

WFO'S 34th ANNUAL CONFERENCE: RETROSPECTIVE

By all accounts our meeting in Boise, Idaho, September 10 – 13, hosted by the Idaho Bird Observatory of Boise State University, was a success. Greg Kaltenecker (Idaho) and Jay Carlisle (Idaho) of Boise State and the Idaho Bird Observatory were instrumental in the meeting's success as were the wonderful meeting registrants, presenters, panelists, moderators, speakers, field trip leaders and volunteers. Thank you all.

For our 34th annual meeting in Boise, the meeting planning committee was co-Chaired by Ed Pandolfino (California) and Catherine Waters for WFO and Greg Kaltenecker and Jay Carlisle for IBO. The other planners were Jay Withgott (Oregon), Debbie VanDooremolen (Nevada), Ted Floyd (Colorado), Dan Gibson (Alaska) and Dave Krueper (New Mexico). This amazing group of volunteers, while holding down full time employment and volunteer positions for other organizations still found time to pull together a beautifully conducted meeting with registration (Ed Pandolfino); keynote speaker, plenary, panels and moderators (Jay Withgott, Debbie VanDooremolen, Ted Floyd); science sessions (Debbie VanDooremolen, Jay Withgott, Ted Floyd); logistics and workshops (Catherine Waters); transportation (Greg Kaltenecker); field trips (Jay Carlisle); and liaisons to the WFO Finance Committee (Dan Gibson, Dave Krueper).

As always, our scientific program took place over two afternoons. This year our rearranged time schedule lengthened the time we had available for our scientific program. Debbie VanDooremolen and Jay Withgott with help from Ted Floyd recruited, invited, organized and coordinated the science aspect of the meeting. Dr. Charles Trost (Idaho) professor emeritus of biological sciences at Idaho State University opened our 34th annual meeting with a presentation on the birds of Idaho with a special insight into the Magpies that have been his special focus of study. Ted Floyd followed as the moderator of a panel that explored the future of field ornithology in a changing world. The paper sessions, moderated by Debbie VanDooremolen, were exceptional. A full list of abstracts and presenters is available on the website. Dr. Craig Benkman (Wyoming) of the University of Wyoming was our keynote speaker. He presented his research on the South Hills Crossbill and then went the extra mile and led an all-comers field trip the following day to the South Hills so meeting participants could see this bird *in situ*.

Ed Harper (California) and Nathan Pieplow (Colorado) moderated our annual experts visual and sounds identification panels. Ed Harper's elegant visual identification power point presentation had the audience completely involved and quietly whispering their answers while the panelists sat on the hot seat. Nathan Pieplow's outstanding experts' sound identification panel created an opportunity for the panel to humble those of us in the audience with their skills. Thank you to Tayler Brooks (Washington), Jon Feenstra (California), Ted Floyd, Rich Hoyer (Arizona), Oscar Johnson (California), and Narca Moore-Craig (Arizona) for sharing their inspirational talents with us.

At the Boise meeting, for the first time, WFO offered a workshop on formatting one's research into a scientific paper for submission to a journal. Philip Unitt (California), Western Birds editor conducted the workshop. Our intent was to encourage more people to submit for publication their original field research, observations, and notes. We plan on doing a series for future meetings that further explores this area. The skins preparation workshop conducted at Boise State University by Daniel Gibson (Alaska) and Robert Dickerman (New Mexico) was informative and popular. Respondents noted that it was interesting to note the differences and similarities of the two represented generations of field ornithologists who led the workshop. The prepared skins were left at Boise State University to add to their growing collection of

specimens. Thanks to Dr. Dickerman for carrying and donating the specimens to Idaho for the Boise State Collection.

The final workshop for the meeting was titled the Art of Listening and was moderated by Jay Withgott with Catherine Waters representing the hearing challenged. It drew a maximum capacity group of attendees. This workshop was conceived as a vehicle to understand how we listen for birds, for what reasons we listen for birds and in what circumstances to listen (for birds). Major contributors to the discussion were sounds recording experts Sylvia Gallagher (California) and Nathan Pieplow.

Boise also represented the kick off for the 40th anniversary year for *Western Birds* that will end next year at our meeting in the Coachella Valley of southern California. Many of those instrumental to the history of the publication were present. Virginia Johnson (California), *Western Birds* graphics editor with 40 years of volunteer effort, former *Western Birds* editor Alan Craig (Arizona) with 20 years and Philip Unitt with 21 years represented *Western Birds* editorial staff of the longest standing. Others attending who are instrumental to *Western Birds* were *Western Birds* book review editor, Alan Contreras (Oregon) and associate editors Dan Gibson and Robert Gill (Alaska). The reception for *Western Birds* was attended by all. President, Catherine Waters spoke a few words and Philip Unitt, editor of *Western Birds* gave a brief history.

Western Field Ornithologists hosted two social events for this meeting. Our parties give each Board Member and Attendee an opportunity to meet fellow participants and visit on a more casual basis. People think ornithologists are quiet and withdrawn but not when they are in a room together socializing. We always have so much to catch up on. The annual welcoming reception that opened the meeting was wonderfully attended and it was great fun to see so many new faces and familiar faces, too.

Every member of the WFO Board is expected to volunteer to help with our annual conference. They are pivotal to the success of our meetings and pitch in to moderate workshops, lead field trips, drive for the trip carpools, take minutes, sit on expert ID panels, organize and tabulate the silent auction, pick up lunches, work the registration table and even grocery shop. They each do this cheerfully. This year WFO members Larry Allen (California), Judy Bass (California), Fred Hanson (California), and Sally Hanson (California), and Robert Waters (California) readily volunteered to join in and help out with the meeting, too.

Our field trips ranged in and around Boise with Lucky Peak yielding the most migratory birds. It was impressive to learn that IBO's banding station at Lucky Peak operates 24 hours a day, six months a year during spring and fall migration. The loop into the Great Basin around Boise produced the most raptors. The Snake River trip was a favorite among meeting participants. The final bird list came to over 150 species and it is posted on the website, www.westernfieldornithologists.org. As an aside, this was our first meeting where our pelagic trip was a river rafting experience (that yielded 18 Northern Dippers). Many thanks go to Fred and Sally Hanson for driving and leading the Thursday rafting trip. And many thanks go to all our leaders of every trip. Each of you was terrific.

The WFO annual conference and meeting had a geographically diverse group of attendees representing 19 states and countries and over 60% of the participants were from places other than California! This was a first.

The following is the geographical distribution of meeting participants:

Alaska
Arizona
California
Colorado
Georgia
Idaho
Michigan
Montana
Nevada
New Mexico
New York
North Dakota
Oregon
South Carolina
Texas
Washington
Wyoming
Mexico
Uganda

We look forward to seeing each of you in Palm Desert in the Coachella Valley of California for our 35th Annual Meeting, October 13 - 17, 2010 at the Embassy Suites Hotel. Kurt Leuschner of College of the Desert is the meeting coordinator along with co-chairs, Ed Pandolfino and Catherine Waters.

Catherine Waters
Western Field Ornithologists
www.westernfieldornithologists.org