



THE BIRDING COMMUNITY E-BULLETIN

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November 2010
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This Birding Community E-bulletin is being distributed to active and concerned birders, those dedicated to the joys of birding and the protection of birds and their habitats.

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You can access an archive of past E-bulletins on the website of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA): www.refugeassociation.org/birding/birding5.html

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RARITY FOCUS

On 12 October, Alan and Donna McKenzie found and photographed a Wood Sandpiper at the Reifel Bird Sanctuary on the outskirts of the Village of Ladner, Delta, BC. The sanctuary is a well-known and popular British Columbia birding location and a great place for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other species.

The Wood Sandpiper was located in the sanctuary's SW pond, west of the entrance, at a location where there are a number of large logs where dowitchers and yellowlegs regularly perch.

For photos of the Wood Sandpiper, see: http://picasaweb.google.ca/Warbler2020/WhatSNew#

Wood Sandpipers are highly migratory Eurasian shorebirds that occur regularly in North America only as rare migrants in the Aleutians and Bering Sea islands, or as very local breeders in western Alaska. They are accidental visitors elsewhere in North America, with previous definite records for British Columbia (1994), Washington (1988), New York (1907 and 1990), and Delaware (2008). For illustrations of this species, see the National Geographic guide (fifth edition), pages 166-167, or the Kaufman Focus guide, pages 184-185.

A number of birders visited the sanctuary the very next morning in an attempt to relocate the bird; however, they came up empty-handed, as did birders in the following days. Fortunately, on the afternoon of Saturday, 16 October, the Wood Sandpiper was again relocated near the viewing tower and later near the sanctuary's outer dike. On 17 October, at least 100 birders searched in vain for the bird, although two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were found as a consolation prize. The

100 birders searched in vain for the bird, although two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were found as a consolation prize. The Wood Sandpiper never appeared again.

### **ONE-DAY WONDER: ENIGMATIC SNIPE**

Regular readers may remember that two Novembers ago we passed along a convincing report of a Jack Snipe observed near Astoria, Oregon, together with a reference to two recent previous Oregon records (October 2004 and November 2007, both supported by specimens obtained at the same location by the same snipe hunter!):

[www.refugeassociation.org/birding/novSBC08.html#TOC02](http://www.refugeassociation.org/birding/novSBC08.html#TOC02)

Jack Snipe, a Eurasian species wintering mainly from the British Isles and nw. Europe to c. Africa and the Indian subcontinent, is an extreme rarity anywhere in North America, with fewer than 10 reports from localities including Newfoundland, Alaska, California, Oregon, and Washington.

With this in mind, a Jack Snipe flushed by Aaron Lang and his dog on 16 October at Beluga Slough, Homer, Alaska is of considerable interest. Lang's dog initially flushed the bird, after which it dropped into some tall vegetation about 40 feet away. Lang immediately noticed the snipe's small size and intriguing field marks. The bird flushed a total of three times at which time Lang obtained a couple of photos of the bird in flight. Other birders were called, but the snipe was not relocated until early in the evening, when birders obtained three views of the shorebird in flight. Each time it flushed silently and at close range. Even in low light its boldly patterned back small size, and short bill length were noticeable.

This Jack Snipe, a one-day wonder, was to be found on subsequent days.

Photos and description by Aaron Lang can be found here:

<http://www.birdingak.com/>

Cryptic and fairly quiet, this is certainly a difficult species to find in North America. The words "mysterious" and "enigmatic" may best describe its status here. However, these recent discoveries may beg the question: Might there actually be a few semi-regular wintering birds or late-migrating Jack Snipes to be found elsewhere in our Pacific coast wetlands? Birders afield in these regions and habitats should perhaps be aware of this possibility.

### **ANOTHER FAMILIAR DECISION: ESA AND GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE**

Last month, we reported on the "warranted but precluded" status of Sprague's Pipit in relation to the Endangered Species

List:

[www.refugeassociation.org/birding/OctSBC10.html#TOC08](http://www.refugeassociation.org/birding/OctSBC10.html#TOC08)

In the last days of September, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the Gunnison Sage-Grouse is also justified for inclusion on the Endangered Species List but precluded from this status because of other considerations.

