



Registration Now Open for AFO 2010 Early Registration with Reduced Rates Ends May 15

The Association of Field Ornithologists will hold their annual meeting in Ogden, Utah, August 12 – 14, 2010. The meeting will be hosted by Weber State University, which is situated between the towering Wasatch Range of the Rocky Mountains to the east and the Great Salt Lake to the west. The conference will feature two days of contributed scientific papers, posters, and symposia. Plenary sessions will include **Craig Benkman** (University of Wyoming), who will speak on the evolutionary ecology of crossbills, and **Charles Duncan** (Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network), who will speak on hemispheric-level efforts to recover populations of declining shorebird species.

Field trips will take place before and after the meeting showcasing western specialties from alpine tundra to desert canyons. **Birding in northern Utah this time of year will be impressive.** In fact, Great Salt Lake was listed by *Audubon Magazine* as one of six “Best Fall Migration Hotspots”! Over 7.5 million birds, representing 257 spe-

cies, utilize Great Salt Lake each year. It is one of the most important sites in North America for migrating and breeding shorebirds, waterbirds and waterfowl and is listed as a site of Hemispheric Importance in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. Fall shorebird migration will be well underway during the meeting.

The AFO encourages ornithologists to use this meeting as a jumping off point to explore the American West. Utah boasts five national parks, more than any other state in the lower 48, as well as eight national monuments and 48 state parks. In addition, Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks are just a day’s drive away. Participants, their families and guests will find a community teeming with fun activities, beautiful mountain vistas and sites of both biological and historical significance. Ogden was listed by *Sunset Magazine* as the city with the “Best Access to the Outdoors.” The landscape is spectacular and provides plenty of activities for the extreme enthusiast or someone just looking for a nice walk.

This meeting also promises to be one of the most affordable ornithological meetings in years. Salt Lake City is just 30 miles away, and is a major hub for Delta Airlines resulting in relatively low airfare. Low-cost dorm rooms will be available. For further information, visit the conference website (<http://conferences.weber.edu/AFO2010/>) or contact the Local Committee Chair, John Cavitt (jcavitt@weber.edu).

View west over the Great Salt Lake from Mount Ogden, above Ogden, Utah. Photograph © by Stephen Trimble, from Trimble’s award-winning book, Bargaining for Eden: The Fight for the Last Open Spaces in America. Inset: Snowy Plover, photo by Michael L. Baird, www.bairdphotos.com.



New Award: "Best Student Paper" *Journal of Field Ornithology*

In a new initiative, the AFO is now recognizing the best paper published by a student or students in each volume of the *Journal of Field Ornithology*. A committee of AFO councilors and members will judge and rank student papers based on the quality, significance, and potential impact of the research. The award winner(s) will be invited to give a special presentation of their work at the AFO's annual meeting, and will receive funds to help cover the costs of traveling to the meeting.

We are pleased to announce that the winners of the first-ever competition are Lauren Rae and Greg Mitchell of the Department of Integrative Biology at the University of Guelph in Ontario.

Their paper, from Volume 80, Issue 4, is entitled "Radio transmitters do not affect the body condition of Savannah Sparrows during the fall premigratory period." The paper was coauthored by Robert Mauck, Christopher Guglielmo, and Ryan Norris.

Radio transmitters are now used widely in studies of avian field biology. Lauren, Greg, and their coworkers asked if transmitters had any adverse effect on the body condition of Savannah Sparrows. Their study was unique in that they monitored condition during the pre-migratory period when birds attempt to acquire substantial amounts of energy to fuel their upcoming migration. Moreover, they looked at the effect of transmitters not only on adults but also on juveniles, which, because of less inexperience foraging, may be more susceptible to the effects of carrying a transmitter.

Another particular strength of this study was that four different measures of body condition were evaluated, including mass, fat-free dry mass, pectoral muscle depth, and fat mass. After a sophisticated set of analyses, results suggested that radio transmitters had no detrimental effect on the condition of the sparrows.

Lauren completed this work as part of a Senior Honors Project while she was earning her Bachelor's degree from the University of Guelph. She is currently finishing a Master's degree in the Cognitive and Behavioural Ecology Program at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Her research now focuses on the impacts of moose on forest bird communities in Gros Morne National Park.

Greg is completing his Ph.D. at the University of Guelph, under the supervision of Ryan Norris and Chris Guglielmo (University of Western Ontario). He is investigating the links between breeding season events, condition, and migratory behavior in Savannah Sparrows of Kent Island, New Brunswick.

Judging this year's Best Student Paper entries were Reed Bowman, Michael Lombardo, Ernesto Ruelas-Inzunza, L. Scott Johnson, and Kathryn Purcell.

For further information on the Best Student Paper Award, see <http://www.afonet.org/JFO/bestpaper.html> or contact Dr. Kathryn Purcell, Chair of the Best Student Paper Committee, at kpurcell@fs.fed.us.



The Best Student Paper Award winners, Journal of Field Ornithology, Volume 80, Lauren Rae (above) and Greg Mitchell (below).



Kearney, Nebraska March 10-13, 2011

The great spring Sandhill Crane migration will provide the backdrop for the 2011 meeting of the Association of Field Ornithologists to be held March 11-13. Joining the AFO at this meeting will be both the Wilson and Cooper Ornithological Societies.

