PICOIDES

Bulletin of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists **Picoides, March 2009**
Bulletin de la Société des Ornithologistes du Canada **Volume 22, Number 1**

Michael Blom with 52-day old wing-tagged SaskatchewanTurkey Vulture, August 4, 2008.
Photo by Wayne Nelson.

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Editor's Message

Welcome to the first issue of *Picoides* of 2009! I hope everyone had a good Christmas and having a great start to the year!

I congratulate members Spencer Sealy and Jean Piuze on their well-deserved awards. Also, I wish to express my condolences to the family and friends of Allen Keast.

Please consider nominating a deserving member with a Jamie Smith or a Doris Huestis Speirs Award. We have interesting notices on Turkey Vultures, Breeding Bird Surveys and OD Boggs. Congratulations to Bridget Stuchbury and her team on their exciting article on bird migration in *Science.* Also inside this issue are several other ornithological notices and features. Don't forget to mark your calendar for the 2009 SCO-SOC AGM in Edmonton on August 20-23, 2009. I encourage everyone to participate in the Baillie Birdathon and Breeding Bird Surveys this spring.

In the last issue, the Mute Swan article certainly stirred up strong emotions and greater interest in SCO. I was particularly upset by some of the abusive language aimed at the authors and myself. However, I was heartened by significant support for my editorship and for the principle of free speech. As well-educated scientists, we should be above using such abusive language and be respectful of different points of view. I know this article was imperfect but it appeared to raise interesting questions and had some reputable supporting evidence behind it. I viewed this article as an opinion piece appropriate for *Picoides* but now realize it may have been better to have it submitted elsewhere. On page 13, I publicly apologize to SCO members and Ornithological Council for publishing such a flawed article. In the Mute Swan debate, I remain neutral and I am committed to giving equal opportunity in *Picoides* to all sides in this debate. In this issue, I welcome two respectful and peer-reviewed responses to the Mute Swan article by Alison and Burton and I do welcome respectful responses to any other article in *Picoides*. There is now a SCO committee to help me vet articles when needed.

This debate has lead to the need to remind everyone that i) *Picoides* is not a peer-reviewed journal, (ii) publication of an article in *Picoides* does not imply endorsement by the Society of Canadian Ornithologists and iii) the editor relies on authors to submit accurate, honest and error-free (as much as possible) submissions.

Please take note of photo submission guidelines on page 4 and the disclaimer on page 10. On a final note, I need all members to continue to submit material and I welcome your feedback to improve *Picoides*. After all, it is your publication. I look forward to hearing from you. Have a safe, wonderful spring!

Cheers,

Rob Warnock
Picoides
Editor

Virginia Rail. Photo by David Raitt.

PLEASE NOTE THE PICOIDES DEADLINES! Deadlines are now February 15, May 15 and October 15.

Submit submissions to warnockr@accesscomm.ca

Attention Photographers- Submission Guidelines!

To assist the Picoides editor with managing photo submissions, please do following

- Use tiff or jpeg file format
- Minimize file size while maintaining photo quality. This helps keep overall file size down and speed up downloads
- Use descriptive file names. Generic file names from photo software are not very helpful.
- Supply captions for all photos. Good captions include common names of species, names of people, locations, activities, behaviours and dates and very importantly photo credit.

Your submissions are greatly appreciated and always welcome.

Northern Flicker. Photo by David Raitt.

Rob Warnock, Editor of Picoides

Call for Nominations for D.H. Speirs Award

The Doris Huestis Speirs Award is the most prestigious award given by the Society of Canadian Ornithologists and is presented annually to an individual who has made outstanding lifetime contributions to Canadian ornithology. Past awardees include professionals who work at museums, government agencies, private companies and universities, as well as amateur ornithologists.

To nominate a candidate for the Speirs award please provide the Chair of the award committee with the name of the nominee and supporting information that describes the nature and scope of the nominee's contributions and impact in Canadian ornithology. This could include their efforts to advance conservation, science, public education, or some combination of these or other contribution(s).

Nominations for the 2009 award may be sent to:

Dr. Marty Leonard, Department of Biology, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 4J1
Phone: (902) 494-3540; Fax: (902) 494-1123; e-mail: mleonard@dal.ca

Nominations will be accepted until 1 June 2009.

For more information on the award and previous award winners go to: http://www.sco-soc.ca/speirs_award.htm

The Jamie Smith Memorial Award for Mentoring

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS - 2009

In recognition of Jamie Smith's contribution to fostering ornithological research, the Society of Canadian Ornithologists has created The Jamie Smith Memorial Award for Mentoring in Ornithology.

This award honours established ornithologists - either in academia, industry, non-government or government agencies - nominated by students, colleagues and/or peers to have displayed excellence in mentoring a new generation of professional or amateur biologists. The award will be presented to the recipient at the Society's annual meeting.

Nomination: Details concerning nominations can be found online at (**http://www.sco-soc.ca/jamie_smith/jsma_nominations.htm**). A coverletter (max 1000 words) outlining why the nominee should receive the distinction should accompany the nomination. The nomination must be accompanied by at least two additional letters of support (max 500 words) that indicate they have seen and support the nomination letter. They may then add their own comments on the nominee.

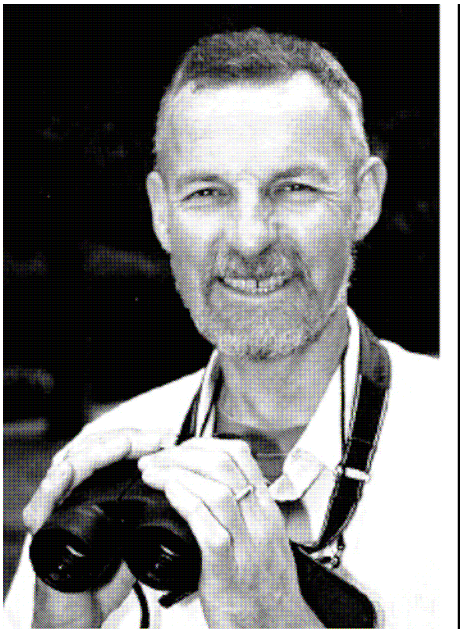
Deadline for submission of nominations is 3 April 2009.
Nominations should be sent, by email, to:
Ken Otter
Chair - Jamie Smith Memorial Mentoring Award Committee
email: otterk@unbc.ca

Society of Canadian Ornithologists
Société des ornithologistes du Canada

Le prix commémoratif Jamie Smith de tutorat en ornithologie

APPEL DE CANDIDATURES - 2009

En reconnaissance des efforts de Jamie Smith qui a toujours encouragé la recherche en ornithologie, la Société des ornithologistes du Canada a créé le prix commémoratif Jamie Smith de tutorat en ornithologie.



Ce prix honorera des ornithologues reconnu(e)s – qui ont œuvré dans l'enseignement, dans l'industrie, dans des agences gouvernementales ou des organisations non-gouvernementales – mis en nomination par des étudiants, par des collègues et/ou par leurs pairs pour avoir fait preuve d'excellence dans le tutorat auprès d'une nouvelle génération de biologistes amateurs ou professionnels. Le prix sera remis au cours de la réunion annuelle de la Société.

