



**SWAROVSKI BIRDING COMMUNITY E-BULLETIN
DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE NORTH AMERICAN SWAROVSKI BIRDING
COMMUNITY**

Information, communication, and inspiration on birds, wildlife, and nature

July 2005

This E-bulletin is distributed as a joint effort between Swarovski Optik of North America (SONA) and the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA). You can access [an archive of past E-bulletins](#) on the NWRA site.

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JULY: GUY BRADLEY CENTENNIAL

It has not always been easy being "pro-birds."

One hundred years ago, even after the passage of the Lacey Act (1900) and, in Florida, the passage of the Act for the Protection of Birds and Their Nests and Eggs (1901), wading-birds continued to be killed for their plumes. At that time, Guy Bradley, a former plume-hunter himself, was hired by the American Ornithologists' Union and the National Association of Audubon Societies to serve as a bird-warden in south Florida. He was soon appointed Monroe County game warden while being paid by the out-of-state organizations.

Bradley collected vital evidence against illegal hunters and plume-dealers in Florida, tirelessly watched over

rookeries, and arrested a number of violators. On 8 July 1905, Bradley was killed while attempting to arrest a well-known plume-hunter and his party that were killing egrets at Cape Sable. Bradley was only 35; his murderers were never convicted.

We thought you might like to be reminded of some of the details of more difficult times gone by. The Bradley centennial anniversary this month is a good way to do this.

In case you didn't already know, in 1988 the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation established a national Guy Bradley Award to recognize individuals for achievements in wildlife law enforcement, especially activities which advance the law enforcement goals and mission of state and federal fish and wildlife agencies. The award has become much-coveted award and has helped keep the spirit of Guy Bradley alive.

At Flamingo, in what is now Everglades National Park, there is a small plaque honoring Guy Bradley near the restaurant and gift-shop. You may have passed it when visiting the Everglades. Be sure to look for it the next time you are there. There was also a book recently published on Bradley that describes the period of bird conservation during which he worked, a volume by Stuart B. McIver, *DEATH IN THE EVERGLADES* (University Press of Florida, 2003). You can get more details on Guy Bradley and the history of the bird protection movement of his day at: <http://everglades.fiu.edu/reclaim/bios/bradley.html> and <http://www.keysso.net/aboutso/history/deaths/officerskilled.htm>

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RARITY FOCUS

Eventually, birders who gain experience and the desire to find more birds will think about making a pilgrimage to central Michigan to find the rare Kirtland's Warbler. June is the best time to do that, because that's when males are on territory in Jack Pine country. (After 1 July, viewing opportunities usually diminish.) Birders will usually travel to the towns of Grayling or Mio to take a Fish & Wildlife-sponsored or Forest Service-sponsored tour to see Kirtland's Warblers. Click [here](#) for details.

Fortunately, there has been encouraging news from the Michigan pinewoods in the last month. The Huron

National Forest's Kirtland's Warbler census, run mid-month, resulted in tallying 459 singing males. This is the highest-ever count on National Forest lands, and it's something to celebrate. (Other reports from Michigan are still coming in.) It also seems that almost all these males were located on habitat developed through forest management. Currently, no wildfire habitat exists on Huron NF, so something that the Forest Service is doing for the warblers must be working.

Also, last month, a small group of dedicated banders and warbler researchers were attempting to capture banded birds in Michigan to link the birds to preferred winter habitat based on isotopic signatures from their diet. Simply stated, bugs the warblers eat in the Bahamas will leave a biochemical signature on the feathers they grow. On 8 June, the team captured a male in Ogemaw County that was previously banded in 1996 as an adult. That would make him at least 10 years old, the oldest Kirtland's warbler ever documented. Four days later, also in Ogemaw County, another male Kirtland's was captured, this one originally banded as an adult in 1995, a bird at least 11 years old! Records are, indeed, meant to be broken. Both males were observed defending territory, and appeared to be "in great shape." Assuming an annual round-trip migration of approximately 3,000 miles, these little birds would have logged at least 30,000 and 33,000 miles, respectively, during migrations throughout their lives.

