

## **Highlights of the 2013 WFO Conference in Petaluma, California**

WFO's 2013 Conference was one of our most successful meetings ever. We set a new WFO record with over 270 registrants. Science Sessions included descriptions of a new species of seabird, Bryan's Shearwater. Ed Harper's photo ID quizzes tested our skills with visual challenges and Nathan Pieplow enlightened us with his creative and educational arrangements of bird sounds. The headquarters of PRBO Conservation Science gave us the ideal venue for our opening reception where we enjoyed seeing some of the latest work of artists Sophie Webb and Keith Hansen. We offered six workshops covering a variety of field skills. Thirty-eight field trips, including four pelagic trips, produced a list 240 species. Details below...

### **WFO 2013 Petaluma Science Sessions**

The Science Sessions kicked off with Peter Pyle presenting on the discovery and identification of a new seabird species, Bryan's Shearwater. Thanks to the efforts of Debbie Vandooremolen and Dave Quady, the session offered a wide variety of presentations including papers on west coast occurrence and identification of "Vega" gull and Common Eider, numerous papers on status and conservation issues involving shorebirds, raptors, Black-backed Woodpecker, Gray Vireo, Tricolored Blackbird, Black Rail, Bendire's Thrasher, grassland birds of the southwest, and more. Other presentations covered use of "citizen science" data including eBird data and Breeding Bird Atlas results. Russ Bradley's Keynote talk gave us all a good overview of the great work being conducted by PRBO Conservation Science on the Farallon Islands and revealed some fascinating data about changes in the ocean ecosystem affecting breeding seabirds.

### **WFO 2013 Petaluma Field Trip Report**

Our field trip participants took full advantage of the tremendous bird diversity found in this area in fall and the equally diverse offering of field trips arranged by Frances Oliver, racking up an impressive total of 240 species (see full list at the end of this report). Some of the highlights are detailed below.

- Four pelagic trips produced five species of storm-petrels including Wilson's, Fork-tailed, and Leach's; Flesh-footed and Manx Shearwater; all three jaegers and South Polar Skua; and the continuing Northern Gannet (first in the Pacific Ocean) on Southeast Farallon Island.
- Hawk watchers enjoyed an unprecedented migration of large numbers of Broad-winged Hawks over the Marin Headlands.
- The Railing field trip found all the expected rails including a 'singing' Black Rail.
- Shorebird migration did not disappoint with 31 species found including Pacific Golden-Plovers at Shollenberger Park and Red Knot at Bodega Bay

- A Western Kingbird on Outer Pt. Reyes was in an unusual location where there may be more records of Tropical Kingbird than Western!
- Red-breasted Nuthatches, in the midst of a widespread western irruption, were everywhere, including one found well offshore on a pelagic trip.
- “Eastern” vagrants included a Philadelphia Vireo on Outer Pt. Reyes; Ovenbirds at Bodega Bay and Outer Pt. Reyes; Northern Waterthrush at Giacomini Wetlands; Black-and-white and Tennessee Warblers on the Half Moon Bay trip; a most confiding Connecticut Warbler at Outer Pt. Reyes; American Redstart and Blackburnian Warbler at Bodega Bay; Chestnut-sided Warblers on Outer Pt. Reyes, at Bodega Bay, and another that landed on a boat on a pelagic trip (see photo below); a Blackpoll Warbler at Spring Lake Park in Santa Rosa; Palm Warblers on Outer Pt. Reyes and at Las Gallinas; Clay-colored Sparrows on Outer Pt. Reyes and at Bodega Bay; an Indigo Bunting in Bolinas; a Baltimore Oriole at Bodega Bay.



**'pelagic' Chestnut-sided Warbler** photo by Dave Bell



**Connecticut Warbler** photo by John Sterling

Of course, the most excitement was generated by a bird found beyond the scheduled reach of our field trips – a Common Cuckoo (ID vs. Oriental Cuckoo still to be confirmed). For the second consecutive year, a species never before recorded on the west coast south of Alaska (last year it was the Common Ringed Plover in Davis) decided to appear right in the midst of a WFO conference. Luckily, this time the bird was close enough (Watsonville) to allow our Sunday Half Moon Bay trip to make a detour to see it. Also, many other attendees managed to zip down to get that bird and still get back to Petaluma to enjoy the rest of the conference.



**Common Cuckoo** photo by John Sterling

### **WFO 2013 Petaluma Workshops**

This year, thanks to the efforts of Ken Able and Kurt Leuschner, we offered six different workshops covering field identification, molt, bird sketching, and tracking.

- Homer Hansen and Allen Fish led a workshop on identification of raptors, including a field trip to Marin's famous Hawk Hill to observe migrating raptors.
- Scott Terrill and Jim Danzenbaker used photos and skins to teach participants how to ID birds at sea.
- Alvaro Jaramillo covered shorebird identification with classroom and field sessions.
- Keith Hansen showed folks how to sketch birds in the field as well as new ways of looking at birds.
- Peter Pyle helped unravel the mysteries of molt and showed how understanding molt is critical to improving your field identification skills.
- Richard Vacha covered the techniques and skills needed to track birds and other wildlife.

