

The Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology is a non-profit research and education institution. Its mission is to contribute to the study, knowledge, and conservation of the world's wild bird species through biodiversity activities involving our bird collections, education programs, research projects, and publications.



Fall • 2019

NEWS

WESTERN FOUNDATION OF VERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY

A Bird's Eye View... by Dr. Linnea Hall, Executive Director



Dr. Hall in the field

Museums are not about rooms of dead animals. Instead, they actually are key players in learning about and conserving living organisms, and in educating the public about them and the environment. Museums are often involved with conservation breeding, habitat preservation, and research to ensure survival for many of the planet's threatened or endangered species (American Alliance of Museums [AAM] 2019), thus the WFVZ's continuing work with Ventura County's bird species is directly in keeping with the good works that museums conduct on behalf of nature.

Case in point: the WFVZ's field program conducted intensive breeding bird surveys in spring and summer 2019 on the Santa Clara River, the Santa Monica Mountains, Conejo Open Space lands, and the Channel Islands, all aimed at collecting information on the status of our local avifauna and assisting with the restoration of their habitats. Among other good news, we documented that Least Bell's Vireos continue to remain relatively free from brood parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds on the lower Santa Clara River, and that Yellow-billed Cuckoos stayed on the river during the breeding season in high-quality breeding habitat, making it possible that there will be a nest there soon! Thanks to the restoration of native vegetation on the Hedrick Ranch Nature Area, and shrewd management of the property by the Friends of the Santa Clara River (www.FSCR.org), this property is key to potential cuckoo breeding on the river, as long as predicted climate changes over the next 25+ years do not alter the current trajectory.

Museums have long been educators about our world too, and they are more supportive than ever of the full spectrum of diverse human communities around them. The WFVZ is deeply committed to making its

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New Members Welcome!

Thank you for your support and welcome to our flock!

- California Condor \$500+** Jesse Zoernig & Cecile McKee
- Peregrine Falcon \$250+:** Judith and Mark Fleischman
- Brown Pelicans \$100+:** Lois and Roy Fischman, Marta Ulvaeus
- American Kestrels \$50+:** Anthea Adams, Morgan Carter and Julia Hauben, Mary Hansen, Rosalind & Richard Goldstein
- Ca Quail Family \$35+:** Kimberly Lundy, Taylor Stampa, Richard & Debbie Swift, Joanna & Bob Taylor, Susan Richart-Wilson
- Loggerhead Shrikes \$25+:** Tanya Brokaw, Brenda Contreras, Nathan Johnston, Daisy & Addie Pidduck
- Donations:** Ebell Women's Club-New Display Case
City of Camarillo Community Service Grant
Eric & Cristine Johnson Education Fund

WESTERN FOUNDATION OF VERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY

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A Bird's Eye View Continued...

materials, education programs, and research opportunities accessible to all Ventura County and California residents, and I encourage you to read about our expanding community programs on our website (www.wfvz.org).

A last few facts about museums in the US: they support more than 726,000 American jobs, contribute \$50 billion to the economy annually, and have approximately 850 million in-person visits and millions of online visits each year (AAM estimate based on National Study on the Use of Libraries, Museums, and the Internet, IMLS, 2008). They also are considered the most trustworthy source of information in America, rated higher than local papers, nonprofits, the US government, or academic researchers (Museums R+D, Reach Advisors, cited by AAM https://www.aam-us.org/programs/about-museums/museum-facts-data/#_edn23, accessed 30 Sept 2019). Thus, there are great reasons to visit natural history museums, and the WFVZ aims to be your go-to Natural History Museum in Ventura County. I hope you will join as a Member (we have memberships for financially disadvantaged families!), and visit us often!

Sincerely, Linnea

Meet the Board of Directors



Stephen Rothstein

President of the Board Dr. Stephen Rothstein's major research interests are in behavior, ecology, evolution, and ornithology. He regards evolution as most important and considers behavioral problems mainly in the context of ecology and evolution. Specific areas of concern are animal sociality, reproductive biology, species interactions such as competition, the evolution of adaptations, and systematics. His present research is limited to birds and he is currently working on the coevolutionary interactions between parasitic birds and their hosts, egg recognition behavior in birds, social behavior and the determinants of dominance, the breeding biology of icterids, and the significance and origin of variation in cowbird vocalizations. He is also involved in conservation programs dealing with endangered species that are threatened by cowbird parasitism. Steve has been on the WFVZ's Board since 2009.



