



THE BIRDING COMMUNITY E-BULLETIN

October 2009

This 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](#).

Table of Contents:

- [RARITY FOCUS](#)
- [A SEARCH FOR EXTREME RARITIES](#)
- [FIJI PETREL PHOTOGRAPHED](#)
- [GALAPAGOS ISLAND: GOAT FREE](#)
- [IBA NEWS: MBCC SECURES MORE LAND FOR THE REFUGE SYSTEM](#)
- [NEW RULES ON EAGLES](#)
- [BOOK NOTES: ANOTHER NEW SHOREBIRD GUIDE \(CHANDLER REVISITED\)](#)
- [TIP OF THE MONTH: USE THOSE CALLING CARDS](#)
- [INITIAL CHESAPEAKE BAY REPORTS RELEASED](#)
- [MANX SHEARWATER PAIR PRODUCE VIABLE YOUNG IN MAINE](#)
- [JOINT VENTURE BILL IN CONGRESS](#)
- [CORRECTION: PHILADELPHIA URBAN BIRD TREATY](#)
- [NEWS OF SHAMELESS SELF-PROMOTION](#)

RARITY FOCUS

There were some fabulous candidates for our Rarity Focus this month.

One was a sand-plover found near Staunton, Virginia by Allen Larner and Ed and Nancy Lawler on 6 September. The bird remained until at least the afternoon of 8 September and was seen by a number of delighted observers. The specific identity of the bird – Greater Sand-Plover or Lesser Sand-Plover – remains a question. Photos by several photographers and other details may be found here:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/wendeldh/3895576088/>

Another Rarity Focus candidate species was a European Golden-Plover found by Andy Urquhart on 14 September, near Bombay Hook NWR in Delaware. It was also observed by a few other birders the next morning who watched it for about 30 minutes before it flew off, never to be relocated. To get details check:
<http://jeffreyagordon.com/2009/09/european-golden-plover-near-smyrna-de-photo-by-anthony-gonzon/>

A third rarity contender last month was a Black-tailed Gull at Port Burwell Provincial Park in Ontario on the edge of Lake Erie. The gull was found on 28 September by Brandon Holden, and seen, again, but only by a few birders, the next day. Photos of the bird can be found here:
http://www.peregrineprints.com/ind_WhatsNew.htm

Despite the three excellent rarity candidates above, our number one choice this month was a Western Spindalis

story from Florida.

In early September, it was announced that a pair of Western Spindalis had successfully fledged three young in Everglades National Park at Long Pine Key. The park did not want the nest location made public until the birds fledged, and the last young bird fledged on 1 September.

This represents the first fully confirmed U.S. nesting record of Western Spindalis. Curiously, there actually seemed to be six birds involved: one adult male, two adult females, and the three young. Even more remarkable, the species has been reported at this location in previous years, suggesting that nesting attempts may have occurred in the Long Pine Key vicinity before.

The Western Spindalis, called Stripe-headed Tanager until 2000, is normally a vagrant from the West Indies, and it is a species we have previously reported under our Rarity Focus. For readers unfamiliar with the bird, see National Geographic, p 402-403, the "big" Sibley, page 460, or Kaufman page 320-321. The first-ever observation of the species in Florida was in 1957, but there have since been over 50 records in the state, mostly of the black-backed race from the Bahamas.

Here are the full details and photos of the Long Pine Key birds taken by Larry Manfredi:

<http://www.southfloridabirding.com/html/Western%20Spindalis%20nesting.htm>

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

A SEARCH FOR EXTREME RARITIES

In late August, BirdLife International announced the launch of a remarkable campaign to find 47 rare birds thought to be possibly extinct. This is a global bid to try to confirm the continued existence of 47 species of bird whose existence has not been verified for decades, with at least one species unobserved for 184 years.

The campaign was announced at the 21st British Birdwatching Fair, which this year had as its symbol the rare and endangered Cebu Flowerpecker of the Philippines. The Cebu Flowerpecker, a species feared extinct by the early 20th Century, was rediscovered in 1992, just before the last remnants of its forest home were to be destroyed.