Candidatures : La façon de procéder aux mises en nomination est décrite à **http://www.sco-soc.ca/jamie_smith/jsma_nominations_fr.htm**.
Une lettre (max 1000 mots) justifiant le fait que la personne candidate devrait recevoir ce prix devra accompagner toute mise en nomination; celle-ci devra être accompagnée d'au moins deux lettres d'appui confirmant que les signataires ont lu et appuient la lettre de mise en nomination. Ces lettres peuvent aussi justifier en détail la mise en nomination, sans toutefois dépasser 500 mots.

La date limite pour soumettre une candidature est le 3 April 2009.
Les mises en nomination doivent être envoyées par courriel à :
Ken Otter
Président - Jamie Smith Memorial Mentoring Award Committee
e-mail: otterk@unbc.ca

Society of Canadian Ornithologists
Société des ornithologistes du Canada

SCO-SOC
Annual Meeting/Réunion annuelle
EDMONTON 2009
August 20-23 Août
University of Alberta/Université d'Alberta

The Society of Canadian Ornithologists will be hosting its 2009 annual conference at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, AB from Thursday August 20 to Sunday August 23, 2009. The conference will take place at the TELUS Centre for Professional Development on the University of Alberta campus. The conference social will be held on Thursday in the atrium of the Telus Centre with presentations Friday and Saturday in Telus Centre –Room 150. A poster session is planned for Friday evening in the Telus Centre Atrium. A barbeque-style banquet will occur at Fort Edmonton Park on Saturday evening. Field trips are arranged for Sunday for interested participants as well as early morning bird walks on Friday and Saturday.

The University of Alberta campus is located in central Edmonton near the beautiful North Saskatchewan River. The Telus centre is located on the East-Central section of the U of A campus (Corner of 111 Street and 87 Avenue – Building 93). Underground parking is available in the Telus Centre as well as surface parking in Lots N & U (111 Street and 89 Avenue). Registration will begin on April 15, 2009. Online submission and registration can be found at http://sco.biology.ualberta.ca.

Program:
Plenary lectures will be given by Dr. Spencer Sealy and Dr. Grant Gilchrist that will highlight the incredible breadth of Canadian ornithology and our contributions to international bird understanding and conservation.

Dr. Sealy is a professor in the Department of Zoology at the University of Manitoba and will speak on what he has learned from more than 30 years of ongoing research at Delta Marsh, Manitoba that has fundamentally structured the way we think about passerine ecology. His talk is entitled “Cowbirds and Their Hosts: Warblers to Catbirds”.

Dr. Gilchrist is a research scientist with the National Wildlife Research Centre in Ottawa. Grant’s work on the population dynamics of birds in remote northern ecosystems has provided critical insights into the interrelationships between climate change, human hunting, and northern conservation. He will speak on the “Conservation Biology of the Northern Eider in Arctic Canada and West Greenland”.

The remainder of the program will be made up of submitted papers and posters that will be selected by the organizing committee. Abstracts for poster and oral presentations can be submitted online beginning April 15, 2009 at: http://sco.biology.ualberta.ca.

The closing date for abstract submission is June 5, 2009. Lead authors will be contacted as to whether their presentation has been accepted by mid-June 2009.

Avian Conservation and Ecology - Écologie et conservation des oiseaux: New Issue Announcement

Editors-in-Chief, Marc-André Villard and Tom Nudds are pleased to announce the publication of Volume 3, Issue 2 of Avian Conservation and Ecology - Écologie et conservation des oiseaux (http://www.ace-eco.org/ ACE-ÉCO). In their editorial, "Establishing a New Scientific Journal: Trials and Tribulations", Villard and Nudds reflect on 3 years of innovative open access publishing in a culture dependent on traditional methods for measuring journal impact (http://www.ace-eco.org/vol3/iss2/art7). This issue also marks the launch of a new special feature: Conservation of Prairie Birds: Causes and Consequences of Population Declines, edited by Nicola Koper and Tom Nudds <http://www.ace-eco.org/docs/callforpapers/special_feature_grasslands.pdf>. We encourage you to join us in our commitment to the rapid dissemination of freely accessible research by submitting a manuscript to either the special feature or a regular journal issue.

To view the full text articles from the newest issue, select the HTML or PDF links from the online Table of Contents.

Les co-rédacteurs en chef, Marc-André Villard et Tom Nudds, sont heureux d'annoncer la publication du dernier numéro (volume 3, numéro 2) d'Écologie et conservation des oiseaux (<http://www.ace-eco.org/> ACE-ÉCO). Dans leur éditorial, <http://www.ace-eco.org/vol3/iss2/art7/> "Lancer une nouvelle revue scientifique: défis et stratégies", Villard et Nudds se penchent sur trois années de publication innovatrice en ligne dans le contexte d'une culture dépendante des facteurs d'impact traditionnels pour le choix des revues.

Ce numéro marque aussi le lancement d'une nouvelle section spéciale: <http://www.ace-eco.org/docs/callforpapers/special_feature_grasslands.pdf>

Conservation des oiseaux des prairies: causes et conséquences du déclin des populations, corédigée par Nicola Koper et Tom Nudds. Nous vous encourageons à vous joindre à nous afin d'assurer la dissémination rapide des travaux de recherche librement accessibles en soumettant un manuscrit pour publication dans la section spéciale ou dans un numéro régulier de la revue.

Afin d'accéder aux articles plein-texte du nouveau numéro, cliquez sur le lien HTML ou PDF de la table des matières <http://www.ace-eco.org/>.

Celle-ci est aussi reproduite ci-dessous.

Spencer Sealy Receives 2008 William Brewster Memorial Award from AOU

Spencer G. Sealy at Delta Marsh, Manitoba, 11 June 2008. Photograph by Mélanie F. Guigueno.

Colleagues describe Spencer Sealy as an "ornithologist's ornithologist" with an exceptionally broad and deep knowledge of birds and a passion to understand their behavior and ecology. He is recognized as one of the world's experts on avian brood parasitism, having produced, with students and collaborators, a body of research that has greatly added to our understanding of complex behavioural and evolutionary interactions between parasitic cowbirds and their passerine hosts. Sealy has shown what can be achieved when practical field skills are combined with a keen sense of hypothesis-testing in natural systems. With long-term field work centred at the Delta Marsh Field Station in southern Manitoba, supplemented by studies in Texas, Saskatchewan, and Costa Rica, he has used observational and experimental techniques, as well as microsatellites and radiotelemetry (in collaboration with H.L. Gibbs), to elucidate mating systems and to identify attributes of hosts that promote selectivity by cowbirds in their choice of nests. Those attributes include nest-defense behavior and its acquisition, nest placement, host quality, and host tolerance of parasitism, all examined in terms of the consequences of parasitism for the hosts. Sealy's research not only covers proximate mechanisms, but provides a thorough study of coevolution between parasite and host. Over the past two decades, he has authored or coauthored about 50 papers on brood parasitism alone, and many of the findings of those studies have been synthesized in chapters published in *Parasitic Birds and their Hosts: Studies in Coevolution* (edited by S.I. Rothstein and S. K. Robinson), *Ecology and Management of Cowbirds and their Hosts* (edited by J.N.M. Smith and others), and *Avian Incubation: Behaviour, Environment, and Evolution* (edited by D.C. Deeming).

