

The Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology is a 501(c)(3), tax-exempt, non-profit research institution whose mission is to obtain, protect, and manage ornithological collections in a manner that ensures their continued survival and accessibility to the international research community, educators, and students.



WESTERN FOUNDATION OF VERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY

Update from the Executive Director



Linnea S. Hall, Ph.D.

2007 was a great year for us! Important highlights include:

- We finished reorganizing the serials in our library, and received a grant through our local university (California State University Channel Islands) to begin computerizing our books in 2008.
- We edited a monograph by Noel Snyder on "An Alternative Hypothesis for the Cause of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker's Decline," which was released in October.
- We finished the construction of our multi-purpose room, and taught our first formal Ornithology course during the fall 2007 semester for California State University Channel Islands students and other interested people in our community.
- We conducted a field project with community volunteers on the distribution of breeding Grasshopper Sparrows (*Ammodramus savannarum*) in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area for the National Park Service.
- We continued our bird population monitoring project in central Guatemala, where red-listed species such as Golden-cheeked Warbler (*Dendroica chrysoparia*) and Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*) exist.
- And, we continued our fundamental mission of providing access to our materials for researchers, educators, and students — more and more of them all the time!

As you will see in this newsletter, more recently we initiated our Seminar Series, with a great presentation by

researcher Noel Snyder on February 15th. In addition, we will be holding our first-ever Fundraising Dinner on April 26th, during which we will present an "Ed N. Harrison Conservation Award" to California State Assembly Member Pedro Nava in recognition of his work on behalf of California Condors (*Gymnogyps californianus*) in the state.

Many other projects are forthcoming, so keep in touch! You can always e-mail (wfvz@wfvz.org), call (805/388-9944), or write us (439 Calle San Pablo, Camarillo, CA 93012). We're happy to answer your questions.

Best wishes, Linnea



Meet the Board

The Western Foundation has a Board of Directors, which meets bimonthly.

- President:** Kathleen Harrison Killelea
Treasurer: William G. Langford
Secretary: Chrystal S. Klabunde
Kimball L. Garrett
Michael Kelly
Ed Tarvyd

Welcome New Members

Thank you for your support and welcome to our flock!

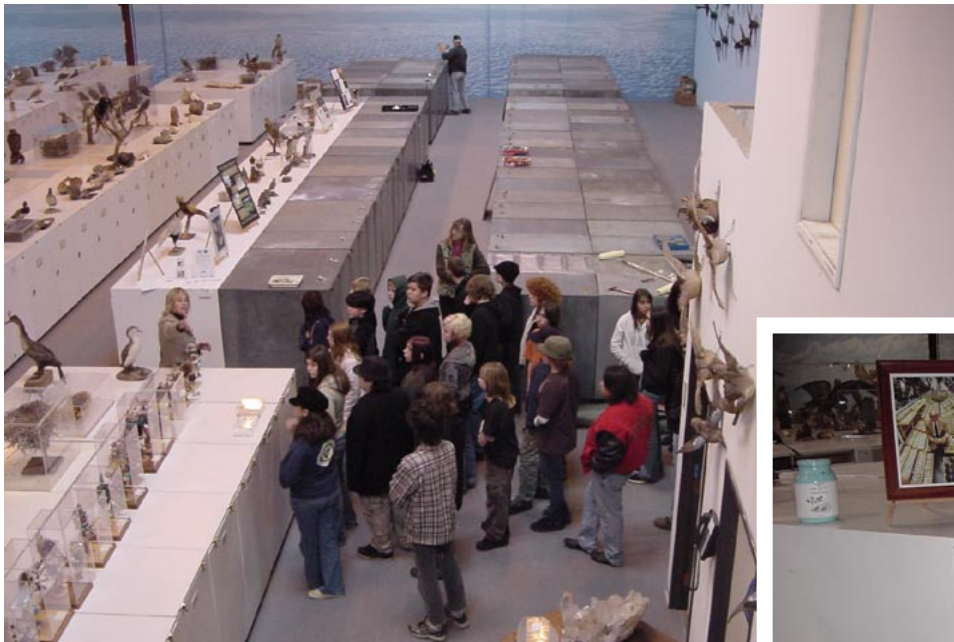
- Peregrine Falcons** (\$250+): Ron Barnes
Brown Pelicans (\$100+): Marcia Edwards, David Weeshoff
American Kestrels (\$50+): Brenda Kanno, Katherine Owens, Judith Rothman
Loggerhead Shrikes (\$25+): Jennifer Counter Friedrichsen, Warren Pulich

