

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

## *A Bird's Eye View* FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Linnea S. Hall, Ph.D.**

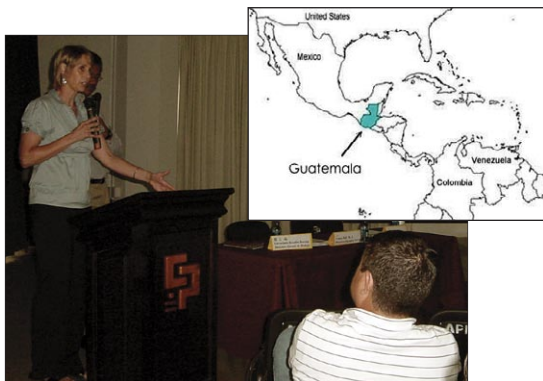
In June 2009 the WFVZ presented a summary of 8 years of data collected for our bird breeding project in the country of Guatemala. For an audience of government, museum, university, and non-profit biologists, René Corado and I presented breeding information on more than 210 species of birds in 15 departments (states) across Guatemala. We summarized that between 2001 and 2009 we found new distributional records for at least 35 different bird species: 18 that were documented as occurring in the dry, central, Motagua River valley for the first time; two that were documented in the Pacific region for the first time; and 21 that were found in the mountains of Guatemala for the first time. New reproductive records were found for a total of 46 different species, 9 of which were documented as breeding in Guatemala for the first time. In addition, 14 species were documented coming into breeding condition, or breeding, as juveniles, and 22 species were documented coming into breeding condition, or actually breeding, during the dry season (Guatemala's "winter"). In addition, based on our analyses of birds' eggs from the Motagua River valley we suggested that further investigation into the amounts of heavy metals in aquatic birds and birds of prey is warranted, and we suggested several strategies for Guatemala to employ

to help conserve its avifauna. These included the creation of parks and reserves near Guatemala City for migrant and resident birds and ecotourists; the building of a system of waste-water treatment plants throughout the country to capture effluent and trash before they are discharged into free-flowing rivers and streams; and the establishment of a country-wide monitoring program for birds of prey to determine current population numbers and quantify impacts, as well as ban impacts such as outright shooting.

As a result of the presentation we met government and university biologists who are already working on the contamination issue in the country, including an effort to draft a congressional measure to mandate the clean-up of the highly polluted Motagua River, the largest river in the country. We were also invited to participate in alliances of organizations working on pine- and dry-forest conservation in Central America, both of which directly relate to the WFVZ's long-term monitoring goals in Guatemala.

Thus, although the WFVZ has wrapped-up the majority of its project to assess the breeding ecology of birds throughout the country, we plan to continue our population and contaminants monitoring so that we can provide the government of Guatemala with current data on the status of birds in the Motagua River valley. If you are interested in contributing to the WFVZ's Guatemala project, or in learning more about it, feel free to contact me.

*Sincerely, Linnea*  
[linnea@wfvz.org](mailto:linnea@wfvz.org)



*Linnea Hall and René Corado giving project presentation in Guatemala, June 2009.*

## News from the Collections

These past few months have seen varied and interesting use of the collections of the WFVZ. More than 50 requests have been received for the use of egg, nest, or study skin data, copies of literature in the library, information from the California Birds Records files, archival photos, and answers to general bird questions. In addition, we have continued digitizing our egg, nest, and study skin records, and Volunteers **Dixie and Bill Anderson**, **Linda Reynolds**, and Curatorial Assistant **Lisa Winfrey** have ably assisted with this. **Eddie Corado**, Preparation Assistant, has assisted with turning incoming bird specimens into study skins; Volunteers **Peggy Ellis**, **Linda Reynolds**, and **Peg Stevens** have cataloged and archived incoming bird journals, research articles, and donated books; **Peggy Ellis** and **Peg Stevens** are working on completing the shelf list for the library; **Danielle Glenn**, **Tara Pennington**, and **Isabel Rice** have been conducting “bug checks” and tallying the numbers of bird specimens in the drawers; **Peg Stevens** has been computerizing egg measurements taken over the years; and **Dixie Anderson** is computerizing the total numbers of egg and nest specimens, by species, in our holdings.

