

WFO Fall and Winter 2012/13 Newsletter

Edited by Catherine Waters

In the Field

It is December and just a few days short of the winter solstice as this is being written. Along the west coast the wind is blowing and the skies, for most of us, are dark one day and brilliantly sunny the next. As we eke out as much daylight or dusk light as we can from the shortened day many of us are grabbing our jackets, hats, gloves and bins (or shorts, caps and flip flops) to participate in a more-than-a-century long winter ritual, the annual Christmas Bird Counts. Here, in southern California, as it is throughout the west, folks are gathering for what have become our collective annual winter holidays field outings (for a history see <http://birds.audubon.org/history-christmas-bird.count>). Today it takes a massive amount of time and energy and thousands of people to do these counts. As you travel through your count area reveling in the glory of the birds and fellowship of a winter's day in the field, remember that regional/area coordinators and compilers have volunteered their time to see to it that your important observations become data that gets recorded and entered into the chain of 11 decades of records. Thank you to each of them and to you for the effort to further our knowledge.

WFO's 37th Annual Conference in Petaluma

If you did not make it to Petaluma you missed a landmark WFO annual conference! What a great experience for a record number of attendees. The WFO conference coordinating team continues to make these annual gatherings excellent experiences on every level: Ed Pandolfino (chair, newly elected president), Robbie Fischer (registration, finance, scholarships), Frances Oliver (field trips), Ken Able (workshops), Kurt Leuschner (workshops, field trips and merchandise), Dan Gibson and Carol Beardmore (silent auction), Dave Quady (awards, nominations, finance, science programs, AND field trips!), Jon Dunn (fundraising, field trips), Dave Shuford (President), Liga Auzins (Recording Secretary), Nathan Pieplow (Sounds ID Moderation), Ed Harper (Visual ID Moderation), Point Reyes Conservation Sciences (Hosting), Debbie Van Dooremolen (Science Sessions). Peter Pyle (Plenary Session, workshops, field trips). Homer Hansen, Allen Fish, Al Jaramillo, Scott Terrill, Jim Danzenbaker, and Richard Vacha all presented workshops to enhance field skills as well as led field trips. Russ Bradley provided the keynote address on the Farallon Islands. And, Debi Shearwater of Shearwater Journeys, worked with WFO to provide multiple pelagic trips for the meeting's participants. On our website (www.westernfieldornithologists.org) you will find a complete list of all the amazing people who served as science session presenters, panelists, organizers, and field trip leaders. Thank you, one and all.

Highlights of the conference were varied. A great cocktail party, hosted by WFO, and held at PRBO's main offices was popular. The science sessions were packed. There was general good cheer surrounding the sounds identification teams for the ID panel. The whispers in the audience for the expert's visual identification segment reminded us that the audience was apparently filled with experts, too! The finding of a Common Cuckoo near Watsonville caused a near stampede on the 28th when that news was relayed to a room full of people listening to a report from the chair of the California Bird Records Committee. Our annual book silent auction hit a record high for helping to keep the coffers full for our scholarship projects. We were successful in surprising Larry Allen and Bob Evans with volunteer awards.

Our 38th Annual Conference will be in Olympia, Washington August 22 – 25. Think about volunteering to help with this meeting. There are plenty of opportunities and your assistance would be truly appreciated.

- Volunteer for a short stint at the reception table to meet and greet fellow members.

- Volunteer to help see off the field trips
- Help with the science sessions. Debbie Van D and Dave Q can always use help throughout the year in identifying, contacting and encouraging local field ornithologists, college/university students, researchers, etc. to present papers at the annual conference.
- Think about helping with the annual book silent auction. You will have a chance to work with the Alaska field ornithologist, editor, author and all around great guy - Dan Gibson – while raising money for our youth scholarship fund.
- If you have a special field talent, contact Ken Able about presenting a workshop.
- We are especially interested in a workshop to help all of us closet data or information or observation collectors to put our years of research into publishable or presentation form. Send an email of your interest (or inquiry) to contact@westernfieldornithologists.org.
- If you are adept with social media, think about volunteering to help promote the meeting among your social networking friends.
- We are waiting to hear from you! Send your email to contact@westernfieldornithologists.org to the attention of WFO Annual Conference.

