



**THE BIRDING COMMUNITY E-BULLETIN**

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January 2007

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Happy New Year!

We begin 2007 with enthusiasm and relative optimism: enthusiasm for the birding opportunities that we hope to enjoy this year and relative optimism over the potential for making North American bird populations more secure than ever. Our Birding Community E-bulletin is being distributed through the generous support of Steiner Binoculars as a service to active and concerned birders, those dedicated to the joys of birding and the protection of birds and their habitats. You can access an archive of past E-bulletins on [on the birding pages of the National Wildlife Refuge Association \(NWRA\) website](#) OR on [the birding webpages for Steiner Binoculars](#).

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**RARITY FOCUS**

Our rarity of the month is a Redwing that appeared in Nova Scotia in early December. The Redwing, a Eurasian thrush not to be confused with our Red-winged Blackbird, is a mega-rarity in North America, with only about a dozen previous records, mostly all from Newfoundland. (An illustration and description of the species can be found on page 358-359 in the National Geographic guide - 5th edition.) Redwings breed from eastern Siberia west to Iceland, with a small population also having established itself since the 1970s in southern Greenland; the species normally winters in southern Europe, northwest Africa, and southwest Asia.

Last month's Nova Scotia Redwing was found on 2 December in Brooklyn, Nova Scotia, about 85 miles south-southwest of Halifax. It frequented a marina park and foraged at holly bushes and feeders in a nearby residential area. The Redwing accompanied a large flock of other birds, including European Starlings, Common Grackles, Blue Jays, Evening Grosbeaks, a couple of Baltimore Orioles and a Bohemian Waxwing. This was only the second record for Redwing in Nova Scotia; the first was on Sable Island in 1989, a locality virtually inaccessible to most birders.

The Redwing in Brooklyn remained until at least 7 or 8 December. To see photos of the Redwing taken by Richard Stern, see:

[http://www.pbase.com/rb\\_stern/image/71150647](http://www.pbase.com/rb_stern/image/71150647)

In the meantime, another Redwing, or perhaps more than one, was being seen in the St. John's, Newfoundland area in early December.

Given the current range-expansion of this species, birders in the United States, particularly in the Northeast, would do well to watch for Redwings in the future, especially in flocks of wintering American Robins.

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### **TRICOLORED BLACKBIRD: REJECTED FOR ESA**

In the July E-bulletin, we mentioned efforts to secure habitat for Tricolored Blackbirds in southern California as part of the IBA effort in that state:

<http://www.refugenet.org/birding/julSBC06.html#TOC03> and

<http://www.steiner-birding.com/bulletin/july06.html>

Last month, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced the results of a 90-day petition to list the Tricolored Blackbird as Threatened or Endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973. The USFWS determined that the petition did not present sufficient scientific or commercial information to indicate that listing the blackbird is warranted at this time.

In 1990, the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) added the Tricolored Blackbird to its list of Bird Species of Special Concern, and the species is still considered a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Bird of Conservation Concern (USFWS 2002). This designation is the result of mandates required by the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, which in part requires the USFWS to identify non-game migratory bird species that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under the ESA. One of the

goals of the "Conservation Concern" category is to draw attention to those species in greatest need of conservation action and to focus funding and conservation efforts on them in an effort to preclude the need for future listing.

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### **CERULEAN WARBLER: ESA AND A COFFEE CONNECTION**

With a population decline of over 3 percent annually since the mid-1960s, Cerulean Warbler has increasingly drawn considerable conservation attention. Conservation concerns have been directed at everything from the extent and condition of core North American breeding areas and Northern Andean wintering habitat (mid-altitude elevation in broken canopy), to migration stopover sites.

Recently, we focused on the threat of mountaintop removal in Appalachia and its impact on the warbler:

<http://www.refugenet.org/birding/junSBC06.html#TOC08> and

<http://www.steiner-birding.com/bulletin/june06.html>

Some ornithologists consider this species the fastest declining Neotropical migratory songbird in North America. The situation has become so critical that organizations have petitioned that the Cerulean Warbler be added to the list of Threatened (as opposed to Endangered) species under the ESA.