In addition to this ongoing, “basic” archival work — the day-to-day work of museum personnel — we have also been doing some “fun” work in the collections. For example, I finished working with the H. Arden Edwards collection in May, and since June have shifted my attention to a collection of Australian-region eggs previously belonging to famous English ornithologist **John Gould**. This collection is composed of eggs that Gould himself collected, but also contains many eggs collected by **John Gilbert**. All eggs date from ca. 1830s, and in some cases represent the first eggs ever found for some Australian bird species. This collection was received in the early 1980s from the Philadelphia Academy of Sciences together with another 8,000 egg sets and 1,000 nests. I have also been able to locate information from Gilbert’s original expedition diaries to determine the localities and dates for the Gould/Gilbert eggs, making them useful for science. It is wonderful to see these eggs reunited with their data.

Another fun project has been the cataloging of nests received from **Dr. Charles Collins**, Emeritus Professor at California State University Long Beach, and a member of the WFVZ. Dr. Collins, who studies tropical swifts (among many other bird species), collected some beautiful nest specimens during his travels over the years, and recently donated some of these nests to the WFVZ. For example, his donated materials



**René Corado**  
Collections Manager



include a first nest record for the Pygmy Swift (*Tachornis furcata*) from Venezuela.

We’ve also had some international visitors to the collections over the past few months, including Jordanian biologist **Mahmoud Bdour**, who visited in July with a group of biologists from the California Condor Recovery Program in Ventura. We also had the pleasure of meeting a group of Condor biologists from Mexico (Baja Condor Program and the Universidad Autonoma of Mexico City) in September: **Maria Catalina Porras Pena**, **Juan Vargas**, **Elvira de la Cruz**, and **Fernando Gual**. And finally, we met **Dr. Matthew Johnson**, the new Research Coordinator for the Condor Recovery Program, who visited with **Jesse Grantham**, Program Coordinator, in June. Researchers **Bill Clarke**, **Richard Erickson**, and **Bill Strausberger** also used the collections over the past few months, and WFVZ Scientific Panel members **Harry Carter**, **Walter Sakai** (of Santa Monica College), and **Dr. Steve Rothstein** (of UC Santa Barbara) also visited over the summer.

As always, there are more projects to do than we have time and hands for, so please let us know if you are interested in joining the WFVZ as a Volunteer!

**Saludos, René Corado**  
[rene@wfvz.org](mailto:rene@wfvz.org)



**One of our flock:**  
**Carol Camerano**,  
WFVZ Bookkeeper and  
Linnea’s helpful assistant!

### WESTERN FOUNDATION OF VERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY

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### Island Loggerhead Shrike Project

This past April and May the WFVZ started its 2-year project assessing the population size of Island Loggerhead Shrikes (*Lanius ludovicianus anthonyi*) on Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz islands in the Santa Barbara Channel. As we mentioned in our Fall 2008 newsletter, this project is a collaboration between the National Park Service California Mediterranean Research Learning Center, Channel Islands National Park, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the WFVZ. In April, staff of the partner organizations (including **Linnea Hall** and **René Corado**) and about 20 experienced volunteers conducted foot surveys for shrikes on Santa Rosa Island in cold, windy conditions, and observed about 30 birds in nearly 5,000 acres of searched area. On Santa Cruz Island — which we sampled twice in May with two different groups of about 20 volunteers each — we noted about 20 birds in approximately 9,700 acres of searched area. Thus, population sizes are low, as we suspected, although they are apparently higher on Santa Rosa than Santa Cruz. Surveys in 2010 may find different results, however, since different localities on the islands will be surveyed.

If you are interested in volunteering for the 2010 shrike surveys you can contact **Dr. Linnea Hall** ([linnea@wfvz.org](mailto:linnea@wfvz.org)). All volunteers **must** have extensive birding experience, **must** have prior experience with shrike identification, **must** be in excellent physical shape since the hiking is off-trail and extremely rugged, and **must** be able to use topographic maps for navigation and orientation.