Although some cowbirds apparently lay indiscriminately in multiply parasitized nests, Sealy's work has broken new ground by highlighting the potential of cowbirds to be more selective in their use of hosts. They may lay fewer eggs on smaller egg-laying ranges than previously thought and use information on host quality and nesting synchrony to maximize their fitness. Removal of a host egg by female cowbirds in association with laying is variable, and its function is complex and still poorly understood. Incubation of cowbird eggs and of the host's eggs may be enhanced. Sealy's research has also revealed finely tuned responses by hosts; some hosts discriminate between female cowbirds and predators at the nest and react according to the level of the threat in relation to the stage of the nesting cycle. Acceptance of costly parasitism by most hosts seems to outweigh losses incurred during rejection, but in some cases, evolutionary lag may be invoked. Cowbird embryos develop unusually quickly, outpacing host embryos and, hence, usually hatch first, particularly in nests of smaller hosts. After hatching, cowbirds receive more food because they are better competitors, not because they possess exaggerated features that hosts cannot resist.

Sealy grew up in Saskatchewan, where he developed an interest in birds at a young age. While working toward his M.Sc. (University of British Columbia, 1968) and Ph.D. (University of Michigan, 1972; supervisor Robert W. Storer), he completed the first major research on the breeding ecology of auklets on an island in the Bering Sea and feeding and breeding biology of murrelets in the Queen Charlotte Islands. This background led him to join others in founding the Pacific Seabird Group in the early 1970s. Immediately after graduation, he was hired at the University of Manitoba, where he is currently a Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences. This pioneering ornithological researcher on the Canadian prairies has been especially instrumental in developing a large and active research program at Delta Marsh, which has focused on the breeding ecology of passerines such as the Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) and on brood parasitism. His lab group has been large, diverse, and productive. With about 50 students over the years, Sealy has published more than 230 papers on a vast array of species and topics.

Throughout his career, Sealy has maintained a strong interest in natural history and has actively supported the efforts of amateur ornithologists and regional journals such as Blue Jay. He was also responsible for developing the ornithological collection at the University of Manitoba and has visited innumerable bird collections around the world to gather information on topics ranging from historical distributions of birds to plumage, cowbird hosts, and egg characteristics. Maintaining such an active research program is a considerable achievement, considering Sealy's heavy administrative responsibilities in several ornithological societies, including the Society of Canadian Ornithologists – Société des ornithologistes du Canada and the AOU, for which he is currently Editor of The Auk.

Although Spencer Sealy is being honoured with the William Brewster Memorial Award particularly for his thorough and insightful body of work on avian brood parasitism, few ornithologists can match the breadth of his knowledge and the diversity of his interests, which include avian morphology, distribution, behavioural ecology, and physiology. Such expertise comes only with extremely hard work and exceptional dedication over more than four decades. The American Ornithologists' Union is proud to recognize such a researcher, who continues to inspire students and colleagues.

Award criteria .—The William Brewster Memorial Award consists of a medal and an honorarium provided through the endowed William Brewster Memorial Fund of the American Ornithologists' Union. It is given annually to the author or coauthors (not previously so honored) of the most meritorious body of work on birds of the Western Hemisphere published during the 10 calendar years preceding a given AOU meeting

Disclaimer

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Rob Warnock, Picoides Editor

Brown headed Cowbird. Photo by Jean Sébastien Guénette.

The North American Breeding Bird Survey in Canada recognizes one of its top volunteers!
Connie Downes

Spring is just around the corner and the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is gearing up for another year and looking for new participants!

The BBS is a long-term, international monitoring program designed to track the status and trends of diurnal landbird populations throughout the United States and Canada. Every year beginning in 1966, volunteer participants throughout the United States and Canada have risen in the pre-dawn darkness to begin their BBS routes. Routes are run during the peak of the breeding season for songbirds, usually early June. Participants are expert birders, highly skilled in bird identification and are able to identify birds both by sight and by song. Over 3000 survey routes are run each year across the continental U.S. and Canada. In 2008, the BBS was extended to northern Mexico making it a truly continental survey.

The BBS plays a vital role in efforts to conserve landbird populations in North America. Bird populations are subjected to numerous widespread threats including habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, land-use changes, climate change and chemical contaminants. Results from the BBS inform wildlife managers and researchers of significant changes in landbird population levels and help identify species or species groups that are in decline.

Jean Piuze and his wife, Andrée Boucher, are presented with an award of recognition for their contribution to the Breeding Bird Survey. Left to right: Gilles Falardeau (CWS), Yves Aubry (CWS), Norbert Lacroix (Président, Club des ornithologues de Québec), Andrée Boucher**,** Jean Piuze. Photo supplied by Connie Downes.

The success of the BBS is in large part a result of the dedication of its volunteer participants, without whom the survey would not exist. Last spring, the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), Environment Canada, had the opportunity to give special recognition to one of the top BBS volunteers in Canada, Mr. Jean Piuze from Quebec City. Mr. Piuze is only the second BBS participant in Canada to complete 100 BBS routes. He has participated in the BBS for 30 years, assisted during much of this time by his wife, Andrée Boucher. In 2007 alone, Mr. Piuze ran 15 BBS routes in northern Quebec covering some 6,500 km in his car and contributing over 200 hours of his time to the task! In recognition of his accomplishments, at the April, 2008 meeting of the *Club des ornithologues de Québec*, representatives from Environment Canada presented Mr. Piuze with two books on birding

and a letter of congratulations. The CWS is happy to have been able to make this special acknowledgment of the efforts of just one of the many dedicated and skilled BBS participants.

Currently, some 500 BBS routes are run each year in Canada. However, there are many more participants needed to fill vacant routes or to replace those who have retired. Many of our BBS participants are 55 years of age or older and we expect there will be more retirements in the near future. While we have sufficient coverage to get reasonable precision of trends and annual indices in much of southern Canada increased participation would help fill geographic gaps in coverage and increase species coverage and precision of the results. We need to expand our coverage farther north to get better information on poorly understood areas such as the boreal. In other areas, such as the prairie grasslands, the large distances and sparse population make it difficult to recruit participants.

If you are able to identify all species by sight or by sound, have good hearing, and are willing to donate one day or more a year to the Breeding Bird Survey, please contact us. You can check the BBS website for more information and for addresses of the BBS national office or provincial/territorial coordinators (http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/nwrc-cnrf/default.asp?lang=en&n=416B57CA).