## **FULL SPECIES LIST FROM WFO 2013 PETALUMA CONFERENCE**

Greater White-fronted Goose

Brant

Cackling Goose

Canada Goose

Wood Duck

Gadwall

Eurasian Wigeon

American Wigeon

Mallard

Blue-winged Teal

Cinnamon Teal

Northern Shoveler

Northern Pintail

Green-winged Teal

Redhead

Ring-necked Duck

Greater Scaup

Lesser Scaup

Surf Scoter

White-winged Scoter

Black Scoter

Hooded Merganser

Common Merganser

California Quail

Ring-necked Pheasant

Wild Turkey

Red-throated Loon

Pacific Loon

Common Loon

Pied-billed Grebe

Horned Grebe

Red-necked Grebe

Eared Grebe

Western Grebe

Clark's Grebe

Black-footed Albatross

Northern Fulmar

Pink-footed Shearwater

Flesh-footed Shearwater

Buller's Shearwater

Sooty Shearwater

Manx Shearwater

Wilson's Storm-Petrel

Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel

Leach's Storm-Petrel

Ashy Storm-Petrel  
Black Storm-Petrel  
Northern Gannet  
Brandt's Cormorant  
Dbl-crested Cormorant  
Pelagic Cormorant  
American White Pelican  
Brown Pelican  
Great Blue Heron  
Great Egret  
Snowy Egret  
Green Heron  
Black-crowned Night-Heron  
Turkey Vulture  
Osprey  
White-tailed Kite  
Golden Eagle  
Northern Harrier  
Sharp-shinned Hawk  
Cooper's Hawk  
Red-shouldered Hawk  
Broad-winged Hawk  
Swainson's Hawk  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Ferruginous Hawk  
Black Rail  
Clapper Rail  
Virginia Rail  
Sora  
Common Gallinule  
American Coot  
Black-bellied Plover  
Pacific Golden-Plover  
Snowy Plover  
Semipalmated Plover  
Killdeer  
Black Oystercatcher  
Black-necked Stilt  
American Avocet  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Greater Yellowlegs  
Willet  
Lesser Yellowlegs  
Whimbrel  
Long-billed Curlew  
Marbled Godwit

Ruddy Turnstone  
Black Turnstone  
Surfbird  
Red Knot  
Sanderling  
Western Sandpiper  
Least Sandpiper  
Baird's Sandpiper  
Pectoral Sandpiper  
Dunlin  
Short-billed Dowitcher  
Long-billed Dowitcher  
Wilson's Snipe  
Red-necked Phalarope  
Red Phalarope  
Sabine's Gull  
Bonaparte's Gull  
Heermann's Gull  
Ring-billed Gull  
Western Gull  
California Gull  
Herring Gull  
Glaucous-winged Gull  
Forster's Tern  
Elegant Tern  
South Polar Skua  
Pomarine Jaeger  
Parasitic Jaeger  
Long-tailed Jaeger  
Common Murre  
Pigeon Guillemot  
Marbled Murrelet  
Cassin's Auklet  
Rhinoceros Auklet  
Rock Pigeon  
Band-tailed Pigeon  
Eurasian Collared-Dove  
Mourning Dove  
Common Cuckoo\*  
Barn Owl  
Great Horned Owl  
Burrowing Owl  
Spotted Owl  
N Saw-whet Owl  
Vaux's Swift  
White-throated Swift

Anna's Hummingbird  
Belted Kingfisher  
Acorn Woodpecker  
Red-breasted Sapsucker  
Nuttall's Woodpecker  
Downy Woodpecker  
Hairy Woodpecker  
Northern Flicker  
Pileated Woodpecker  
American Kestrel  
Merlin  
Peregrine Falcon  
Western Wood-Pewee  
Willow Flycatcher  
Pac-slope Flycatcher  
Black Phoebe  
Say's Phoebe  
Western Kingbird  
Hutton's Vireo  
Warbling Vireo  
Philadelphia Vireo  
Gray Jay\*\*  
Steller's Jay  
Western Scrub-Jay  
American Crow  
Common Raven  
Horned Lark  
Tree Swallow  
Violet-green Swallow  
Barn Swallow  
Cliff Swallow  
Black-capped Chickadee\*\*  
Chestnut-backed Chickadee  
Oak Titmouse  
Bushtit  
Red-breasted Nuthatch  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
Pygmy Nuthatch  
Brown Creeper  
House Wren  
Pacific Wren  
Marsh wren  
Bewick's Wren  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher  
Golden-crowned Kinglet  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Wren  
Western Bluebird  
Swainson's Thrush  
Hermit Thrush  
American Robin  
Varied Thrush  
Northern Mockingbird  
European Starling  
American Pipit  
Cedar Waxwing  
Ovenbird  
Northern Waterthrush  
Black-and-white Warbler  
Tennessee Warbler  
Orange-crowned Warbler  
Nashville Warbler  
Connecticut Warbler  
MacGillivray's Warbler  
Common Yellowthroat  
American Redstart  
Blackburnian Warbler  
Yellow Warbler  
Chestnut-sided Warbler  
Blackpoll Warbler  
Palm Warbler  
Yellow-rumped Warbler  
Black-throated Gray Warbler  
Townsend's Warbler  
Wilson's Warbler  
Spotted Towhee  
Rufous-crowned Sparrow  
California Towhee  
Chipping Sparrow  
Clay-colored Sparrow  
Lark Sparrow  
Savannah Sparrow  
Fox Sparrow  
Song Sparrow  
Lincoln's Sparrow  
White-crowned Sparrow  
Golden-crowned Sparrow  
Dark-eyed Junco  
Western Tanager  
Lazuli Bunting  
Indigo Bunting  
Red-winged Blackbird



Tricolored Blackbird  
Western Meadowlark  
Yellow-headed Blackbird  
Brewer's Blackbird  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Baltimore Oriole  
Purple Finch  
House Finch  
Lesser Goldfinch  
American Goldfinch  
House Sparrow

\*Half Moon Bay trip 'detour'

\*\*Humboldt County trip, Sun-Mon