

Western Field Ornithologists Newsletter
Fall/Winter 2016
Edited by Catherine Waters

The Season in the Field: In the West, especially the southwest, it was a pretty brutal summer and fall and who knows what the winter has in store for us? Whatever we are experiencing is shared by the wildlife around us, be they earth worms, badgers, moths or birds. Like us they are dependent on water and a livable climate range. Almost without a doubt they are in search of or have found a permanent or temporary place with available food and water. This is being written in mid-December and the Great Horned Owls are teaming up for the breeding season. Those precocious Allen's Hummingbirds are beginning to defend food producing plants as their own. Though it seems very early, the Scrub Jays and Northern Mockingbirds are honestly defining territories. They can all be heard, as this is being typed, in the center of the densely inhabited flats of L. A. County. The only reason they are here is this spot is a fueling stop on their journey or where they begin their breeding season and that is because in this place, in a congested old neighborhood, there is shelter, food and water. Water attracts or nourishes what they feed on and water sustains them to forage for food. Think about doubling up on your water "features" or making an existing feature more generous in size. If you are consistent in keeping the features cleaned and filled, the numbers of birds using them will build by each season. We may have occupied the space formerly owned by wildlife but that does not mean we cannot share that space and share some joy and providing water seems to be a viable avenue for refreshing the journeys or lives of our winged friends.

WFO Takes Flight in Fortuna: Our annual conference was in Fortuna, California this year and it was an amazing experience on every level. The setting, the facility, the region, the birds. WFO front line organizers Tom Blackman (facilities), Suzanne Carota (finance/youth logistics), Rob Fowler (field trips), Susan Kelly (registration), Dave Quady (lead organizer), Diane Rose (workshops) and Steve Rottenborn (science program) pulled together to make this, our largest conference ever, a rousing success. A highlight was our young field ornithologists, past and present who attended the conference. Two even gave outstanding paper presentations from their research projects at Occidental College. A complete, photo documented (thank you to Ron LeValley and Tom Blackman) write up is on the WFO website at westernfieldornithologists.org/conference. If you do not have computer access to see Dave Q's wonderful conference write up, contact Cat Waters, cpannellwaters@gmail.com, and she will get a copy to you.

Book, Books, Books: Three cheers to WFO's members who displayed wonderful generosity in making our normally small annual silent book auction a fly away success.

A great number of people entrusted us with their collections or single favorite book. We received family heirlooms and sought after rarities, too. Each of you who shared one or many books and in some cases, boxes of books, contributed to enriching the Pasadena Audubon/WFO youth scholarship program and WFO's San Miguel/Publication Fund on an unparalleled level. Thank you. Cindy Lippincott and Bob Berman (Oregon), Tony Brevelier (Colorado/California), John Harris (California), Karen Havlena (California), Bob Pann (California), Chris Swarth (California), Carolyn Titus (Nevada), Jay Withgott (Oregon), Lowell and Susan Young (California) and many others gave unstintingly from their personal book shelves and archives. Regardless, each and every one of you who gave a book or books, your contribution was greatly appreciated. Of special note were all the wonderful people who pitched in to help Dan Gibson and Cat Waters organize the sale, especially Rubi Abrams, who strolled in and taught all of us what organization really was. T

WFO Wings It to Colorado in 2017: Plans are already well underway for WFO's conference in Pueblo, Colorado August 16 – 20. President Tom Blackman and Board Member Larry Modesitt are putting together a conference that will allow us to see the best this area of Colorado has to offer. Colorado is famous for many things but a well-kept secret is Colorado harbors some of the finest birders and field ornithologists in the West and beyond. Mark your calendars!

News from the Leading Edge: WFO Board members traveled by planes and cars and from far and wide to be in Fortuna for our annual face-to-face Board of Directors meeting. The annual conference marks our nomination of new Board members and the passage of those whose Board terms are over. Our officers serve on an annual basis and our Board members serve for three year terms and can be re-elected to another three-year term. This year we had some marvelous additions, a few farewells, and a double-back! First, we should all stand and welcome Tom Blackman our new president. And, we should continue the applause for Kurt Leuschner who left the Board after six years of leading our specialized field trip committee and who is now our Vice-president. Rounding out the Executive Officers of WFO are Liga Wurster and Suzanne Carota, two amazing people who keep us marching in step. Following close on their heels, we are introducing John "No Relation to Kimball" Garrett, Kimball "No Relation to John" Garrett and Karen Havlena who were elected to the WFO Board. Each has their own special perspective they bring with them and WFO is lucky to have people with their fine qualities to carry on our mission.