"The mention of species such as Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Jamaican Petrel, Hooded Seedeater, Himalayan Quail and Pink-headed Duck will set scientists' pulses racing. Some of these species haven't been seen by any living person, but birdwatchers around the world still dream of rediscovering these long-lost ghosts," said Marco Lambertini, BirdLife International's chief executive.

The end goal of the project is, of course, the conservation of bird species. Should these birds be rediscovered, serious conservation efforts to keep them in existence will have to be launched.

For more details, see

http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2009/08/lost_and_found.html

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

FIJI PETREL PHOTOGRAPHED

Also in the category of rarities, the very first Fiji Petrel specimen ever collected was taken in 1855 on the island of Gau, in the Fiji Island group; a second was not taken until 1984. Since then, there have only been a handful of reports, mostly of birds colliding with houses on Gau. Until this year nobody had ever positively identified the species at sea.

At long last a live Fiji Petrel was photographed at sea this spring, and the news and photo were announced and published last month. For more information, see here:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/sep/11/fiji-petrel-first-photographs>

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

GALAPAGOS ISLAND: GOAT FREE

Island birds are notably vulnerable, given their potential exposure to invasive rodents, plant-eaters, and disease. Earlier this year, the island of Santiago, the fourth largest island (226 square miles) in the Galapagos Archipelago, was declared goat-free. Goats had been released on the island in the 1920s, and by the 1990s the expanded offspring of these goats had destroyed much of the shrub and tree vegetation in the sensitive highlands of the island.

Santiago is home to nine species of Darwin's finches, including the unique tool-using Woodpecker Finch, and also to threatened species such as the Galapagos Rail and Galapagos Petrel.

This extensive goat-eradication project, led by the Galapagos National Park Service and Charles Darwin Foundation, makes this the largest eradication of invasive mammals from an island ever achieved. With a

foundation, makes this the largest eradication of invasive mammals from an island ever achieved. With no goats on the island, it is expected that vegetation recovery will be rapid, hopefully resulting in substantially increased bird populations.

For more information, see:

<http://www.thedailygreen.com/environmental-news/latest/galapagos-goats-finches-47082704#ixzz0Plx43qSm>

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

IBA NEWS: MBCC SECURES MORE LAND FOR THE REFUGE SYSTEM

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC) meets about three or four times a year. The Commission is authorized to oversee the expenditure of Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp funds and several smaller, funding sources for the purchase and lease of migratory bird habitat for the Refuge System. The meeting in early September was particularly significant.

The Commission approved the expenditure of nearly \$8 million in Stamp funds to add more than 4,000 acres to seven units of the Refuge System. Six of the seven were part of, or adjacent to, recognized Important Bird Areas (IBAs). The six IBA-related acquisitions were:

Tulare Basin Wildlife Management Area, Kern and Tulare Counties, California, with an acquisition of 1,042 acres of easements to protect wetlands and uplands in order to stop the gradual erosion of habitat that supports migrating waterfowl,

Blackwater NWR, Dorchester County, Maryland, with an acquisition of 823 acres to preserve marsh, shoreline, wooded swamp, and forested upland habitat,

Bombay Hook MWR, Kent County, Delaware, with an acquisition of 273 acres to promote and enhance habitat for a diversity of species, particularly American Black Ducks,

Silvio O. Conte NWR, Pondicherry and Mohawk River Divisions, Coos County, New Hampshire, with an acquisition of 761 acres to preserve and protect important waterfowl feeding, nesting, and resting habitat,

Bear River NWR, Box Elder County, Utah, with an acquisition of 700 acres to allow for more efficient use of water resources on adjacent refuge lands that are critical for managing wetland bird habitat, and

Lake Umbagog NWR, Coos County, New Hampshire and Oxford County, Maine, with an acquisition of 438 acres of emergent and forested freshwater wetlands that provide nesting and waterfowl brood-rearing habitat.

The MBCC which has been in operation since the late 1920s is a model of thoughtful and bipartisan bird conservation that operates virtually under the radar, and is largely underappreciated or simply misunderstood.

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

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

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

NEW RULES ON EAGLES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) released a final rule last month that will allow limited incidental "take" or disturbance of eagles through public safety activities or other development projects. The permits will only be granted if they will not impact the goal of maintaining or increasing eagle populations.

The Bald Eagle was removed from the Endangered Species Act in 2007, and incidental take permits had been allowed under the ESA. However, there were no similar provisions under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act once the eagle was delisted.

