

# Western Field Ornithologists Newsletter

## Autumn/Winter 2014-15

Edited by Catherine Waters

### The Season in the Field

The drought in the West continued bringing to many of us unheard of days of high temperatures, cloudless skies, and a fire-prone landscape from spring into the late fall. Our water tables dropped and snow melt barely sufficed to bring lasting water supplies to waterways and marshlands. Depressing, huh? At the height of the heat, just the simple act of putting out a modest moving water supply, whether birdbath or pond, could bring birds in the droves. In many areas of the West we experienced early and heavy fall migration that brought surprises in the field as well as surprises for those of us covering urban neighborhoods. WFO's website highlights many of our western avian surprises. As the season progressed, and to the absolute delight of California field ornithologists and field observers, the mid-fall movement of rarely-seen-in-numbers Varied Thrushes was simply amazing. It may be a legend but some bird pundits have averred that the years of Varied Thrushes arriving in numbers outside of their usual range is a harbinger of a heavier rain and snowfall season. Rain in the western "lower 48" began earlier than "normal" so one can only hope for an extended rainy season. As this is being written, the annual Christmas Bird Counts are upon us. Make the most of this far ranging annual scientific field experience. Volunteer to work on a count or multiple counts! Make time to get out in the field. See you there! Maybe you will do as well as the Anchorage, Alaska count and be able to report 34 American Dippers!

### Big Sky Country here we come - Billings, Montana for our 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference June 10-14, 2015

Be prepared! Start watching the WFO website. Our annual conference for 2015 will be in Billings, Montana June 10 – 14, 2015. Ed Harper and his Montana team have put together a wonderful late springtime conference to introduce us to his home state. An exciting series of science sessions, skills workshops, and field trips will anchor the conference. And, yes, this is your big chance to include finally seeing or returning to Yellowstone! Visit the WFO website or contact Steve Rottenborn, [srottenborn@harveyecology.com](mailto:srottenborn@harveyecology.com) and cc Dave Quady, [davequady@att.net](mailto:davequady@att.net) for details regarding the science sessions, call for papers and submission of abstracts. Meeting announcements have been distributed state- by-state and that information is also posted on our website. If you have questions, want to volunteer for the conference, lead or assist with field trips, give a workshop etc., contact Ed Harper, [calidris@surewest.net](mailto:calidris@surewest.net) and cc Frances Oliver, [hummer52@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hummer52@sbcglobal.net) and Joyce Meyer, [meyer2j@aol.com](mailto:meyer2j@aol.com).

Our partners, Colorado Field Ornithologists, [www.cobirds.org](http://www.cobirds.org), are holding their annual conference the week before WFO's and if you are driving (we are) this is your chance to do a double-dip birding trip.

### San Diego Conference Recap

WFO's *annual conference in San Diego was wonderful on every level*. With it finished, we said good-bye to **Ed Pandolfino** as our annual conference chair/coordinator. Ed took us to new heights. He pioneered our on-line paperless registration system for starters when he stepped in to take Cat's place and ended five years later, leaving WFO with a polished conference template and a high bar to follow into the future. Insert applause and standing ovation here.

A complete conference report is on the WFO website, [www.westernfieldornithologists.org](http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org). However it does not go far enough in calling attention to the amazing planning in bringing many founders of WFO to San Diego, a symposium on avifaunal change, honoring all the past presidents, and a keynote devoted to 44 years of WFO history. Wow!

The list of thank yous for this conference, that hosted more registrants and scholarship winners than we have ever had before, is long. WFO's Tom Blackman, Robbie Fischer, Robert Gill, Joyce Meyer, Frances Oliver, Dave Quady, and Dave Shuford along with **Pasadena Audubon, San Diego Audubon, San Diego Field Ornithologists, the San Diego Natural History Museum** and talented individuals from throughout the field ornithology community in the west made the workshops, field trips and social activities possible. Sadly, this little two page newsletter is not long enough to thank all individually. Beyond WFO's Board, who all pitched in on every level, there were WFO friends, many of decades-long standing, who gave papers, worked on scholarships, assisted on and led field trips, conducted workshops and much, much more: Elisabeth Ammon (Nevada), Jon Feenstra (California), Shawneen Finnegan (Oregon), Ted Floyd (Colorado), Pete Ginsburg (California), Homer Hansen (Arizona), Rich Hoyer (Oregon/Arizona), Dave Irons (Oregon), Paul Lehman (California), Narca Moore-Craig (Arizona), Nathan Pieplow (Colorado), Peter Pyle (Hawaii, California), Geoff Rogers (California), Debbie Van Dooremolen (Nevada), Jay Withgott (Oregon) to name a few. Thank you one and all.

