

2002

## Western Regional News

North American Bird Bander

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The top five species made up 49% of the total, a typical proportion in recent years. Twenty Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were netted (but not banded) between 1 Aug and 11 Sep. One hundred twenty-five warblers of 17 species made up 18% of the total catch, a low proportion for this station. The sparrow group, led by 72 Slate-colored Juncos and 69 White-throated Sparrows, made up 22% of the total, a usual proportion.

The weather during the banding period was warm and dry, with record heat in early August. September rains were about an inch above average, but August and October rainfall was well below normal, and the region was well into drought by early November. Conditions for netting were generally very good, though high winds following strong cold fronts prevented opening nets on about 10 mornings in October and early November. No new species were banded.



Founded in 1925

## Western Regional News

### ANNUAL MEETING - 6-8 SEPTEMBER 2002 BISBEE, ARIZONA

Bisbee is a former mining town that has become a tourist mecca because of charming turn-of-the-(last)-century buildings that remind many of Europe. With a plethora of shops and a wide selection of the best restaurants in southeastern Arizona, there is plenty to do when not banding or birding. A wide selection of lodging is also available - contact the Bisbee Chamber of Commerce at <chamber@bisbeearizona.com> for details. Bisbee is well situated for birding many of the Arizona "hot spots" and this year will be the new location for the Southwest Wings Birding Festival three weeks before the WBBA meeting. It is also ideal for travel into northern Mexico with its own border crossing at Naco.

For the WBBA meeting this year we plan on taking advantage of these attributes plus easy access to established banding sites in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, the first "Globally Important Bird Area" in the Western Hemisphere.

**PROGRAMS** will include Sheri Williamson, author of the new *Peterson Field Guide to the Hummingbirds of North America*, and her husband Tom Wood who runs two MAPS stations in northern Sonora. Together they operate the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory <sabo@sabo.org>. Other programs may include travelogues of tropical birding destinations and the San Pedro Avian Resources Center (SPARC) <sanpedrobirds.org>.

**FIELD TRIPS** will include visits to newly discovered sites just across the border in Sonora (no entry visas required), the San Pedro Riparian Area, and canyons in the spectacular Huachuca Mountains as well as visits to banding sites along the San Pedro (NB: see book review on pg 18.)

Early September is a great time to visit southeast Arizona. Weather may include afternoon thunderstorms and highs in the mid-80s to mid-90s, but Bisbee is located at over 5,000 feet, so is always

cooler than Tucson by about 10° F. Most of the Arizona specialties are still to be found and migrants will be passing through in numbers. Hummingbird numbers should be nearly at their peak, and in the evening nectar-feeding bats clean out the hummer feeders.

**CALL FOR PAPERS:** Abstracts are now being accepted for the Saturday afternoon oral presentation session. Papers should address some aspect of capturing, banding or marking birds. Acceptable topics include: results of studies, use of techniques, analysis of study results and/or the value of bird banding in conservation. Posters and demonstrations on similar topics are also welcome. Oral presentations should be limited to 15 minutes. Abstracts and proposals for posters and demonstrations should be submitted no later than 7 Aug 2002 and sent to WBBA's President:

**Ken Burton**  
**P. O. Box 716**  
**Inverness, CA 94937**  
**415-669-1847**  
**kmburton@svn.net**

Abstracts should include:

- 1.) Title
- 2.) Name(s), affiliation(s), and address(es) of the author(s)
- 3.) Summary of the information to be presented
- 4.) Specification of any audio-visual equipment needed

For posters and demonstrations, please provide the topic and a brief description. Specify time, space, and equipment requirements for display.

WBBA members should already have received a printed or electronic flyer with registration information. Readers needing a flyer or additional information should contact our local host:

**Jack Whetstone**  
**1763 Paseo San Luis**  
**Sierra Vista, AZ 85635**  
**530-439-641**  
**myiarchus@hotmail.com**

An NABC certification session will be held in

Jan. -Mar. 2002

conjunction with the annual meeting. See accompanying announcement and contact Rita Colwell for details.

