



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

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

May 2004

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GREETINGS!

Welcome to the first "Swarovski Birding Community E-bulletin" for North America. This brief and fairly simple communication will appear approximately every month, and is intended to keep friends and associates informed about the developing plans for the Swarovski Birding Community here in North America. The E-bulletin will include up-to-date information about both on-line and real-time SBC activities, along with keeping you abreast of important birding and bird conservation news.

The format will not be flashy, but the content will be substantive. We are keeping this E-bulletin as streamlined as possible, so that regardless of the e-mail-management program you have, you will be able to access the content.

As you may be aware, the Swarovski Community effort was launched in the United Kingdom last August, and we intend to have a parallel and expanded effort here in North America before long. The Swarovski Birding mission is as follows:

- * To enhance peoples' fascination and appreciation of birds and wildlife.
- * To create an international community comprised of people who share a passion for birds.
- * To foster an environment that will allow people to gain access to nature through birding and bird protection.
- * To remove impediments to the enjoyment of birds.

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DIGISCOPING

Digiscoping is rapidly replacing photography as the medium of choice for many birders. In keeping with this trend, the material on the Swarovski Birding site will certainly reflect this growth. The quality of images captured by digiscoping is remarkable. For example, about two weeks ago, Neil John Fifer of New South Wales, Australia, won the Gold Medal prize for the "Best Nature Print" in the Sydney International Exhibition of Photography, using a 4 MP digital camera and a Swarovski AT 80 HD spotting scope. This is a remarkable achievement, since the contest was not a digiscoping contest. Fifer's winning image is an outstanding shot of "Pair of Grey Teal at Sunrise." For information on this competition, [take a look](#). To see the winning image, click "SIEP 2004" at the bottom of the page to access the teal photo (found under "Nature Print Awards").

If you want to review a primer on digiscoping, we recommend a few pages by Lawrence Poh, from Malasia, a man considered the "father of digiscoping." For the essentials, [try these pages](#). And for more details on his techniques, [see these pages](#).

More recent digiscoping details can be found through [another collection of links](#) by Mary Scott.

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SWAROVSKI BIRDING IN THE FIELD (TOURS)

There are a several birding trips already scheduled for Swarovski Birding. One particularly interesting trip is scheduled to visit the Galapagos Islands. This departure is scheduled for 2 -16 November 2004, operated and designed by WildWings in the UK. The Galapagos, as you probably know, have over two dozen species of endemic birds, including the endangered Waved Albatross, Galapagos Penguin, and two endemic gull species - the Swallow-tailed Gull and the Lava Gull. Of course, the islands are also home to the celebrated Darwin's finches. Although the total number of birds that is expected to be seen on the Galapagos trip is not large - around 55 species - the trip includes an amazing assortment of species found nowhere else in the world. Trip features include tour guide, Tony Marr, a modern 83-foot long motor yacht, and free participant use of the latest Swarovski optical products. (While in the Quito area, there will be a birding excursion to the Jungle Lodge at Tandayapa, where up to 17 species of hummingbird may be seen at the feeders!) More information about the Galapagos trip can be found [here](#).

Another scheduled Swarovski Birding journey to New Zealand, run in cooperation with MassAudubon and set for late November, is already full. This trip will be co-led by Wayne Petersen and Tony Wilson of Manu Tours.

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WEEKEND WORKSHOPS

The Swarovski Birding Community efforts in North America will eventually include a series of "weekend workshops" designed to improve your birding skills and knowledge. Initial ideas for these workshop topics include raptors, pelagic birds, shorebirds, fall warblers, autumn migration, and digiscoping. Scheduling for these events will begin in the next couple of months. Stand by for more details in the June E-bulletin. If you have immediate questions - and even ideas on desired weekend workshop topics - contact [Wayne Petersen](#).

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CONSERVATION NOTES

BIRD-FUNDING PRIORITIES - For the last year, a number of bird-oriented groups in Washington DC have been developing a list of "bird-funding priorities" - essential federal appropriations issues that include "must-have" items that are needed to stimulate bird conservation. Five essential funding items have been proposed by the Bird Conservation Funding Coalition in light of immediate FY '05 budget goals and the needs beyond. While there are many other important funding needs, there seems to be general consensus that there are five core items upon which 21st-century bird conservation could be built. They are presented here in no particular order, in light of the FY '05 budget:

* North American Wetlands Conservation Act - NAWCA provides funding for conservation projects for the benefit of wetland-associated migratory birds in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The Act, in existence since 1989, is a splendid example of how conservation funding can be leveraged. Since its inception more than \$1.6 billion in partner contributions have been raised to match \$573 million in federal funds in order to save 20.6 million acres of wetlands. For FY '05, the President's budget includes NAWCA funding of \$54 million. The Funding Coalition requests that at least \$54 million be approved.

