

40th Annual Conference of the Western Field Ornithologists

Billings, MT • 10–14 June 2015

Science Program

12 and 13 June 2015 • Billings Hotel and Convention Center

Schedule of Presentations and Identification Challenges

Friday, 12 June 2015

Afternoon Session – Yellowstone Room

- 1:00–1:10. Welcoming Remarks by WFO Vice President TOM BLACKMAN.
- 1:10–1:40. Opening Presentation by JOHN CARLSON. **The Last Best Place – the ecology and conservation of the avifauna of eastern Montana.** (See Featured Speakers)
- 1:40–2:00. MARCO RESTANI, DEB REGELE, MONTY SULLINS, GEORGE MOWAT, and ROBERT LUBBERS. **Nesting ecology of Ospreys along the Yellowstone River, Montana.**
- 2:00–2:20. MICHAEL SCHWITTERS. **Bird species found at Shemya Island, Alaska, 1999 – 2010.**
- 2:20–2:40. JENNIFER BALLARD. **Le Conte’s Thrashers: density estimation, natural history, and the effects of point count protocol.**
- 2:40–3:00. TED FLOYD. **Ten years of nocturnal migration studies in Boulder County, Colorado, 2006–2015: What we know, and what we still don’t know.**
- 3:00–4:00. **Break.**
- 4:00–5:30. Sound Identification: Team Challenge, moderator NATHAN PIEPLOW.

Saturday, 13 June 2015

Afternoon Session – Yellowstone Room

- 1:00–1:10. Welcoming Remarks by WFO President DAVE QUADY.
- 1:10–1:40. Opening Presentation by DENVER HOLT. **Declining populations of Long-eared Owls in western Montana: results of long-term research.** (See Featured Speakers)
- 1:40–2:00. JOSEPH MORLAN and GUY McCASKIE. **Update from the California Bird Records Committee.**
- 2:00–2:20. JEFF MARKS, ANN NIGHTINGALE, and JENNA MCCULLOUGH. **Natural history in an unnatural environment: breeding biology of Northern Saw-whet Owls on the Boardman Tree Farm.**
- 2:20–2:40. EDWARD PANDOLFINO and NATHAN D. PIEPLOW. **An analysis of the vocalizations of the four U.S. subspecies of White-breasted Nuthatch.**
- 2:40–4:00. **Break.**
- 4:00–5:30. Photo Identification: Expert Panel, moderator ED HARPER.

Banquet and Evening Program –Ballroom

- 6:30–9:30. Keynote Address by STEPHEN J. DINSMORE. **Plovers, prairie dogs, and plague: the Mountain Plover in Montana.** (See Featured Speakers)

Featured Speakers

*Science Sessions Day 1 – Opening Presentation
Friday, 12 June. 1:10 p.m. Yellowstone Room*

CARLSON, JOHN C. **The Last Best Place – the ecology and conservation of the avifauna of eastern Montana.** *Bureau of Land Management, Montana/Dakotas State Office, 5001 Southgate Drive, Billings, MT 59101-4669; jccarlso@blm.gov.*

The grasslands of eastern Montana are the heart of the largest remaining mixed-grass prairie in the United States, and sagebrush in Montana represents the majority of the northern-most extent of this widespread but highly impacted habitat. Eastern Montana is highly important for two species that represent these habitats and are under consideration for listing under the Endangered Species Act: the Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*) and Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*). Eastern Montana grasslands are also home to a suite of other grassland species that are "of concern" for numerous organizations, including the McCown's Longspur (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*), Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*), Baird's Sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*), and Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*). I will discuss the ecology of these habitats and the history of ornithological exploration of Eastern Montana. In addition I will present an overview of recent studies related to a number of avian species that reside in these habitats and discuss how the results of these investigations have led to changes in management and conservation focus so that we can ensure that eastern Montana continues to represent the last best place for a suite of species emblematic of the prairies and sagebrush biomes of the West.