Last month, the USFWS published its finding on the petition and maintained that listing was "not warranted." However, the finding also strongly acknowledged that the Cerulean Warbler is in need of cooperative conservation efforts if the species' population declines are to be reversed, a trend that would likely require listing this species in the future if they continue. Cerulean Warbler may represent an opportunity to demonstrate that proactive and cooperative conservation action can keep species at risk from sliding into Threatened or Endangered status, but it is also an opportunity that is rapidly and dangerously slipping away.

A number of conservation and environmental organizations, including the National Audubon Society, Defenders of Wildlife, Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project, and Western North Carolina Alliance were most disappointed by the USFWS finding and clearly made their objections known:

<http://www.defenders.org/releases/pr2006/pr120606b.html>

Obviously, efforts to save Cerulean Warblers have to take place not only on the breeding grounds, but also in the species' Neotropical wintering habitat.

As mentioned last month, one piece of good news is that the Cerulean Warbler is one of the species that can co-exist quite well with traditional shade-grown coffee cultivation, particularly in the Northern Andean region. (The warbler prefers broken-canopy wintering habitat, 8-10 meters high, at an elevation of 800-1,600 meters, a region corresponding to the location of many shade-coffee plantations in the northern Andes.)

One study area in Colombia has demonstrated that this region also serves as a haven for other Neotropical

One study, done in Colombia, has demonstrated that this region also serves as a habitat for certain neotropical migrants, such as Olive-sided Flycatcher, Canada Warbler, and Golden-winged Warbler.

Recent efforts to save Cerulean Warbler habitat in the Northern Andes have also begun to link with promotion of Cerulean Warbler-compatible coffee. The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is working to preserve critical wintering habitat at a 500-acre Cerulean Warbler Bird Reserve in the Rio Chucuri Basin of Santander, Colombia. (The plans are to have this property purchased and operated by Fundacion ProAves of Colombia.) ABC will also be working with the Thanksgiving Coffee Company that has long-term experience in the shade-coffee market through its creative arrangement with the American Birding Association (ABA). For details on the combination of these efforts, see the Thanksgiving Coffee website: <http://store.thanksgivingcoffee.com/abc>  
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## **BARBED-WIRE-FENCE-MARKING FOR PRAIRIE-CHICKENS**

Last month, we mentioned conservation efforts to plan more strategically for prairie grouse: <http://www.refugenet.org/birding/decSBC06.html#TOC06> and <http://www.steiner-birding.com/bulletin/dec06.html>

Work on behalf of prairie grouse continues, and researchers at the George Miksch Sutton Avian Research Center have gathered information since 1999 that indicates that barbed wire fences account for significant Lesser Prairie-Chicken mortality. In Oklahoma 39.5 percent of the prairie-chicken mortality recorded was due to fence collisions, while in New Mexico, this figure was 26.5 percent.

With funding support from the USFWS, the Colorado Bird Observatory, and the North American Grouse Partnership, Sutton Center researchers are working on efforts to mitigate these losses.

This effort includes the removal of many miles of unneeded fences in parts of northwestern Oklahoma and northeastern portions of the Texas panhandle. Researchers have also been working a project to reduce prairie-chicken mortality by marking miles of fencing in a way that will increase its visibility to the birds.

In early December, the Sutton Center launched a new "how-to" page on its website that explains these fence-marking methods to landowners. The Center will be testing this creative approach to reducing mortality over the next year to see if it is effective in reducing collisions. You can see it described at: [http://www.suttoncenter.org/fence\\_marking.html](http://www.suttoncenter.org/fence_marking.html)

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## **FCC LIGHT CONSIDERATION**

After years of ambivalence and evasion, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is finally seeking comments on any effects that communications towers may have on migratory birds, and whether these effects might warrant regulations specifically designed to protect migrating birds.

The FCC has tentatively concluded that medium intensity white strobe lights for nighttime use are preferred over red obstruction lighting as a way of protecting migrating birds without compromising aircraft navigation safety. The FCC is seeking comments on this tentative conclusion, along with thoughts about whether the Commission should adopt any additional requirements based on other tower construction features (e.g., use of red strobe or red blinking incandescent lights, use of guy wires for tower support, variability of tower height, tower location, and the possibility of co-location of towers).

The USFWS estimates that the number of migratory birds killed by communications towers could range from 4 to 50 million per year. In light of these widely divergent numbers and varied estimates, the FCC is seeking further comment supported by evidence on the number of migratory birds killed annually by communications towers. (The USFWS also asserts that lighting is a "key attractant for night migrating songbirds, especially on nights with poor visibility," but adds that further research is needed.)