This represents a point of collision for science, land use, wildlife management, and dollars. In the final analysis, "getting to the back of the line" is not good for birds.

"The Gunnison Sage-Grouse numbers fewer than 4,000 birds and occupies only about 10 percent of its historic range. Placing this bird on the Candidate List for endangered species protection at some un-named point is an abdication of responsibility," said the American Bird Conservancy's President George Fenwick. The Gunnison Sage-Grouse is found only in six or seven counties in Colorado, and one in Utah. The Gunnison Basin in Colorado comprises over half the species' entire world range.

In March, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decided that the similar Greater Sage-Grouse is also warranted for inclusion on the Endangered Species List but is also precluded from listing. How many more of these decisions are in the wings?

### **GULF UPDATE: WHERE WE ARE NOW**

Although the gushing BP oil well, Deepwater Horizon, was finally plugged with cement and declared "dead" in September, oil continues to wash ashore on National Wildlife Refuges, National Seashores, and other natural areas under state and local jurisdiction. Hundreds of workers are still collecting an estimated 50,000 pounds of oily debris from many vital bird habitats every day.

The Obama administration, under pressure from the oil industry and states on the Gulf, lifted the drilling moratorium on 12 October, a moratorium that the administration imposed in April in the wake of the disastrous BP oil gusher. The ban was scheduled to expire 30 November. Instead, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced the change of date because new safety and inspection rules imposed after the accident had reportedly reduced the risk of another catastrophic blowout. Some drilling supporters say the new rules are too onerous, while critics say significant risks remain in deep-water drilling.

The temporary ban on exploratory oil and gas drilling was lifted immediately, although drilling has been slow to resume while the oil companies work to meet a number of new safety requirements. Toward the end of October, it was revealed that BP and Halliburton knew for at least six weeks before the Deepwater Horizon explosion that the cement mixture being used to seal the bore hole was unstable, "but neither acted upon that data," according to the presidential commission investigating the country's worst-ever environmental disaster. This is one of the first official findings of responsibility for the accident.

Meanwhile, efforts to have offshore oil and gas revenues directed to a reasonable mitigation fund – the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) – are stuck in Congress. While the House of Representatives passed the CLEAR Act which contained provisions to fully fund LWCF to the tune of \$900 million annually, the Senate has yet to act. We covered this story in September:

[www.refugeassociation.org/birding/SepSBC10.html#TOC05](http://www.refugeassociation.org/birding/SepSBC10.html#TOC05)

Just because \$900 million per year is made available through the LWCF doesn't mean that the funds are appropriated by Congress. Moreover, boosting the oil and gas revenue beyond \$900 million for a more robust "conservation royalty" and

dedicating a large proportion to Gulf-coastal acquisition for birds and other wildlife might be an excellent idea given the public's outrage over the Gulf fiasco. Still, what the oil and gas companies have been regularly paying in terms of offshore oil and gas revenue (averaging about \$6.3 billion annually over 5 of the past 6 years – excluding one excessive year, 2008, where the offshore revenues reached beyond \$18 billion) is simply not being directed to fully fund the LWCF. The \$900 million is certainly collected, but it's not all directed to conservation. It's Congress that has failed to appropriate those collected funds for conservation mitigation.

It will now be up to a "lame-duck" Congress to move on this. The lifting of the drilling ban is a good reason to finally secure a guaranteed future for LWCF. The Senate could take the next step by moving on the CLEAR Act. Or there could be another vehicle, some other bill where the LWCF is allocated the real dollars needed for conservation.

Regardless of what happens, you can find good background on the LWCF need, public opinion, and the LWCF track record here:

[http://lwcfcoalition.org/files/General\\_Factsheet\\_Revised.pdf](http://lwcfcoalition.org/files/General_Factsheet_Revised.pdf)

## **URBAN TREATIES**

In mid-October, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the availability of new challenge funding grants for nine additional cities under the Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds (Urban Bird Treaty). The USFWS will also revisit the current nine Urban Bird Treaty cities with challenge grant funds to continue their participation in the program.