* Joint Ventures - JVs are regionally based partnerships of public and private organizations dedicated to the

delivery of bird conservation within their boundaries. Originally formed to deal with waterfowl and wetlands, Joint Ventures are now moving rapidly toward delivery of conservation for all birds. All of the bird conservation initiatives in the U. S., such as Partners in Flight, explicitly have recognized Joint Ventures as the conservation delivery-mechanism with the greatest potential for achieving habitat and population objectives. Since their inception in the late 1980s, JV partnerships have leveraged \$2.2 billion in public and private funds to protect, restore, and enhance over 8 million acres of priority habitat across the continent. The Funding Coalition is supporting the \$11.6 million provided in the President's FY '05 budget.

* Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act - the NMBCA provides grants for the conservation of migratory birds in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as within the U.S. The President's budget contains \$4 million for the Neotrop Fund, and the Funding Coalition has requested a fully-authorized \$5 million. The money that Congress has appropriated for the NMBCA has been more than quadrupled by matching funds for projects that protect, restore, and manage habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. Still, this funding vehicle needs major growth, since bird conservation investments in the U.S. will not be effective without making investments to conserve migratory species throughout the hemisphere.

* USFWS Division of Migratory Bird Management - The Funding Coalition has requested at least a \$2.5 million increase over the President's budget for essential bird monitoring and avian research. This support for science is critical to improving capacity to deliver effective bird conservation. This funding would assist the Division of Migratory Bird Management, suffering a \$4.5 million shortfall in the current fiscal year. The President's proposed budget does include an increase of \$4.6 million, but much of this increase is earmarked for specific projects. This still leaves the Division \$2.5 million short of its requirements for delivering the minimum scientific services that were provided in FY '03. The Funding Coalition also recommended that \$767,000 in the budget be approved to fill a documented operating deficit in the research-permits program.

* State Wildlife Grants - When the popular CARA bill was shelved in 2000, "State Wildlife Grants" were devised as a provisional program to allow the state wildlife agencies to fund a wide variety of wildlife-related projects. Although most bird conservationists still feel that a more permanent source of funding for this purpose (to the tune of \$350 million per year) would be desirable, funding of State Wildlife Grants is important to bird and wildlife conservation in the interim. The President's FY '05 budget calls for \$80 million for these grants. The Funding Coalition has requested a boost to \$125 million.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY - For most North American birders, the month of May is a month when the wonder of bird migration take center-stage. International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) was created a decade ago by bird-conservation visionaries at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. The day (officially celebrated on the second Saturday in May, but often observed throughout the month of May, depending on location) continues to focus attention on the spectacular phenomenon of spring migration. Today, it is celebrated through bird walks, youth-education programs, and lectures. This year's theme is "Conservation of Colonial Birds." [Click here for more details.](#)

CRP SLIPPAGE? - The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a highly successful part of U.S. Farm Bill, designed to set aside sensitive cropland for 10 to 15 years in return for rental payments. CRP has been critically important, for example, for reestablishing grasslands in the "Prairie Pothole Region" (the Dakotas and nearby states and provinces) and for providing essential nesting habitat for many waterfowl and other ground-nesting birds. Most CRP enrollments run for 10 years, but the funding and acreage enrollment caps have been fluctuating yearly. Of course, to maintain net CRP acres, new enrollment rates must at least equal expiration rates. Unfortunately, in much of the Prairie Pothole Region in the U.S. we are witnessing recent low acceptance rates, probably due to new scoring criteria. This is an important problem, as the next retooling of the Farm Bill should be crafted in the next couple of years. Bird conservationists should be alert to these concerns.

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ODDS & ENDS

ABA - The SBC staff had an interesting and productive trip to the recent American Birding Association Convention in McAllen, Texas. We did some creative networking, and we helped to explain to friends and associates what the Swarovski Birding effort is intended to accomplish.

And speaking of the ABA, just a couple of months ago, the Swarovski Birding Community was able to co-sponsor the "Annual 2003 Partners in Flight Awards" in with the ABA. The awards were announced and distributed at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, held in Spokane, Washington. There, eight awardees for Partners in Flight (PIF) were recognized, and they each received a carved wooden plaque during the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Director's Reception (hosted the USFWS Director, Steve Williams). This year's awards, jointly sponsored by the American Birding Association and the Swarovski Birding Community, were as follows:

1. C.J. Ralph, Klamath Demographic Monitoring Network
2. Tim Burr, conservation, protection and management of sensitive avian species on military lands in the western United States including Hawaii.
3. Peter Blancher, technical and mapping contributions to the North American Landbird Conservation Plan
4. The Institute for Bird Populations, developing and implementing landbird conservation strategies by modeling.
5. Kirtland's Warbler Training and Research Project, conserving the Kirtland's Warbler, the Bahamas' most elusive bird.
6. Merrie Morrison, "Bird Conservation" magazine
7. Marjorie Schock Derrick, USFWS Communication Tower Construction Guidelines made County law to save birds.
8. Steve Lowrimore, Conservation of Swallow-tailed Kites in the Gulf Hammock region of Florida and the Southeast.

SBC OFFICES - Finally, our North American SBC office at MassAudubon's Joppa Flats Education Center, in Newburyport, Massachusetts, will open shortly. This relationship with Mass Audubon will provide a number of advantages for the SBC, some of which will be described in more detail in future E-bulletins.

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If you have a friend who wants to get future copies of the North American Swarovski Birding E-bulletin, have them contact:

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