

AFO Afield



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From Sea to Sky: NAOC-V Set for Beautiful British Columbia

Some things are worth a long wait. Consider the return of a missing geolocator, the annual passage of migrants in spring, or test results for extra-pair paternity in your demographic study. But what could be worth a six-year wait? The Fifth North American Ornithological Conference, of course.

After an excellent 2006 program in Veracruz, Mexico, the NAOC moves to Canada for the first time with workshops, meetings, and field trips running from August 12 to 22, 2012. (The conference's main program takes place August 14–18). The site of this year's ornithopalooza is the University of British Columbia, located between the Strait

of Georgia and the North Shore Mountains in beautiful Vancouver.

The local organizing and scientific program committees have planned a meeting to remember, with plenary speakers, paper sessions, and symposia topics that span the full breadth of ornithology and the far reaches of the continent. And while engrossing talks and natural wonders have come to typify the NAOC, this conference will also feature lively discussion about the future of our field and its professional societies (see page 2).

Don't miss this opportunity to reconnect with classmates and colleagues, immerse



yourself in information and ideas, and get excited all over again about studying birds.

View from the Rose Garden on the University of British Columbia campus.

D'Arcy Norman





Travel Tips from a Conference Insider

By Lee Robinson, AFO Secretary

For over a year and once a month, I have driven from Seattle to Vancouver to attend the Local Organizing Committee meetings at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Here are a few things I have observed or noted from these trips:

1. First and foremost, if you are a US citizen, go get your passport out, open it up and check the expiration date. You MUST have a VALID passport to enter Canada and to return to the US; your driver's license no longer is an acceptable document for going through customs. All children 16 and older also must have a valid passport; children younger than 16 must have a certified copy of their birth certificate.
- 2.. If you are flying into Seattle and renting a car, be sure to allow plenty of time to get through the border. It takes about three hours to drive from downtown Seattle to the border. During summer months, going through border security can be a long wait (45 minutes or longer). I have found it often takes longer to cross back into the US than to go into Canada. Have your binoculars (you ARE bringing your bins) handy when coming back to the US as there are some great tidal flats you can scan while waiting. Fall migration will be well underway.
3. You should consider flying directly into Vancouver International Airport (YVR). Gas is expensive (relative to the US) and there is a wonderful regional transit system that was set up for the 2010 Olympics. The SkyTrain runs from the airport to downtown and buses from there to UBC.
4. Right now the US and Canadian dollars are just about equal in value, but the Vancouver shops I've visited do not take US currency. Credit cards are the best option except for small purchases, for which a \$10 minimum may apply.
5. Vancouver is a very international city with lots of great "Mom & Pop" small eating establishments of any number of delicious cuisines. I have sampled Irish, Lebanese, Indian and Chinese dishes all within walking distance, or a short bus ride, from the campus.

A Conference Sampler

Plenary speakers

Fiona Schmiegelow on boreal bird ecology and conservation
Pete Marra on carry-over effects and seasonal interactions
Roxanna Torres on sexual selection and life history strategies
Irby Lovette on the evolution of warbler diversity, behavior and ecology

Field trips

Shorebirds of the Fraser Delta
Marine birds and mammals of the Salish Sea
Vancouver North Shore coast and mountains
The Okanagan Valley from sagebrush to alpine meadow

Workshop and symposium topics

Estimating abundance and occupancy
Communicating through the media
Using and contributing to avian collections
Acoustic monitoring
Avian disease ecology
Life-cycle conservation of migrants
Impact of marine renewable energy
Phylogenetics, diversification, and conservation of birds

And more

Silent Auction
Quiz bowl
Student-professional dinner
Nearby museums, gardens, parks, and trails

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Travel Tips from AFO Secretary and Conference Insider