News from the Collections

Feliz Año 2008! As always, it has been busy here at the Foundation since the last newsletter came out. For starters, in January we received 180 specimen cabinets from the California Academy of Sciences, through the help of **Maureen Flannery**, Collections Manager in the Department of Ornithology and Mammalogy. These cabinets represent a lifetime supply for us, and so this donation (a more than \$250,000 value) is one of the most wonderful the Museum has ever received. In addition, **Dr. Bertin Anderson**, who has donated his large collection of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*), will be assisting us with the transportation costs of the cabinets. So overall, this has been a real help to the Foundation. The initial moving of the cabinets off the two semi trailers was done by volunteers **Bill Anderson, Bill Langford, Jim Gross, Jim Michels, Garrick Thompson, and Linnea** and **René**. Cleaning, removing hardware, and painting of the first 75 cabinets was accomplished in early February by **Bill Anderson, Chrystal Klabunde, Bill Langford, and Eddie Corado**.



René Corado
Collections Manager



< Late January 2008:
Our new cabinets before being
painted, with students from Ventura
touring the collections.

Besides cabinets, many birds and eggs were donated over the last two months. For example, **Pete Bloom** donated an immature Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), which is being screened for West Nile Virus and lead poisoning. **Cynthia Hartley**, of the Surfrider Foundation, donated 9 birds that needed to be checked for cause of death. **Martin Ruane** from Point Mugu Naval Base donated about 100 birds and another 50 sets of abandoned eggs of endangered Snowy Plovers (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) and Least Terns (*Sterna antillarum*); and **Lynn Hall**, an aviculturist working in Camarillo, donated 15 rare fruit doves. In addition, **Dr. Joel "Jeep" Pagel** brought us 8 Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*) and 8 Pueos (Hawaiian Short-eared Owls, *Asio flammeus*) from Hawaii, and another batch of California birds that had been killed due to impacts with cars, windows, and cats. We also received eggs from captive-bred Alala (Hawaiian Crow, *Corvus tropicus*), Akepa (*Loxops coccinea*), Puaiohi (Small Kauai Thrush, *Phaeornis palmeri*), and Hawaiian Creeper (*Loxops maculate*) from the Hawaii Endangered Bird Conservation program.

✓ Two weeks later:
Freshly painted cabinets!



We continued to answer requests for data on our egg, nest, and study skin collections from different U.S. researchers and from around the globe. To mention just a notable few, **Utako Yoshimoto** from Los Angeles asked for information on Emperor Penguins (*Aptenodytes forsteri*); **Katie Langin** of Colorado requested information on Orange-crowned Warblers (*Vermivora celata*); **David W. Johnston** from Florida asked for information on Charles Doe specimens; **Oscar Ballesteros** from Mexico requested information on Common Yellowthroats (*Geothlypis trichas*); **Amy McAndrews** from Mexico needed data on Short-eared Owls; **Rosa Agudo** from Spain requested data on Egyptian Vultures (*Neophron percnopterus*); and **Ingrid Hutzler** from New Zealand asked about New Zealand materials deposited at the WFVZ.

Continued . . .

... News from the Collections Continued

Of course, something has to be done with all of these incoming materials, and that's what my main job is: to remove the contents from incoming eggs, prepare study skins, "catalog" these materials, and integrate them into the collections. Cataloging includes verifying the identity of the materials (what species they belong to), writing the labels and cards that either go with the materials into the collections or go into our card catalog, and entering all of the information into our computer databases. One of the main projects I am working on is the continued cataloging and integrating of the egg sets and nests collected in the early 1900s by **H. Arden Edwards**, which were donated to the WFVZ by the Irvine Ranch Conservancy in late 2007. To date I have cataloged more than 100 nests and eggs from this collection, which is a very time-consuming process, since the data have been separated from the materials, and have to be re-matched with each set of eggs and nest.

