into Wyoming. Despite some wintry weather, participants recorded at least 194 species. Highlights included Colorado specialties such as the White-tailed Ptarmigan, Dusky Grouse, American Three-toed Woodpecker, McCown's Longspur, Chestnut-collared Longspur, and Brown-capped Rosy-Finch; shorebirds including the American Golden Plover, Stilt Sandpiper, and Buff-breasted Sandpiper; vagrant passerines such as the Magnolia Warbler, Palm Warbler, and Field Sparrow; and rare fall migrants such as the Broad-winged Hawk and Sabine's Gull. Western birders also delighted in many common eastern species, from the Blue Jay to Eastern Screech-Owl.

WFO THANKS YOU!

We thank the many people (besides those mentioned above) who contributed to the conference's success, including Larry Allen, Andy Boyce, Richard Delavega, Bob Evans, Doug Faulkner, Robbie Fischer, Mike Freiberg, Allison Hilf, Nick Komar, Tony Leukering, Norm Lewis, Chuck Otte, Mark Peterson, Mike San Miguel, Ari Rubin, Larry Semo, Scott Severs, Kei Sochi, Andrew Spencer, Robert Waters, and Colorado Field Ornithologists.

LOOKING AHEAD TO NEXT YEAR

Next year's WFO conference will be held 27–30 September 2007 in Las Vegas, Nevada, and will be hosted by Red Rock Audubon Society. Mark your calendars and come join us!

Ted Floyd, Catherine Waters, and Jay Withgott