Every year, more than 500,000 Sandhill Cranes, 3-5 million geese (Canada, Cackling, White-fronted, Ross', and Snow), and 7-9 million ducks converge on the central Platte River and Rainwater Basin in Nebraska. Whooping Cranes, Bald Eagles, dancing Greater Prairie-Chickens, and prairie dogs can also be seen. This is one of the most magnificent wildlife spectacles to be found anywhere on the planet.

More details on the meeting and different options for traveling to Kearney will be posted on an official meeting website in the near future, but please feel free to direct any preliminary questions to the chair of the Local Committee, Mary Bomberger Brown at mbrown9@unl.edu. For more information about the crane migration, Nebraska birding, and the greater Kearney metropolitan area, see www.rowsanctuary.org, www.whoopingcrane.org, www.nebraskabirds.org, www.nebraskaflyway.com, www.chickendancetrail.com and www.visitkearney.org.



Sandhill Cranes by Kim Lowes, <http://www.kimlowes.ca/>

Vancouver, British Columbia, 2012

Looking ahead... AFO will be joining the other major ornithological societies for the 2012 North American Ornithological Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia. Dates to be determined.

Journal of Field Ornithology Article Highlighted on the BBC's "Earth News" Website

In the first issue of the *Journal of Field Ornithology* this year, Ricardo Canales-del Castillo, José González-Rojas, Irene Ruvalcaba-Ortega, and Ángel García-Ramírez of the Conservation Biology Laboratory of the Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon in San Nicolas de los Garza, Mexico, reported finding three new breeding sites of the Worthen's Sparrow (*Spizella wortheni*), one of the world's rarest birds (Volume 81, Pages: 5-12).

This discovery was featured in a lengthy article by Matt Walker on the BBC's Earth News website.

As described in more detail in Walker's article and the original paper, only a single specimen of Worthen's Sparrow was ever taken in the United States, in 1884, near Silver City, New Mexico. It is now considered extinct in the U.S. It was once probably common across the Mexican Plateau, but now has a very restricted breeding range in northeastern Mexico. Until now, we have had little information about where within this reduced range the remaining birds were breeding. This has hampered efforts to conserve the species.

Dr. Castillo and his team found nests at three sites in the La Soledad Valley, which occupies part of two Mexican states, Nuevo Leon and Coahuila. Based on their research Dr. Castillo told the BBC that the most optimistic estimate is that 500 individuals of the species remain.

For further information the reader is referred to the original paper and to the BBC summary at (see: http://news.bbc.co.uk/earth/hi/earth_news/newsid_8576000/8576551.stm).



Worthen's Sparrow photograph by Antonio Hidalgo
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/antoniohidalgo/>

Meet the Nominees to Join the AFO's Governing Council

The AFO council would like to thank Michael Braun, Adrienne Leppold, and Kimberley Young of the outgoing Class of 2010 for their many years of service to AFO. As for the new Class of 2013, the Nominations Committee proposes that existing councilor J. Dylan Maddox move into that class to serve a second term and be joined by an impressive slate of nominees, who appear below. The nominees will attend the council meeting held in Ogden, Utah in August just prior to the annual conference. AFO members will vote to approve the slate of nominees at the business meeting in Ogden on August 13.

Daniel R. Ardia

Dan is an Assistant Professor in the Biology Department and the Biological Foundations of Behavior Program at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Dan's research is focused on the evolution of life histories in birds, particularly at the interface of physiology and behavior. He is especially interested in the how environmental conditions drive life history tradeoffs. He is currently involved in studies of the evolution of clutch size in *Tachycineta* swallows as well as the causes and consequences of variation in egg temperature and incubation behavior in this species. Dan also does substantial work in the area of ecoimmunology, i.e., studying immune activity within the framework of how organisms interact with their environment and how immune activity tradeoffs with other life history traits.



Paul Hamel

Paul is a Research Wildlife Biologist in the USDA-Forest Service's Southern Hardwoods Laboratory in Stoneville, Mississippi. Paul studies impacts of forest management and landscape processes on the biology, conservation, and management of Neotropical migratory birds. He is also involved in inventory and monitoring for Neotropical migrants and other nongame birds, and the impacts of forest management on birds and other animals. Paul's present focus is the biology of Cerulean Warbler, including the use of GIS technology for analyzing the distribution and abundance of this species in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley. He serves on the steering committee of the Cerulean Warbler Technical Group and is a member of the steering committee of the International Rusty Blackbird Technical Group.



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John P. McCarty

John is a Professor of Biology and the director of the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. John obtained a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Cornell University where he worked on the behavior and ecology of Tree Swallows. After working on a variety of research topics, including the effects of environmental contaminants on breeding birds and the importance of frugivory for forest birds, John spent three years as a AAAS Science Policy Fellow in Washington D.C., working with the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, the USDA Forest Service, and other agencies to synthesize and communicate scientific information to policy makers. Currently, his lab studies topics related to the conservation and management of birds in agricultural landscapes. Recent research includes a long-term study of Dickcissels and other grassland birds and work on the stopover ecology of migrating Buff-breasted Sandpipers in the Rainwater Basin region of Nebraska.



Andrea K. Townsend

Andrea is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Cornell University. Andrea won the very first Best Student Presentation Award given out at an AFO meeting, in 2007 in Orono, Maine. Equally at home in the field and in the genetics lab, Andrea is currently assessing habitat-driven variation in inbreeding depression among a number of cooperatively breeding birds, including the American Crow, the Florida Scrub-Jay, and the Red-backed Fairy-Wren. Her past field research has included extensive experience following the unique social

behavior of crows in suburban Upstate New York as well as varied experiences working with threatened and endemic species in the Dominican Republic.

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