Most importantly, the FCC is looking for comments on specific ways in which it could implement some recommended actions.

Some encouraging results have been obtained by extinguishing steady burning red lights on towers (height of about 475 feet and also possessing guy wires), and retaining only flashing red strobe lights. There is support for the position that red flashing lights may not attract night migrants, or at least that they are not as strongly attractive as continuously illuminated red lights. (As for the alternative of using white strobe-like lights, more research is needed, and there is outward resistance from the general public and the Federal Aviation Administration for this change, regarding the change as potentially unfriendly to aircraft.)

We have covered the issue previously in the E-bulletin: <http://www.refugenet.org/birding/julSBC06.html#TOC08> and <http://www.steiner-birding.com/bulletin/july06.html>

Public comments on whether the FCC should take measures to address bird kills at towers are due by 22 January. The FCC needs to hear from people who care about birds to assure appropriate action.

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Find FCC details here:

<http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-IMPACT/2006/November/Day-22/i19742.htm>

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### **A COUPLE OF GOOD PHOTO-SOURCES**

To obtain copyright-free photos of birds, wildlife, wildflowers, and much more, you may want to take a look at the USDA Forest Service's, "Find-a-Photo" electronic library website. This is part of the Forest Service's NatureWatch, Wildlife, Fish, and Threatened and Endangered Species Program's Photograph Library. This site allows users to access thousands of copyright-free wildlife and environmental education photographs that have been donated by Forest Service employees, as well as by its partners and volunteers:

[http://www.notes.fs.fed.us:81/wo/wfrp/find\\_a\\_photo.nsf/home?openpage](http://www.notes.fs.fed.us:81/wo/wfrp/find_a_photo.nsf/home?openpage)

Readers of the E-bulletin wishing specifically to search and use some of the hundreds of bird photos in the archive should click "Search for Photos" and then "Birds."

Another good archive for photo-use is the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) photo-library, found at:

<http://www.refugenet.org/photolibraryterms.htm>

Also note that the Second Annual NWRA photo contest - which offers prizes and serves to build the electronic library - runs through the end of this month. Details can be found at:

<http://www.refugenet.org/contest/2007ContestHome.html>

Besides the winning photographs, up to 200 images will be selected this year for inclusion in the NWRA Refuge Image Library. Every photographer submitting an entry will receive a complimentary one-year membership in the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

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### **GOS TAKES LEAD ON STAMP**

The Georgia Ornithological Society (GOS) has initiated an innovative effort to sell Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps (also known as "Duck Stamps") in plastic holders so that birders can display their conservation dedication (e.g. flaunted on their binocular straps or as jacket zipper-pulls).

Proceeds for the stamp go to acquiring wetland and grassland habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

For general details on this ingenious effort by GOS see:

<http://www.gos.org/duckstamp/duckstamp.htm>

For testimonials on this campaign: <http://www.gos.org/duckstamp/testimonials.htm>

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### **IBA NEWS: NEW YORK DEVELOPMENTS**

This month's IBA focus takes us to New York. An early IBA pioneer, the New York IBA Program has taken the lead in the United States in a number of ways. Among these ways is the fact that it was one of the first states to produce an IBA state publication (1998, J. V. Wells, compiler).

Since then, New York's IBA Program has progressed through a second round of site identifications and has implemented an IBA Adoption Program that has successfully engaged people and groups in conservation activities throughout the state. These efforts have been instrumental in the publication of New York's second edition of the New York IBA volume, a book that details the revised set of 136 IBAs in the state, along with providing information about how people can help protect birds at these sites.

By engaging partners and volunteers, New York's IBA Program has successfully contributed to the restoration of habitat, the implementation of monitoring activities, and the securing of funding for land protection. In addition the IBA Program has increased participation in conservation planning processes, influenced land management, and educated the public about the benefit of birds and their conservation. Examples of New York IBA Program successes include restoration of heron nesting habitat on North Brother Island as result of a partnership with New York City Audubon and New York City Parks and Recreation, creation and marketing of a birding trail to promote ecotourism throughout the Niagara River Corridor IBA and the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge Area IBA, empowering local citizens groups to successfully fight inappropriate developments in IBAs, and working collaboratively with state and federal agencies to see that publicly owned IBAs like the creative multi-partner Montezuma Wetlands Complex and state Wildlife Management Areas are properly managed for priority birds.

