

Western Field Ornithologists Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2015

Written by Catherine Waters

The Season in the Field

It is Labor Day weekend and bins in hand we have been quietly celebrating the almost imperceptible seasonal change (in southern California) as we explore local parks and patches, river beds and marshes or forests and fields –while sweating profusely- for the thrill of witnessing annual fall migration. For a few weeks now shorebird numbers have been building and those of us who do not take much of a summer vacation began turning in the first shorebird reports in July. Others stayed out of the sun and are only recently rejoicing in the amazing beauty of the color yellow as orioles, warblers and tanagers once again cross our views. That tiny nip in the morning air is what passes for the first signs of fall these days. There's no use in beating a dead horse here, the drought plaguing the western United States continues and it remains to be seen how it will play out and if it heralds a new norm. It is believed the nomads that first populated the western hemisphere arrived in the waning days of the Pleistocene because of a shift in climate. It could be that we are experiencing the cutting edge of something new that we will not live long enough to see how the story evolves. However, we can, and should, be part of the documented record and studying and reporting birds in the field is a large part of that. There are bird observatories and bird record committees in every western state that study and maintain relevant avian records and histories from their regions. *North American Birds* tracks and publishes, through an amazing effort by dedicated volunteers, a large portion of avian distribution of the western hemisphere by region. *ebird*, for those of us who are digitally adept, continues to refine and expand their offerings while managing a massive, accessible data base. And, *Western Birds* remains a unique, peer reviewed scientific journal devoted to publishing your field research. The key to these troves of knowledge is the field ornithologist who studies birds and records and reports his/her findings. One picture may take the place of a thousand words but without the pertinent information to go with it, it is only a picture.

Annual Conference Wrap ups and future sites

Billings, Montana was an amazing location for WFO's annual conference in June 2015. Everything was a success: attendance, workshops, paper session, vendors and field trips. Frances Oliver, who made it all work, capped off the event admirably by coordinating a written report and delightful photo essay, of the entire conference for the WFO website, www.westernfieldornithologists.org, click on Conference. If you were unable to attend you can at least bask in the glow.

Individuals and organizational folk really need to be singled out for their effort on behalf of WFO. The Billings Conference Committee was led by Bruce Hallett, Ed Harper and Frances Oliver with the help of WFO Board members and friends. The field trip leaders were amazing and from the smiling faces wandering in at the end of the trips, they did a fantastic job: Helen Carlson, John Carlson, Daniel Casey, William Crane, Jeri Dalton, Jim Danzenbaker, Stephen Dinsmore, Paulette Epple, Audrey Evers, Joel Evers, Shawneen Finnegan, Tom Forwood, Ed Harper, Bruce Hallett, Homer Hansen, Lou Ann Harris, Steve Hoffman, Rich Hoyer, Mitch Hurt, Dave Irons, Nate Kohler, Don Marsh, Gary Mowat, John Parker, Deb Regele, Forrest Rowland, Gary Swant, Raymond VanBuskirk, Jay Withgott, Richard Wolcott, and Robin Wolcott. Stand up and take a bow. Our next conference will be in Fortuna, California, September 28 – October 2, 2016. See you there?

For those of us who double-dipped or wished they could have, there's a wonderful write up and photo essay on our partner's, Colorado Field Ornithologists website. Their Salida, Colorado conference was amazingly successful, www.cobirds.org/. Some of us thought we would excel at Bird Jeopardy. Now is not too soon to begin practicing. Stay tuned for CFO's annual conference in Lamar, Colorado, May 2016. Hope to see you there!

Western Field Ornithologists continues down the information highway

Western Birds is now a digital as well as a traditional hard copy publication. Your WFO membership makes you eligible for the hard copy and the e version. Check it out on your computer from our website, www.westernfieldornithologists.org and see how you like it. Try accessing it using your Android/iPhone or download it to your reading device or tablet. Let us know how it works for you. If you would like to comment on the digital journal *Western Birds* send any comments to contact@westernfieldornithologists.org and they will reach the WFO publications committee. Fan mail is always popular. Send your requests for digital only subscription to our membership chair, Suzanne Carota, at smcarota@gmail.com.