John Carlson is the Conservation Biologist for Montana/Dakotas Bureau of Land Management in Billings, MT. He was formerly a Wildlife Biologist with the BLM in Glasgow, MT and the Zoology Program Manager at the Montana Natural Heritage Program in Helena. He obtained his BA in Zoology from the University of Montana and MS in Zoology and Physiology from the University of Wyoming. John was born and raised in northeastern Montana and has had a strong interest in wildlife in general and birds specifically for as long as he can remember. He has conducted research on a wide variety of animal species from one end of the world to another, including seabird research in the Antarctic, the Bering Sea, and northern Baffin Bay. Closer to home he has investigated a number of wildlife species including Greater Sage-Grouse, Harlequin Ducks (*Histrionicus histrionicus*), black-footed ferrets (*Mustela nigripes*), Boreal Owls (*Aegolius funereus*), grassland birds, and bats.

*Science Sessions Day 2 – Opening Presentation
Saturday, 13 June. 1:10 p.m. Yellowstone Room*

HOLT, DENVER W. **Declining populations of Long-eared Owls in western Montana: results of long-term research.** *Owl Research Institute, P.O. Box 39, Charlo, MT 59824; owlmontana@blackfoot.net.*

The Owl Research Institute's 29 years of year-round research show a clear downward trend in Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*) populations in western Montana, consistent with other open country temperate zone bird species. Reasons for this downward trend remain speculative, but habitat change and loss are likely influences.

In 2013, populations of Long-eared Owls in North America were estimated at 15,000, with 9,000 in Canada and 6,000 in the United States. If accurate, the Long-eared Owl population estimates were similar to those of Flammulated Owls (*Psiloscops flammeolus*) and Spotted Owls (*Strix occidentalis*), both of which have federal, state, and regional status concerns.

It remains uncertain if results from local long-term studies are applicable throughout a species' range. Long-eared Owls are highly migratory, irruptive, and perhaps nomadic – complicating the monitoring and gathering of reliable

distribution information and population estimates. Furthermore, habitat naturally changes over time – a fact often forgotten – and this too could influence distribution and population changes. Nonetheless, local long-term studies provide valuable information for alerting conservationists and managers to changes in animal populations.

The Long-eared Owl is a year-round resident that breeds and winters throughout Montana. Its lifestyle has evolved around living in and adjacent to open country habitats. As a top-of-the-food-chain predator the Long-eared Owl is an ideal indicator species of grassland and rangeland health in Montana, and throughout its range. Furthermore, owls in general generate enormous interest from the public due to their appealing looks. Consequently, they can be used as icons of conservation that help generate support and funding.

Denver Holt's biography appears in the **Workshops** section of the Conference Schedule.

Keynote Address
Saturday, 13 June. 6:30 p.m. Ballroom

DINSMORE, STEPHEN J. **Plovers, prairie dogs, and plague: the Mountain Plover in Montana.** *Department of Natural Resource Ecology & Management, Iowa State University, 203 Science II, Ames, IA 50011; cootjr@iastate.edu.*

The Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*) is a terrestrial shorebird that is an endemic breeder on the North American Great Plains. In Montana its association with black-tailed prairie dogs (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) infected by sylvatic plague has impacted local population dynamics. From 1995 to 2014 I studied the Mountain Plover in Phillips County, Montana, where I individually color-marked >1,800 Mountain Plovers and monitored >1,600 nests during the 21-year study. Plovers occupy large, inter-connected prairie dog colonies, and their use of colonies is negatively impacted by the recent presence of plague. Nesting plovers readily disperse to prairie dog colonies between years with females (4.64 km) moving farther than males (2.75 km). The presence of plague on a prairie dog colony does not affect dispersal distance the next year. Nest survival shows strong annual and seasonal variation and appears to be greater for male-tended nests. Annual survival rates were 0.06 from hatch to age 1 and varied between 0.74 and 0.96 for adults (>1 year old). Plovers occur at low density (< 1 bird/ha) on active prairie dog colonies and the breeding population in this region numbers approximately 250 individuals. Collectively, this information provides a better understanding of the population dynamics of the Mountain Plover and suggests several conservation strategies for its long-term persistence.

Steve Dinsmore is Professor of wildlife ecology and Associate Department Chair in the Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management at Iowa State University. He received a B.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology from Iowa State University (1990), a M.S. in Zoology (minor in Statistics) from North Carolina State University (1994), and a Ph.D. in Fishery and Wildlife Biology from Colorado State University (2001). His primary interests are avian ecology, population biology, capture-recapture analysis, and monitoring animal populations. His research program at Iowa State University emphasizes studies of avian population biology. He currently supervises one research associate and four graduate students working primarily on issues of demography and habitat management of birds. In addition to projects involving graduate students, he maintains his own research program with Mountain Plovers and collaborates with scientists on projects related to avian ecology, population biology, and sampling and study design issues. His teaching responsibilities include an undergraduate course in ornithology, a graduate course in avian ecology, and study abroad courses to Antarctica and Costa Rica. In his spare time, he enjoys bird watching and traveling.