With continued efforts from our volunteer participants, our U.S. partners, the Canadian Wildlife Service, our provincial/territorial coordinators and many others the BBS will continue to grow in North America and be a vital tool for bird conservation.

Status Change

All winter long
we fed the sparrows
meanwhile grumbling about
the scarcity of birds
no colourful redpolls, crossbills
no grosbeaks or waxwings
oh, occasional blue jays, woodpeckers
some nuthatches and chickadees
mostly just drab house sparrows
two dozen or so adults and young
that crowded the feeders, scattering seed
when they weren't scolding in the cedar.

Now, in February, those same sparrows
suddenly show heightened plumage patterns
the males with white cheeks and
bills black as ink and now
those birds are frenziedly dancing
about our neighbors' purple martin house
where all the doors, alas, are closed
but, oh, those chattering sparrows
suddenly are looking better, thank you.

Bob Nero

White-winged Crossbills. Photo by Jean-Sébastien Guénette.

Obituary
Allen Keast 1922 - 2009

Raleigh Robertson and Paul R. Martin

Allen Keast in Sydney, Australia outside his childhood home. Photo by Floyd Connor.

Dr. Allen Keast passed away on Sunday, 8 March, at about noon, in Kingston General Hospital where he was admitted about three weeks ago due to an infection in his heart. He was in his 87th year.

Allen was born November 15, 1922 in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. He was an avid naturalist from his earliest boyhood - a passion that continued throughout his career. A family myth suggests that as soon as Allen opened his eyes, his old Scottish grandfather pushed his head up to a bird's nest so he could see into it. As a young boy, he fashioned his interest in natural history by finding nests and being fascinated by the details of colour and pattern of birds' eggs, finding it both a challenge and a thrill to find a nest and add to his egg collection. Even at this early age, his love of nature and his curiosity led him to many outdoor adventures on his own; he told with great pride and fondness how his grandmother allowed him, at age 8, to take a billy can and matches into the bush alone to make tea.

Following high school, Allen served in the Australian Army, being stationed for some 20 months in New Guinea, specifically in New Britain. By this time, his exploration of natural history and, in particular, of the world of birds had led him to develop his typing skills so that he could transcribe his nature notes. This in turn got him a typing job with the command in New Guinea, and provided him with the opportunity to explore the natural history and the avifauna in this tropical rainforest habitat that was of such great interest to him. Rumour has it that his fellow soldiers delighted in putting whatever specimens they could lay their hands on (snakes or otherwise) into his bed for him to find. Upon completion of his military service, Allen attended the University of Sydney from 1946 to 1950 when he was awarded a B.Sc. with first class Honours. He continued his education at Sydney, while also holding a post as Assistant Curator of Birds, Reptiles and Amphibians at the Australian Museum, and earned a M.Sc. degree in 1952. He recounted with great delight and gratitude how, as an ornithologist at the Australian Museum, he had many opportunities to learn from some of the great amateur naturalists and ornithological masters of the time. Many of these colleagues were self-taught in this regard.

In 1953, Allen was awarded the Peter Brooks Saltonstall Scholarship at Harvard University for his Ph.D. studies. At Harvard, Allen was the first graduate student supervised by one of the leading evolutionary biologists of our time, Professor Ernst Mayr. He also worked with the renowned comparative anatomist, Alfred Sherwood Romer. The Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard published Allen's PhD thesis, "*Bird Speciation on the Australian Continent*" in 1961.

After earning his PhD in 1955, Allen became Curator of Birds, Reptiles and Amphibians at the Australian Museum in Sydney, a position he held from 1955 to 1960. He then held a Visiting Researcher position at the Edward Grey Institute at Oxford University, as well as an appointment in 1962 as Visiting Biologist in South African National Parks, Pretoria, South Africa.

Allen had a very strong interest in Australian natural history and he was also keenly interested in functional morphology and the role of evolution in shaping adaptations and hence community structure. He recognized that the fauna of the isolated island-continent of Australia was very different from that of the southern continents of Africa and South America, and this led Allen to produce major

works on evolution in the southern continents.

Allen joined the Biology Department at Queen's University at Kingston in 1962 as Assistant Professor, and quickly moved up through the ranks to Full Professor, a position that he held until his retirement in 1989.

Upon coming to Queen's, and finding himself in Canada, Allen was faced with a different biota in the cold-dominated, highly seasonal north temperate region, and he saw an opportunity to study biogeography and the forces molding community structure on a much smaller scale – that of the fish fauna in the isolated lakes of southern Ontario. He established a field program at the Queen's University Biological Station at Lake Opinicon, and for more than 30 years examined comparative morphology and competition in those fish communities. This work extended to bird communities, and led to his edited volume "*Biogeography and Ecology of Forest Bird Communities*," published in 1990 and spanning a diversity of communities from around the globe.

Allen's early interest in natural history and in birds led him to continued work on birds, and involvement with the ornithological communities in both Australia and North America throughout his career. Similarly, his interest in biogeography and the evolution of faunas led him to also continue work on large-scale biogeography and on vertebrate community structure. Hence, Allen never had to choose between these somewhat disparate but complimentary avenues of endeavour, and he managed to balance three major research thrusts, dealing with birds, with fish, and with large-scale biogeography.

Throughout his career, Allen was a strong proponent of field studies and field stations for both research and teaching, recognizing the value of exposing both undergraduate and graduate students to study organisms in their natural environment.

During Allen's time at Queen's, he trained many undergraduates and at least 27 graduate students. He published at least 50 primary research papers, 60 book and conference chapters and 7 books on biogeography. His work served to draw the attention of the world's ecologists and evolutionary biologists to the unique biogeography of Australia. In the Canadian lakes, he was a leader in demonstrating that the ecology of fishes changes dramatically as they grow. He recognized and took advantage of the unique opportunity that lakes provide – that of a suite of organisms locked in isolation in a common environment, often competing for common resources. Over the 25 years he studied fish communities in Eastern Ontario's myriad lakes, especially at the Queen's University Biological Station, he produced another 30 scientific papers in this field.

One of Allen's great strengths was to synthesize. During his career, he edited or co-edited numerous volumes on evolution, biogeography and the relationships of biota, including several on birds. One of his more significant works was a 1980 volume on "*Migrant Birds in the Neotropics*" co-edited with Eugene Morton, that focused attention on issues of conservation for species that inhabit multiple regions throughout their life cycle, and highlighted a deficiency in our knowledge of Neotropical migrant birds on their wintering grounds.
As Professor Emeritus following his retirement, Allen continued his involvement in field studies, and persisted with his passion for writing. He maintained an active interest in the department, and especially in the Queen's University Biological Station, right up until his death. Allen's generosity and passion for field studies and for the biology station led him to endow the J. Allen Keast Lake Opinicon Undergraduate Research Fellowship in addition to establishing endowments for lectureships at both the University of Sydney and Queen's University.

In many ways, Allen Keast was larger than life - a generous, passionate, and dedicated biologist with a charm and personality that were both unique and memorable. He will be greatly missed by many friends and colleagues.