Volunteers continue to help us computerize our specimens. Volunteers **Bill and Dixie Anderson**, and **Linda Reynolds**, continue to enter study skin data into our database. Linda also enters all of the incoming



scientific journals into a database, and **Peggy Ellis** has started the reorganization of the book section of our library. **Peg Stevens** helps us enter reprints and technical reports among other tasks, and **Jean Hulberg** is sorting our newsletters in the library. **Chris Bumber** continues to be a big help preparing birds as study skins, checking for bugs, and more recently, moving the Canada Geese into their new cabinets!

We have had many recent visitors, as you'll see from the other articles in this newsletter. Notable research visitors since the last newsletter have included **Kristof Zyskowski**, Collections Manager of the Vertebrate Zoology collections at the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University; **Douglas H. Erwing**, Senior Scientist and Curator in the Department of Paleobiology at the Smithsonian Institution (the National Museum of Natural History); and **Gary Michael**, the Curator of Birds at the Louisville Zoo in Kentucky.

As I said, it's always busy here at the Foundation, and this report is only a brief summary of what we've been up to recently. If you want to learn more about what we do at the WFVZ, feel free to contact us!

René Corado

Research & Collaborations

Guatemala Project

The Guatemala Project continued this winter, in December and January (actually, the "dry season" for Guatemala). For this trip the purpose was three-fold:

1. To confirm the identity of an unusual bird found by a Guatemalan University student in a shade-coffee plantation in the Department (State) of Suchitepequez;
2. To teach mist-netting and banding techniques to resource managers working with our partner organization in Guatemala, "Defenders of Natural Areas" (Defensores de la Naturaleza); and
3. To continue our own long-term bird monitoring work in thorn scrub and pine-oak vegetation in central Guatemala.

We were able to successfully carry out all three goals, although time was short (as always).



Sergio Salguero (left) and Rudy del Cid
Perez of Defenders of Natural Areas.

René Corado visited the shade-coffee plantation and was able to determine that the unusual bird observed by the student was an aberrant male White-winged Tanager (*Piranga leucoptera*). Instead of being fully red, as the adults are, or mottled red and yellow, as the juvenile males can be, this bird was similar in all ways to the adult male except that it was bright yellow.

René also trained two managers of the non-profit "Defenders of Natural Areas" (Defensores de la Naturaleza) in banding techniques, working with them for two days along the Motagua River in the little town of Palo Ammontonado. These men are



Aberrant male
White-winged Tanager.



Continued . . .

... Guatemala Project Continued

charged with monitoring birds in areas throughout the region, but have not been able to receive any formal training on how to do so. Thus, the WFVZ conducted this training session with them in the dry season, and will also conduct point-count training with them and other staff of Defensores in the upcoming wet season (May/June 2008).

Finally, Linnea and René spent one week at the WFVZ's main monitoring site, El Chical, along the Motagua River. This time, the bird fauna was dramatically different from the previous January: thorn scrub forest that was just cut and burned in June 2007 was now covered with exotic grass that stood about 8 feet tall. The grass was planted to provide forage during the dry season to the village's cattle; in addition to feeding the cows, it also had already attracted more seed-eating birds than we have ever recorded in this area. For example, there were far more Varied Buntings (*Passerina versicolor*) than usual, as well as Stripe-headed Sparrows (*Aimophila ruficauda*). The villagers have also observed hundreds more doves, of several species, than usual. In addition, we recorded Dicksissels (*Spiza americana*) using the grass fields, which have not been recorded recently in this particular area of Guatemala. Surprisingly, a number of Yellow Grosbeaks (*Pheucticus chrysopheplus*) were also observed, which had also never been recorded at this site.