Continued from page 2

6. Weather—YES! This maritime climate ranges from cool, drizzly mornings to warm (17 °C/63 °F) sunny afternoons (and it is not “East Coast humid” at all). Evenings usually are cool (teens C/ 50’s F) and a rain jacket is highly recommended. If you will be on one of the field trips, full rain gear should be considered. Check an online forecast a few days before departure and pack accordingly. And don’t forget your hat and sunscreen!
7. The UBC campus is located on a peninsula that juts into the Strait of Georgia and Burrard Inlet. On a clear day the Canadian Coast Mountains, where many of the alpine Olympic events were held, seem close at hand. Some fun places for you and the family to visit include Stanley Park (bike rentals available) and the Aquarium “next door” (www.stanleypark.org), Bard on the Beach—usually 2 Shakespeare plays every day/evening (www.bardonthebeach.org), Grouse Mountain (how appropriate AND you can hear the newly described Sooty Grouse)—a great place to hike, and take the gondola ride either up or down the mountain (www.grousemountain.com), Granville Island—an “urban montage” of fresh produce,

bakeries, a brewery, arts and crafts, music and markets of all sorts (www.granvilleisland.com), Chinatown, the Capilano Suspension bridge—way cool (www.capbridge.com) and right on the UBC campus there is the Botanic Gardens, the Museum of Anthropology, the Beaty Biodiversity Museum and the UBC Farm. Marine Drive forms the north and west sides of campus (more or less) and has a wonderful hiking/jogging trail alongside it as well as several access points to the beach. Jericho Beach has kayak and wind surfer rentals and lessons; Wreck Beach is “clothing optional.”

The Local Organizing and Program Committees have been putting together an outstanding conference including not only plenary speakers, four days of symposia, contributed papers and posters, but also the movie “People of a Feather” (www.peopleofafeather.com), bird band jams, a Canada vs. US softball game (all Latinos become honorary Canadians for this event) and lots of workshops and field trips. Be sure to check the NAOC-V website (www.naoc-v2012.com) frequently for updates. We look forward to seeing you at the conference.

AFO’s Role in the Proposed Society for Ornithology

By Kathryn Purcell, AFO Vice-President

By now, most of you are probably aware that the AFO and other ornithological societies have been experiencing declines in membership and revenue for many years. A number of factors have contributed to the problem, including the rise of electronic publishing and a shift from taxonomically-based science to functionally oriented disciplines. Last year the American Ornithologists’ Union (AOU) formed a committee to explore ways to revitalize ornithology and ornithological societies in the Americas. This is not the first attempt to address the contemporary challenges facing our field. Even so, the AOU committee started with a blank slate and developed a creative and far-reaching proposal to achieve the full potential of ornithology in the Americas, including the Caribbean. “A Vision for the Society for Ornithology” (SFO) was posted on the Ornithology Exchange in March (www.ornithologyexchange.org). The 45-page document presents a rationale for unifying ornithologists within a new, non-profit professional society.

Over the winter, the AFO was invited to help explore the goals and priorities of this proposed society. In April, the Council voted unanimously to participate in planning

discussions so that our interests are served in the event that we decide to join. By choosing to engage in the planning process, the Council acknowledges that the problems facing ornithological societies are real and serious and need to be addressed. The primary challenges revolve around the loss of members and revenue. Over the last decades, society membership has declined slowly, and continues to decline a bit more each year. AFO is no exception. The decreases we are seeing in membership renewal rates are small, but steady enough to be of concern.

Other challenges to our societies include the transition to electronic publishing. Many of us have nearly instant, online access to journals through our universities, agencies, and other institutions. While this has made science widely available to interested readers, online access to journal articles has exacerbated the decline in membership because journal access has historically been one of the primary reasons to join a society. As a result, the ornithological societies are competing with each other for members, and societies in general have been less successful in recruiting and retaining younger members.

In the coming months, AFO representatives will serve on three committees that are charged with revising the current SFO implementation plan. These committees include equal representation from all interested societies. Our involvement will keep us informed. This does not mean that the AFO endorses the idea of a new society and we have no obligation to join the SFO, but our involvement will ensure that issues and initiatives important to the AFO will be considered.

The next few years will be very interesting ones and these are hard decisions. We clearly need to rethink how our societies function and the services they provide to the ornithological community. As we move ahead, we welcome input from you, our members, through a forum we have created on the Ornithological Exchange. To join the conversation, you will first need to create an account. When you have an account, go to the “Forums” tab, scroll down to “Societies”, and then click on “Member Discussions” under “Association of Field Ornithologists”. Please take a look at “A Vision for the Society for Ornithology” and let us know what you think.

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Best Student Publication 2011

By Diane Neudorf

The winner of the annual Best Student Publication Award in the *Journal of Field Ornithology* (JFO) is Melissa Price, a recent Ph.D. graduate from Loma Linda University in California. Melissa's winning paper was "Population status, habitat dependence, and reproductive ecology of Bahama Orioles: a critically endangered synanthropic species", *Journal of Field Ornithology* 82:366-378.

