SUGGESTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS TO WESTERN BIRDS

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Western Birds solicits papers that are both useful to and understandable by amateur field ornithologists and also contribute significantly to scientific literature. The journal welcomes contributions from both professionals and amateurs. These guidelines are intended to assist authors and expedite editing. Beginning authors should not be discouraged by what may seem to be a myriad of technical requirements. Simplicity, not complexity, is a virtue in scientific writing. If your information is within the scope of the journal (see below) and worthy of publication, the editors will be glad to guide you in preparing your manuscript. If at all possible, get someone with both experience writing for scientific journals and whose writing ability you respect to review your manuscript before submitting it.

CONTENT

Appropriate topics include distribution, migration, status, identification, geographic variation, conservation, behavior, ecology, population dynamics, habitat requirements, the effects of pollution and climate change, and techniques for censusing, sound-recording, and photographing birds in the field. Site guides are acceptable if they add significantly to previously published knowledge of bird distribution, status, or population in the area. Special features include photographic essays and periodic reports of state or provincial bird-record committees. Laboratory studies not bearing directly on field ornithology are not appropriate.

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Papers of general interest will be considered regardless of their geographic origin, but particularly desired are reports of studies done in or bearing on the Rocky Mountain and Pacific states and provinces, including Alaska and Hawaii, western Texas, northwestern Mexico, and the northeastern Pacific Ocean.

PROCESSING OF MANUSCRIPTS

To submit a manuscript, send electronic files to assistant editor Daniel D. Gibson (e-mail avesalaska@gmail.com). For the process of review, Dan will send the manuscript to one of Western Birds' associate editors, to me, or will handle it himself, according to the associate editors’ availability and according to whose expertise best matches the subject of the paper. The associate editors recruit qualified peer reviewers, evaluate and synthesize the reviews, and return the reviews to the author, with instructions for generating a final draft suitable for publication. If the final draft meets with the associate editor's approval, he or she sends it to me with a recommendation for acceptance and notifies the author. With final acceptance, I give the author an estimate of page charges (see below) and give the manuscript its final copy editing.

The author receives proof of the paper that includes the text, tables, figures, and figure legends. In the proof, the tables and figures are placed at the end; the typesetter will place the tables and figures in their proper places when he makes the corrections to the proof.

Proofread the proof very carefully, since this is your final chance to fix mistakes.
Though the proof is generated, after editing, from the electronic copy you provide, mistakes can still arise. Pay particular attention to any special symbols and the alignment of entries in tables.

Proofread the proof and return it to me with any necessary corrections as quickly as possible to ensure your contribution's appearing in the next available issue.

PREPARATION OF MANUSCRIPTS


Title, Author's Name, and Author's Address

The paper's title should be as descriptive as possible but not over ten words long. Type the title all in capital letters, flush left (beginning at the left margin of the page). Double space below the title and type your name flush left, followed by a comma and your physical address, followed by a semicolon and your e-mail address. If the paper has coauthors, list their names and addresses in the same manner. Co-authors may list their e-mail addresses or not, as they prefer. Combine the names and addresses of two or more authors with the same address on one line. Include the zip or postal code. Include at least the e-mail address of the author to whom correspondence should be directed. Don't use footnotes to give a current address or other ancillary information but simply add the current address in parentheses after the primary address.

Abstract

Include abstracts only with papers five or more pages long that have internal subheadings (that is, will be published in Western Birds' format for longer papers). Shorter papers (in our "Notes" format) do not need abstracts.

Because the abstract is what readers will use to determine whether they want to read the entire paper, it is important that the abstract be as clear, informative, and readable as possible. Write exclusively in the active voice, and summarize your actual results. Do not write things like "the molt cycles of the Willow and Alder Flycatchers were compared." Substitute instead real information: "The Willow and Alder Flycatchers molt only in their winter ranges, the Willow twice per year, immediately after arriving in fall and just before departing in spring, the Alder only once, in midwinter."

Begin the abstract with the word "ABSTRACT" in capital letters, followed by a colon, then continue immediately with the abstract's text. Abstracts should consist of a single paragraph only and no more than 250 words.

Text

Indent the first line of each paragraph.

Introduction. An introductory paragraph should state very briefly the study's objectives, inform the reader what the paper is about, and, most importantly, entice him to read on. The introduction is not the place for a long historical review of the subject. Do not use the heading
"Introduction."

Subheads. If the paper runs five or fewer double-spaced pages, do not use any internal headings (other than "Literature Cited"); the paper will be published in the journal's "Notes" section. Divide papers of six pages or longer into sections and, if necessary, subsections. Identify each section except the introduction with a very brief heading. Type each primary head in capital letters, flush left on its own line. Type each secondary head in capitals and lower-case letters, flush left on its own line. Type each tertiary head in capitals and lower-case letters, run in to the first line of the following text. Do not use more than three levels of headings. Often the primary heads Methods, Results, Discussion, and Summary will assist the reader, but for many papers these subheads are not appropriate and they are not required.