Abstracts of Scientific Presentations

BALLARD, JENNIFER. **Le Conte's Thrashers: density estimation, natural history, and the effects of point count protocol.** *Great Basin Bird Observatory, 1755 E Plumb Lane #256A, Reno, NV 89502; ballard@gbbo.org.*

The Nevada Bird Count (NBC) was initiated in 2002 to provide spatially explicit estimates of bird abundances in 13 habitat types across the state of Nevada primarily through point counts, and to provide a framework for both project-related and statewide monitoring of landbird populations. In 2008, the Great Basin Bird Observatory began a 6-year project to further assess the status of nine focal bird species, including the Le Conte's Thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*), under the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. I will discuss our estimates of density and population size for the Le Conte's Thrasher in Clark County, and how small changes in point count protocol can reveal interesting patterns of behavior and create more opportunities for statistical analyses addressing population estimates and trends.

FLOYD, TED. **Ten years of nocturnal migration studies in Boulder County, Colorado, 2006–2015: What we know, and what we still don't know.** *American Birding Association, 2009 South Fork Drive, Lafayette, Colorado 80026; tfloyd@aba.org.*

The study of nocturnal migration in North America was until recently a chiefly east-of-the-Mississippi affair. The conventional wisdom was that detectable night flights are comparatively unimpressive in western North America, especially in the Rocky Mountain region. The problem with this interpretation has much to do with bias and expectation, with “knowing too much.” If one “knows” to listen in early autumn for the flight calls of thrushes (an excellent strategy in the East), then one will hear few if any nocturnal migrants in the interior West. In Boulder County, Colorado, I have documented that the heaviest flights of audible nocturnal migrants occur from late July to early September. These flights consist almost entirely of sparrows and warblers, many of them flying apparently east toward molting grounds in the central and southern Great Plains. Much remains to be worked out: What conditions favor strong summer flights at night? How far are the birds actually flying? How extensive regionally is the phenomenon? And where are all the thrushes? In other words, what causes thrushes and other loud migrants to go undetected in fall and spring?

Clarity on these questions will likely require technology: radar, automated recording, and, ideally, biotelemetry. At the same time, new discoveries will benefit from the insights and perseverance of natural historians: everything from midsummer dispersal of Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) to fall flights of Baird's Sparrows (*Ammodramus bairdii*) to midwinter migration by American Tree Sparrows (*Spizella arborea*) to occurrences we're not even thinking about right now. Successful nocturnal migration studies, like so much in field ornithology, require us to abandon old habits of thought.

MARKS, JEFF^{1,2}, ANN NIGHTINGALE², and JENNA MCCULLOUGH³. **Natural history in an unnatural environment: Breeding biology of Northern Saw-whet Owls on the Boardman Tree Farm.** ¹4241 SE Liebe Street, Portland, OR 97206; jmarks17@gmail.com. ²Rocky Point Bird Observatory, Victoria, BC V8T 2C1 Canada; motmot@shaw.ca. ³Idaho Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83844; mccu9180@vandals.uidaho.edu.

The Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) is one of North America's most common strigids, but its breeding biology remains poorly understood. We followed 33 Saw-whet nests at a hybrid poplar tree farm in Oregon from 2012 to 2014. Reproductive measures (clutch size, nesting success, and productivity) were comparable to those obtained in “natural” habitats. One male mated with two females and produced 6 fledglings from 10 eggs, constituting the third record of polygyny for the species. More than half of the nesting adults were second-year (SY) birds. We captured both adults at 26 nests: both parents were SYs at seven nests, both were after-second-years (ASY) at five nests, the female was SY and the male ASY at seven nests, and the male was SY and the female ASY at seven nests. Considering clutch size and number of young fledged, we found no evidence that pairs composed of SY parents had lower productivity than those composed of ASY parents. Indeed, the highest mean clutch size occurred at nests where

both parents were SYs, and the lowest mean number of young fledged occurred at nests where both parents were ASYs. Neither mean clutch size nor mean number of young fledged differed significantly among nests of the four combinations of parental ages. Only one male and one female nested in more than one year; both obtained new mates the second year. The female had nested successfully in 2012 and settled in a box 3 km away in 2013; she abandoned her first clutch in 2013 and then renested 15 days later in a different box with a male that also had nested successfully in 2012. We encountered only one of 109 banded nestlings in a subsequent year. Our data suggest that breeding-site fidelity and natal philopatry are low in this population, as has been found elsewhere.