One of the world's rarest species, the Bahama Oriole (*Icterus northropi*) is confined to three major islands collectively known as Andros, The Bahamas. The species is synanthropic, preferring to nest in urban residential areas. Very little was known about the ecology of this critically endangered species. Melissa set out to determine the population status, breeding ecology, and potential threats to the Bahama Oriole as part of her dissertation research. Her coauthors, were fellow graduate student Valerie Lee, and advisor William Hayes.

Through extensive surveys, Melissa and her colleagues estimated that the world popu-

lation of these orioles at 141 to 254 individuals. They found that anthropogenic habitats were frequently used for nesting, but that the orioles preferred nesting locations with adjacent natural areas (coppice habitat). The birds used coppice habitat frequently during the nonbreeding season and for foraging during the breeding season.

Melissa and her colleagues determined that lethal yellowing disease of coconut palms, the orioles' preferred nesting tree, and loss of natural coppice habitat were the biggest threats to the orioles. Brood parasitism by shiny cowbirds also had a negative impact.

JFO published many excellent student papers in 2011, but Melissa's stood out in the thoroughness of the study and its significance in highlighting management priorities for this critically endangered species.



Eric Gren

Melissa with a Bahama Oriole.

Melissa recently completed her PhD at Loma Linda University studying the behavioral ecology, taxonomy and population genetics of the Bahama Oriole. She is currently keeping busy teaching at local universities and taking care of her 8-month-old daughter and 2-year-old son. This summer she will begin a post-doctorate position at the University of Hawaii at Manoa studying conservation genetics of endangered endemic tree snails. Melissa plans to attend the 2013 AFO meeting to receive her award.

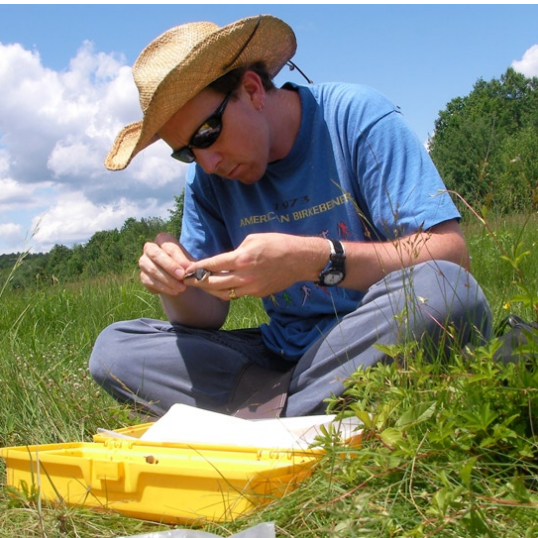
Working in urban areas, Melissa sometimes encountered curious onlookers during her research.

Ed Elmendorf



Four Accomplished Ornithologists Nominated for the AFO Governing Council

Ever since its 1922 origin as the New England Bird Banding Association, the AFO has succeeded thanks to the talents and collective effort of its members. Those who serve on the AFO Council provide essential leadership in promoting the scientific study and dissemination of information about birds. Four accomplished ornithologists have offered their services to the Council and will be formally

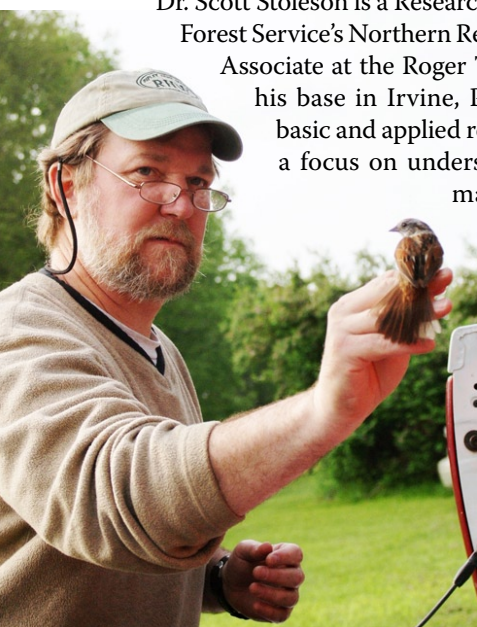


Ethan Clotfelter

Geoff Giller

nominated for election at the NAOC. Ethan Clotfelter and Scott Stoleson will stand for election to three-year terms, while Alex Jahn and Valentina Ferretti have been nominated as replacements for Councilors expected to assume new responsibilities as Officers.