Acknowledgments. Spell out the full first names of people being acknowledged; omit titles and degrees. Use the heading “Acknowledgments” only if the paper has other subheadings.

References

Ensure accuracy by always checking your literature citations against the original sources. Use the name/date system of citation; that is, cite references as "(Jones 1970)." When possible, incorporate citations into the structure of sentences, as in "Jones (1970) reported that..." or "According to Jones (1970)...." Distinguish papers published by the same author(s) in the same year by lower-case letters, beginning with "a," following the year. Cite references by three or more authors by the first author's name only, followed by "et al." (do not italicize), followed by the year. Include page numbers when you quote directly or when you wish to specify a particular part of a reference: (Jones 1970:592–593). Cite unpublished material in text without underlining as (unpubl. data) or (pers. comm.). Do not include references to unpublished sources in the Literature Cited section.

Above the reference list at the end of the paper, type LITERATURE CITED as a primary heading (that is, on its own line, flush left, all in capital letters). Use the following examples as models for references.

Journals. Capitalize only the first letter of the author's name. Note that authors' given names are abbreviated as initials. In the article title, capitalize only the first letter of the first word and of proper nouns. Journal abbreviations follow the style of the Chemical Abstracts Service Source Index (which covers far more than chemistry). If you're in doubt as to how to abbreviate a journal name, spell it out completely. No comma should follow the journal's name. For monographs in irregular serials, follow the same style as for journal articles but omit the number of pages if one monograph constitutes the entire issue.

If a digital object identifier (doi) number has been assigned to the source, append it at the end of the reference after a semicolon as "doi.org/" followed by the number, so that the entire expression can be blocked and copied as a web address. The intent of the doi system is that the numbers make articles easier to locate and stabilize web addresses. Including these numbers in the bibliography is a requirement of Western Birds assigning doi numbers to its articles. If you don't have an article's doi number (and much older literature lacks them), don't worry; I can look them up easily.

(Papers by multiple authors)


(More than one paper by same author in one year)


(Irregular serials)


(Regional reports in North American Birds, etc.)


In lists of records, abbreviate Audubon Field Notes by AFN, American Birds by AB, National Audubon Society Field Notes by NASFN, and North American Birds by NAB. If you cite records from the regional reports extensively, do it in text simply as, for example, "AB 37:1019, 1984."

Books. Capitalize all words in the title except articles, conjunctions, and prepositions. Include the publisher and publisher's location (city, and state or country if ambiguous) but omit the number of pages. Abbreviate words in the publisher's name by using the same format as for journal abbreviations. Some recently published books also have doi numbers; please include them if so. Again, don't worry if you can't locate one.


Part of a book. Capitalize the chapter or article title as if it were a journal article title; capitalize the book title as with other books. Include the volume editor(s) and pertinent page
numbers.


Birds of the World or Birds of North America accounts. Please use the following model, modified from the Cornell Lab's recommendations to reflect the actual date of publication of the latest revision, not the date of transition from "Birds of North America" to "Birds of the World." This can be identified from the "Revision History" page for each species. This recommendation is based on the principle that original rather than secondary or derivative sources should be cited whenever possible.

For these accounts, the doi number serves as the web address. Use the number of the "Birds of the World" account. Though doi numbers are supposed to be permanent identifiers, sometimes, unfortunately, they are superseded.


Note that numbers up to 320 were published by the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia; those after 320 were published by Birds of North America, Inc. If the account has been revised since its original publication for the online edition, cite the revised account as, for example,


"In-house" reports by government agencies or environmental consulting firms. Such reports are not usually available in libraries, so avoid citing them if the report is unavailable through the Internet. If you must cite them, include the address from which the report can be ordered. If the report is available online, cite the website from which it can be downloaded. Without these addresses, other researchers may find it difficult or impossible to locate your original sources.

Egbert, J. 1981. Field inventories in New Mexico of selected Gila Valley birds. Report to New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (order from New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, State Capitol, Santa Fe, NM 87503).

World Wide Web sites. If you cite a website and refer to it only once or twice, put the citation in the text (as you would with a personal communication), not in the Literature Cited at the end of the article. If you must cite a website multiple times, you may cite it in the bibliography by following this model:


When choosing what literature to cite, always prefer literature of which printed copies are in libraries. Web addresses are changed distressingly frequently by all kinds of organizations, including government agencies. We have all experienced the frustration of clicking on broken links.

