

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



Linnea S. Hall, Ph.D.

A Bird's Eye View FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's almost Spring again — my favorite time of the year because the birds are singing and breeding!

In this issue of our newsletter you'll read about some of the current projects of the WFVZ, the upcoming events, and the people who help us, including our Volunteers. WFVZ Volunteers help us accomplish a multitude of tasks, including preparing this beautiful newsletter; processing, shelving, and reorganizing materials in the library; helping us complete the computerization of our study skin, egg, and nest records; and assisting with our continuous "bug check" program. Recently they've also assisted with the reorganization of our bird materials into the 180 specimen cabinets we received in 2008. The Volunteers thus really make a difference to us at the Western Foundation — **THANK YOU SO MUCH TO ALL THE WFVZ VOLUNTEERS FOR THEIR CONTINUED HELP!**

One topic that I wanted to mention is that the visibility of the Western Foundation has really improved over the past year. As I mentioned in our last (Fall 2008) newsletter, in September we had a crew from the Discovery Channel visit the WFVZ to film nests in our collection and interview René Corado and me about nest construction and architecture. In December 2008 the *Ventura County Star* wrote

a lovely article about the Western Foundation, and put it on the front two pages! In February the local Acorn Newspaper ran a nice article about the Foundation in one of its weekly editions, and from November 2008 through February 2009 we've had a steady stream of press coverage on the *Egg and Nest* book that we collaborated on with Rosamond Purcell! So, needless to say, this coverage has been wonderful, and has resulted in increased scientific and lay interest in the collections of the Foundation. The number of tours for school and civic groups has increased, as well as the attendance on our monthly Public Tours — all of which is great for the WFVZ!

It's a great privilege for me to work in the collections of the Western Foundation, because of their size and scope, and I'm very proud to share them with researchers, educators, and the public. The materials are precious and enormously useful to the conservation of wild bird species, which is my own personal reason for working here. If you haven't yet visited the collections, or you haven't seen them in awhile, be sure to visit us during one of our Public Tours, our annual Open House event, a research seminar, or an ornithological class (see Calendar section, this issue). I look forward to seeing you soon!

Sincerely, Linnea

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Thank you for
your support and
welcome to our flock!

Peregrine Falcons \$250+

Dennis Cabral

Brown Pelicans \$100+

Mary Lou Brown

American Kestrels \$50+

Urban Kubat
Sharon Pettus

Loggerhead Shrikes \$25+

Steve Bennett and
Family
Carol Camerano
Nicholas Duncan
Linda Dye
Judith Laurentowski

UPCOMING EVENTS

See page 4 for details
about these and
other events!

WFVZ Seminar – Local Raptors: March 14

WFVZ Workshop – Study Skins: April 3–4

WFVZ Class – Ventura County Birds: June 26–27

WFVZ Public Tours: March 27, April 24, June 26, July 31

Conejo Valley Audubon Meetings: April 6, May 4

News from the Collections

Since our last newsletter, **Lisa Winfrey**, an undergraduate student at California State University Channel Islands, has joined us as our new Curatorial Assistant. Welcome Lisa! We also gained the assistance of two new volunteers, **David Vander Pluym** and **Isabel Rice** — thank you for your help! Our current volunteers are listed in this newsletter (page 5) — in 2008 these wonderful people donated more than a thousand hours of their time to helping the WFVZ!

During the last week of November 2008 we had the opportunity to have Japanese bird nest and egg artist **Mamoru Suzuki** visit the Foundation to examine unique materials in the collection. Mamoru has illustrated, and with his wife, written many books in Japanese on the nesting and breeding ecology of the world's bird species. Mamoru visited the Foundation in the late 1990s, but his recent visit was the first time that many of our volunteers and **Linnea Hall** had met him. It was delightful to work with him in the collections and to show him a few local birds!



*René Corado
Collections Manager*



*Japanese artist Mamoru Suzuki and Lisa Winfrey (our new Curatorial Assistant). Nearby mounts are male (left) and female (right, speckled) Snowy Owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*).*

Photographer **Sharon Beals** visited the collections for the first week of December 2008 to photograph particular eggs and nests of birds from outside the United States for her upcoming book on the subject. Her photos are luminous and colorful and capture the beauty of the materials. We were happy to assist her with her project.

The response to the *Egg and Nest* book published by Harvard University Press and based solely on the collections of the Western Foundation has been terrific! Numerous Blogs, newspaper articles, and even a Podcast have reviewed the book (see our website at www.wfvz.org for links), and the reception has been great. We are pleased with this, and hope that the book helps promote the beauty and wonder of bird materials, as well as the ecology and conservation of the birds themselves. A few First Edition autographed copies are still available through the Western Foundation — you can purchase them through PayPal on our website or get them in person at the Foundation. All proceeds from the sale of the book go directly to the WFVZ.