**Right and below:** A view of one of the Loggerhead Shrike survey units on **Santa Rosa Island**, and part of the survey team for Santa Rosa in April.



**Below:** A view of one of the Loggerhead Shrike survey units on **Santa Cruz Island**, and part of the survey team for Santa Cruz in May.



## Calendar

### WFVZ Seminar

Friday, **November 20**, 2009, 6:30 – 8:00 PM

Vertebrate Zoology Collections Curator **Paul Collins**, of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, will discuss his research on the historic nesting of Bald Eagles on the Channel Islands. The Foundation will open at 5:30 PM for viewing of the collections..

Free to WFVZ Members, Volunteers, and Interns; \$5 for all others, payable at the door.

Limited to 50 people; please RSVP by **November 16** if you want a space held for you.

### Costa Rica Birding Expedition!

Join **Linnea Hall**, **René Corado**, and **Dave Pereksta** for a birdwatching adventure in Costa Rica in February/March 2010. Reservations are being taken now; group size is limited to 20 people. Details will be available in October. Contact the WFVZ at 805/388-9944, or [wfvz@wfvz.org](mailto:wfvz@wfvz.org) for more information.

### WFVZ Classes & Workshops

#### Introduction to Ornithology

Taught by **Linnea Hall** and **René Corado**.

An 8-week course on the diversity, ecology, evolution, and taxonomy of the birds of North America, with an emphasis on identifying the birds of southern California. One 3-hour lecture and one 3-hour museum or field lab weekly, starting first week of October. Course limited to 20 students. Individual classes may be taken; contact the WFVZ (805/388-9944) for more information.

\$200 for currently enrolled college students and Volunteers; \$300 for WFVZ Members; \$400 for non-members.

#### Private & Semi-private Study Skin Preparation Lessons

Each lesson is 4 hours.

\$50 for WFVZ Members and current college students; free to Volunteers; \$65 for all others.

Please call the Foundation (805/388-9944) for details.

#### Feather Development and Identification Workshop

Saturday, November 14, 2009, 9 AM – 3:30 PM (lunch from 12 – 1:30 PM on your own).

Taught by **N. John Schmitt**, Ornithological Artist & Taxidermist.

A great overview of feather growth, plumages, feather wear, and feather identification, with exercises using feathers and wings from the WFVZ collections. John has illustrated the bird plates for multiple field guides and natural history books, including National Geographic's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*.

**Make reservations by November 2nd.**

\$100 for WFVZ Members, \$125 for non-members, \$80 for WFVZ Volunteers and current college students..

### WFVZ Tours

**Public Tours:** Fridays, 3 – 4 PM

**October 30, November 20, December 18**

The general public is invited to tour the Foundation's large collection of bird eggs, nests, and mounted specimens. All tours require a reservation. Please call us (805/388-9944) at least one day in advance to get on the waiting list. Tours are free to Members and Volunteers; \$3 per person for all others.

#### Group Tours by Appointment

Special group tours can be arranged for groups of 10+ 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. Fee is \$3 per person (\$5 per person as of January 2010).

### WFVZ Annual Open House

Saturday, **October 24**, 10 AM – 4:00 PM. Free.

Check our website ([www.wfvz.org](http://www.wfvz.org)) for details!

### Conejo Valley Audubon Society Meetings

Mondays, 7:30 – 9 PM

**October 5, November 2, December 7**

The Conejo Valley Audubon Society holds its meetings regularly on the first Monday of the month (unless noted otherwise), September through May, from 7:30 to 9 PM. Meetings are held at the Foundation, which opens at 7 PM for viewing of the collections.

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Thank you for your support  
and welcome to our flock!

Julien J. Caestecker, Jr.