Scholarships

It is important that we acknowledge and welcome the two exceptional young people who won this year's 2012 Pasadena Audubon/WFO youth scholarships to attend our annual conference. **Kimberlyann Harvey** of French Camp, California and **Ioana Seritan** of Davis, California won these scholarships. You can read more about these wonderful and talented young women, including their essays, on the WFO website. We are sure you will be seeing them in the field and their names in print again!

Through the generosity of Pasadena Audubon and WFO's annual silent auction donors and bidders, WFO offers an array of scholarships: full meeting scholarships, free basic registration for all field ornithology or birding oriented young people of Jr. and High school age who apply to attend our annual conferences, and, on an occasional basis, we also cover expenses for our western U. S. based field trips for a single qualifying young person. The various criteria and guidelines are available to interested young people by sending an email to the attention of Robbie Fischer at contact@westernfieldornithologists.org.

WFO Board News

WFO continues to have one of the most vibrant ornithology Boards in the West. At our annual meeting this year we said a fond farewell to our president, Dave Shuford. What can we say, here? Dave gently and diplomatically led WFO through two years of landmark territory and will continue to see us through two more in the role of Past-President. In his place the incredibly talented, competent and hardworking Ed Pandolfino stepped up to the helm as our new president. Dave Quady was elected to be vice president and with his long standing on the Board and his future as an officer, we will benefit greatly from the historical memory he will bring along with his other talents. We said thank you and fond goodbyes to Carol Beardmore and Jon Dunn, WFO Board Members, for their six continuous years of expanding WFO's horizons in opportunities for field ornithology study, outreach and fundraising in the West. At the same time, we welcomed, heartily, Joyce Meyer (Washington), Ed Harper (California/Montana) and Dan Singer (California) as our newest members of the WFO Board of Directors. Each of these people brings with them a fresh and talented background to WFO and we look forward to their future contributions. Liga Auzins (Secretary) and Robbie Fischer (Treasurer) were elected to new terms and all of us who are members and associates of WFO enjoy working with these two important WFO Officers. At this same meeting WFO bid farewell to Cat Waters as an officer. She completed her term as Past President and learned, loved or both every minute of the experience.

A complete listing of WFO's Board of Directors, *Western Birds* editors and committee chairs is available on the WFO website under the "About Us" tab.

WFO On the Road: Field Trips & Expeditions

Trip of a life time? Travel with Ken Able, Jon Dunn, Lena Hayashi, and Dave Quady in June 2013 to bird frequently overlooked northeast California and address some ornithological questions about this unique area. This fund raising trip to benefit Western Field Ornithologists will begin and end in Reno NV, June 24 to July 1. We'll bird Sierra Valley and Yuba Pass, Honey Lake Valley and Eagle Lake, and habitats in Modoc County. Exemplifying the range of habitats, we hope to find such nesting species as Williamson's Sapsucker, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Nuttall's and White-headed Woodpeckers, Flammulated Owl, Yellow Rail, Wilson's Phalarope, Black-throated and *nevadensis* Sage Sparrows, and Bobolink (at the only known breeding site in California). This trip will be offered to WFO members first and registration will open in January. Watch the WFO website for more dates and details.

A field expedition in the planning stages is a 2013 research based expedition into a Sonoran Joint Venture area being coordinated by Carol Beardmore of the USFWS. Participants will be expected to travel at their own expense and contribute to the scientific goals of the expedition. Carol's expeditions are exceptional experiences. Watch the website for announcements.

In June 2013 the Tejon Ranch Conservancy will once again sponsor a five day long survey for Purple Martin on the Ranch in the southern California Tehachapis. This is a unique field opportunity and we hope WFO members will continue to participate in this joint project between The TRC, Audubon California and WFO. Indicate your interest by sending an email to contact@westernfieldornithologists.org.

A 2014 trip to Montana coordinated by WFO Board Member and Montana native Ed Harper is now in the preliminary planning stages. Keep this on your radar!

WFO Awards

We honored wonderful people at our annual conference this year. The three recognized individuals have provided WFO with continuity and excellence and we are proud of our association with each of them. Larry Allen (California) and Robert Evans (Arizona, Colorado) were recognized with a WFO Award for their high level of volunteerism. *Western Birds* 43:4 is a tribute devoted to the career of Dr. Robert Dickerman (New Mexico) for his life long history as a collections manager, researcher, field ornithologist and mentor (among other things). A special thanks to the authors for their contributions to this special edition of *Western Birds* and to Daniel Gibson for shepherding, as special editor, this issue of *Western Birds*. At the meeting we also acknowledged, for the assembled WFO participants, the contributions of Kathy Molina and Joseph Morlan for their long standing work on *Western Birds*.