Appendices

Place long lists of records or other data in an appendix. We always have the option of putting long appendices on the WFO website, with a link to the web address in the published article. Condense material as much as possible. Type the heading "Appendix" as a first-level heading. If your paper has more than one appendix, number the appendices with Arabic numerals. Begin each appendix with a brief explanatory paragraph that includes definitions of all nonstandard abbreviations used. The name of any month may be abbreviated by its first three letters.

Tables

Typesetting of tables costs more than typesetting of regular text, and tables can be awkward to handle. Therefore, include in your paper as few tables as possible. Seriously consider whether you can present your tabulated data just as effectively in a graph or in text, by means of sentences written in parallel form. Don't repeat the same information in text and tables. The text should give the reader the take-home message inherent in the table. Place tables at the end of a manuscript but in the same file as the main text. Please use Microsoft Word’s table format, as that format will help the typesetter get the alignment of the columns right the first time. Number the tables with Arabic numerals, cite each one at least once in the text, and number them in the order in which they are first mentioned in the text.

Table titles should be short. Put ancillary information in footnotes, keyed by superscript italic letters.

Make tables narrow and long instead of wide and short. Tables that must be turned sideways on the page needlessly waste space and are a pain to view on a computer screen. The editor may ask that you restructure a table if it is too big or awkward. Examples:
### Table 1  Sound Levels\(^a\) at Greater Sage-Grouse Leks <3200 m and >3200 m from Gas-Field Operations in Wyoming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>(L_{\text{Aeq}})</th>
<th>(L_{\text{A10}})</th>
<th>(L_{\text{A50}})</th>
<th>(L_{\text{A90}})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;3200 m ((n = 17))</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Min</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Max</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;3200 m ((n = 5))</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Min</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Max</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Corrected for noise-floor influence.

### Table 2  Recaptures the Following Year of Anna's Hummingbirds Banded in Southwestern Idaho

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band no.</th>
<th>Date initially banded</th>
<th>Date(s) recaptured</th>
<th>Distance (km)(^a)</th>
<th>Age/sex at banding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K81554</td>
<td>9 Nov 2017</td>
<td>9 Nov 2018</td>
<td>0.0 (2018)</td>
<td>Juvenile female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23 Dec 2019</td>
<td>0.15 (2019)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18 Dec 2019</td>
<td>0.72 (2019)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K47032</td>
<td>7 Nov 2018</td>
<td>29 Nov 2019</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Adult male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K47033</td>
<td>7 Nov 2018</td>
<td>29 Nov 2019</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>Adult male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M07787</td>
<td>25 Jan 2019</td>
<td>17 Dec 2019</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>Adult female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K47030</td>
<td>7 Nov 2018</td>
<td>17 Dec 2019</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>Adult male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Distance between sites of original banding and recapture the following year.
Figures

When you prepare illustrations, remember that they will be reduced as necessary to fit within one page of *Western Birds* text, which measures 4 inches wide by 6.75 inches high. Therefore, keep this shape in mind when you prepare both line art and photographs. It is best to plan for a maximum height of 6.25 inches to allow space for the figure legend or photo caption. Photos may be cropped to show the subject(s) optimally in the space available.

Number each figure with an Arabic number. Refer to each figure at least once in the text, and number the figures in the order in which they are first mentioned in the text.

*Line art* (maps, graphs, charts, sketches). If you are scanning line art to send, make sure that you use “bitmap” as your format, rather than “grayscale” or “RGB.” If you submit a line-art figure in electronic form, ensure that its resolution is at least 600 dots per inch. Figures submitted at lower resolution will not look good in print, and I will ask you to resubmit them at the higher resolution needed. Submit electronic figures as separate PDF files, JPG files, or Windows Metafiles, not embedded in Microsoft Word documents or Power Point files (the resolution of figures extracted from these programs is too poor).

Minimize or avoid legends within a figure. Instead, put the explanation and key to symbols, to the maximum extent possible, in the figure legend that will be typeset.

It is essential that the lettering in your drawing be compatible with the detail in the drawing. Line art will be reduced so that the lettering in it is about 8 point (that is, capital letters about 1/16 inch high), so do not draw detail so fine that it will be lost when the figure is reduced by the factor that will bring the lettering to this size. You may find it easiest to draw line art at roughly twice the size it will appear in the journal. I will calculate the proper reduction.

If necessary, I can have the lettering typeset and added to the figure, to ensure it is printed at an appropriate size. To take advantage of this possibility, submit an original lacking the lettering plus a version with the desired lettering clearly specified.

When you generate graphs, make them in black and white or shades of gray if possible, avoiding colors. When an issue of *Western Birds* is assembled, our graphics manager distributes the color illustrations within an issue’s pages to economize on printing costs. Color figures may need to be placed away from their first mention in the text, an undesirable situation. We may convert a color figure to grayscale if the color is not critical to the figure’s interpretation.