Allen was predeceased by a younger brother, John. His sister, Janet Baker, who with her husband, Sydney, lives near Seattle, survives him.

Corrections to Mute Swan paper by Alison and Burton

I have since come to learn that the Mute Swan paper by Alison and Burton contained factual errors. There is now a SCO committee to assist the editor with fact checking of submissions. I have addressed Picoides' status as non-peer-review publication elsewhere in this issue. I apologize to members of Society of Canadian Ornithologists and especially the Ornithological Council and its staff for publishing these errors that harmed their public credibility. Specifically, I want to correct the following:

1) The Ornithological Council's Executive Director is named Ellen Paul, not Helen Paul. She did not represent herself to be the attorney for the Ornithological Council in the comments submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. At no time has Ellen Paul represented herself as an attorney in this or other matters involving the Ornithological Council; she has not practiced law since 1991, before she became a staff member for the Ornithological Council.

2) The Ornithological Council was not involved in lobbying for the *Migratory Bird Treaty Reform Act*.

3) Subsequent to the enactment of this statute by the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, acting as directed by the U.S. Congress, published a notice in the Federal Register comprising a "*Draft List of Bird Species to Which the Migratory Bird Treaty Act Does Not Apply*." The Alison/Burton piece implies that the Ornithological Council was somehow involved in the development of this Federal Register notice, but that in fact, the Federal Register is a publication of the United States government and the Ornithological Council played no role in the publication of the notice.

4) The Ornithological Council submitted comments addressing various aspects of the criteria for exclusion of a species, but did not address any particular species on the list. Mute Swans were mentioned only once, and then only to point out that "*The Migratory Bird Treaty Act* is silent about whether a country can protect taxa that are not included in one or more of the treaties. In practice, each country has some latitude about how to interpret the treaty. Indeed, Canada is electing to protect Mute Swans, or at least giving its provinces the option to do so, and yet apparently accedes to the U.S. decision not to protect Mute Swans." Therefore, the statements by Alison and Burton that the "reasoning is flawed and evidence goes against it" were erroneous.

5) Alison and Burton took out of context a statement made by the Ornithological Council, in comments made jointly with the Society for Conservation Biology and the Wildlife Society, in November 2009, pertaining to a change proposed by the U.S. Department of the Interior about the manner in which the Endangered Species Act is implemented. That statement, regarding the extent to which federal agencies in the United States employ staff with scientific expertise was incorrect. In fact, the comments argued that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has the requisite biological expertise to make determinations about the impact of agency actions on endangered species, whereas other agencies - to whom this new policy would delegate this determination - do not. The Burton/Alison piece implies that this statement pertains to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and to the determination made by that agency with regard to the Mute Swan. The letter does not address the Mute Swan or the Migratory Bird Treaty Act at all, and asserts that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does have the biological expertise to make this kind of decision.

6) The Ornithological Council did not address a scientific issue in a manner that involved flawed reasoning or that contradicted the available evidence, as the one comment about Mute Swans did not involve a scientific issue; that in fact, the letter did not address the extensive discussion in the notice published by the USFWS about the scientific merits pertaining to the status of the Mute Swan.

Rob Warnock
Editor of Picoides

Historical Information on Bird Distributions Indicates that Mute Swans Were Introduced to North America

Robert Askins, Department of Biology, Connecticut College, New London, CT 06320, USA

In a recent issue of Picoides, Alison and Burton (2008) challenged the long-accepted view that the Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) in North America are derived from captive birds imported from Europe. Using information from historical accounts; paleontological and archaeological records; and descriptions of current swan distributions, they argue that the Mute Swan was already present when Europeans settled North America, and therefore is a native (not an introduced) species. Unfortunately their paper was not peer-reviewed, so it is particularly important to assess their sources of information and their methods before accepting their conclusions. I will focus on the historical records from early European explorers and settlers that they cited. I will also address the scientific information on swan distributions from the past 300 years that they chose not to consider in their analysis. Others are responding to their paleontological, archaeological and distributional evidence.

The most concrete historical evidence presented by Alison and Burton for the occurrence of Mute Swans in North America at the time of European settlement is the painting of a swan by John White. The painting was completed in the 1500s in Virginia. Alison and Burton argue that this is clearly a Mute Swan because of the curved neck, raised wings and knob on the bill. The shape of the neck is often used as a general field mark for distinguishing both Tundra Swans (*C. columbianus*) and Trumpeter Swans (*C. buccinator*) from Mute Swans, and standard field guide illustrations show the first two species with straight, vertical necks and Mute Swans with sinuously curved necks. This difference in posture is not dependable, however, because Tundra and Trumpeter swans often have curved necks when they are in relaxed positions (Figures 1, 2), while alert Mute Swans may have straight necks. A comparison of photographs in the Birds of North America accounts for Tundra and Mute Swans demonstrate that either species can show a straight-necked or curve-necked profile (Limpert and Earnst 1994; Ciaranca et al. 1997). The knob on the bill in the painting would be diagnostic for Mute Swan, but it is smaller than in either a typical male or female Mute Swan. The

Figure 1. Tundra Swans at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, Washington. Note the curved necks of many of these swans. Photograph by Gerrit Vyn.

Swans have longer, more pointed tails (Ciaranca et al. 1997). The long, thick bill shown in the painting is most similar to that of a Trumpeter Swan, a species that originally occurred on the eastern coast of North America (Mitchell 1994). Mute Swans and Tundra Swans have thinner, shorter bills with a sloping, concave upper surface, and this is probably why this painting is sometimes labelled as a Trumpeter Swan. (Some of John White's other paintings show birds with inaccurate proportions, however. For example, see his painting of the Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*) at the British Museum Images website (http://www.bmimages.com/resultsframe.asp?W=4&F=0001&Step=37); both the bill and tail are disproportionately long for a Brown Noddy.) The other reliable characteristic for distinguishing Mute Swan is the orange bill color. The painting shows a black bill like that of a Tundra

Swan or Trumpeter Swan, but this is apparently inconclusive if the authors are correct about the paint becoming darker over time. If the painting originally showed the orange bill with a black base that

Figure 2. Trumpeter Swans (with one Mute Swan on the far right) at LaSalle Park Marina, Burlington, Ontario. Note the curved necks of many of the Trumpeter Swans. Photograph by Ken Abraham.

characterizes the Mute Swan, however, then one might expect to see two dark tones (the original black and the darkened orange). The entire bill appears to be uniformly dark black. Overall, the swan depicted in the painting appears to mix characteristics of different species of swans, so it cannot be conclusively identified as a particular species.

This detailed comparison of the White painting with swan photographs is probably not very relevant, however. I suspect that the iconic image of a curved necked swan with raised wings would be so strongly engrained in the mind of any 16th century Englishman that he would draw swans with these characteristics after seeing them from a distance. Because the swan was a symbol of royalty and aristocracy in England and was a common element in heraldry in both England and continental Europe, swan iconography was highly standardized, and the curved neck, raised wings and knobbed bill were part of this image.