Hopefully you all will have fond good-byes for outgoing WFO Board members Raymond Van Buskirk and Catherine Waters. Ray was a legacy from our youth scholarship program. Cat, who dates from the turn of the 21st century, leaves after a mixed career with WFO where she happily dove into every project that caught her fancy. She's sure there are plenty of folks out there who are breathing a sigh of relief

that they no longer have to hear her voice over the Board conference calls piping up with “Well...” The WFO Pubs Committee will continue to hear from her as she’s staying on to help finish up the projects that the Committee began during her Board tenure.

One last piece of Board news has to do with a new WFO member. In this little newsletter it is infrequent that we get to announce something like a new addition to the WFO family but yours truly gets that pleasure one more time and would like all of you to welcome Aiden Shuford, the newly arrived son of WFO Board member Dave Shuford and Jen Roth.

Membership on the Move: WFO enjoys a wonderful membership spanning the professional and the amateur field ornithologists to universities and libraries. When we gather each year it is a feast of friends, excellent science sessions and in- the- field- birding and for as hard as WFO’s volunteer staff works to make it all come together, it is the members who bring the excitement of the moment with them. Thank you.

On the ledger side, we honestly have someone whose position it is to keep track of you. Have you met her? It is the wonderful Suzanne Carota who also functions as our treasurer and Guru of Spreadsheets. Did you know that Suzanne also holds the position of Membership Secretary for WFO? It is a big, wide ranging, time consuming position within WFO and she thinks the world of her contacts with you and loves her job. However, we shouldn’t increase her workload. Please keep her abreast of your new addresses and phone changes (WE NEVER SHARE OUR MEMBERSHIP/MAIL LIST) and do your level best to try and renew your membership in a timely fashion so Suzanne can grab more than a few minutes in the field.

Further Afield: Starr Ranch in Orange County will be hosting a beginners and advanced banding workshops in the Big OC for late winter 2017. These are incredible workshops that provide a solid educational experience to anyone doing avian field research. March 11, 12 and again Marsh 18, 19. For full details and workshop descriptions contact Kayla Baker at 949-858-0309 or kaylambaker17@gmail.com. There are opportunities for camping on the Ranch for the field ornithologists/biologists attending.

Our partner, Colorado Field Ornithologists, will be holding their annual conference June 1 – 5, 2017 in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Sea and Sage Audubon of Orange County, CA continues to offer outstanding multiple – week workshops in bird identification by sight and sound. The workshops meet weekly and the next one is starting in January. Contact

www.seaandsageaudubon.org. These workshops are exceptional learning experiences.

Great Basin Bird Observatory (GBBO) will be holding the Great Basin Bird Conference May 17 – 21 in Reno, Nevada. Devoted to the research and study of birds of the Great Basin and surrounding areas, information on this conference, including where to submit papers, is on their website, <http://www.gbbo.org/birdconference>.

Portland Audubon continues to offer amazing workshops for further one's field skills. These fill fast and you need to watch their website, <http://audubonportland.org/trips-classes-camps/adult/classes>. All their offerings are excellent and span a range of topics appropriate for all field ornithologists.

WFO Publishes for the Birds: For those of you who may be unaware, Philip Unitt has just completed his 30th year as editor of *Western Birds*. He, along with his staff and Dan Gibson and Ginger Johnson (WFO's longest standing volunteer), make *Western Birds* happen. Adding mightily to this mix are the wonderful associate editors and reviewers. Each of them make it possible for WFO to publish active research and noted observations on birds in the West. You can submit your research and notes for publication in *Western Birds* to Dan Gibson, avesalaska@gmail.com. He's waiting to hear from you. For those of you awaiting *Avifaunal Change*, the second in our monograph series, it is nearly compiled and goes to the copy editing/design stage in February. Following it in the publication flight pattern, there will be a monograph on Le Conte's Thrasher. And, the archive of *The Euphonia* has been scanned. It will be available on the WFO website come January of 2017. Look for it.

The Trailing Edge: Ed Pandolfino, Dave Quady and Cat Waters, all WFO past presidents, have teamed up to do an ad hoc project for the WFO archive documenting all of our past presidents, vice presidents and (hopefully) board members. Send them a picture of any of those folks from your personal archive to contact@westernfieldornithologists.org. The Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology in Camarillo, California houses the WFO archive. The WFVZ has been the repository for all WFO's records and especially the California Bird Record Committee's records since our inception. Our new WFO Committee, the Hawai'i Bird Record Committee will be storing their archived records at the venerable Bishop Museum in Honolulu, Hawaii. WFO thanks both of these institutions for their generosity in assuring documents of field ornithology interest in the West and eastern Pacific are safely stored.

Thank you to Dave Quady for his comments and assistance in reviewing and copy editing this newsletter.