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## NABC Certification Session

The Western Bird Banding Association will hold a North American Banding Council certification session for the Bander and Trainer levels on 4-5 Sep, immediately prior to its 2002 annual meeting in Bisbee, AZ.

Applications are available from:

**Rita Colwell**  
**281 Margarita Court**  
**Los Altos, CA 94022**  
**650-949-1869**  
**birding@attglobal.net**

We will accommodate a maximum of 12 candidates at Bander level and 4 candidates at Trainer level. Candidates may take the written examination at the certification session or, prior to the certification session, under the supervision of a NABC trainer. The deadline for submission of applications for this certification session is 15 Jul 2002.

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## From WBBA's President

Dear Members,

This winter, I unexpectedly assumed the Presidency of WBBA when my predecessor, Jim Steele, resigned. He did so because he felt that he had too many commitments to fulfill his obligations as President. The Board thanks Jim for his several years of service to the organization as Secretary, VP, and President.

By now I should be familiar to most of you, at least in name. I have handled WBBA's membership for ten years; served as Treasurer for seven, 2nd and then 1st VP for three, and NABC Alternate or Representative for four; was responsible for Back Issues for many years; have attended every meeting but one since 1992 and co-hosted the 1998 meeting. So I have a good sense of the

organization's recent history and some thoughts on where it should go in the near future.

The current issues facing WBBA were discussed at our last meeting, a synopsis of which was printed in *NABB* 26(3). I want to take this opportunity to elaborate and update you on some of them.

First, the organization is doing quite well financially. We have avoided risky investments and weathered recent events more or less unscathed. We also are implementing some cost-cutting measures such as sending out renewal notices by e-mail (many of you have received these already). We are now proceeding to transfer all our Life membership dues to an endowment fund administered by the Marin Community Foundation. This will safeguard a substantial portion of our capital against unforeseen disaster and guarantee a predictable rate of return – a nest egg, if you will pardon the expression. By the way, there have been 34 Life members, all of whom, to the best of our knowledge, are still alive.

Speaking of money, did you know that WBBA has a small-grant program? The fact that we have not advertised it very widely has contributed to our solvency! Our goal is to award two \$500 grants each year, one for research and one for monitoring, though this number could be higher or lower depending on the year's fiscal outcome. Compared to most granting agencies, our requirements are quite modest: you are expected to submit a report and requested to present your results at a WBBA meeting. If you or a bander you know would like to apply, the person to contact is Geoff Geupel, 415-868-0655 (2084), <ggeupel@prbo.org>.

On a less upbeat note, WBBA's membership has experienced a steady decline over the years. The organization has shrunk by about 15% since 1995. That is a more alarming decline than some species being considered for the Endangered Species list! Last year, for example, we attracted 25 new members but lost 39. Why do members not renew? The few who have told me say they are not banding anymore, but surely there are other reasons and we know there are lots of banders who are not members. We want WBBA to represent all the banders in the West, which we obviously can not do if they do not join. But you can help! I would like to ask each of you to try to recruit just one new

member this year. I would be thrilled to be able to report a membership increase at this year's meeting! You can direct potential members to our Web site (<http://thecity.sfsu.edu/snfc.western.htm>); there is a membership form there.

It would be unfair of me to ask you to recruit new members without also asking you how we can serve you better. We try hard to be responsive to members' wishes and suggestions – but we are not mind readers! Please feel free to contact any WBBA Board member (our addresses are conveniently found on the inside back cover of this journal) and voice your thoughts. We promise to bring them up for discussion at the next Board meeting, if not sooner.