As a result of the New York IBA Program's success, Jillian Liner, New York IBA Program Coordinator since

2001, recently received an Audubon ACE (Audubon Cares about Excellence) Award. ACE Awards recognize National Audubon Society staff members who have performed an outstanding task or have contributed to the implementation of an innovative idea. Congratulations are due Jillian Liner for her Individual Achievement in making New York's IBA Program an outstanding model for other states to follow.

For more information on the program in New York see:

[http://ny.audubon.org/IBA\\_new.htm](http://ny.audubon.org/IBA_new.htm)

For additional general information about the ongoing IBA program in the United States, see:

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/index.html>

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### **BOOK REVIEW: RTP RECONSIDERED**

Last summer marked the tenth anniversary of Roger Tory Peterson's passing and provided a perfect opportunity to revisit Peterson's impact on birding, including his many splendid contributions to the ornithological literature. ALL THINGS RECONSIDERED is a fine collection of some of RTP's bite-sized essays that have appeared in BIRD WATCHER'S DIGEST through the years, a selection thoughtfully selected by BIRD WATCHER'S DIGEST editor, Bill Thompson III (2006, Houghton Mifflin).

The book serves as a wonderful reminder of the breadth of Peterson's experiences, his irrepressible enthusiasm, and his abundant contributions to present-day birding. Whether he's writing about the penguins in Antarctica or vultures in Africa, Peterson tells a good story. Most interesting, perhaps, are his reflections on the changing status of American birds - from Bald Eagle, to California Condor, to Cattle Egret - and his thoughts about the changing American birding scene over the years. Peterson's impressions about art and photography, whether re-evaluating the contributions of Audubon or discussing techniques in the use of photographic blinds, also contribute to the compelling writing in this new book. This volume offers all readers a chance to experience the accomplishments of a skilled writer, along with giving all birders the opportunity to examine or reexamine the depth of RTP's many contributions.

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### **FIRST "NATURAL" WHOOPING CRANE IN EAST ARRIVES IN FLORIDA**

In July 2006, we reported on the first young Whooping Crane to be hatched in the wild from the experimental flock at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin.

<http://www.refugenet.org/birding/julSBC06.html#TOC16> and

<http://www.steiner-birding.com/bulletin/july06.html>

The family group (parents # 211 [male] and # 217 [female], along with their offspring, #W601) left Necedah NWR on 19 November 2006, and arrived last month, on the afternoon of 9 December, at Chassahowitzka NWR in Florida.

The youngster, W601 ("Wild601"), is the first-ever wild-hatched Whooping Crane in what is known as the Eastern Migratory Population. This bird is also the first-ever, second-generation Whooping Crane to successfully make the migration south to Florida.

This event marks another major milestone in the effort to reintroduce a self-sustaining population of Whooping Cranes in the East.

See here for more details (look for the 11 December report, entry 2):

[http://www.operationmigration.org/Field\\_Journal.html](http://www.operationmigration.org/Field_Journal.html)

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### **CATALOG GIANT AGREES TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE PAPER POLICY**

In response to a campaign focusing on the paper used in the one million catalogs that Victoria's Secret sends out per day, Limited Brands, parent company of Victoria's Secret announced a new conservation policy on 6 December.

Much of the paper used in the catalogs is from the Boreal Forest of Canada, one of the world's three largest intact forests, a major swath of nesting birdlife in North America.

The company announced that it would support the protection of endangered forests by:

- \* Not using paper from endangered forests or caribou habitat in the Boreal Forest,
- \* Increasing post-consumer recycled or Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified fiber in all catalogs, starting with 10 percent the first year and increasing each year,
  
- \* Moving toward FSC certified fiber for non-recycled content, and
- \* Supporting the Boreal Forest Conservation Framework.

This change in policy, as well as Victoria Secret's declared commitment to conservation, is encouraging, particularly given the established importance of the Boreal Forest to tremendous numbers of North American breeding bird species. Any and every effort to conserve this enormous avian nursery is to be lauded and supported. We look forward to following the company's progress throughout the implementation of this important conservation move.