At the same time, Birdlife International has "downlisted" the Kirtland's Warbler from Vulnerable to Near-threatened. While conservation measures in Michigan have been effective and research is growing in the Bahamas, any parallel U.S. downlisting from Endangered to Threatened would probably be premature. It's very exciting that the Kirtland's Warbler has been exhibiting recent recovery and has responded to hands-on management (from pine manipulation to cowbird eradication), but the species' future is still far from secure. (Reduction of cowbird control, threatened though current budget demands is, similarly, a risky proposition.)

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WRONG-WAY 309

Another rarity of sorts this past month was a Whooping Crane that surprisingly appeared in Addison County, Vermont, on 9 June. This bird, Number 309, part of the experimental Whooping Crane-re introduction project, is a female, a bird that otherwise might have been expected to spend the summer at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin. Instead, Number 309 somehow ended up far to the east of her target upon her return northward flight from Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge in Florida. (She is part of the flock that is "trained" to fly to Chassahowitzka and is expected to return 1,228 miles back to Necedah on her own.)

Number 309, located through the use of a transmitter, spent the rest of June on private farmland at her new Vermont haunts. If 309 can't get back to her fellow cranes, the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership is committed to trapping her and airlifting her back to Wisconsin to join her brethren.

"She is an important bird to the program, and if we leave her where she is we eliminate any chance that this bird will mate," said Joe Duff, of the Ontario-based Operation Migration. "She's a good wild bird, certainly independent. The only problem is she happens to be a little lost."

Click [here](#) for more information on crane reintroduction, the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership, and its many partners.

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REFUGE PHOTO CONTEST LAUNCHED

The National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) and Swarovski Optik of North America (SONA) are launching a 2005 Refuge Photo Contest - a digital photo contest designed to showcase America's national wildlife refuges.

Images can be of birds, mammals, insects, fish, other animals, plants, people, or simply refuge scenery, in short, almost any sight at a National Wildlife Refuge can be submitted for this contest. The contest begins in July and ends in December 2005.

The judges will be Shawn Carey (Migration Productions), Maria Cecil (principal, Cecil Editorial and former editor of DEFENDERS magazine); Karen Hollingsworth (professional nature photographer), and Clay Taylor (Digiscoping expert and Natural Markets Field Coordinator for Swarovski Optik of North America). Winning entries will be selected by two rounds of judging. The first round will select up to 200 images to be included in the NWRA Refuge Image Library. The second round will result in the selection of the top prize winners.

Prizes will include a number of fine Swarovski products, including a full digiscoping outfit (telescope with eyepiece, tripod, tripod-head, and digital camera attachment), a Swarovski 8x30 SLC binocular, and a Swarovski Extremadura carrying bag. Trek Technologies has provided their novel TrekPod as a prize, and Houghton Mifflin has contributed a number of their wonderful field guides. The photographers for the top 200 images will also each receive a prize NWRA/Swarovski hat. This is a contest where everyone wins, with all photographers submitting an entry receiving a complimentary one-year membership in the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA).

See the [Contest Pages](#) for more information on the Swarovski and other prizes, as well as procedures, rules, and other details.

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COCOA: HOW SUSTAINABLE?

As previously reported in the E-bulletin, bird enthusiasts have been supporting shade-grown coffee as bird-compatible habitat for some time. There has been a parallel conventional wisdom concerning cocoa (*Theobroma cacao*) grown under a canopy of native trees. The similarity may not be perfect, however, as reported from Brazil's Atlantic forest. (This region is incredibly diverse, with estimates of total plant diversity running as high as 20,000 species, half of which are endemic to Brazil. The area is also rich in animal life as well, with approximately 620 species of birds, 260 species of mammals, and 260 amphibians, of which about 160 birds, 70 mammals, and 130 amphibians are endemic. Unfortunately, approximately 95 percent of the Atlantic forest is already gone.) Cocoa farms in this area have long been thought to represent a system of sustainable agroforestry. Recent research, however, has suggested that the canopy over cocoa farms is showing a loss of diversity, with original native trees dying off and being replaced by various faster-growing trees, including invasive non-natives such as mimosa (*Leucaena leucocephala*). One reason this is happening is that undergrowth is cleared twice a year, and only the quickest growing species can escape being cut over during the six-month interim. Exit a source of crucial biodiversity.