*Photographs.* *Western Birds*’ photo editor will review the photos to ensure they are of a quality adequate for publication. The resolution of photographs should be at least 300 dots per inch at the 4-inch width at which the photo will be reproduced in *Western Birds*. High-resolution TIFF files are best, but JPG is acceptable if the resolution is adequate. It is best to submit original versions of a photo and allow *Western Birds*’ photo editor to crop the photo as necessary to fit it on the page and make it look as good as possible.

*Figure legends.* Group captions for figures at the end of the paper. Include enough information in the legend that the figure can be understood without reference to the text. Minimize the amount of lettering in the figure by putting as much explanation of the figure as possible in the legend. Do not indent legends. Include a credit with each photo. Examples (note how the legend explains symbols used in the figure):

Figure 1. Comparison of annual counts of Greater Sage-Grouse, 2000–2020, at 22 leks in and
near the Pinedale gas field with higher and lower measured sound levels. A, $L_{A50} < 26$ dB ($\bullet$, $n = 11$) versus $L_{A50} > 26$ dB ($\circ$, $n = 11$). B, $L_{Aeq} < 31$ dB ($\bullet$, $n = 15$) versus $L_{Aeq} > 31$ dB ($\circ$, $n = 7$). Lines are best-fit linear regression; solid lines, stable trends; dashed lines, declining trends. Declines significant when $L_{A50} > 26$ dB and $L_{Aeq} > 31$ dB (both $P < 0.001$).

Figure 1. Apparent chat × oriole in San Timoteo Canyon, San Bernardino County, California, September 2019. Notice how the wing bar can be obscured depending on the bird’s posture. An album with additional photos can be found at https://westernfieldornithologists.org/archive/V51/Grube/.

*Photos by Matthew Grube*

Note that photo credits are set flush right in italics.

**WESTERN BIRDS’ STYLE**

Use standard American English spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Good scientific writing is simple and direct. Write in the active voice whenever possible; that is, write "I saw ..." instead of "... was seen" or "the author saw ...." Avoid bureaucratic jargon or birdwatchers’ slang. Write in a style that is lively and engaging, neither folksy nor pedantic. A well-edited textbook is a better model than most government-agency reports.

Use the proper tense for verbs, present for conditions that still exist, past for completed events. Use the past tense to refer to statements in published literature. For example, write "Grinnell and Miller (1944) stated that ..." instead of "Grinnell and Miller (1944) state that ...." The authors, now dead, have completed their statement, though one may pull their book off the library shelf and read it today. Avoid writing in the conditional; that is, do not use the word "would" unless it is necessary. Introduce restrictive clauses with "that," nonrestrictive clauses with "which."

For more information on good scientific writing, see *Scientific Style and Format: The CSE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers* and Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style.* Or ask me for my “Common Problems in Today’s Writing” for sample solutions to common types of awkward writing, excessive wordiness, or tortured grammar.

**Nomenclature**

Include the English names of all plant and animal species, if the species has a widely known English name. Include the scientific name of each plant or animal after the first mention of its common name in text. Don’t include the scientific name in the title unless it is relevant to the paper’s content. For species and higher taxonomic categories of birds, use the names recommended by the North American Classification Committee (NACC) of the American Ornithological Society (see http://checklist.americanornithology.org/taxa). It is not necessary to cite this authority.

Italicize the scientific names of genera, species, and subspecies but not those of families, orders, or other higher taxonomic categories.

**Numbers and Measurements**
Use only the metric system for bird weights and measurements and preferably for all other measurements. Avoid mixing the metric and English systems. Use numerals with all units of measurement, including time: e.g., 2 hours, 7 km, 0.37 m². Report numbers with a number of significant figures appropriate to the data. For example, 13/37 may be reported as 35% but not as 35.135%.

Use decimals instead of fractions. Do not leave a decimal naked (e.g., write 0.2 instead of .2).

Use the 24-hour time system: write 15:30 instead of 3:30 PM, 07:00 instead of 7 AM, etc. Write dates with the day preceding the month and without commas: 23 July 1982. Use no apostrophe in expressions like “the 1920s.”

Use latitude and longitude for geographic coordinates, not UTM (universal transverse Mercator). Websites enabling you to convert back and forth between the two systems are readily available. Either decimal degrees or degrees, minutes, and seconds are acceptable; just be consistent within one article. Express coordinates at an appropriate level of precision; for example, coordinates expressed down to the second would be misleadingly precise localization of a study area 5 km across. The second is the maximum precision relevant in studies of birds. With decimal degrees, three decimal places is usually the appropriate level of precision; never use more than four decimal places for such coordinates.

PAGE CHARGES

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Thank you for your cooperation and your interest in Western Birds.