Other than the grass fields, the remainder of the birds were similar to those seen on other visits at this time of year, although more Elegant Trogons (*Trogon elegans*), including a fledgling male still in female-like immature plumage, were observed.



Another recent catch ...
a Blue-gray Tanager (*Thraupis episcopus*).

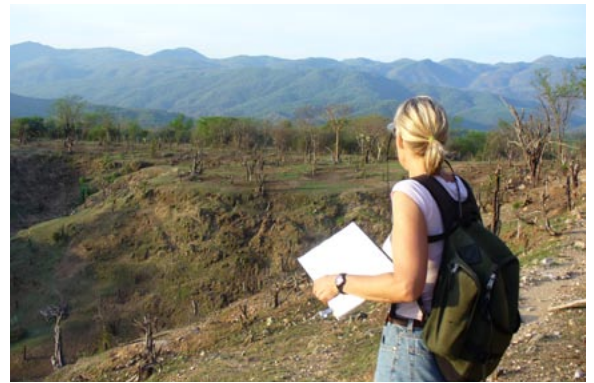


Eggs of a Groove-billed Ani
(*Crotophaga sulcirostris*).

Students in René's and Linnea's study skin preparation and bird ecology class at the Universidad del Valle in Guatemala City.



✓ January 2007: Thorn scrub forest in its native state, before it was cut and burned.



▲ June 2007: Immediately after it was cut and burned.
✓ January 2008: Only six months later, the cultivated grass fields attract seed-eating and other birds.



Greyish Saltator
(*Saltator coerulescens*).

CSU – Channel Islands

The WFVZ has been collaborating on several projects with local California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI), over the past year. As mentioned in our previous newsletter, the WFVZ taught an upper-division formal Ornithology course for CSUCI during fall 2007 semester. In addition, during this current spring 2008 semester, the WFVZ is assisting CSUCI Senior **Steven Zoelle** with his final “capstone” project at the University. The project entails georeferencing the locality information for all of the Foundation’s specimens collected in Guatemala. This information will be used to generate maps of the collecting localities in the country, which will be incorporated into upcoming publications on the birds of the country by the WFVZ. In addition, Steven will be learning how to mist-net and band birds this semester, so that he gets experience with some of the



In December 2007 CSUCI students and members of the public completed their Ornithology course, which was taught by Linnea and René. The final exam included identifying a collection of study skins.

field techniques that are used by avian researchers.

The last project we are conducting with CSUCI at this time is with CSUCI Digital Resources and GIS Librarian, **Kristen LaBonte**, who received a grant to have two interns computerize WFVZ egg and nest data for birds in Family Strigidae (owls), and enter the

Foundation’s journal serials into the CSU system’s computerized library catalog. Both interns, **Jenny Kobernick** and **Kimi Elitzer**, have already started the project, and will be finishing in May 2008.

We’re excited to have these opportunities to work with students and faculty at the local University, and hope to increase our collaborations in the future!

Seminar Series



Following his presentation, **Noel Snyder** graciously signed copies of his 2007 book **“An Alternative Hypothesis for the Cause of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker’s Decline”** (cover image shown at right). Published by the Western Foundation, it can be purchased by phone at 805/388-9944 or online at www.wfvz.org/html/pub_prog.html.



At the Western Foundation’s February 15th, 2008, seminar, **Dr. Noel Snyder** presented an engaging talk about the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, widely believed to be extinct due to the loss of habitat. Addressing a standing-room-only audience, Dr. Snyder discussed his research about purported sightings of the Ivory-billed, and the potential misidentification of the species (including his personal experience of misidentifying an aberrantly plumaged Pileated Woodpecker as an Ivory-billed).



Dr. Snyder’s research findings do not support the traditional belief that there was extensive loss of hardwood-forest habitat. Instead, he has hypothesized that predation by humans (i.e., hunting and collecting) is a more likely cause for the species’ decline.

Citing examples of other endangered (California Condor) and extinct (Carolina Parakeet, *Conuropsis carolinensis*) bird species, he stressed the importance of investigating and understanding the cause of decline prior to planning recovery efforts.