Researchers Samir Rolim and Adriano Chiarello of the Reserva Natural de Vale do Rio Doce in Linhares, Brazil, emphasize that while this system is certainly better than deforestation, management practices could still be adjusted to allow for more biodiversity. For one, the cocoa farmers could clear the smaller non-native trees and let the native saplings flourish to replace an ageing canopy. This reminds us of one of the lessons we've already learned in the propagation of coffee: all shade is not equal.

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SAGE-GROUSE AND WEST NILE

We again visit the beleaguered sage-grouse scene, now with warnings about West Nile Virus.

Over the past few years, Greater Sage-Grouse have been found infected with West Nile Virus at a number of locations, including Wyoming, Montana, and Alberta. Ongoing studies have suggested that the species is highly susceptible to the disease. None has shown neutralizing antibodies, intimating that most sage-grouse do not survive WNV. Indeed, researchers have yet to find a Greater Sage-Grouse that has survived infection by WNV, a grave situation for a species already facing diminishing habitat.

Even the smallest doses of the virus have killed sage-grouse during experimentation. There is also evidence that WNV, usually spread by mosquitoes, can spread directly between sage-grouse.

A 2003 study found that sage-grouse survival had fallen by an average of 25 percent in two locations in the Wyoming portion of the Powder River Basin, as well as at another site in Wyoming and one in Alberta.

Studies are ongoing.

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WIND ENERGY: A WAY OUT?

It's hard to read about bird conservation these days without running into references to wind-energy. Indeed, the 2005 theme for IMBD this year (officially recognized on 14 May 2005) was "Collisions: Clear the Way for Birds."

Varied modern technological advances such as wind-turbines, cell-towers, and tall glass-dominated buildings, all present obstacles to birds and contribute to loss of bird life. Recent and growing wind farm proposals, such as that near Horicon National Wildlife Refuge, only serve to accentuate the significance of the issue.

Two major areas of concern in the area of wind energy have preoccupied bird conservationists: placement and on-site research. The placement of the wind-power units is, of course, crucial, both from the perspective of wind direction/strength and from the perspective of affected birds. Indeed, differences in location can influence different suites of bird species in different ways (e.g., grassland grouse, nocturnal Neotropical migrants, raptors, and seaducks). The demands for continued research are as common and as justified as the debate over the placement of the units themselves.

There are two other areas, however, that rightfully deserve almost as much concentration as the issues of placement and on-site research. These are economic disincentives and actual unit design. Without going into detail (our newsletter format doesn't allow for that), let us lightly touch on these two points.

First, in the area of economic incentives, wind energy developers have engaged in costly studies on land and wildlife impacts from site to site. The studies vary in terms of scope, design, and utility. However, most are not peer-reviewed, and few have been made available to the public. Consequently, the studies are especially vulnerable to attack by opponents of wind energy projects.

At the same time, the many costs - including those for studying possible wildlife impact - are not recouped UNLESS the projects are built and the units put on line. Therefore, the cost of wildlife studies can function as a major disincentive to abandon a site. The more the developer spends on the preparations, the more the developer is committed to the project. If, however, there was a way to ensure that properly-designed, peer-reviewed research took place and could be made publicly available, thus removing the financial disincentive to developers to abandon a potential project site, there could be a benefit to all parties. In short, there could be a public fund to pay for researching wildlife impact, and IF a project were built, the developer would then reimburse the fund. This would remove at least part of the developer commitment to the project. (The basics of this concept originated with Ellen Paul, Executive Director of the Ornithological Council, and Kevin Rackstraw, eastern North American regional director for Clipper Windpower.)