The earliest European visitors and settlers perceived their surrounding through a European lens. For example, my efforts to deduce the types of birds that were common in New England at the time of English settlement from early accounts such as “New Englands Prospect” by William Wood (1634) ended when I found only vague descriptions of “linnets” and “partridges” (European birds that are not found in North America) or general descriptions of “swans” and “eagles” with no indication of the particular species. Only the most distinctive birds, such as hummingbirds and turkeys, can be precisely identified in these accounts. John White is well known for his painting exceptionally accurate illustrations of indigenous people (Hulton and Quin 1964), but even he would have been influenced by European expectations and assumptions.

The other historical information presented by Alison and Burton consists of vague travelers’ accounts of unidentified species of swans. Nothing in these accounts suggests that Mute Swans were involved. The more parsimonious explanation is that Tundra or Trumpeter Swans were observed. These species were known to occur in North America, and their historical distribution has been carefully documented with museum specimens as well as from archaeological sites (Lumsden 1984). Their distribution and seasonal occurrence differed from current distributions before the extensive

destruction of wetlands in central North America and the near extinction from which the Trumpeter Swan is now recovering, so differences from current distributional or migration patterns in historical records do not constitute a strong case that these observations represented a third species of swan.

While emphasizing inconclusive observations of unidentified swans, Alison and Burton ignore the large amount of precise evidence about bird distributions in the 18th and 19th centuries. Why weren't Mute Swans collected or painted by experienced and widely traveled early naturalists such as Mark Catesby, Alexander Wilson and John James Audubon? Specimens, not notes based on visual observations, were the only accepted source of information on bird distributions until the 1940s, when field guides and better optics made visual identification reliable. In the 1800s dozens of naturalists and professional collectors traveled to every region of North America collecting both common and rare birds. Common birds were collected from each region to determine whether there were regionally distinctive populations (subspecies). By the 19th century, the professionals were joined by hundreds of amateur ornithologists, virtually all of whom used shotguns to collect specimens. The hundreds of thousands of study skins prepared by professional and amateur ornithologists were preserved in natural history museums. North American museums have preserved four to five million bird specimens (Peterson et al. 2005), a large proportion of which were collected in North America. Every state and province has at least one such collection, and until recently the distributions of bird species were mapped primarily by using information from these collections. For example, the detailed descriptions of distribution of waterfowl in Bent (1923 - 1925) are based primarily on museum specimens. Even small and elusive songbirds that live deep within swamps, such as Bachman's Warbler (*Vermivora bachmanii*) and Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*), are represented in museum collections. It is difficult to conceive of how a large, conspicuous species such as the Mute Swan would not end up in some of these collections if there had been a North American population. If they had been rare, they would have been more highly sought after. (There are dozens of Ivory-billed Woodpecker specimens in collections, for example.) If there were one or two specimens in collections, this might indicate that Mute Swans were occasional winter vagrants from Eurasia, like Eurasian Wigeons (*Anas penelope*) or Tufted Ducks (*Aythya fuligula*), but as far as I know there is not even a single specimen from before the period of known introductions of Mute Swans in the 1800s. A breeding population of Mute Swans certainly would have yielded numerous specimens in a number of museums. Why did Mute Swans disappear from the record for 200 to 300 years? Were they extirpated in the 1600s only to be reintroduced in the early 1900s? Why would they go extinct in North America at a time when only a narrow coastal band of eastern North America was settled by Europeans?

Alison and Burton also ignore the carefully documented evidence for the first records and subsequent spread of Mute Swans in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The references to the historical spread of Mute Swans are summarized in Appendix 1 of Ciaranca et al. (1997). Feral birds were first recorded close to known captive populations of Mute Swans, and they slowly spread out from several regions where they originally escaped from captivity. The historical evidence indicates that they spread from places like the Boston Public Garden and large private estates in Long Island, not from some hidden refuge in the wilderness where a native population had remained undetected for more than 200 years.

In the process of gathering vague accounts of swans in North America and ignoring the precise and easily verified record of bird distributions based on museum collections, Alison and Burton provide a misleading description of the available historical information. Other than a painting of a swan that has a mix of characteristics of different swan species and may have been heavily influenced by the standard European iconography of swans, they provide no new information about the historical record of Mute Swans in North America. They certainly do not demonstrate conclusively that Mute Swans were found in North America at the time Europeans first settled the region.

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Birds and Climate Report

Reprinted from Bird Studies Canada E-newsletter February 20, 2009

The National Audubon Society has released a new report on the winter distribution and movements of birds in North America on February 10, 2009. According to report co-author and Audubon Director of Bird Conservation Greg Butcher, 58% of the 305 widespread bird species that winter on the continent have shifted significantly north since 1966. The newest analysis reveals that bird movements are evidence of a short-term response to climate change.

Bird Studies Canada is partnered with Audubon through BirdLife International. The Birds and Climate Change report is based on information collected through the Christmas Bird Count. As the coordinator of Christmas Bird Counts in Canada, Bird Studies Canada and our volunteers provided critical data for this research. Citizen science programs are an extremely important tool for monitoring, and collecting data for analysis and to guide conservation action.

Report details and other resources are available on the Audubon website at: http://www.audubon.org/news/pressroom/bacc/index.html.

Evidence that Mute Swans are Native to North America is Lacking

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Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) have long been considered a non-native species to North America by the vast majority of professional ornithologists (e.g., American Ornithologists' Union 1998). Introductions during the 1800s have been well documented (Ciaranca et al. 1997), and the subsequent population increase and range expansion follows that expected of an introduced species (e.g., Ellis and Elphick 2007: Fig. 2 therein). In the November 2008 issue of Picoides, however, Alison and Burton (2008) assert that this view is mistaken and claim that they have found evidence suggesting that the species is native to the Americas. Given that their article was not subjected to peer-review, I offer some counterpoints that call into question Alison and Burton's interpretation of the evidence.

My focus is on the documented fossil evidence from the American West and on known movement patterns in modern swans. Others will provide detailed responses to the other points raised by Alison and Burton (2008). In my view, however, none of the evidence purportedly showing that Mute Swans are native to the Americas meets modern scientific standards. For instance, if one were to take the statement attributed to David Beers Quinn that "there would be nothing in the paintings that the artist [John White] did not see, these men were scientists" to be literally and absolutely true, as Alison and Burton apparently do, then one has to wonder why he painted a swan with a pale iris. In addition, the bill shape and the dark colour around the eye and gape of the swan that White painted in 16th century Virginia are not accurate for any modern species of swan. Either John White sometimes painted things that he did not see, or he painted a bird that was neither a Mute Swan nor a Trumpeter Swan (C. buccinator).

The centerpiece of Alison and Burton's fossil evidence is the studies of Hildegarde Howard, who thoroughly reviewed and reanalysed the Pleistocene avifauna from Fossil Lake, Oregon (Howard 1946). In addition to considering new material from the site, Howard's paper makes reference to previous studies conducted by two earlier paleontologists (Cope and Shufeldt) and reassesses some of their work. The paper is long and in places quite technical, with detailed discussions of certain bones. The paper deals with all birds found at the site, although the majority of the fossils come from species of waterfowl.