## WFO Board News, Good-byes and Welcomes

At our annual face-to-face WFO Board of Directors meeting we had some real changes. We said good-bye to:

- **Ken Able** who finished his term on the WFO Board but will continue as Special Publications Editor and serve on the newly formed Science and Conservation Policy Committee. His wonderful points of view, respected by all of us, along with his worthwhile to listen to opinions, will be missed.
- **Dan Singer**, too, rotated off the WFO Board. He spent countless hours vetting our new accounting program before we purchased it, serving on the WFO Finance Committee, representing the California Bird Record Committee and helping our new Treasurer, Suzanne Carota, adjust to WFO.
- On the executive side, we said good-bye to our fearless leader of the past two years. **Ed Pandolfino** completed his never boring presidency after shepherding us through the joys and growing pains (and mine fields) of e publications, new accounting programs, and a new WFO Bird Record Committee, The Hawaii Bird Record Committee. Ed will stay on to help Cat and Dan do the e publication of *Western Birds* slated for March of 2015.
- **Dave Shuford** finished his term as Past President and Chair of the WFO finance Committee. Dave's forward thinking and soft, reasoned way of approaching issues will be missed. Dave will continue as a member of the WFO Publications Committee and as an editor, with Robert Gill and Ken Able, of *AVIFAUNAL CHANGE*.
- And, as if the above were not enough, our Treasurer, Membership Chair and friend, **Robbie Fischer** retired. She knew how and where to save money and left us in the best of financial shape after 13 years of steering our finances. A wonderful individual and field ornithologist as well as hard working volunteer for WFO scholarships, WFO outreach, and Sequoia Audubon she gently prodded in some cases and told us in others and always had our best interest at heart.
- **Joseph Morlan** turned over the reins of the WFO website in advance of the annual Conference. Joe worked on, and served as webmaster and photo editor of [www.westernfieldornithologists.org](http://www.westernfieldornithologists.org) since its inception.

Also in San Diego, WFO welcomed:

- **Dave Quady**, [davequady@att.net](mailto:davequady@att.net), of Berkeley, California, as our new president.
- **Tom Blackman**, [obeach@cox.net](mailto:obeach@cox.net), of San Diego, California stepped up to be WFO's vice president.
- **Suzanne Carota**, [smcarota@charter.net](mailto:smcarota@charter.net), of Long Beach, California was elected Treasurer and Membership Chair. A birder and field ornithologist, she is new to WFO. We are excited to have her join us.
- **Tim Brittain**, [twbrit@cox.net](mailto:twbrit@cox.net), of Chula Vista, California became WFO's Webmaster. Tim has been a well-hidden, behind-the-scenes key person for publishing *Western Birds* for years. A "tech" publication wizard, we were lucky to have him waiting in the wings.
- And, WFO was gifted with the continuation of **Liga Auzins**, [llauzins@yahoo.com](mailto:llauzins@yahoo.com), of Garden Grove, California, as our Recording Secretary. She's been a wonderful addition to WFO.
- The newly formed **Hawaii Bird Record Committee** was added as a committee of WFO.
- **Susan Kelly**, California, [s.kelly@sbcglobal.net](mailto:s.kelly@sbcglobal.net), **Steve Rottenborn**, California [strottenborn@harveyecology.com](mailto:strottenborn@harveyecology.com), and **Raymond VanBuskirk**, New Mexico, [newmexicobirder@gmail.com](mailto:newmexicobirder@gmail.com), were elected to the WFO Board of Directors. They were welcomed by all and are joining us for the first time.

## What else around the West?

**Colorado Field Ornithologists** (CFO), [www.cobirds.org](http://www.cobirds.org), WFO's partner-in-the-west, will be holding their annual conference, a week before WFO's Montana Conference, in Salida, Chaffee County, Colorado, June 4-7, 2015. If you have never read their wonderful journal, *Colorado Birds*, or attended one of CFO's fun annual conferences you are missing out. This coming year would be the perfect time to become a member and to attend their meeting.

*The secrets of waterfowl are about to be revealed...* If you can manage it, **Sea and Sage Audubon of Orange County, CA** is sponsoring a weekly intermediate to expert workshop, with day and night sessions, on waterfowl. A workshop of this level is infrequently, if ever, offered anywhere in the U.S. and your time will be well spent. Birders, biologists, consultants, ornithologists and the interested public are all welcome to avail themselves of this rare opportunity. Details of this and other of S and S's outstanding continuing workshops to educate the field ornithology community are on their website, [www.seaandsageaudubon.org](http://www.seaandsageaudubon.org). The workshop will be held in Huntington Beach.

*Singing along with the birds...* Have any of you taken the time to check out **Great Basin Bird Observatory's**, interactive "game" to learn Nevada bird sounds and songs? It is on their website and it is a wonderful tool. [http://gbbo.org/getinvolved\\_birdsong.html](http://gbbo.org/getinvolved_birdsong.html). Watch their website, too, for seasonal ornithology field employment opportunities.