Dr. Ethan Clotfelter, Associate Professor of Biology at Amherst College, has published on a broad range of topics, including brood parasitism, parental care, behavioral endocrinology, life history evolution, and environmental toxicology. His most recent work has focused on incubation behavior in cavity-nesting tree swallows. Some of his results have been published in the *Journal of Field Ornithology*. In fact, Ethan was introduced to AFO by one of his graduate mentors, former *JFO* editor Ken Yasukawa. After being elected to the Council, Ethan said that he hopes to emulate Ken's commitment to serving the Association during his time as councilor.



Scott Stoleson

Terry LeBaron

Dr. Scott Stoleson is a Research Wildlife Biologist for the US Forest Service's Northern Research Station and a Research Associate at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute. From his base in Irvine, Pennsylvania, Scott conducts basic and applied research on avian ecology, with a focus on understanding the impacts of land management practices on the distribution, abundance, and demography of bird populations. His current and recent work includes Cerulean Warbler response to timber management, post-breeding habitat use by forest-interior birds, and effects of oil and gas development on forest ecosystems. Scott's perspective will enhance the AFO's contributions to the advancement of science-based bird conservation. After accepting



Alex Jahn

Jose Ignacio Giraldo

his new position on the Council, Scott wrote, "I have been a member of AFO since 1994, in part because of its strong commitment to both Neotropical ornithology and student research. I believe we as a professional society need to carefully consider whether and how we can continue these commitments as we discuss the potential merger of AFO into a united Society for Ornithology." Dr. Alex Jahn is a post-doctoral research associate at Universidad de Buenos Aires, where he studies the mechanisms underpinning the life history and migratory strategies of birds. He is especially interested in how variations in life-history, physiological, and ecological traits illuminate evolutionary history and conservation needs. His scientific articles have appeared in many journals, including *JFO*. When asked to describe his involvement with AFO, Alex replied, "I have been involved with the AFO for several years, primarily as Spanish Editor for the *JFO*. I grew up in South America and do most of my research on migratory birds there, and I am eager to help the AFO establish a stronger presence in Latin America. I am especially interested in helping students from across the hemisphere gain international field research experiences. I look forward to helping the AFO continue to be a leader in disseminating information about field-based ornithology, and in stimulating state-of-the-art research techniques by students and professionals."

Dr. Valentina Ferretti shares Alex's interest in avian life-history strategies and in working in Latin America, where she has studied the White-rumped Swallow and Bay-capped Wren-spinetail.



Valentina Ferretti

Kelsey Low

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Ornithologists Nominated for the AFO Governing Council

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Her work focuses on questions that explore the interface between ecology, behavior, and evolution of mating systems and breeding biology. As a post-doctoral fellow working with Dr. Robert Curry at Villanova University, Valentina is studying variation in behavioral and genetic traits associated with mate choice along the distributional range of two hybridizing species of chickadees. As a Latin

American herself, she has always been interested in maintaining ties with students and researchers in Latin America, by providing increased opportunities for their participation in ornithological research and, more generally, in science and education. Valentina will work within AFO to help strengthen the existing connections with our Latin American members and to help build new ones.

Vancouver Specialties—Bird Quiz

Nature Vancouver has posted a list of the city's avian specialties, along with directions to the metropolitan area's best birding sites at www.naturevancouver.ca/avian_specialties. Can you identify these four examples? Answers appear on page 8.