The discussion of swan bones is seven pages long (pp. 159-165). Prior to Howard's work, four species of swans had been identified from the site: Trumpeter Swan, Tundra ("Whistling") Swan (*C. columbianus*), and two extinct species (*C. paloregonus* and *C. matthewi*). In her reassessment, Howard determined that in fact there was sufficient evidence to recognize only two species, Trumpeter Swan and *C. paloregonus*.

Nowhere in the document does Howard suggest that fossils of Mute Swans have been found at the site, nor that anyone has ever suggested that they have. The paper does, however, make numerous comparisons between modern Mute Swan bones and swan fossils found at Fossil Lake, which is perhaps the source of the confusion. Howard considered the extinct species *C. paloregonus* to be more closely related to the Mute Swan than to either of the extant North American species. At the time this paper was written, the modern *Cygnus* swans were split into two genera, with Mute Swan placed in the genus Sthenelides. Howard considered the extinct species *paloregonus* to belong in the genus *Sthenelides,* rather than Cygnus, and many aspects of the description of its bones refer to similarities to those of Mute Swan to support this classification.

For example, in her summary passage, Howard states that Shufeldt's identification of certain bones as belonging to a species of goose ("*Anser condoni*") were in error because he did not have any Mute Swan specimens for comparison. A careful reading of the detailed fossil descriptions that follows demonstrates that Howard believed that Shufeldt made his misidentification because he thought that all swans have a furcula similar to that of Trumpeter and Tundra Swans. Had he had a specimen of a Mute Swan (or another of the "*Sthenelides*" swans), Howard argues, he would have known that some swans have a furcula that resembles that of a goose. This knowledge would have allowed him to

recognize that the bones he assigned to *Anser condoni* actually belonged to a swan and would have led him to the conclusion that Howard draws, which is that these bones belonged to *paloregonus*.

It is clear from several passages in the paper that Howard did not think that the fossils she assigns to *Sthenelides (Cygnus) paloregonus* (including the bones Shufeldt identified as *Anser condoni*) belonged to Mute Swans. Several quotes from the paper demonstrate that she considered *paloregonus* and Mute Swan to be distinct (though related) species. As Alison and Burton note, most of these statements refer to the larger size of *paloregonus*. For example:

"In length of the skeletal elements, paloregonus exceeds S. olor throughout …" (p. 160);

"The blunt contour of the tip of the blade, with slight dorsal excrescence, has an almost exact counterpart in a furcula of *S. olor* now available (L. A. Co. Mus. no. Bi69), and in the symphyseal area closely resembles another specimen of the same species (L. A. Co. Mus. no. Bi1096). Both modern furculae, however, are smaller than the fossil." (p. 162); and

"The humeri now assigned to *S. paloregonus* are large, exceeding *S. olor* and *C. columbianus* in size …" (p. 163).

Importantly, however, other comments go beyond the size differences between the two species, and refer to shape differences:

"Fossil similar to S. olor, though depression more proximal in extent than in living form and pisiform process itself broader and less pointed; … " (p. 164); and

"Distance from pisiform process to tip of internal edge of trochlea relatively less than in Cygnus or S. olor, and similar to S. melancoriphus." (p. 164).

Probably the best demonstration that Howard did not consider Mute Swan to have occurred at Fossil Lake is the species list that she gives on p. 190, which does not include Mute Swan either in the "List according to Shufeldt (1913)" or in Howard's "List as now amended".

In short, there is no evidence that Howard considered Sthenelides paloregonus to be a "Mute Swan genotype (ancestor)" as described by Alison and Burton (2008: 38). What Howard does suggest is that paloregonus was more closely related to Mute Swan and Black-necked Swan (*C. melancoryphus*) than to the other North America swans. Based on her analysis, it is equally plausible that the closest modern relative of paloregonus is the Black-necked Swan of South America.

In their letter, Alison and Burton also imply that there is a history of natural movements from the current native range of Mute Swans to North America, and that such movements are to be expected. Evaluating many aspects of these arguments is complicated by the fact that Alison and Burton do not follow widely accepted citation norms for scientific documents. Many of their claims lack reference to the source material; for example, the claim that "Mute Swans were known in Yosemite early on". Other items appear to be attributed, but the references are then found to be missing from the citation list. For example, the Abstract refers to sightings in Alaska that are attributed to "Sladen and King 1976, Heilprin 2006", and in Saskatchewan that are attributed to "Greenwood 2000". None of these three references appears in their citation list, so it is impossible to verify what the source documents actually say, or determine whether these hypothetical sightings have been subjected to any form of review. It seems possible, for example, that the Saskatchewan reports involved the breeding attempts in the 1960s that have been ascribed to introduced birds (Lever 2005).

Even those claims that are referenced do not seem to have withstood scrutiny. For instance, various references are made to Mute Swan records from Alaska, yet the species does not appear on the most recent edition of the "Checklist of Alaska Birds" (Gibson et al. 2009: http://www.uaf.edu/museum/bird/products/checklist.pdf), and no reports have ever been submitted to the Alaska Checklist Committee for review (D. D. Gibson, in litt.).

Mute Swan introductions have been described in various places across the continent, including British Columbia, Montana, Saskatchewan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Ontario, as well as along the Atlantic seaboard, where the main North American population lies (American Ornithologists' Union 1998). In addition there are "numerous reports elsewhere in North America [that] pertain to local escapes from captivity" (American Ornithologists' Union 1998), some of which result in limited breeding (e.g., in Nevada; Floyd et al. 2007). Thus, careful elimination of such origins for any reported birds would be essential before any modern report could be accepted by the scientific community.

In discussing whether it is plausible for Mute Swans to have reached North America, Alison and Burton pose a question that they attribute to Paul S. Martin: "The question is not, would Mute Swans have come onto this continent? but [sic] rather, why would they not?" Leaving aside the obvious point that the mere ability for something to have happened does not mean that it actually has happened, there is considerable evidence that Mute Swans are unlikely to make long-distance over water movements on a regular basis. Moreover, this evidence demonstrates that the movement behaviour of Mute Swans differs from that of Arctic-nesting swans.

Mute swans are certainly capable of overland movements of hundreds of miles, but such movements over water appear to be exceedingly rare. For instance, out of 82,000 Mute Swans banded in Britain, and >19,700 subsequent reports of those birds, there are only 45 records of birds moving the short over-water distance to continental Europe, with the farthest going little further than Denmark (Wernham et al. 2002). In contrast, in both Bewick's (*C. columbianus bewickii*) and Whooper Swans (*C. cygnus*) there have been more long-distance recoveries from many fewer banded birds, suggesting that the low number of Mute Swan movements cannot be explained by a lack of observers available to record movements. In addition to their much reduced propensity towards long-distance migrations, Mute Swans also have a more southern range than do Bewick's and Whooper Swans, so the overwater distance to North America is much greater for Mute Swans than for the other two species.