MORLAN, JOSEPH¹ and GUY McCASKIE². **Update from the California Bird Records Committee.** ¹359 Solano Dr., Pacifica, CA 94044; jmorlan@gmail.com. ²954 Grove Ave., Imperial Beach, CA 91932; guymcc@pacbell.net

In the past two years the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC) accepted first state records of Tundra Bean-Goose (*Anser serrirostris*), Salvin's Albatross (*Thalassarche salvini*), Nazca Booby (*Sula granti*), Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*), Marsh Sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*), and Common Swift (*Apus apus*). A split of the Sage Sparrow (*Artemisiospiza belli*) and establishment of the introduced Scaly-breasted Munia (*Lonchura punctulata*) added two additional species. These additions bring the California list to 659 species. In addition, the Committee is reconsidering the identification of a previously accepted "Shy Albatross" from 2000-2001 as a Chatham Albatross (*Thalassarche eremita*), and is reviewing the documentation for North America's first Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*). Five species (Hawaiian Petrel [*Pterodroma sandwichensis*], Blue-footed Booby [*Sula nebouxii*], Neotropic Cormorant [*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*], Yellow-green Vireo [*Vireo flavoviridis*], and Pine Warbler [*Setophaga pinus*]) were removed from the review list while one species group – Magnificent/Great/Lesser Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens/minor/ariel*) – was added. The Arctic Warbler (*Phylloscopus borealis*) was replaced by Arctic/Kamchatka Leaf Warbler (*Phylloscopus borealis/examinandus*). A new category code, "RI" – "Reintroduction in progress - not yet established," was created, and the California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) category code was changed from E (Extirpated from California) to RI. A "watch list" of introduced breeding species not yet established has been added to our web site. Web publication of *Rare Birds of California* was rolled out in March 2014. An annual CBRC report dealing mainly with 2013 records authored by S. Rottenborn, B. Daniels, G. McCaskie, and J. Garrett is scheduled to be published in *Western Birds* 46(3). Guy McCaskie stepped down after 14 years of service as CBRC Secretary, and Thomas A. Benson is now Secretary.

PANDOLFINO, EDWARD¹ and NATHAN D. PIEPLOW². **An analysis of the vocalizations of the four U.S. subspecies of White-breasted Nuthatch.** ¹1328 49th Street, Sacramento, CA 95819; erpfromca@aol.com. ²2480 Kittredge Loop Dr. #0848, Boulder, CO 80310; npieplow@gmail.com.

It is well known among birders, and some field guides note, that there are distinct differences in the repertoire of vocalizations among the subspecies of the White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*). However, the only detailed published analysis of the vocalizations of this species covered only one subspecies (*S. c. carolinensis*) in one location in Minnesota. We used recordings made throughout the ranges of the four subspecies found in the United States to qualitatively and quantitatively compare their vocalizations. Consistent with morphologic and genetic evidence, we found that vocalizations of this species suggest three distinct groups: 1) the eastern nominate subspecies (*S. c. carolinensis*), 2) the two interior subspecies (*S. c. nelsoni* and *S. c. tenuissima*), and 3) the western subspecies (*S. c. aculeata*). Although there are not enough recordings to fully analyze the two subspecies found in Baja California, the vocalizations of the taxon found in northern Baja California (*S. c. alexandrae*) are very similar to those of *S. c. aculeata*, and vocalizations of the southern Baja subspecies (*S. c. lagunae*) are very similar to those of the two interior subspecies. This finding is also consistent with morphologic and genetic data. All four subspecies produce a simple song consisting of an evenly-spaced series of overslurred notes. The cadence of this song can vary from <5 notes/sec to >15 notes/sec. The pitch (fundamental frequency) of these songs increases as one moves east to west, with *S. c. carolinensis* having the lowest pitch and *S. c. aculeata* having the highest. *S. c. aculeata* also gives a song unique to