Nicholas E. Collias

Hilary & Stephen De Cesari

Piera & Barbara Fumagalli

Jack Gillooly

Lori Griffin

Howard Higley

Mary Lynn Josephson

Patricia Jump

Connie K. Lowry

Thomas Malley

Ronaele & Gary Martin

Nancy Mecozzi

Gerry & Joan Olsen

Helen Osenga

Alan & Jean Scott

Elaine Sichel

Joseph P. Skorupa



## Education

So far in 2009 the WFVZ has given at least 25 tours of the collections for members of the public, students in grades K-12, students in college and university biology courses, docents at other museums and nature centers, congregations of churches, government biologists, and biologists working for other non-profit conservation organizations. All of these tours for groups of 10-40 people were arranged at least 3 months in advance, and cost only \$3 per person. Tour costs will rise to \$5 per person in 2010. The Foundation's standard tour is one hour long, and covers the history of the Foundation and the biology, conservation, and ecology of birds of the world. The tour also showcases some of the amazing egg, nest, and bird materials in the collections. Tours can be tailored to fit the particular educational needs of your group. All available tour dates in 2009 are currently booked, but if you want to get on the list for 2010 please call 805/388-9944 to get on the schedule.

Presentations on the collections of the WFVZ were also given recently by **Linnea Hall** and **René Corado** to members of the Oxnard Sunrise Rotary and the Camarillo Noontime Rotary, as well as to middle-school students at Las Colinas School in Camarillo on their "Careers in Science" night. Volunteer help with this type of outreach, outside the WFVZ, is especially helpful, so if you are interested in staffing a booth at a local fair or event (e.g., career days, Earth Day, environmental awareness events), please let us know!



*René and Linnea's presentation to the Camarillo Noontime Rotary group, on September 2nd.*



## Eggciting News (worth squawking about!)

— from the American Bird Conservancy's e-newsletter *BirdWire*, May 2009

### **Obama Administration Moves to Protect Spotted Owl**

On March 31st, in response to a court case brought by American Bird Conservancy and other conservation organizations, the Obama Administration told Federal Judge Emmet Sullivan that it would not defend the Bush Administration's Northern Spotted Owl Recovery Plan or its decision to reduce Critical Habitat for the owl, and would instead pursue a settlement with the plaintiffs to have the plan revoked. Settlement negotiations continue, but the Administration has asked for a 60-day delay to permit it more time to consider the issues until more Interior Department staff are confirmed by the Senate.

### **EPA Bans Deadly Pesticide Responsible for Millions of Bird Deaths**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced its final decision to ban all residues of the highly toxic pesticide carbofuran (sold under the name Furadan), on food sold in the U.S. Carbofuran is responsible for the deaths of thousands of birds, and has been the target of an American Bird Conservancy campaign to prevent all uses. The agency's announcement confirms a proposed action dating back to July 2008. The manufacturer, FMC Corporation, now has 90 days to challenge the decision. EPA is also proceeding with the cancellation of all registered uses of the pesticide.



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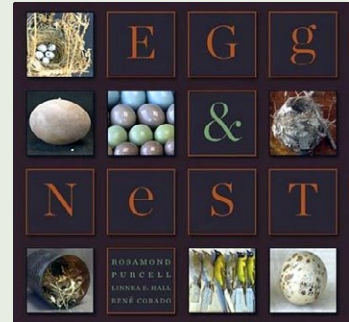
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Michael R. Kelly, D.V.M.  
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### **EGG and NEST** by Rosamond Purcell, Linnea S. Hall, and René Corado

Available through WFVZ.  
\$32 for Members and  
Volunteers; \$39.95 for  
others (plus tax).

Order through our Gift  
Store ([www.wfvz.org](http://www.wfvz.org))  
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### Categories:

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

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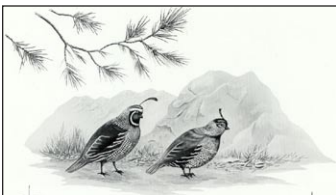
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## WESTERN FOUNDATION OF VERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY



439 CALLE SAN PABLO  
CAMARILLO, CA  
93012-8506

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:

Phone: 805/388-9944

Fax: 805/388-8663

E-mail: [wfvz@wfvz.org](mailto:wfvz@wfvz.org)

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