*Mamoru Suzuki with WFVZ friend Nobuko McClure (left) and WFVZ Volunteers Peg Stevens and Linda Reynolds (far right). Nearby mounts are Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) on left (with red head, behind Nobuko), and California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) in center (behind Mamoru).*



*Photographer Sharon Beals (above) working with nest materials from the collections, and her photo (below) of a Highland Guan (*Penelopina nigra*) nest and eggs.*



In early 2009 we received photographs and slides, as well as the accompanying field notes, of **Ray Quigley**, well-known bird photographer and collector. Many of Ray's ("Quig's") materials were already held in the Foundation's collections, donated years ago; however, we did not have Quig's oldest field notes nor the bulk of his photographic collection. These materials represent priceless mementos of the early to mid-1900s in the western U.S. Ray's son, **Ron Quigley**, donated the materials, and we are thankful to him for his gift.

We are also indebted to **Tom Schulenberg** for his assistance with the identification of materials that he collected in Peru in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These beautiful materials — mostly eggs but also some nests — represent some of the only known specimens for several Peruvian bird species. The materials were lacking their original data when they were donated to the Western Foundation, but Tom has recently provided most of the missing information so that the materials can be fully catalogued.

Many other projects are currently "in the works" and on the horizon for the collections of the WFVZ — stay tuned!

*Saludos, René Corado
rene@wfvz.org*

Research & Collaborations

Guatemala Bird Project

The WFVZ returned to Guatemala in January 2009 to continue working on its long-term project on the bird species of Guatemala. *Linnea Hall* and *René Corado* met with the Director of CONAP (Consejo de Areas Protegidas; Department of Protected Areas) to discuss giving a formal presentation about the results of our nine years of data collection on the breeding patterns and distributions of bird species throughout the country, and to share our findings about trash and contamination in the Rio Motagua, including the discovery that DDT and heavy metals are making their way into the eggs of species breeding along that river. As a result of the meeting, the WFVZ will be giving formal presentations during our next (June 2009) visit to museum, non-profit, and governmental officials, with the intention of stimulating environmental clean-up efforts in the country — including those dealing with bacterial contamination of river water (especially from fecal bacteria) and heavy use of pesticides that are already banned in other countries around the world.



Neotropical migrants in Guatemala:

- ▲ *Female Indigo Bunting (Passerina cyanea)*
- ▼ *Immature male Wilson's Warbler (Wilsonia pusilla)*



▲ *Pesticide spraying of tomato crop in El Chical, Guatemala, in January 2009. Note that the man is not even wearing a mask to protect himself!*



< *Trash in the riparian area in our study area in El Chical, Guatemala, in January 2009.*

In addition to these meetings, we also conducted point counts and other monitoring work at our study site in the thorn-scrub region of Guatemala, and we visited a new site (closer to Guatemala City) with lovely pine-oak vegetation that harbored many species of Neotropical migrant birds — those species that fly south to the Central and South American tropics to spend the “winter” and then return to North America to breed. Our monitoring data to date show that of the 63 species of birds detected in our study area, 26 species occur with enough regularity to examine their trends in abundance. Of these species, 13 have exhibited increases, 4 have exhibited decreases, and 9 have exhibited no trends (up or down). Overall, however, all of the detected species seem to occur in relatively low numbers compared to other areas the species inhabit, which may mean that there have been long-term impacts (such as from pollution or contamination effects) that have affected their population sizes.

The WFVZ plans to continue its work in Guatemala to monitor long-term trends in bird abundance, as well as to continue monitoring the effects and degree of contamination on the birds species – and people – in the region. If you are interested in helping support the Guatemala project, or in learning more about it, feel free to contact Dr. Hall.

Calendar

WFVZ Seminar

Saturday, **March 14**, 3:30 – 4:30 PM

Researcher **Peter Bloom**, who works with birds of prey and other species, will discuss his Ph.D. research project and the ecology and status of local raptor species. The Foundation will open at 3 PM for viewing of the collections.

Free to WFVZ Members, Volunteers, and Interns; \$5 for others. Limited to 50 people; please RSVP by **March 12** if you want a space to be held for you.

WFVZ Classes & Workshops

Study Skin Preparation Workshop

Taught by **René Corado**

All materials will be provided.

Day 1: Friday, **April 3**, 10 AM – 3 PM

\$40 for WFVZ Members and Volunteers; \$50 for others.

Day 2: A second day to practice the techniques will be offered to interested students on Saturday, **April 4**; time to be determined by the group.

\$30 for WFVZ Members and Volunteers; \$40 for others.

Please RSVP by **March 30**.