that taxon consisting of a series of sharply slurred, evenly spaced notes that fall and then rise in pitch (*toeey-toeey-toeey*). None of the other U.S. subspecies give a similar song. Both *S. c. carolinensis* and *S. c. aculeata* frequently give a simple call note that is very distinctly and very rapidly modulated. This note is significantly higher in fundamental frequency and averages longer in duration in *S. c. aculeata* than in *S. c. carolinensis*. Neither interior subspecies gives a similar call. Both interior subspecies give two common calls which are distinctive and diagnostic among the U.S. taxa. One call consists of a series of tightly-paired notes given at a constant pace (disyllabic *quank*). The other is a very rapid, unevenly-spaced series of single over-slurred notes given in short bursts (rapid *quank*). Neither song nor calls show any diagnostic differences between the two interior subspecies. Thus, while very difficult to differentiate visually in the field, these three subspecies groups can be confidently identified by vocalization.

RESTANI, MARCO¹, DEB REGELE², MONTY SULLINS², GEORGE MOWAT², and ROBERT LUBBERS².
Nesting ecology of Ospreys along the Yellowstone River, Montana. ¹*Department of Biological Sciences, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN 56301; restani@stcloudstate.edu.* ²*Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1075, Billings, MT 59103.*

The Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society (YVAS) has monitored Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) nests along the Yellowstone River, Montana since 2009. YVAS has focused conservation efforts on Ospreys because 1) the local population is increasing, 2) most pairs are building nests on power poles and thereby coming into conflict with utility companies, and 3) nestling mortality from entanglement in baling twine is evident. In 2009 three volunteers located 22 nests, and today 30 volunteers monitor over 85 nests. From 2012-2014 all nests were located on anthropogenic substrates: platforms on poles, bridge spans, power poles, and cell towers. Mean (SE) number of young fledged per occupied nest was above that needed to sustain the local population: 1.87 (0.22) in 2012 ($n = 30$ nests), 1.35 (0.18) in 2013 ($n = 48$ nests), and 1.51 (0.16) in 2014 ($n = 55$ nests). Some nest sites consistently produced more fledglings than others: 25% of nests produced 51% of all fledglings during 2012-2014. Reproductive success was unrelated to distance to nearest neighbor, density of breeding pairs within 5 km, and location along the river. Median hatch date was 14 June based on measurements of 134 nestlings taken at banding. Nesting chronology did not differ by location along the river but there was some indication that earlier breeding pairs produced more fledglings. From 2012-2014, eight nestlings became entangled in baling twine: one died, one was euthanized, and six fledged normally after being freed. The discovery of new nests annually, robust reproductive success, relatively low density, and breeding by a two-year old Osprey suggested that the population was in the growth phase. YVAS has contributed to science literacy by engaging volunteers and undergraduate student interns, and has promoted conservation by coordinating with power companies to erect nesting platforms and by rescuing entangled nestlings.

SCHWITTERS, MICHAEL. **Bird species found at Shemya Island, Alaska, 1999 – 2010.** *Post Office Box 143, Choteau, MT 59422-0143; schwit@3rivers.net.*

Shemya Island, Alaska, lies near the western end of the Aleutian Islands. Since World War II, it has been managed by the U.S. Air Force as Eareckson Air Station. Through the assistance of the USDA (Wildlife Services) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I conducted a study on the island of the bird-aircraft strike hazard from 1999 to 2010. The study involved a census of wildlife on the island during 17 visits, usually during the spring and fall, averaging two months per visit. A byproduct of the study was the listing of all the birds I found on the small island. Lying about 600 km from Asia, many of the species shared affinities with Asia more than with North America. A total of 216 bird species have been found on Shemya Island to date. During my visits, I recorded 203 species, including 72 uncommon Asian species. One species, Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), had not previously been recorded in western North America. The first North American records of the Lesser Black-backed Gull subspecies *Larus fuscus heuglini* and of the Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) were collected from the island. Other examples of the 72 Asian species found were Taiga Bean-Goose (*Anser fabalis*), Tundra Bean-Goose (*Anser serrirostris*), Falcated Duck (*Anas falcata*), Garganey (*Anas querquedula*), Baikal Teal (*Anas formosa*), Smew (*Mergellus albellus*), Lesser Sand-Plover (*Charadrius mongolus*), Terek Sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*), Far Eastern Curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*), Black-

tailed Gull (*Larus crassirostris*), Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*), Brown Shrike (*Lanius cristatus*), Red-flanked Bluetail (*Tarsiger cyanurus*), Gray Bunting (*Emberiza variabilis*), Eurasian Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), and Hawfinch (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*). A number of the species were photographed, and some were collected for the University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