Second, in the field of unit design, we see most bird enthusiasts stuck with a critical examination of the

propeller-image of wind-power, with roots in the classic Dutch windmill and the Great Plains wind-powered water pump. This begs the question: Are there other, more bird-compatible designs that are, or could be, available?

It is possible that traditional horizontal-axis wind-turbine technology will peak in the next few years, largely due to the limits of blade size and their effects on the whole machine. Centrifugal force, torque, and unit fatigue are all involved.

There are potential alternative vertical-axis designs, helical or spiral-formed vanes, and other omni-directional and efficient units that have real promise. Why stick with the "old" technology, when other options might be better for the birds?

Rather than simply saying "No," perhaps bird enthusiasts should be spending more energy looking for ways to say "Yes," helping a potentially "green" wind-power industry to deliver clean and increasingly bird-compatible non-fossil-fuel-burning energy.

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LWCF: WHEN IS A 49-PERCENT CUT SIMPLY NOT ENOUGH?

In May, we focused on the stateside section of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The LWCF is a forty-year-old land-acquisition vehicle originally intended to use offshore gas and oil revenue coming into the U.S. Treasury to secure federal, state, and local lands for conservation and recreation. The LWCF is the nation's primary source of money to acquire land. Some fabulous bird and birding habitat over the years have been obtained through the LWCF mechanism.

Earlier this year, however, the Bush administration asked Congress to cut spending from the LWCF by 49 percent in fiscal year (FY) 2006, which begins 1 October. Most of the proposed cut would result from terminating virtually the entire stateside portion of LWCF (as described in May's E-bulletin), even though some administrative funding would remain.

Still, the federal-side was to be spared the executioner's axe, with, for example, the Administration suggesting that the refuge system's portion of LWCF run up to \$41 million, actually a \$4-million increase over 2005. Coincidentally - even before the announcement of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker discovery in late April - the vital

coincidentally, even before the announcement of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker discovery in late April, the great Cache River National Wildlife Refuge was slated to receive an additional \$809,000 (for 500 acres) from this LWCF funding, as recommended by the President's budget for FY 2006.

So, despite the Administration's suggested 49-percent cut, some core expenditures were preserved, something that should provide minor relief.

Not so fast!

Enter the House Appropriations Committee, not satisfied with this 49 percent reduction. The committee majority recommended an 83 percent cut on 9 May. That's right. Why cut a mere 49 percent when you can cut 83 percent? The only funding left intact was \$43.1 million for both federal and stateside operating costs, wrap-up of ongoing projects, and administrative expenses. Not a dime for new acquisition.

Stateside and federal-side LWCF was in tatters, and along with it \$809,000 worth of Ivory-billed Woodpecker habitat in Arkansas. The House committee decision, by the way, was made 11 days after the glorious announcement of the woodpecker's re-discovery. Ten days after that, the House of Representatives as a whole approved the committee's grim decision.

In the first week of June, the Senate had its turn at the chopping block. The good news is that the Senate Appropriations Committee recommended \$162 million for Federal LWCF and \$30 million for stateside LWCF. This was confirmed by the whole Senate on 29 June. The bad news is that the total \$192 million was still \$66 million less than last year's total LWCF. That's a 26 percent cut.

Although the expenditure of \$809,000 for Cache River NWR was put back in the Senate bill, the differences between House and Senate still remain to be reconciled in conference.

Meanwhile, on the Ivory-bill scene, the Administration has pledged \$10 million for woodpecker habitat and conservation work. One wonders where this \$10 million will actually come from. The Refuge System budget is already strapped; the Endangered Species budget is cut to the bone, and the usual modest amount of money raised by the Migratory Bird [Duck] Stamp can only go so far. Worst of all, the LWCF, as we have seen, is not particularly favored by Congress.

If the House and Senate "split the difference" in conference (a possibility, since that's happened before), then the combined LWCF could be \$117.6 million, or a 54 percent cut from FY 05. And that's still \$12 million less than the President recommended for FY06.

