WFO 39th Annual Conference
San Diego, CA October 8-12 2014

Our 39th conference was a sort of "homecoming" for WFO as we made our way back to San Diego, where the organization was born more than 44years ago.

The conference was a great event in so many ways.

- We set a new record for total attendance (296 registrants) besting the previous high we set in Petaluma, CA in 2012 by a wide margin.
- The Science Sessions on Friday and Saturday were well-attended, as usual, and featured talks on topics ranging from ornithological archeology to eBird. Many of the papers presented will appear in WFO's next major publication, *Avifaunal Change in Western North America*.
- We offered workshops on Warbler, Sparrow, and Vireo identification presented by Jon Dunn, Kimball Garrett, Homer Hansen, and Peter Pyle. Peter also gave a workshop on molt and Nathan Pieplow gave us a preview of his upcoming book on bird vocalizations, presenting a new approach to listening to and learning bird song. Phil Unitt taught a group the ins-and-outs of bird specimen preparation.
- A pre-conference reception at the gorgeous San Diego Natural History Museum was sold out and we had the chance to examine dozens of bird specimens key to the history of ornithology in California.
- Ed Harper's Photo ID panel and Nathan's Bird Sound Challenge were big hits and, as always, seamlessly blended humor, entertainment, and education.
- We celebrated WFO's history on Saturday night with guests including the five surviving members of the 'gang of six' who started the organization way back in the 1960s. Two of those founders, Pierre Devillers and Jean Terschuren, came all the way from Belgium just for this event. Also present were 10 of the 13 living past presidents.

Tom Blackman and our conference host, San Diego Field Ornithologists, organized a dazzling array of field trips, the results of which are summarized below.

Forty-eight field trips were scheduled including a 2-day trip to the Salton Sea. The trips within San Diego county netted 285 species and 15 additional species were seen only in Imperial County on the Salton Sea trip, bringing the conference grand total to 300 species! We offered two pelagic trips with the first featuring great looks at the much sought after **Craveri's Murrelet** and a **Red-billed Tropicbird**.

Craveri's Murrelets Photo Bill Schmoker

Red-billed Tropicbird Photo Bill Schmoker

Black-footed Albatross turned up on the second trip. Both trips had three species of **Storm-Petrel - Ashy, Black and Least**, as well as **Brown Booby** and **Arctic Terns**. Observers on the coast saw 19 **Brown Boobies** at one time as well as a **Blue-footed Booby**.

Brown Booby Photo Bill Schmoker

Notable shorebirds were **Baird's Sandpiper**, **Pectoral Sandpiper** and **Solitary Sandpiper**. The Tijuana River Valley had **Red-throated Pipit** along with **Lapland Longspur** and multiple **Northern Waterthrushes**.

Red-throated Pipit Photo Gary Rosenberg

The Palomar Mountain group had several **Lewis's Woodpeckers**, and a flyover of **Red Crossbills**. **Lewis's Woodpecker** was also seen in the Cuyamaca Mountains.

Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery produced a well-photographed **Yellow-green Vireo**, in addition to **Magnolia, Chestnut-sided, and Black-and-white Warblers**.

Yellow-green Vireo Photo Daniel Lee Brown

Dickcissels were seen at opposite ends of the county - one in Del Mar and the other in Borrego Springs. Additional Del Mar birds included **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** and **Orchard Oriole**. Borrego also had two **Inca Doves** and an **Ovenbird** at Tamarisk Grove. The Salton Sea two-day trip found **Yellow-footed Gull, Franklin's Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull** and a late **Willow Flycatcher** among the 123 species seen on this trip. San Diego County increased its already impressive species list to 516 with the addition of a **Neotropic Cormorant** found on Lake O'Neill.

Neotropic Cormorant Photo Tom Blackman

The bird appears to be making the lake its daytme home letting many birders see it on their way home. Not included in the totals were Black-throated Magpie Jay, Orange-cheeked Waxbill and a hybrid American x Black Oystercatcher.

Thanks to Tom and all the field trip leaders who contributed to the success of the conference by taking time to scout, compare notes and lead our trips.

Field Trips were enjoyed on both land and sea:

photo Ken Able

photo Bill Schmoker

Though, for some, the enjoyment proved too much...

photo Bill Schmoker

Thanks in large part to a contribution from Pasadena Audubon, we were able to provide scholarships to the conference to six promising young field ornithologists ranging in age from 12 to 18...

Left to right – Mario Balitbit, Betsy Underwood, Dessi Sieburth, Logan Kahle, Teodelina Martelli, and Lee Evans photo Joyce Meyer

The Science Sessions were excellent and well-attended, as always...

The Workshops nearly all sold out...

Sparrow ID with Homer Hansen

Molt with Peter Pyle

Warblers with Jon Dunn & Kimball Garrett

Bird Sounds with Nathan Pieplow

At the Saturday evening banquet editor Phil Unitt presented Kathy Molina with an award for her many years of service as Assistant Editor of Western Birds...

Past presidents received numbered shirts to note their position in the WFO chronology...

Past presidents Cat Waters, Bob McKernan, David Yee, and John Luther with current president, Dave Quady and (future president?) Teodelina Martelli

Your WFO board was hard at work on Thursday (instead of birding...)...

Left to right – Kurt Leuschner, Dan Gibson, Bob Gill, Ken Able, Phil Unitt, Frances Oliver, Dave Shuford (in back), Kimball Garrett, Cat Waters, Dave Quady, Ed Pandolfino, Ed Harper, Joyce Meyer, Jon Dunn, Dan Singer (in back), Liga Auzins, Robbie Fischer, Tom Blackman, Ginger Johnson, Susan Kelly. Not pictured: incoming board members Steve Rottenborn and Raymond VanBuskirk and incoming treasurer/membership secretary, Suzanne Carota

Our thanks to departing board members Dan Singer (left) and Ken Able (right), treasurer/membership secretary Robbie Fischer, and president Ed Pandolfino.

Be sure to mark your calendars now for the next WFO Conference in Billings, Montana, June 10-14 2015.