The Urban Bird Treaty program, connecting cities and partners to conserve birds through education, hazard reductions, conservation actions, and habitat improvements, is designed to help educate citizens about birds and conserve the birds that nest, overwinter or migrate through urban areas.

Those interested in investigating such funding are encouraged to visit this website:

[www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/Partnerships/UrbanTreaty/urbantreaty.html](http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/Partnerships/UrbanTreaty/urbantreaty.html)

## **IBA NEWS: BC UPDATE**

Since our "rarity of the month" was a shorebird found in British Columbia, some Important Bird Area news from British Columbia is appropriate.

The Important Bird Areas Program in BC is a joint partnership between BC Nature, Bird Studies Canada, and Nature Canada. The most recent issue of BC's IBA newsletter, the program's sixth newsletter, is now available on the BC Nature website. This newsletter contains informative reports, profiles of outreach events, new communication materials, and more. You can find more details here:

[www.bcnature.ca/pages/stewardship\\_projects/IBA\\_publications.html](http://www.bcnature.ca/pages/stewardship_projects/IBA_publications.html)

For other Canadian IBA programs see here:

[www.ibacanada.ca/](http://www.ibacanada.ca/)

And for additional information about worldwide IBA programs, including those across the U.S., check the National Audubon Society's Important Bird Area program web site at:

[www.audubon.org/bird/iba/](http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/)

## **LOOK FOR EGRETS WITH MARKINGS**

Also in Canada, this time in southern Ontario, we have news about Great Egrets.

In the past decade, over 1,200 young Great Egrets have been banded with readable red leg-bands marked with white alpha numerics (number-number-letter) in the Great Lakes region and southward. This year, over 100 egrets were marked with very obvious orange wing-tags with similar alpha-numerics. If you see any marked egrets bearing red leg-bands or with bright orange wing-tags, please try to accurately read the number-letter combinations and report the details (where and when observed and by whom). Send any observations to: [chip.weseloh@ec.gc.ca](mailto:chip.weseloh@ec.gc.ca)

## **STAMP ART: A HAUTMAN AGAIN**

Last month, James Hautman won the 2010 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest. He has previously won the competition three times, in 1989, 1994, and 1998. His painting of a pair of Greater White-fronted Geese will grace the 2011-2012 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp to go on sale in late June 2011. The USFWS produces the stamp, which sells for \$15 and raises about \$25 million annually, to provide critical wetland and grassland habitat for the Refuge System.

There were 235 entries in last month's contest, and James's brother, Robert Hautman, placed second with his painting of a single Greater White-fronted Goose. Robert Hautman is a two-time previous contest winner (1997 and 2001). A third Hautman brother, Joe, has won three times, in 1992, 2002, and 2008. This is serious family talent!

You can view James Hautman's first-place image here:

[www.fws.gov/home/feature/2010/2010DS047.jpg](http://www.fws.gov/home/feature/2010/2010DS047.jpg)

## **BIRD HAZARD SURVEY**

Researchers at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, are studying the risks and benefits to birds caused by human behavior and technology (e.g., alternative energy efforts, cats, windows, and communications) as they are perceived by Americans with varying interests in birds. The researchers do not expect those responding to the survey to know the degree of risk associated with each of these behaviors or technologies. Indeed, some consequences remain unknown. The responses on these perceived risks will help more fully understand public opinions and behavior. The responses are expected to provide tools to raise bird conservation awareness.

The anonymous online survey (which takes about 25 minutes to complete) can be found here:

...the entire, more extensive survey, which takes about 20 minutes to complete, can be found here:  
[www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22BDFEUJWXT](http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22BDFEUJWXT)

### **BOOK NOTES: A WORLD OF BIRDING**

A new National Geographic book, GLOBAL BIRDING, by Les Beletsky, encourages North American readers to tour the world through armchair birding. This book provides the reader with birding wonders overseas, chapter by chapter, location by location, and with introductory advice on where to do, when to go, and how to approach birds in these astounding areas. There aren't many maps, 10 total, in the book's 320 pages, but its 200 photographs are gorgeous, just the kind one expects from National Geographic.