There are now two new permit types that will be allowed. One would be permitted when the disturbance is associated with, but not the purpose of, an activity (e.g., during real estate development). The second would allow the removal of nests under limited circumstances, particularly if they create safety concerns (e.g., near airports). Deliberate killing of eagles is still outlawed. In order to manage these population impacts, each FWS region will have a limit of no more than five percent of the estimated annual regional eagle productivity.

Interestingly, Bald Eagles and Golden Eagles represent two very different management challenges. "The Bald Eagle population has rebounded in the past decades, and its recovery poses the challenge of managing a healthy population still protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. But unlike the Bald Eagle, the Golden Eagle population is not expanding, and may be in decline," said Paul Schmidt, the USFWS Assistant Director for Migratory Birds. The USFWS has stricter limits for authorizing take on Golden Eagles, with permits issued only for safety emergencies.

The new rules will go into effect next month.

For more details, see:

<http://www.nytimes.com/gwire/2009/09/11/11greenwire-interior-releases-new-rules-for-disturbances-to-892.html>

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

BOOK NOTES: ANOTHER NEW SHOREBIRD GUIDE (CHANDLER REVISITED)

Shorebird aficionados should be pleased to learn of another new and well produced shorebird photo guide by well-known British shorebird expert and photographer, Richard Chandler.

Despite the use of a slightly different terminology for describing shorebird molt than many American birders currently use, the many high quality photographs and succinct plumage and identification descriptions more than compensate for this. Easy to read maps and useful introductory material on shorebirds and their identification make this a fine supplement to an of the more general bird field guides.

At \$35, Princeton University Press has produced Chandler's new SHOREBIRDS OF THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE with its 134 species accounts, represents yet another quality, if not somewhat hefty, specialty bird publication from Princeton University Press (2009).

If you like shorebirds and you enjoy fine photographs, you'll want this book.

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

TIP OF THE MONTH: USE THOSE CALLING CARDS

A year ago in March we hinted that at some point we would describe the use of "birder calling cards" left behind at business establishments as one of our tips of the month. Well, the time has come.

Your two E-bulletin editors recently returned from the Midwest Birding Symposium in northwestern Ohio where over 800 participants were each given a small supply of such "leave behind" cards which indicated that "A bird watcher has patronized your business. Please support wildlife and habitat preservation." Undoubtedly, many business establishments were flooded with these cards during the symposium weekend.

These cards work. They raise an awareness of birder tourist dollars circulating among businesses in communities. We have heard of a number of positive results from all sorts of locations, - results that increase birder visibility and aid support for bird conservation.

In case you haven't seen sample cards, have a look at these (all good for adoption, editing, or further local development):

http://www.bsboird.org/birding/pdf/BSBO's_Birders_Calling_card.pdf

http://www.bluebirdnut.com/Birding_Calling_Cards.htm

http://www.ncbirdingtrail.org/Documents/NCBT_CallingCards.pdf

<http://www.floridabirdingtrail.com/callingcard.html>

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

INITIAL CHESAPEAKE BAY REPORTS RELEASED

In June, it was reported that President Obama signed an Executive Order establishing the Chesapeake Bay as a "National Treasure," and mandated that various federal agencies carry out specific draft plans for the survival of a healthy Chesapeake:

<http://www.refugenet.org/birding/junSBC09.html#TOC02>

Last month, federal agencies released the seven draft reports. They contain a range of proposed strategies for accelerating cleanup of the nation's largest estuary and its vast watershed, all of which are vital to birdlife. The draft reports collectively call for increased accountability and improved performance from pollution control, habitat protection, and land conservation programs at all levels of government. The draft reports could become the first step in a new approach aimed at restoring and protecting the Chesapeake Bay and its waterways in the region, as defined by executive order. The reports are available at:

<http://executiveorder.chesapeakebay.net>

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

MANX SHEARWATER PAIR PRODUCE VIABLE YOUNG IN MAINE

Manx Shearwaters nest throughout the eastern North Atlantic, especially in Iceland and Great Britain. Although they have visited potential western North Atlantic nesting locations for decades, their first North American breeding was not confirmed until 1973 when a pair produced a chick on Penikese Island in Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts. In 1977 another breeding pair was confirmed on an island in Newfoundland; however, since then there have only been hints that the species might be nesting in the U.S.

