

32ND ANNUAL WFO CONFERENCE, LAS VEGAS, NEVADA: RETROSPECTIVE

From 27 to 30 September 2007, 140 attendees enjoyed WFO's unique blend of scientific paper sessions, workshops, panels, and field trips, as well as a book signing coordinated with the release of two exciting new books. The conference benefited from local coordination by Red Rock Audubon Society, making it a resounding success.

ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS

Jon Feenstra, Ed Pandolfino, and Debbie Van Dooremolen were elected to fill three positions on the board of directors that opened up as a result of last year's enactment of term limits and board expansion. Elisabeth Ammon and Gjon Hazard were re-elected to second terms. Jon, Ed, and Debbie take the places of Ted Floyd, Daniel Gibson, and Mike San Miguel, who were thanked for their years of active and effective service on behalf of the organization.

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM

This year's scientific paper sessions, moderated by Debbie Van Dooremolen, featured 26 presentations by speakers from 12 states and 3 countries. Abstracts of all papers are at www.wfo-cbrc.org/WFO2007ConferenceAbstracts.pdf.

Many talks featured research on bird communities, conservation efforts, and species of interest (such as the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Willow Flycatcher, and Clapper Rail) at natural and restored areas in the Las Vegas region, as well as elsewhere in Nevada and the Southwest. We also heard about the distribution of desert thrashers, shorebirds at shrinking reservoirs, nocturnal migration, Snowy Plovers on urban beaches, and tamarisk as bird habitat.

Several talks presented data from radio-telemetry studies, helping to illuminate the behavior of the Laysan Teal, dispersal of the American White Pelican, and pesticide contamination of the White-faced Ibis. Robert Gill delighted us with a second year of hot-off-the-satellite data from Bristle-thighed Curlews migrating across the Pacific Ocean.

A highlight was the session on genetic analysis and avian systematics by John Klicka and his students at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Following an introduction to the methods and approaches of molecular systematics, they revealed some surprising findings about the House Wren, Western Flycatcher, Solitary Vireo, Eastern Towhee, and western pine-oak birds in general. For many in the audience, this session helped bridge the gulf between molecular systematics and field-based ornithology.

Finally, Carol Beardmore and Philip Unitt presented a survey of endemic subspecies of the Sierra de la Laguna Biosphere Reserve, previewing a planned WFO research expedition to this intriguing area near the tip of Baja California. For further details contact Carol at carol_beardmore@fws.gov.

WORKSHOPS, KEYNOTE, PANELS, AND BOOK-SIGNING

This year's trio of workshops received rave reviews. John Klicka and his students treated participants to the preparation of study skins and a tour of the bird collection at UNLV's Marjorie Barrick Museum. Andrew Farnsworth of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology guided workshop attendees through the fascinating world of nocturnal migration and flight calls. At the nearby Las Vegas Wash, Chris Dodge, Joe Kahl, Allen Calvert, and Beth Sabin from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation gave a group hands-on experience with mist-netting and banding.

Our keynote speaker, Chris Elphick of the University of Connecticut, an editor of the *Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior*, gave an engaging and enlightening talk on breeding bird atlases. After reviewing approaches taken by various atlases, Chris explained how the newly published *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Nevada* (of which he was an author) employed an innovative statistical technique, using information on habitat, geography, and habitat use to estimate birds' ranges in unsampled areas of the state.

MEETING RETROSPECTIVE

The mystery slide and sound panels have become one of WFO's best-loved traditions, and this year Joe Morlan and Nathan Pieplow returned as moderators. Joe had the experts and the audience squinting and scratching over images of tricky peeps and flycatchers. Nathan shared some perplexing vocalists and treated us to the amazing wonders of starling mimicry.

New this year was a book signing. WFO's membership includes many well-known authors, and on hand to sign their books were Elisabeth Ammon, Dan Cooper, Jon Dunn, Chris Elphick, Ted Floyd, Kimball Garrett, Dan Gibson, Robb Hamilton, Guy McCaskie, Phil Unitt, and Jay Withgott. The event celebrated the publication of the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Nevada*, and WFO unveiled the long-awaited *Rare Birds of California*—a truly impressive work and the first book our organization has published.

FIELD TRIPS

The field trips covered birding hotspots of the Las Vegas region and beyond, from urban sites like the Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve and Sunset Park to regional favorites like Corn Creek. Some daylong trips went farther afield to enjoy Pahrnagat NWR, Warm Springs Ranch, and Utah's Lytle Ranch. The trips were ably coordinated by Je Anne Branca, and participants recorded 195 species. Regionally uncommon highlights included the Least Flycatcher, Prothonotary and Blackburnian Warbler, and Utah's first Red-breasted Sapsucker of the northern race *Sphyrapicus r. ruber*.

WFO THANKS YOU!

Many people contributed to the success of the conference, from those who manned the registration table to the field trip leaders to the panel members. Besides the usual herculean efforts of Catherine Waters, Robbie Fischer, and other WFO regulars, numerous volunteers from Red Rock Audubon Society helped coordinate this year's meeting, including John Bialecki, Donn Blake, Mary Blake, Je Anne Branca, Cheri Carlisle, Lorraine Cassidy, Ted Cassidy, Rick Fridell, Hermi Hiatt, John Hiatt, Diane Jadowski, Maureen Kammerer, Tracy Kipke, Dave Mackett, Marilyn Mackett, Christiana Manville, Felix Owens, Sheila Reyes, Rita Schlageter, Betty Seebeck, Jim Switalla, Carolyn Titus, and Debbie Van Dooremolen. The Southern Nevada Water Authority and the Great Basin Bird Observatory provided important financial, logistical, and volunteer assistance. Above all, WFO would like to single out Pam Nickels, president of Red Rock Audubon, for her dedication and spirited commitment to this meeting. Thank you, Pam, for everything you did! WFO welcomes its new members and attendees from the Las Vegas area, and we look forward to seeing you at future meetings.

Jay Withgott