For a perspective on the Victoria's Secret change from the Boreal Songbird Initiative, see this site:

<http://www.borealbirds.org/alerts/alert-001.html>

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### **GULF OF MAINE FISHING LIMITS: GOOD FOR SEABIRDS**

The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recently approved a revised Herring Fish Management Plan with a new seasonal (1 June to 30 September) closure of the Gulf of Maine to mid-water and pair-trawl vessels. Less intrusive purse seine and fixed gear will now be the equipment of choice for the herring fishery during summer months. This change will affect fishing protocols from Eastport, Maine, to Provincetown, Massachusetts for a distance of 50 miles from shore.

This conclusion was reached when a varied coalition of lobster, tuna, ground fish, purse seine, and recreational fishermen, along with ecotourism businesses, whale and seabird researchers, and conservation groups came together in agreement over the need for changes in herring fishery management.

CHOIR (Coalition for the Atlantic Herring Fishery's Orderly, Informed, and Responsible Long-Term Development) is a group that supports a healthy and responsible use of the herring resource and appropriate management of the herring fishery, the people of the Gulf of Maine region who depend on the sea for a living, and the birdlife and other natural resources of the Gulf of Maine marine zone. Given the tremendous importance of herring in the diet of many Gulf of Maine and Northwest Atlantic seabirds and marine mammals, this milestone in fisheries management deserves recognition.

For more information, see here: <http://www.choircoalition.org/>

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### **STATESIDE LWCF BREAKTHROUGH**

For the past four decades, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has been responsible for the creation and development of more than 40,000 national, state, and local parks, refuges, forests, and recreation areas in all fifty states (and 98% of all U.S. counties). Many birding hotspots have theoretically been preserved or enhanced through this program, a program that receives its support from offshore oil and gas revenue.

Unfortunately, over the years different Congresses have chosen to starve LWCF, either the federal portion or the stateside portion, with the states almost invariably getting deprived of essential conservation funding.

Regrettably, efforts to guarantee funding for LWCF - especially the CARA effort of six years ago, which also included vital funding for state wildlife and coastal restoration - have not been successful in securing a future for wild places and for wild creatures.

In the waning days of the 109th Congress, however, there was a small but significant move to reverse this trend. New and permanent funding for stateside LWCF was approved by the present Congress as a "conservation royalty" of 12.5 percent of lease revenues that will accrue from an expansion of new oil and gas drilling in 8.3 million acres of the eastern Gulf of Mexico. Without the diligent work on the part of several legislators, this provision probably would not have been included in legislation that, although flawed, was already on track for passage.

Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and K. Salazar (D-CO) led the LWCF effort. Their estimates of future funding to states and localities are not large, about \$10 million to \$30 million annually, starting in 2009, but the impact could still be considerable. Signed by the President shortly before Christmas, this represents the first-ever dedicated revenue stream for the stateside LWCF program. Some knowledgeable conservation observers believe that this move could also lead to a future pattern of funding for conservation.

You can find details on the stateside LWCF effort here:

<http://www.nrpa.org/content/default.aspx?documentId=5063>

The bill that was signed also included a large chunk of oil and gas revenue (37.5 percent of federal royalties) to specifically be directed to Gulf coastal and wetland restoration (and infrastructure mitigation). Louisiana politicians, particularly Sen. M. Landrieu (D-LA), have worked on ensuring this funding for some time. We have touched on the issue of Gulf Coastal restoration for the benefit of birdlife - and people - in this E-bulletin in the past, including last year at about this time:

[http://www.refugenet.org/birding/janSBC06.html#TOC13\\_and](http://www.refugenet.org/birding/janSBC06.html#TOC13_and)

<http://www.steiner-birding.com/bulletin/jan06.html>

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If you wish to distribute all or parts of any of the E-bulletins, we request that you mention the source of any material used. (Include the URL for the E-Bulletin archives if possible).

If you have friends or co-workers who want to get onto the monthly E-bulletin mailing list, have them contact either:

- Wayne R. Peterson, Director, Massachusetts Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program, Mass Audubon, 718/534-2046, [wpetersen@massaudubon.org](mailto:wpetersen@massaudubon.org) OR
- Paul Baicich 410/992-9736, [paul.baicich@verizon.net](mailto:paul.baicich@verizon.net)

If you DON'T wish to receive these E-bulletins, contact either of us, and we will take you off our mailing list IMMEDIATELY.