Gift Shop

The Western Foundation is selling a variety of items to raise money for our Guatemala Project. We hope you'll shop with us!

Guatemalan Jewelry

The jewelry pieces are sterling silver and/or gold, and the keychains and pins are laminated metal. All of the items are hand-made in Guatemala. We buy them directly from the individuals who make them; so in addition to helping the Foundation, your purchase helps impoverished Guatemalan families, too.

Books

We have a large collection of used bird and general natural history books that are available for purchase. Please contact us, or check our website (www.wfvz.org/comps/dup_bird.pdf) for the titles currently in our inventory.



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Orders can be placed by **mail** (paid by check) or **online** through PayPal (paid by credit card). Please note that credit card orders can only be accepted through PayPal.

Checks and money orders should be made out to "Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology." All California orders must add 7.25% sales tax.

Shipping is included for all orders within the USA.

For orders outside the USA, please call (805/388-9944) or e-mail us (wfvz@wfvz.org) for a shipping quote.

Send orders by mail to: Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology
439 Calle San Pablo
Camarillo, CA 93012-8506



Calendar

WFVZ Public Tours

March 28, Friday, 3 PM

May 30, Friday, 3 PM

April 25, Friday, 3 PM

June 27, Friday, 3 PM

The general public is invited to tour the Foundation's large collection of bird eggs, nests, and mounted specimens.

Tours are generally held on the last Friday of the month at 3 PM. Tours require a reservation; please call (805/388-9944) at least one day in advance to get on the waiting list. Our suggested donation for public tours is \$3 per person.

WFVZ Fundraising Dinner

April 26, Saturday


The WFVZ will hold its first annual fundraising dinner on Saturday evening, April 26th, at the Foundation, where we will be honoring Assemblyman Pedro Nava for his work on legislation to protect California Condors. For details and to RSVP, please contact the Foundation at 805/388-9944.

Conejo Valley Audubon Society Meetings

April 7, Monday, 7:30 PM

May 5, Monday, 7:30 PM

The Conejo Valley Audubon Society holds its meetings regularly on the first Monday of the month, September through May, from 7:30 to 9 PM. Meetings are held at the Foundation.



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Michael has been a supporter, and is now a Board Member, of the WFVZ. We hope you'll patronize his business!

Thanks to FedEx Kinkos for printing this newsletter!



393 Arneill Rd
Camarillo, CA 93010
805-482-3364

Friends, Fly-bys & Flock


Volunteer Party: On December 15th, 2007, the WFVZ held a Holiday Party for its volunteers. Nearly all the volunteers were able to attend; and after the food was eaten, Linnea Hall gave a presentation about her research on Elegant Trogons (*Trogon elegans*) in southeastern Arizona.



Red-crested Visitors: Eight members of the Thousand Oaks chapter of the Red Hat Society toured the Foundation's collections on October 11th, 2007. Adorned in their bright red hats and purple outfits, these ladies were delightful visitors; and René had a good time with them!

Continued . . .



Home Team: Linnea with the local youth-soccer team she is personally sponsoring. Note the WFVZ quail on their shirts (right)! 



New Volunteers: Jennifer Carlson (left) is a National Park Service employee who took our Ornithology class last semester. Mary Holmes is a CSUCI student. Welcome!

WESTERN FOUNDATION OF VERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Categories:

- \$ 25: Loggerhead Shrike
- \$ 50: American Kestrel
- \$ 100: Brown Pelican
- \$ 250: Peregrine Falcon
- \$ 500: California Condor
- \$1000: Bald Eagle
- \$ _____ Other

Please mark membership type: NEW___ RENEWAL___

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Please make your check payable to: "Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology." We appreciate your thoughtfulness and support. Please note that your membership contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowable by law.

Return to: WESTERN FOUNDATION OF VERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY, 439 CALLE SAN PABLO, CAMARILLO, CA 93012

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WFVZ News is published quarterly 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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