In 1997 a Manx Shearwater was seen on the 22-acre Matinicus Rock off mid-coast Maine, and a nesting burrow was found the following year. (Matinicus Rock is part of the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge.) An

egg was also found in this burrow in 2005, but it never hatched. In 2006 and 2007, up to 19 Manx Shearwaters were seen around the island, and eggless burrows were found in 2008.

Finally, last month, researchers from the USFWS and Audubon's Seabird Restoration Program discovered a young Manx Shearwater in a relatively shallow burrow at the site - the first time in the United States the species is known to have reached an age old enough to fly.. The burrow was one of six found on the island.

"This is what we all work and hope for," said Stephen Kress, director of Audubon's Seabird Restoration Program.

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

JOINT VENTURE BILL IN CONGRESS

Migratory Bird Joint Ventures - regional partnerships administered by the USFWS along with state, local, and private partners to protect bird habitat - have proven to be one of the most effective bird conservation approaches in practice today. Currently there are almost two dozen joint ventures at work across the continent, ranging from long-established JVs to those in various stages of development.

JVs have effectively created models for prioritizing and solving conservation problems and restoring habitats critical to conserving declining and potentially declining bird species.

H.R. 2188, the Joint Ventures for Bird Habitat Conservation Act of 2009, would formalize the status of the JV approach, further requiring the Secretary of the Interior to develop an official framework for approving, establishing, and supporting JVs in the future.

Specifically, the legislation would:

Encourage the USFWS and other federal land management, natural resource, and agriculture agencies to engage and participate on JV management boards, facilitating interagency collaboration on important bird conservation issues,

Strengthen the USFWS in order to approve JV implementation plans and provide funds and technical assistance to JV management boards and partners, and

Facilitate the use of grants, cooperative agreements, contracts, and other mechanisms to move funds between partners to accomplish the JV mission.

The Joint Ventures for Bird Habitat Conservation Act has already passed the House of Representatives. It awaits action in the Senate, with Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) indicating a major willingness to bring the bill before the Senate Water and Wildlife subcommittee that he chairs.

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

CORRECTION: PHILADELPHIA URBAN BIRD TREATY

Last month we described supportive activity in Philadelphia under the Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds program held at the Philadelphia Zoo that coincided with a meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union. We inadvertently stated that Philadelphia was a new participant in the Urban Conservation Treaty for Migratory Birds program, when in fact it was already an established participant. The ceremony actually acknowledged deepening activity in the treaty program. Details can be found here:

<http://www.fws.gov/news/NewsReleases/showNews.cfm?newsId=190C5617-E54D-B422-631F3B767CCCFC66>

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

NEWS OF SHAMELESS SELF-PROMOTION

Since the Birding Community E-bulletin is in its sixth year of publication and distribution, we are sharing remarks from some of our readers. As previously noted, we will include a comment or two each month this year. These will be placed at the very end of each E-bulletin so you can simply stop reading at this point if you'd like!

"This is The New York Times of birding electronic newsletters. I've been getting newsletters, news items, and press releases about birds and birding for more than 20 years. But the Birding Community E-Bulletin puts all others in the shade. It's always meaty, informative, and insightful. Each item in every issue seems more interesting than the last. It's refreshing to have someone distill the most important bird-related information from all the clutter. I read every single issue."

- Bill Thompson, III, Editor, BIRD WATCHER'S DIGEST

"Like others, I am flooded with e-mail, including a dozen or more periodic bulletins and alerts from bird-

oriented groups. One stands out and always gets priority - the Birding Community E-bulletin. I read it thoroughly and usually save them for future reference. It is just the right mix of serious conservation news - and unlike most, it brings us those rare nuggets of good news, too! - along with fun birding news. And I always know that the reports are researched carefully and are accurate and free of exaggeration or bias."

- Ellen Paul, Executive Director, Ornithological Council

[\(return to table of contents\)](#)

You can access an archive of past E-bulletins on the [birding pages](#) of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) website OR on the [birding pages](#) for our thoughtful corporate sponsor, Steiner Binoculars.

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 OR
- Paul Baicich 410/992-9736, 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.