Despite the drop in membership, the number of *NABB* manuscripts submitted to WBBA has risen dramatically since our new Editor, Kay Loughman, took office. This is extremely heartening, albeit a lot more work for Kay than she had anticipated! She is taking her responsibility very seriously and deserves our heartfelt praise and thanks. We would like to see the trend continue. Lots of you are sitting on years of data that would make ideal *NABB* papers. *NABB* manuscripts are refereed, but the competition is less fierce than in some other journals, and since the publication cost is borne entirely by membership and advertising, there are no page charges. We hope you will consider submitting a paper soon. We may even be able to put you in touch with someone who can help you analyze your data and perhaps co-author your paper.

One of our biggest needs right now is development of our Web site. Jim Steele put together and maintains our current site, which is hosted by San Francisco State University; but, as mentioned already, Jim has many other responsibilities. So we are looking for a Webmaster – and we may even be able to direct some funding to the project. Among the things we would like to have on the site are the Annual Report form (and the ability for contributors to proof their totals) and a geographically referenced directory of WBBA members with descriptions of their banding programs, of particular value to prospective volunteers, interns, and visitors. If you have Web design skills, please consider sharing your expertise with us!

This is an exciting time for WBBA. We have taken the lead in holding NABC evaluation sessions and plan to continue making these a feature of our annual meetings. We are increasing the quantity and quality of *NABB* articles. We are starting to put technology to use in enhancing communication both within the organization and between members and prospective banders. With your help, I believe we can turn our membership decline around and be a community that truly represents the majority of banders in the West. I look forward to serving as your President, and I hope to see you at this year's meeting in Arizona!

Wishing you full nets and filled band orders,

**Ken Burton**

29 Mar 2002

## With Regret

With regret we report the recent passing of two longtime WBBA members, **Steven M. Speich** and **Kay Burk**, both of Tucson, AZ. We extend our deepest condolences to Steven's and Kay's families and friends.

## Western Station Reports

### Alaska Bird Observatory - 2001 Summary

By Jacqueline Weicker, Migration Program Mgr.

<jackiew@alaskabird.org>

Alaska Bird Observatory

PO Box 80505 Fairbanks, AK 99708

<www.alaskabird.org>

The Alaska Bird Observatory (ABO) was established in 1991 and is dedicated to advancing the appreciation, understanding, and conservation of birds through research and education. The year 2001 kept us busy with a number of long-term monitoring projects across Alaska. ABO continued multi-year studies of landbird habitat use, owl surveys, Breeding Bird Survey routes, research on the effects of military overflights on nesting passerines, and population monitoring in Denali National Park and Preserve. New contracts for last year included point-count censuses in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and MAPS work at Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge.

We completed our tenth year of migration monitoring at our flagship mist-netting station at Creamer's Field Waterfowl Refuge, Fairbanks. Our staff banded 2,990 birds of 40 species from April through September (17,811 net-hr), with the help of four interns and over 50 community volunteers. The number of birds caught was lower than in previous years, although we tried to make up for it by netting larger game. The result was

seven nets destroyed, no moose banded. One highlight of 2001 was the publication of some research by Senior Biologist Anna-Marie Benson, based on data from Creamer's Field Migration Station:

Benson, A. M. and K. Winker. 2001. Timing of breeding range occupancy among high-latitude passerine migrants. *Auk* 118: 513-519.

Education remains an integral part of our mission. In 2001, we offered census and banding classes to wildlife professionals, mentored a young scientist in a nesting ecology study of Tree Swallows, and gave countless bird-banding demonstrations to school children and adults. In addition, we trained 13 interns in the skills of banding, nest-searching, censusing, and bird conservation.

Perhaps our most exciting news is that we have built a new nest for 2002! The growth of the observatory over the last ten years has spurred the construction of a new 2300 square-foot facility, located on the edge of Creamer's Field Waterfowl Refuge. Designed to be environmentally friendly and energy efficient, the building has much-needed office space, a classroom, storage space, and room for interpretive displays and a gift shop. For pictures of the new building or more information about our research and training programs, please see the ABO website.