Coming soon to the WFO website will be a complete digital library of *Western Birds*.

The project, undertaken by Tim Brittain our webmaster and digital pubs guru, with Ed Pandolfino, who has shepherded the project along since stepping into the fray. Make sure you thank Ed when you see him. This is not a small project and it will be a lasting contribution to you and WFO.

The digital *Rare Birds of California* has been updated with corrections and amplifications. There is now a search that was a special project of Joe Morlan of the CBRC. With thanks to Dave Quady, on the e *Rare Birds* home page there are now guidelines for authors/researchers on citation of the digital book. If, in your *Rare Birds* reading/ research, you should stumble across a missing link or digital print artifact please send an email about it to Tom Benson, the secretary of WFO's California Bird Record committee, thomasbenson@aol.com and Cat Waters of the WFO Publications Committee, cpannellwaters@gmail.com so that it can be included in the corrigenda.

Of interest

There are some unique opportunities coming up. One very special one is the traveling exhibition of *Birds in Art* 2015 that will open at the Fullerton Arboretum, Fullerton, California, December 28 – February 22, 2016, www.fullertonarboretum.org. This traveling show derives from a very unique annual juried exhibition at the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum of Wausau, Wisconsin. The international juried show with birds as its key theme was begun in 1976 and each year's exhibition travels annually throughout the U.S.

There are dozens of ongoing projects, field opportunities and programs throughout the west (and US) to raise our consciousness and field skills and the below is an overview what you can do or what is being done for you:

- Paul Baicich's and Wayne Peterson's, *The Birding Community E-Bulletin*, remains the most timely compilation of bird and bird related conservation news available in the U.S. today. From beginning to end it is relevant. It is also easy to subscribe. Just send an email to paul.baicich@verizon.net. They do not share their mail list.
- The Nevada Birdsong Learning Program, a product of Great Basin Bird Observatory, is available online and free to all, www.gbbo.org/getinvolved_birdsong.html. It is devoted to teaching the calls and songs of the birds of Nevada. You can do this workshop with a beverage in hand while sitting in your recliner.
- Tucson Audubon has 3 early 2016 study workshop programs to enhance field skills. February (Sparrows), again February (Raptors) and April (Birding by Ear). A great excuse to do some birding and learn something new, too.
- Sea and Sage Audubon, Orange County in January is offering their beginning (January) and then advanced (March) bird sounds ID workshops. These courses are incomparable and geared to the professional as well as the interested amateur.
- Portland Audubon is offering, for those of us still stumbling, "Do you ebird?" October 8 or 10.
- The Nevada County, California Breeding Bird Atlas effort would benefit from having more individuals and groups sponsor and/or undertake blocks. This is a little explored area of California and participation would be a win-win for field ornithologists and birds. Contact gnateater@gmail.com to volunteer for a day or the duration of the project.

Board Business

WFO welcomes nominations for our Board of Directors, attendance at our board of directors meetings, and participation on our annual conference and standing committees. Turn on your email and send your message to our contact@westernfieldornithologists.org attn: Dave Quady or Tom Blackman. At our Board and Members meeting in Billings we held our annual election for Officers and Board Members. It is always with regret that we say goodbye to the folks we've enjoyed working with and with joy that we welcome new people who are willing to share their time and talents with us. It seemed like the time just flew and this year we found ourselves bidding (fond) farewells to Kimball Garrett (California), Robert Gill (Alaska), Ed Harper (California) and Joyce Meyer (Washington) – all of whom brought their unique talents and perspectives to the table on behalf of WFO.

Our election this year brought us Homer Hansen (Arizona), Larry Modesitt (Colorado), Diane Rose (California) and W. Dave Shuford (California). Dave Quady, Tom Blackman, Suzanne Carota and Liga Auzins were re-elected as our officers. They deserve our continuing thanks for jobs well done.