Private Study Skin Preparation Lessons are also offered.

\$60 for WFVZ Members and Volunteers; \$75 for others.

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

Identification of Ventura County Birds for Novices

Taught by **Dr. Linnea Hall**

Friday, **June 26**, 4 – 7 PM (at the Foundation) **and**

Saturday, **June 27**, 7 – 11 AM (in the field; site TBD)

\$50 for WFVZ Members and Volunteers; \$70 for others.

Limited to 20 people; please RSVP by **June 22**.

Feather and Wing Identification Workshop

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

To be offered in **Fall 2009**

Check our website (www.wfvz.org) or call us (805/388-9944)

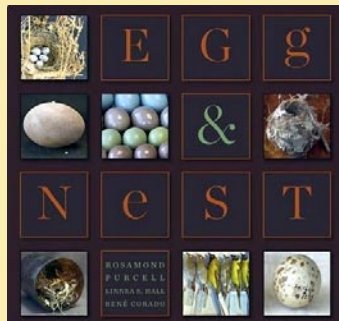
for details.

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)
or call 805/388-9944
for details.



WFVZ Tours

Public Tours: Fridays, 3 – 4 PM

**March 27, April 24, June 26, July 31, August 28,
September 25, 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. Our suggested donation for public tours is \$3 per person.

Group Tours by Appointment

Special group tours can be arranged for 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. Our suggested donation for group tours is \$3 per person.

WFVZ Annual Open House

To be held in **Fall 2009**

Check our website (www.wfvz.org) for details!

Conejo Valley Audubon Society Meetings

Mondays, 7:30 – 9 PM

**April 6, May 4, September 14 (TBD), October 5,
November 2, December 7** (no June – August meetings)

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.

Donation Wish List

The following items represent the Foundation's most pressing program needs at this time. If you are interested in supporting the Foundation, please consider making a donation to address one of these needs. See our website (www.wfvz.org) or call us (805/388-9944) for details!

Acrylic Boxes are needed to protect live-mount specimens (the cost is \$50 to \$500 per box, depending on specimen size).

The Ed N. Harrison Memorial Scholarship Fund provides one annual \$300 scholarship to a graduate student conducting research that will lead directly to the conservation of breeding bird species in Latin America (monetary donations to the fund are tax deductible).

Bookcases (with locking glass doors, new or used) are needed to protect very old ornithological books.

The Guatemala Bird Project (see page 3) can be supported by making a monetary donation to the WFVZ or by purchasing hand-made Guatemalan textiles and jewelry through our online store (www.wfvz.org); all proceeds will support our bird inventorying and monitoring work in Guatemala, and help Guatemalan artisans.

Eagle-eyed Visitors & Friends

... at our Open House



Visitors watching *René Corado* demonstrate study skin preparation techniques at the Foundation's October 2008 Open House.

... at our Holiday Party



Some of the Foundation's volunteers and staff listening intently to, and asking questions about, a presentation on the WFVZ's Guatemala project in December 2008.

At far left: *Jennifer Carlson*, Volunteer (in black jacket) and her partner.

Front row, from left: *Isabel Rice*, Volunteer, and her husband; and *Peggy Ellis*, Volunteer, and her husband.

Back row, from left: *Dixie* (sitting) and *Bill* (standing) *Anderson*, Volunteers; *Lisa Winfrey*, Curatorial Assistant (standing next to Bill); and *Carol Camerano* (sitting), WFVZ Bookkeeper.



Young visitors were captivated by *Linnea Hall's* demonstration of egg-blowing techniques at the Foundation's October 2008 Open House!

... in our Ornithology Class



Students from the Foundation's Fall 2008 Ornithology Class watching *Linnea Hall* demonstrate how to take birds from mist-nets set up among willows on Naval Base Point Mugu.

THANK YOU WFVZ VOLUNTEERS!

Your help is invaluable to
the Western Foundation!

Dixie and Bill Anderson
Jennifer Carlson
Cathie Dunkel
Peggy Ellis
Jean and Bill Hulberg
Linda Reynolds
Peg Stevens
David Vander Pluym
Isabel Rice



Recent sightings at WFVZ!



René Corado (masquerading as a *Callipepla californica coradensis*) hard-at-work in his office, cataloging birds for the WFVZ collections! Look closely and you will also see:

Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) piled on the floor and back table.

Montezuma Oropendola (*Psarocolius montezuma*) nests (two) on the back wall.

Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) next to the nests.

Tufted Jay (*Cyanocorax dickeyi*) next to the Northern Goshawk.

Cormall (*Anas pelagicus*) on the table (an imposter with the head of a Mallard and the body of a cormorant!).

Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*) above the desk.

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___

GIFT FOR: _____

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

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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