Bruce Orr

Dr. Bruce Orr has more than 30 years of experience in population and community ecology of aquatic, terrestrial, and wetland environments in the western United States. He specializes in natural resources inventory and management planning, ecological restoration, wetlands and freshwater ecology, riparian vegetation dynamics, flora and vegetation of the western US, and aquatic entomology. He is experienced in wetland delineation and assessment, threatened and endangered species surveys, plant community classification and mapping, mitigation planning, and environmental impact assessment. Bruce is frequently invited to speak about restoration ecology, and he has taught courses including wetland delineation, wetland restoration ecology, ecological restoration of riparian habitats, and watershed management. He serves on science advisory committees including the SFEI—Santa Clara Valley Water District's Science Hub and Coyote Creek Restoration Technical Advisory Committee, and the City of Los Angeles Biodiversity Expert Panel. Bruce joined the WFVZ Board in 2018.



Dexter Kelly

Dexter Kelly first got attracted to birds at the age of four, watching them come to the window feeder and to the suet pack attached to the elm on the lawn ... and he was hooked. That was almost seventy years ago, and he's been at it ever since. He finally made it to California in 1970, and took part in Christmas counts and bird surveys, which culminated in the LA County Breeding Bird Atlas project.

Dexter served several terms on the LAAudubon Board, including a three-year stint as president, helping create several programs that allowed LAUSD students to experience their natural habitat, with class excursions and as science interns doing ecological studies and habitat restoration in the Baldwin Hills. "I'm proud of this accomplishment of payback to the LA Community and natural environment. I can assure you all that no matter how dreary, boring, and frustrating your life can become, there are always new worlds to explore, and new birds to find. If there is any better reason for living than chasing birds, I have yet to discover it." Dexter started on the WFVZ Board in summer 2019.

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Birds and Climate Change by Paul Grindrod



From *Voyage dans l'Amérique Méridionale*,
by Alcide Dessalines d'Orbigny, 1847.

The White-winged Diuca-Finch (*Diuca speculifera*) is, if not the highest, among the highest-altitude nesting passerines in the Western Hemisphere. It lives in the high Andes Mountains in Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile, and is the only bird species other than penguins—and the only nest-building bird—ever documented nesting on ice.

Although known to western ornithologists since the 1830s, the birds' nesting behavior was only discovered in 2003 by a geoscientist from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Dr. Douglas Hardy, during paleo-



White-winged Diuca-Finch
eggs. WFVZ collections;
Cordillera de Arica, Chile,
April 8, 1945.

climate research on an Andean glacier in Peru. In further observations, Doug and his colleagues have not found any nests other than those built on glacial ice, suggesting to them that the species is a glacier obligate. This dependence on glaciers makes them highly sensitive to climate change.

Hardy says that the rate of glacial melting is apparently increasing due to global warming, and that the ice margin is retreating by as much as a meter a year. Additional indications are that the faster melt is having an impact on wetlands downstream where the Diuca-Finches and other birds gather nesting material. Despite significant melting and ice reduction, the birds appear to be holding on, so far, and are currently listed as an IUCN species of Least Concern.

Ongoing loss of high-altitude tropical glaciers will likely have a direct, negative impact on these “glacier birds,” as well as on other High Andean biodiversity. Hardy adds that these kinds of climate changes are likely to affect not only wildlife living high in the mountains, but also lower-elevation communities where the glacier serves as an important resource for human drinking water.

To see video clips of Diuca-Finch breeding activity follow the links below:

<http://www.pbs.org/kingdoms-sky/blogs/mountain-diaries/video-diary-how-we-were-the-first-to-film-glacier-birds>

<http://www.pbs.org/kingdoms-sky/episodes/andes/>



Diuca-Finch nest on ice. Photo
courtesy of Douglas Hardy (used
by permission)

Meet the Board Continued...