So, IF the two houses split the difference on LWCF, we'll end this roller-coaster ride from a start of a 49 percent overall cut recommended by the Administration to an end of a 54 percent cut. No matter what happens, these are not happy times for this aspect of LWCF and for bird conservation.

(We thank colleagues at The Wilderness Society for helping clarify some of the confusion over the recent LWCF numbers.)

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SNEAK ATTACK ON WILDERNESS?

We didn't notice the news in time for the June E-bulletin, but that's probably because the substance was deeply buried in four paragraphs within the 96-page emergency military spending bill signed by President Bush in May.

The four paragraphs in question, written by Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS), would secure the state of Mississippi's claim for natural gas under the Gulf Islands National Seashore. The National Seashore is a network of islands from the Mississippi coast to Florida; two of the five Mississippi islands are designated Wilderness area, ostensibly the highest form of protection.

Gulf Islands National Seashore is known as a fine birding location, currently hosting such breeders as Brown Pelican, a number of egrets and herons, Wilson's and Piping Plovers, Royal and Least Terns, and Black Skimmer. A full checklist can be found [here](#).

The military spending legislation was actually preceded last year by a state bill signed by Mississippi Governor, Haley Barbour (former head of the Republican National Committee) allowing oil and gas leases in state waters surrounding the islands. The governor also signed legislation shifting drilling authority from the state's environmental quality agency to the Mississippi Development Authority, an economic agency with no regulatory power over the environment.

The federal military spending bill will mark the first time the federal government has allowed seismic exploration on National Park property, although energy exploration has been allowed on rare occasions on other Park properties over the last decade. Recently, long-standing policies aimed at sheltering these lands from the ill effects of oil and gas exploration originating outside park borders have been whittled away.

One can only wonder: What's next?

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ALASKA: FREE STREAMERS KEEP AWAY SEABIRDS

Beginning last year, and now extending to this fishing season, most fishing-vessels in Alaska are being required to use streamer-lines and other avoidance devices to keep seabirds away from longline fishing gear. The seabirds will otherwise attack baited hooks and get dragged beneath the water to die. Four types of avoidance devices were developed through collaboration between the USFWS, Alaska Sea Grant, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and fishermen. The devices were made available for free.

In the recent past, tens of thousands of seabirds were killed annually in the Alaska longline fishery alone. These birds included albatrosses (e.g. Laysan and Black-footed), Northern Fulmar, and shearwaters (e.g. Sooty and Short-tailed). The problem is an industry-wide and global issue, with numerous unresolved concerns, especially with industrial-type longline fishing expansion, and fishing lines which may extend for 60 miles.

Research has indicated that the use of streamer-lines is very effective at keeping seabirds away from the baited hooks. It is particularly important for fishermen in Alaska waters to keep a safe distance from the endangered Short-tailed Albatross, a rare species that has recently been recovering and appearing in Alaska waters. (From a population low of approximately a dozen, almost 2,000 of these albatrosses now wander the North Pacific.) The destruction of just a few of these birds could literally shut down fisheries. (No more than four Short-tailed Albatrosses can be taken by longliners over a two-year period, and no more than two by trawl fisheries.)

Research conducted through the University of Washington Sea Grant Program has shown that streamer-lines, when properly deployed, can reduce seabird bycatch in longline operations by almost 100 percent. This action creates a bird-free corridor in which baited longline hooks can sink, thus reducing seabird mortality.

[More information](#) and [additional reports from the American Bird Conservancy](#).

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CATS INDOORS POSTER WINNERS

Winners of the 2005 National Keep Your Cat Indoors Day children's poster competition were announced last month. Both the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Nongame Wildlife Program and the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources sponsored state-wide poster competitions again this year.

Supporters around the country also sponsored other activities to publicize the day. Highlights included multiple local competitions and news articles.

View the [winning posters](#).