Following two chapters on birding from a global perspective and the geography of birds, six chapters take the reader continent by continent to some of the finest birding locations and some of the most interesting birds in the world. And in case you are wondering, Beletsky also provides the names of key local birding and conservation organizations in each region along with essential contact information.

The book is an invitation to exploration and discovery; it offers a tantalizing look into birding possibilities around the world. It is certain to broaden your birding perspective, too.

### **SETTLEMENT REACHED IN HAWAIIAN RESORT CASE**

In June, we reported on the suit against the St. Regis Princeville Resort over the resort's failure to prevent the deaths of young Newell's Shearwaters and Hawaiian Petrels. These birds, heading from their mountain-slope nesting sites to the sea, are attracted to the bright lights of Kaua'i, Hawaii.

[www.refugeassociation.org/birding/juneSBC10.html#TOC07](http://www.refugeassociation.org/birding/juneSBC10.html#TOC07)

An agreement has been reached in this suit where the resort will further reduce its lighting and fund programs aimed at restoring populations of the threatened birds. The parties have worked to identify additional lighting reductions that will help reduce the number of seabirds at risk at the resort but will also allow the St. Regis to continue to provide guests with a safe and enjoyable experience. Additionally, since these seabirds may still be attracted to the remaining lights, the resort will make contributions to off-site projects aimed at protecting the birds.

You can find further details here:

[www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/101019.html](http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/101019.html)

### **TIP OF THE MONTH: CHECK OUT THE BIRDING LISTSERVS**

When you are leaving your home area – on business or pleasure – and you wish to catch up on some out-of-town birding, it is always a good thing to see what local birders are talking about. Let's say you will be visiting Southern California or Michigan or Florida or Washington DC, and you want to catch up on the local birding scene.

A quick way to do just that is to view the local birding listserv for the area in question. It's a great way to see what birds are being seen, especially which "most-wanted" of your birds or which rarities might be encountered.

For a number of years, Jack Siler has provided a crucial link to most of the vital regional and specialty listservs. It has been a wonderful service. You can view all the listservs through this essential page:

[www.birdingonthe.net/birdmail.html](http://www.birdingonthe.net/birdmail.html)

In each case, of course, you can subscribe to the listserv in question, but that's not required. At Silers' site you can simply view... and learn!

### **THIS MONTH'S QUIZ FOR A NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC BIRD BOOK**

To recognize National Geographic's connection with the E-bulletin, as always we have some fine National Geographic books to distribute to E-bulletin readers. Readers who choose to enter our quick-and-easy contest have the chance to win one of these books. Each of our quiz questions will either relate to one of our news items for the previous month, or it will relate to some event or experience that is due to occur during the current month.

For more on NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC books, see:

[www.shopng.com/birdbooks](http://www.shopng.com/birdbooks)

There will undoubtedly be multiple readers who answer our monthly question correctly, so we will only be able to distribute five copies to readers whose names are picked at random from all those submitting correct answers. Because of shipping constraints, only folks residing in the U.S. or Canada are eligible.

The prize this month will be GLOBAL BIRDING, the book mentioned above in our "Book Notes" section. We will have five copies to distribute.

For more on this book, see here:

<http://shop.nationalgeographic.com/ngs/browse/productDetail.jsp?productId=6200640>

Question for this month: Newell's Shearwater, breeding only in Hawaii's mountains, may be a separate species, but it is currently considered a subspecies of what other shearwater species?

Please send your answer (along with your mailing address) by 18 November to:

[birdingbulletin1@verizon.net](mailto:birdingbulletin1@verizon.net)

Question for last month: If you see a Red Knot next month with an orange "flag" on its leg, in what country would it have been banded?

The answer: Argentina.

Last month's winners were: Steven Juhlin (Cape Girardeau, MO), Jill Mathieu (Norton, MA), Sandra McNew (Colorado Springs, CO), Laimons Osis (Seal Rock, OR), Vivienne Torgeson (Lyons, OR). Congratulations to these winners.

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[www.refugeassociation.org/birding/birding5.html](http://www.refugeassociation.org/birding/birding5.html)

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

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

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