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## Western Regional News

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Founded in 1925

# *Western Regional News*

## **2002 ANNUAL MEETING IN BISBEE, AZ**

Every so often WBBA has its annual meeting in a birding paradise and this year it was a real thrill for us to meet at the Bisbee Convention Center in southeastern Arizona. Great birds, great weather, and great dinners!

Friday's field trips to the Chiricahua and Huachuca mountains and San Pedro River gave birders a chance to see lots of Arizona specialties. One group identified eleven species of hummingbirds while visiting Beatty's Orchard, including a Blue-throated, a Lucifer, a White-eared, and two Rufous sharing a single feeder!

WBBA's Board of Directors met on Friday afternoon. Minutes of the meeting will be posted on our Web site. Officers for the coming year are listed here on page 110.

Local science teacher Doug Danforth presented the Friday evening program. He showed slides from recent wildlife-viewing trips to Brazil.

Jack Whetstone supervised the banding session on Saturday morning at the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. More than 30 birds of 14 species were processed including Common Ground-Dove, Willow Flycatcher, Dusky Flycatcher, McGillivray's Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Summer Tanager, Lazuli Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, Abert's Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, and Lesser Goldfinch. It was a particular treat to see

up close several of what were likely the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. Several banders returning to San Pedro House had good, if distant, looks at a Dickcissel – a rare migrant in this area.

This year we were able to have longer-than-usual presentations during the scientific portion of the meeting. Abstracts of papers presented follow this summary. John Tautin gave his final report to WBBA from the BBL.

Saturday evening's keynote speaker was Tom Wood, co-director of the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory (SABO). Tom showed slides of and talked about the work he and Sheri Williamson have done with hummingbirds, both at Ramsey Canyon Preserve and through the Observatory.

Jan Wasserman reports on Sunday's field trip into Mexico: "We did get the Gray Hawk in Mexico, as well as a flyby of a Yellow Billed Cuckoo .... We had a great lunch at a real Mexican restaurant. After we got back, we went to the "new" SABO headquarters, and saw a Violet-crowned Hummingbird in the nest." Participants in Sunday's other field trip raved about finding an Elegant Trogon on Ft Huachuca.

Our thanks to host Jack Whetstone; volunteers Sherry Hayes, Lisa Walraven, and Monica Sierra; and field-trip guides Tom Wood and Wezil Walraven for all that they did to make this meeting a success.

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**ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS  
PRESENTED  
AT WBBA's 2002  
ANNUAL MEETING**

**Studying Hummingbird Migration and Monitoring their Productivity and Survivorship.** Susan M. Wethington\* (P.O. Box 1125, Patagonia AZ 85624; swething@dakotacom.net), George C. West (Professor Emeritus, Institute of Arctic Biology, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, AK), and Barbara A. Carlson (Reserve Director, University of California, Riverside, CA).

One area of concern for hummingbird conservation in North America is that national programs such as MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) do not monitor hummingbird productivity and survivorship. The mist nets used at MAPS stations rarely catch hummingbirds and when caught, few banders have the permission or the ability to band them. Without a separate methodology specifically focused on hummingbirds, the productivity and survivorship of species in the avian family Trochilidae remain unstudied in the United States.

A number of cooperating banders are studying hummingbird diversity, migration, productivity, and survivorship, at multiple study sites, in or near the Catalina, Santa Rita, Huachuca, Pinaleno, and Chiricahua mountains in southeastern Arizona and at two study sites in southern California. Because banding at each site follows a standardized methodology, changes in hummingbird populations among years and among sites can be compared. Results of the study will help define movement patterns of hummingbirds, characterize their diversity, and identify areas that are important for breeding and migration of hummingbirds in southwestern United States.

This paper presents our methodology, discusses some of the challenges associated with estimating hummingbird populations, and shows preliminary results of the study. We welcome the participation of other banders. As others join the project, our ability to identify factors critical for maintaining diversity and abundance of hummingbirds increases.

**Tabular Pyle.** Walter H. Sakai\* (Professor of Biology, Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90405-1628; sakai\_walter@smc.edu) and C. John Ralph (USDA Forest Service, Redwood Sciences Lab, 1700 Bayview Drive, Arcata CA 95521).

We present a new method of summarizing Peter Pyle's (1997) ageing and sexing guide into a tabular guide that has proven to be extremely useful for both novice and experienced banders. The format we have developed allows quick and accurate assessment by a bander as to their ability to distinguish species, age, and sex criteria. Rapid and accurate processing are essential to the health of birds captured and this effort assists in this goal. We give examples of the *Tabular Pyle* in this presentation.