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NAWMP STRATEGIC GUIDANCE

The North American Waterfowl Management (NAWMP), the pioneer "bird plan" launched in 1986, has concluded its first 15 year's of practice. The NAWMP introduced an enviable model of public-private partnerships in bird conservation. An assessment of the first 15 years of experience (1986-2004) is now available. All serious bird enthusiasts would do well to become familiar with the approach, the objectives, the achievements, and the limitations of the waterfowl model. You could start with the ["Strategic Guidance" document for NAWMP](#) just recently released.

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CBBT ACCESS RESOLVED FOR THE PRESENT

In the April 2005 issue of the E-bulletin, we wrote of the controversy over continued birder access to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel (CBBT). With continuing security concerns, the bridge commission was considering closing all access to birders. "Everybody knows that post-9/11, we can't do anything like we did before," said Clement M. Pruitt, head of the bridge's police force.

That could have been the end of it, but birders started negotiating and devising a way to continue access under new circumstances. Birders started collecting information, examining options, and started to push back.

On 14 June, the commission voted on a compromise negotiated with the bridge's executive director and head of security. Under the plan, scientists and researchers would be allowed to go on the bridge-islands once they get a pass (fee: \$50) that could be renewed annually. Amateur birders would have to submit to a security check several weeks in advance and pay \$50 an hour for a police escort.

No one will be especially pleased with the compromise - police or birders - but the birders developed a very good working relationship with the folks at the CBBT. In six months, the commission will reevaluate the plan.

Ned Brinkley, who organized much of the birder alternatives, regrets that he could not convince anyone of the merits of training birders to be on the lookout for potential terrorists, something more substantial than a "community watch" but certainly less than a trained elite force of counter-terrorists.

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BUY YOUR MIGRATORY BIRD STAMP NOW

The 2005-2006 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, commonly known as the "Duck Stamp," goes on sale this month. It costs \$15.

Since the 1930s, more than \$700 million has been raised from stamp sales, with the funding used to secure more than 5.2 million acres of valuable wetland habitat for the Refuge System. Approximately \$25 million a year is currently collected through annual stamp sales.

For those birders with visions of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers glistening in their eyes, it's additionally significant to realize that millions of dollars of stamp revenue have already gone to Cache River and White River National Wildlife Refuges. Surely, more will continue to go to those two refuges. What better way to support this kind of bird conservation?

In addition, the stamp is a bargain, since approximately 98 percent of the revenue from the stamp go through the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund to purchase refuge wetlands. Importantly for frugal birders, the stamp can be used between July of this year through June of 2006 to gain admission to any National Wildlife Refuge in the country that charges an entry fee.

Our suggestion: don't just buy it, display it afield!

For general information on the stamp program and for details on this year's current stamp see: <http://duckstamps.fws.gov/Info/Stamps/stampinfo.htm> and <http://duckstamps.fws.gov/>.

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PALE MALE UPDATE

If you haven't followed the NYC events since the December tumult, Pale Male and Lola have failed to produce chicks in their newly constructed nest on Fifth Avenue at West 74th Street. But, out of left field, there's an unexpectedly upbeat sequel. A Red-tailed Hawk that so closely resembles Pale Male that he is believed to be an offspring - Pale Male Jr. as he has been called-- has succeeded where the closely watched 5th Avenue pair had no young.

Pale Male Jr. and his mate, who has been dubbed Charlotte, are nesting on a corbel, a large concrete architectural ornament, sticking out of the 35th floor of the Trump Parc Hotel, and have produced two young. Both young birds hatched early in June.

And, when it appeared that all was grim for Pale Male and Lola, and in a surprising turn of events, they have mated again. No one knows what the outcome from this occurrence will be.

In the meantime, an article in the July issue of VANITY FAIR "Ruffled Feathers on Fifth Avenue" by Frank DiGiacomo (pg 106-118) is devoted to the Pale Male and Lola saga.

Details can usually be found on these two sites: <http://mariewin.server304.com/marieblog/> and <http://www.palemale.com/>.

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You can also get other excellent bird-oriented "All about birds" information through an Internet project between Swarovski and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology here: <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/>

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