Presenter Biographies

Jennifer Ballard graduated from Washington State University with degrees in Wildlife and Range Management. She earned an M.S. in Wildlife at Colorado State University, studying the impacts of understory on birds and small mammals in narrowleaf cottonwood/box-elder riparian forests along the Yampa River in Colorado. She has been working with the Great Basin Bird Observatory since 2006.

Ted Floyd is the Editor of *Birding* magazine, published by the American Birding Association (ABA), and is broadly engaged in other ABA activities, especially education and outreach. Floyd is the author of many articles and several books, including the *ABA Field Guide to Birds of Colorado* (2014). He serves on the Board of Colorado Field Ornithologists, and is a past member of the WFO Board.

Jeff Marks received an M.S. in wildlife biology (nesting Long-eared Owls) and a Ph.D. in zoology (nonbreeding Bristle-thighed Curlews) from the University of Montana. He and two co-authors recently completed *Birds of Montana*, which will be the first comprehensive book on the avifauna of that state. He occasionally leads birding tours to West Africa and writes and edits for Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive.

Joseph Morlan has served as a member of the California Bird Records Committee since 1981 and is currently CBRC chair. He teaches ornithology at City College of San Francisco.

Edward Pandolfino has devoted his post-retirement years to conservation, birding, and research that connects the two. He co-authored *Birds of the Sierra Nevada: Their Natural History, Status, and Distribution* with Ted Beedy, illustrated by Keith Hansen. He is also a regional editor for northern California for *North American Birds*. He is currently Past President of Western Field Ornithologists.

Marco Restani is Professor of Wildlife Ecology at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota and Board Member of the Yellowstone Valley Audubon Society. He has studied raptors in Montana since 1987. His research focuses on migration and dispersal, environmental contaminants, and habitat use.

Michael T. Schwitters is a retired Air Force Officer and meteorologist. He holds a master's degree in astronomy from the University of Texas, Austin. He has actively participated in many wildlife related projects with various state and federal wildlife agencies. One of his favorite activities has been to read codes on neckbands on wild geese; he has recorded more than 53,000 codes in this pursuit. His wildlife related projects have taken him to many states and provinces, the Bering Sea, the tropical Pacific, and Arctic Canada.

Identification Challenges

Sounds: Team Challenge. *Friday, 12 June. 4:00–5:30 p.m. Yellowstone Room.* **Nathan Pieplow** returns with this pub-quiz style challenge to challenge participants with the varied sounds that birds make. Start forming your teams** now! The audience will have plenty of opportunity to participate, too, so come ready to use what you know about bird sounds and to learn even more. WFO logo prizes will be awarded to the winning team!

Nathan Pieplow is the author of the forthcoming *Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds*. He is the outgoing editor of the quarterly journal *Colorado Birds* and an author of the *Colorado Birding Trail*. He teaches writing at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

** Teams can include up to 6 people, but please, no more than two “experts” per team, defined as current or past members of a bird records committee, and/or professional bird tour leaders. Teams are encouraged to come up with their own creative team name!

Photos: Expert Panel. *Saturday, 13 June. 4:00–5:30 p.m. Yellowstone Room.* In this ever popular staple of WFO conferences, a distinguished panel of identification experts will examine and comment on photographs of “mystery” birds. Panelists will analyze photographs of birds and discuss the relevant aspects of each bird’s particular characteristics that lead to an identification. The intent is to provide a real learning experience for audience and panel alike. Panel moderator is **Ed Harper**.

Ed Harper is one of the finest birders and bird photographers in the country. His lively talks and programs are always highly informative and full of humor. An educator at heart, he taught mathematics and field ornithology classes at American River College for 34 years before recently retiring to spend more time in the field. An active birder, he travels widely and he and his wife, Susan Scott, lead birding and natural history tours all over the world.