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Western Regional News

Notes from 2017 Annual Meeting in Cave Junction, Oregon

WBBA held its 2017 annual meeting at the Siskiyou Field Institute in Cave Junction, Oregon, 28-30 Sep. The meeting was well attended, with approximately 55 participants attending from several western states and two Canadian provinces, as well as Brazil and Costa Rica. As usual, participants were a good mixture of students, academics, government and non-professional banders, and many connections were forged and renewed during the meeting's social events.

The Siskiyou Field Institute is set in the lovely Illinois Valley, and participants were treated to lovely sunrises and an interesting mix of birds in the surrounding woods, with species such as Acorn Woodpeckers showing off for northern visitors, and Chestnut-backed Chickadees delighting those not from the coast. Morning bird walks and banding demonstrations ensured that everyone had a chance to get out and see the birds in the surrounding habitats. Trips to a nearby bog habitat to see the Cobra Lily or California Pitcher Plant, *Darlingtonia californica*, were also popular.

The meeting opened on Thursday with an evening barbeque and social. After a morning of bird walks and banding demonstrations, Friday was devoted to workshops, including one on molt theory by Jared Wolfe, Bob Frey's popular bird first-aid workshop, mist net repair, small band adjustment and removal, and the Wolfe-Ryder-Pyle universal ageing system. In the evening, we were treated to a fascinating talk on the geological history and ecology of the nearby Oregon Caves National Monument by John Roth, a long-serving Ranger and Naturalist in the Monument.

Saturday was devoted to scientific sessions, featuring a plenary talk by David Whitacre on Mexico's bird caves and the biology of swifts. Topics covered ranged widely, including methodology, single-species ecology, historical population trends, breeding and wintering ecology, what early-career researchers get out of volunteering, and the "life history" of bird observatories. The evening keynote was given by the well-regarded Steve Herman, Emeritus Faculty at Evergreen State College, who reflected on his more than 30 years of conducting research (including banding) and mentoring students in the region, and the changes he has seen in bird populations during that time. The meeting was capped with a campfire gathering and music from some talented WBBA members. Sunday featured a sold-out field trip to a nearby mountain Bigelow Lake and a personalized tour of the Oregon Caves by John Roth. While the morning was surprisingly chilly, we still managed to see some interesting birds, including Mountain Chickadees.

-- Judith Toms, President

2018 Annual Meeting in Alaska!

We are delighted to announce that our 2018 meeting will be held in Fairbanks, Alaska, in conjunction with the Alaska Songbird Institute. We are in the process of determining dates and other details; keep an eye on our website, www.westernbird-banding.org, for further details. It should be a great meeting with amazing scenery and a great mix of northern, western and eastern birds: think of species like Boreal Chickadees, Gray Jays, Blackpoll Warblers, Rusty Blackbirds, American Tree Sparrow, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Black-backed and

Three-toed Woodpeckers, Northern Waterthrush and Common/Hoary Redpolls. Field trips could include a visit to Denali National Park. Start planning to make the trip north to join us!

-- Judith Toms, President

2017 WBBA ANNUAL MEETING SCIENTIFIC SESSION SATURDAY, 30 SEP

Presenting author listed in bold

* indicates student author

9:00-10:00: Plenary Presentation: Mexico's Fantastic Bird Caves and Lifestyles Among the Swifts

Dr. David Whitacre

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Dr. Whitacre has studied songbirds and raptors in various places, especially in Tikal, Guatemala, where he directed a study of the forest raptor community for several years. At our meeting, he will return to his roots studying cave-nesting swifts in tropical Mexico. He will introduce us to a third great cave-nesting bird syndrome—that of two *Streptoprocne* swifts that form tremendous colonies in some of Mexico's impressive pit-caves. He will focus on the differing lifestyles represented among the world's 80-odd swift species, with a special focus on foraging ecology.

10:00-10:15: Long-term Monitoring of Bird Populations in Puerto Rico.

Judith Toms¹, John Faaborg², and Wayne Arendt³

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The Guánica Avian Monitoring Project was established in southwest Puerto Rico in 1973. We use standardized, constant-effort mist-netting to monitor non-breeding populations of resident and migratory bird species. Our data reveal long-term population declines in several species, and suggest that changing rainfall patterns may be driving these trends. The Project also demonstrates the

value of long-term monitoring programs, even if they are relatively low effort.

10:15-10:30: Field Notes on Post-Breeding Snowy Plover Banding Efforts

Alexa DeJoannis¹, Mark Colwell¹, and Sean McAllister²

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Western Snowy Plovers (*Charadrius nivosus nivosus*) are federally threatened, and researchers throughout their coastal range monitor the population as part of the Species Recovery Plan. That effort includes color-banding birds whenever possible. During a series of six banding sessions from August to November 2014, we collected molt data on banded birds. We caught 31 plovers; we observed pre-basic molt in after-hatch-year birds, and pre-formative or no molt in hatch-year birds. Shorebirds are much easier to capture during the breeding season, especially since they generally walk to their nests. Most local plovers had ceased breeding activity in July, and they were massed into wintering flocks when we deployed mist-nets or noose-mats. We had some success with both devices, though in our final sessions, we were unable to capture any birds. It is possible that the flock had become too wary.

11:00-11:15: Banding Above the Clouds: A Summer in Pursuit of the Brown-capped Rosy-Finch

Joel Such* and T. Luke George

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Largely nesting in remote and inaccessible alpine locations, the Brown-capped Rosy-Finch (*Leucosticte australis*) has been insufficiently studied during the breeding season. A near endemic to Colorado, this species appears to be undergoing a rapid decline in population. In association with collaborative partners, the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies initiated a research project focusing on this species of concern. With goals to capture, band, and collect blood and feather samples, methods were pioneered in order to realize the objectives. Through trial and error, the first ever Brown-capped Rosy-Finches were captured and processed on their