D. Craig Rudolph Dr. D. Craig Rudolph was born in Ventura County, and he has recently returned following retirement from the US Forest Service. He received a BS and MS in zoology from UCSB and a PhD from Texas Tech University in 1975. He was employed by the Southern Research Station in Nacogdoches from 1986 until retirement in 2016. He conducted extensive research on the federally endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker and coauthored a book (*The Red-cockaded Woodpecker: Surviving in a Fire-maintained Ecosystem*), authored or coauthored numerous articles, and was heavily involved in this species' conservation. Since 1992, Craig has also been involved in research on the federally threatened Louisiana Pinesnake, including an ongoing reintroduction effort in which he plays a continuing role. Other research interests include restoration and management of prairie communities and pitcher plant bogs, lepidopteran community structure, biology of the Diana Fritillary, and snake community ecology. He recently coauthored a book entitled *The Cave Fauna of California*, an annotated checklist of the subterranean fauna of the state with sections on the geology, biodiversity, biogeography, ecology, and conservation of the remarkably extensive and diverse cave fauna of California. Craig joined the WFVZ Board in early 2019.

2019–2020 Calendar

WFVZ Annual Fall and Spring Open Houses

October 12th, 2019, and spring of 2020. Check the website for spring date. October 12: Doors to the museum will be open for visitors to explore the collections of the WFVZ from 10am to 4pm. Many educational events for children and families. No reservations needed. \$5 per person; Free for WFVZ Members!

WFVZ Classes & Workshops

Southern California Spring Bird Identification

Class: Taught every spring (April or May). 4 evening lectures and 3 Saturday morning field sessions. Individual sessions can be taken. Call or check website starting 1 January 2020 for exact dates.

Winter Bird ID Class: For students who have taken the Southern California Bird ID Course: 3 hour labs on 8 and 15 Jan from 6 to 9pm; fieldtrip on 11 Jan from 8 to 11am, weather permitting; additional optional fieldtrip 18–19 Jan to Carrizón Plains and Pixley National Wildlife Refuge. Raptors, gulls, shorebirds, and other species covered. 20 students max; call to make reservation 805-388-9944.

WFVZ Research Seminar Series

Talks covering bird research and conservation in southern California and the western US. Second Friday evening (except in Nov--third Friday, 11/15), Jan, Mar, May, and Jul. 7:30–9 pm; museum doors open at 6:30 pm. Advance registration required.

Public Tours: All tours require prior reservation. The 2nd Wednesday from 3:30 to 4:30pm and last Friday of each month from 3:00 to 4:00pm, except for November and December - See website for Holiday hours. Public Tours are limited to 20 people. Please call us (805-388-9944) at least one day in advance to get on the waiting list. Our fee for public tours is \$7 per person; kids age 5 and under are free. Also free for Members!

Self-Guided Visits: Call us (805-388-9944) to schedule a visit. Fee for self-guided tours is \$5 per person; WFVZ Members and kids age 5 and under are free!

Group Tours by Appointment:

Special group tours can be arranged for 10 to 40 people for school classes, community groups, and other organizations. Please call us (805-388-9944) at least 2 months in advance to arrange your group's tour. Our fee for group tours is \$7–\$20 per person depending on labs and materials covered.

Conejo Valley Audubon Society Meetings:

September-May, 7:30 to 9:00pm, doors open at 7pm, on the first Monday of every month except holidays; free to the public.

Education Program Note

In recognition of artist Mamoru Suzuki, a dear friend, collaborator, and Honorary Board Member, the classroom space at the WFVZ is now the “Mamoru Suzuki Classroom of Nature Exploration.”

Mamoru has written and illustrated many books in Japan that educate and entertain children and families with beautiful artwork about the diversity of nests and nesting strategies of birds of the world. The WFVZ has published two of Mamoru's books in English—“Birds' Nests of the World” and “Secrets of Birds' Nests”—and offers them for sale through our website Gift Store:

(<https://www.wfvz.org/giftstore/publications>).



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WFVZ News is published by the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology to keep our Members, Board of Directors, Volunteers, Associates, and the community informed of our activities, resources, and events.

We welcome comments, contributions, and advertising support of our newsletter, and will gladly acknowledge individual or corporate sponsorship in upcoming issues. Please direct correspondence and inquiries to the above address or contact us at:

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Printed on recyclable paper.



National Science Foundation Grant Recipient!

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