WFO Retreat

Before the annual conference in Petaluma this year, WFO held a retreat, under the guidance of Dave Quady, to explore the possibilities for Western Field Ornithologists into the 21st Century. Your Board and past officers/directors traveled from all over the West to Petaluma a day early to discuss the future of *Western Birds*, WFO membership, organizational means of communication, finances, alternative media, future publications, etc. They did this at their own expense and on their own time. Nothing was decided but avenues for maintaining our vibrancy were discussed and multiple job assignments and ad hoc groups were formed to explore the points that our facilitated discussions zeroed in on.

We are always interested in our members and their thoughts and opinions. If you have suggestions for the future that you are willing to work on or topics that you are willing to help us implement discussion of or if you want to volunteer to be part of the process by donating your expertise in social media, fundraising, membership relations, etc. please do not hesitate to let us know. Send an email to contact@westernfieldornithologists.org or talk to any WFO Board Member (email addresses are printed in *Western Birds*).

Membership Opportunities and Membership News

Skills Workshops: In association with Sea and Sage Audubon, Sylvia Gallagher and Bill Clark continue to offer workshops designed to enhance field skills for birders, field ornithologists, biologists and other interested amateurs and professionals. These workshops take place in Orange County, California. For winter and spring of 2013 S/S is offering a multi-week Birds of the Desert workshop beginning Jan 7, 2013 in Huntington Beach. It will cover all the birds of all of the deserts of the United States. In March 2013 Bill Clark will be offering single day/evening workshops on raptor identification at the beginning, intermediate and advanced levels. For details refer to ww.seaandsageaudubon.org and click on education and then adult education programs.

New Book: WFO life member David Lukas has recently published a new book, *Bay Area Birds* devoted to California's San Francisco Bay Area. This book and information for purchasing other Lukas publications can be found at www.lukasguides.com.

New Publication: Elisabeth Ammon, Director of the Great Basin Bird Observatory (GBBO) announces their ground breaking electronic publication of the *Nevada Comprehensive Bird Conservation Plan*. It is an amazing piece of work (our words, not hers) and sets a standard for statewide bird conservation projects in the west and throughout the United States. Take a look: www.gbbo.org.

Employment Opportunities: And, GBBO has also announced field research employment opportunities for spring 2013. See their website, www.gbbo.org, for details. Applicants' deadline is 1 Jan. 2013.

Awards: Jon Dunn, WFO Life Member and former Member of the WFO Board of Directors, was awarded the prestigious Roger Tory Peterson Award for 2012 by the American Birding Association. Details of the award and Jon's contributions are on the WFO website www.westernfieldornithologists.org

Western Birds, WFO Website, Newsletter

Is it time for you to finally break loose and submit your long-standing research project for publication in *Western Birds*? For some of us this is a daunting thought. We are here to answer your questions and/or guide you through the process of publishing your research. Send your questions or requests to the attention of Dan Gibson or Cat Waters at contact@westernfieldornithologists.org.

Western Birds and the WFO webmaster are interested in your original drawings and photography for inclusion in *Western Birds* and the WFO website. If you have any submission questions please do not hesitate to ask. Send your inquiry to contact@westernfieldornithologists.org.

And, let us know what you are publishing, writing or doing for inclusion in the WFO newsletter and WFO Facebook page. Publications, skills workshops, special events, etc. are all considered on a space available basis. You can send your announcements directed to Cat or Robbie at contact@westernfieldornithologists.org.

IN MEMORIUM

All of us at Western Field Ornithologists - those of us who knew Rich Stallcup and those of us who knew him by name and reputation - were saddened to hear of his passing on 15 December of this year. Rich, a former president of California Field Ornithologists (now Western Field Ornithologists), member of the California Bird Records Committee, and author of articles in *Western Birds* was a formative figure in 20th and 21st Century field ornithology in California and beyond. WFO has plans for a tribute to Rich's life in Volume 44 of *Western Birds*.