All photos by Mike Yip, www.vancouverislandbirds.com

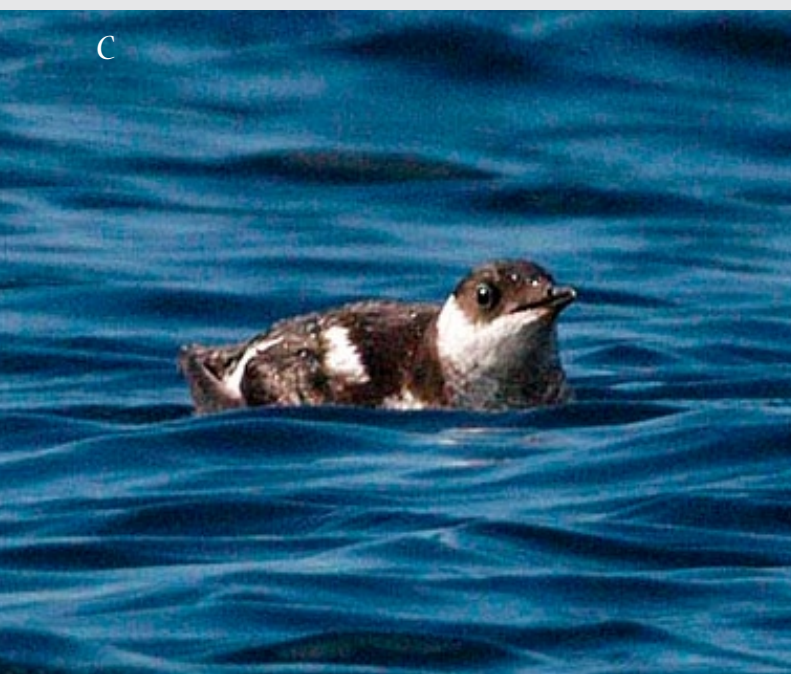
A



B



C



D



Deadlines Approaching for Skutch Research Award and Latin American Bergstrom Research Awards

July 15 is the application deadline for two awards supporting ornithological research in Latin America and the continental Neotropics, respectively.

The Pamela and Alexander F. Skutch Research Award

The Pamela and Alexander F. Skutch Research Award supports minimally invasive, preferably observational research into the life histories, social relations and reproduction of little-known birds of the continental Neotropics, including Trinidad and Tobago. The Association of Field Ornithologists welcomes applications for funding from amateur or professional ornithologists of any nationality. Preference will be given to Neotropical-based applicants that have had some previous experience with the geographic region as well as the bird species involved in the proposed study. Applicants and/or their primary research supervisor must be members of the Association of Field Ornithologists prior to the application deadline to be eligible for an award. One award of up to \$10,000 US is offered annually. Complete details are available at www.afonet.org/grants/Skutch/Skutch.html, along with application forms in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

The E. Alexander Bergstrom Memorial Research Award—for Latin American proposals

E. Alexander Bergstrom (1919–1973) was Vice-President of the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association (now the Association of Field Ornithologists) and the Editor of *Bird-Banding* (now the *Journal of Field Ornithology*) for 21 years. These awards honor his memory and dedication to bird research. The purpose of the award is to promote field studies of birds by helping to support a specific research or analysis project. In judging among proposals of equal quality, special consideration will be given to those that: 1) focus on avian life history, 2) use data collected all or in part by non-professionals and/or 3) employ banding or other marking techniques. Research in both the US/Canada and Latin America is supported, however the deadline for the US/Canada award is in January.

To be eligible, applicants and/or their primary research supervisors must be members of the Association of Field Ornithologists prior to the application deadline. Latin American awards are restricted to individuals based at Latin American institutions (individuals from Latin America that are studying or working at a US or Canadian institution are eligible for US/Canada awards only). Non-professionals, undergraduates, Masters and PhD candidates are all eligible for the Latin American competition. Approximately three awards (maximum \$1500 US each) are made to applicants based in Latin America. Complete details are available at www.afonet.org/grants/Bergstrom/Bergstrom.html, along with application forms in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

If your work meets the application criteria for either of these awards, please consider submitting your proposal this summer. Applications must be received on or before July 15, 2012.

Vancouver Specialties

Answers to Bird Quiz

- A. Red-breasted Sapsucker
- B. Black Turnstone
- C. Marbled Murrelet
- D. Black-throated Gray Warbler

Support AFO with Donations to the Silent Auction in Vancouver

Proceeds from the NAOC Silent Auction will fund student activities and/or student travel within each participating society. Please consider supporting fledgling ornithologists by bringing a bird-related item AND designating AFO as the beneficiary of the item's sale. Anything birdy will do, including art, clothing, books, memorabilia from past meetings, even a vacation rental in a birding hotspot.

AFO Afield is a publication of the Association of Field Ornithologists (AFO), and is freely available on the AFO website, www.afonet.org. Please direct comments, questions, suggestions, etc. regarding this newsletter to the editor Dan Lambert <dlambert@vtecostudies.org>. Send address changes to OSNA Business Office, 5400 Bosque Blvd, Suite 680, Waco, Texas 76710 USA, or send email to <business@osnabirds.org>. For information about membership in AFO, contact OSNA at the address above or call (254) 399-9636.

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