**A Proposal to Build a Nestling Ageing Guide: A Call to Banders.** Dennis Jongsomjit and Thomas Gardali (PRBO Conservation Science, 4990 Shoreline Highway, Stinson Beach, CA 94970).

We propose to build a nestling ageing guide of written descriptions and photographs that can be accessed by researchers. The ability to age nestlings when a nest is found is desirable due to emerging methods for evaluating nest success (e.g., survival time analysis) that require knowing the age of the nest at finding. These new methods do away with the disadvantages of the popular Mayfield (1975) method that requires several assumptions be met: a constant probability of nest failure within a nesting period (e.g., incubation) and an equal probability of failure among nests. Additionally, the Mayfield method does not allow the researcher to evaluate variables (e.g., nest height) that may be affecting nest success. An ageing guide is also useful for those interested in the life history of a species, to help researchers gauge the proper time to band nestlings, and to develop more general parameters for nestling ageing. In order to facilitate this process, we present guidelines and data forms for researchers that band nestlings and are interested in contributing data to this project. We present these guidelines using examples from Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) and Wrentit (*Chamaea fasciata*) nestlings.

**Population Trends of Partners In Flight Riparian Focal Species In Central Coastal California.** Chris R. Tenney, Jason W. Scott\*, and Sarah L. Hamilton (Big Sur Ornithology Lab of Ventana Wilderness Society, Big Sur, CA).

The Big Sur Ornithology Lab (BSOL), a program of Ventana Wilderness Society, was founded in 1992 as a long-term monitoring station to study trends in landbird populations at a coastal riparian site in central California. Since 1992, BSOL biologists have accumulated more than 59,000 banding records of more than 165 species during nine years of standardized mist-netting. The Partners in Flight (PIF) Riparian Conservation Plan (2000) selected 14 focal species, of which five species breed and are captured in the BSOL study area. For these five species, Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*), Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*), Wilson's Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*), Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), and Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), we investigated demographic patterns in four demographic categories: breeding adults, total adults, local hatching-year birds, and hatching-year migrants. Capture rates from 1992 to 2001 showed a significant decline over time in adult breeding Warbling Vireos, and a decline in hatching-year Warbling Vireos that approached significance. The decline in adult breeding Warbling Vireos is consistent with findings reported from Point Reyes National Seashore suggesting that Warbling Vireos are declining on a regional level in coastal California. There was no significant decline for the additional four focal species.

#### **Report from the Bird Banding Laboratory.**

John Tautin, Chief, Bird Banding Laboratory, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, 12100 Beech Forest Road, Laurel MD 20708-4037. john\_tautin@usgs.gov.

The Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL) has a new supplier for some band sizes. As a result, bands are in better supply, and back-logged orders for some sizes have been reduced. The BBL is celebrating 100 years of bird banding. Special posters made for the celebration are being displayed at meetings and are available from the BBL. Finances are somewhat better than they have been for a few

years. BBL has approval to recruit several staff positions. Tautin retires from the BBL at the end of September 2002.

\* Denotes presenter at meeting.

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## **WBBA OFFICERS FOR THE COMING YEAR**

At the annual meeting in September 2002, the following people agreed to serve on WBBA's Board of Directors:

Kenneth Burton	President
Gary Blevins	1st Vice-President
Ken Voget	2nd Vice-President
Jim Steele	Immediate Past President
John Alexander	Secretary
Tricia Campbell	Treasurer
Kay Loughman	Editor

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## **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**

WBBA welcomes the following members joining (or re-joining) from September 2001 to August 2002. We look forward to a lasting and rewarding relationship!

Ned A. Batchelder, Red Lodge MT; Ed Deal, Seattle WA; Robert Domenech, Clinton MT; Michael Dyson, Victoria BC; Dr. Patrick J Gould, Woodland Park CO; Larry Grimes, Manteca CA; Carole Hallett, Portland OR; Jukka Jantunen, Roberts Creek BC; Dr. Edgar T. Jones, Edmonton AB; Vasken Kevorkian, Rohnert Park CA; Amber Keyser, Portland OR; Lloyd Kiff, Boise ID; Danielle O'Grady, Santee CA; Eben Paxton, Flagstaff AZ; Stacy Jon Peterson, Mtn Home AFB ID; Stephen J. Rutkowski, Lakewood WA; Patricia A. Taber, Silver City NM; Jennifer Weikel, Corvallis OR; Stan A. Wright, Auburn CA; and Michael G. van Hattem, Livermore, CA.