For all of these reasons, Mute Swans are far less likely to occur as natural vagrants in North America, than are either Bewick's or Whooper Swans. For such vagrancy to occur, Mute Swans would have to make much longer over water flights than the other two species, or one would have to invoke a northward movement prior to their over water flight. Given the rarity of vagrancy in Bewick's and Whooper Swans, the chance of a natural Mute Swan vagrant to North America must be exceedingly low. Even if such vagrancy did occur, it would not provide evidence for a natural breeding population; many other bird species occur as very rare vagrants in North America without ever establishing populations.

In conclusion, given the absence of evidence that meets the rigours of both peer-review and formal acceptance by the appropriate committees of leading professional organizations (e.g., the American Ornithologists' Union's Check-List Committee), there appears to be no reason to overturn the prevailing view that Mute Swans have only ever established sustainable populations in the Americas as a result of human introductions.

Acknowledgements:

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Speedy Songbirds

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A new study published in Science Vol. 323, no. 5916 announces surprising discoveries about songbird migration. York University biology professor Bridget Stutchbury and her team mounted dime-sized geolocator 'backpacks' on 14 Wood Thrushes and 20 Purple Martins breeding in Pennsylvania in 2007. They were then able to track the birds' fall migration to South America, and their spring 2008 journey back to North America, before retrieving the geolocators from five Wood Thrushes and two Purple Martins last summer.

Purple Martin. Photo by Ron Ridout.

Data from the geolocators indicated that songbirds can fly in excess of 500 km per day – three times faster than previously estimated. As well, the study revealed astonishingly rapid long-distance movements during spring migration; the birds' overall migration rate was two to six times more rapid in spring than in fall. To learn more, visit the York University website at: http://www.yorku.ca/yfile/archive/index.asp?Article=12017.

The paper has been received with enthusiasm, and many bird researchers, including Bird Studies Canada scientists, will be using this technology for future studies.

Wing-tagged Turkey Vultures in Canada

R. Wayne Nelson, 4218 – 63 Street, Camrose, AB T4V 2W2 Canada

Canadian ornithologists and birders for many years may have opportunities to see Turkey Vultures bearing patagial wing-tags of at least five colour combinations.

Please report all sightings of wing-tagged Turkey Vultures. Include the date, location, color of the tag and its code (letters, numbers), the wing (right or left) to which the tag is attached, and the circumstances of the sighting (bird was alone, in a flock, flying or perched, feeding or roosting, etc.).

East-central Alberta -- Yellow tag with black letters

Contact: Rick Morse, 8 Gaylord Place, St. Albert, AB T8N 0S8 Canada
ricmorse@shaw.ca 1-(780)-405-7389.

Beginning in 2008, vultures were tagged at their nests in abandoned farm buildings, east of Edmonton to the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. This vulture study was begun in 2003 to investigate the productivity and distribution of these birds, by Wayne Nelson, Floyd Kunnas, and Dave Moore of the Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division. Nelson, now retired from AFWD, and Rick Morse, a Master Banding Permit holder, began a long-term wing-tagging project in August 2008, tagged 20 nestlings, and two were seen in northern Venezuela in January 2009 (but their ID letters have not yet been read as of submission date, February 13, 2009).

Saskatchewan – Green tag with white letter and numbers

Contact: C. Stuart Houston, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, SK S7N 0J8 Canada
stuart.houston@usask.ca 1-(306)-244-0742 before 9 p.m. CST.

From 2003 to the present, over 300 vultures in central and southern Saskatchewan at nests in abandoned farm buildings have received green wing-tags, in a long-term project conducted by Stuart Houston and his team of Brent Terry, Marten Stoffel, and Michael Blom. Their wing-tagged vultures have been seen in Venezuela, back home in Saskatchewan and at places in-between, and found as a road-kill and recorded on a hunter's trail cam in central Alberta. Soon some of these birds will become breeders and will contribute to the study's other exciting goals. (Some red-green colour-blind people may see these tags as a *dark* blue, but definitely *not* a light blue.)

Pennsylvania – Red tag with black letters

Contact: Keith Bildstein, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Acopian Center for Conservation Learning, 410 Summer Valley Road, Orwigsburg, PA 17961 U.S.A.
Bildstein@hawkmtn.org 1-(570)-943-3411 ext. 108.

From an on-going, long-term study. These vultures might be seen in eastern Canada.

Venezuela 'wintering' North American vultures – red tag with white numbers,
ALSO **pale blue tag with black numbers.**

Contact: Keith Bildstein, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Acopian Center for Conservation Learning, 410 Summer Valley Road, Orwigsburg, PA 17961 U.S.A.
Bildstein@hawkmtn.org 1-(570)-943-3411 ext. 108.

To try to look at the migration of North American vultures from the southern end, in our winters of 2006-07 and 2008-09, over 300 vultures were tagged in NW Venezuela, with red tags at the Maracaibo zoo, and with pale blue tags at Barquisemeto, in a cooperative project between Venezuela researchers and Hawk Mountain Sanctuary researchers. These birds might be seen anywhere E of the Rockies in the U.S.A. and southern Canada. See the next page for more information.

Have you seen a wing-tagged Turkey Vulture?

Researchers at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, together with colleagues in Venezuela, recently placed color wing tags on more than 100 Turkey Vultures over-wintering in northwestern Venezuela. The tagged birds are members of the *meridionalis,* or western North American, subspecies. The birds were tagged to study long-distance migration in the species. They are expected to begin migrating back toward their breeding areas in February. Their movements should take them through Central America and Mexico and into the western United States and Canada.

Reports of these birds will help Hawk Mountain scientists determine the timing and geography of migration in Turkey Vultures, as well as the breeding areas of the birds. Some of the birds have red tags with white numbers, others have light-blue tags with black numbers.

Please report the date and specific location of your sighting, color and number of the tag, the wing (right or left) to which the tag is attached, and the circumstances of the sighting, including whether or not the bird was alone or in a group of vultures, flying or perched, feeding or roosting, etc. Dead birds also should be reported. Report sightings to Keith Bildstein, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Acopian Center for Conservation Learning, 410 Summer Valley Road, Orwigsburg, PA 17961; Bildstein@hawkmtn.org; 1-570-943-3411 ext. 108. All reports will be recognized, and individuals reporting tagged birds will receive summary information about the study. Thank you.

North American Flyway Council Waterfowl Banding Workshop
Lesley Howes

A waterfowl banding workshop and NABC certification session was held at the Haliburton Forest and Natural Reserve in Haliburton Ontario July 29-31, 2008. The workshop was put on by the North American Flyway Council, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Canadian Wildlife Service. The workshop objectives were to provide:

1) training in safe waterfowl capture, handing and marking
2) a better understanding of the federal permitting system,
3) training in the Canadian Council of Animal Care standards for the use of migratory birds in research,
4) opportunity for NABC certification at the bander and trainer levels.

The NABC Waterfowl Banding Workshop participants. Photo by Norm North.

Thirty-seven people attended the workshop including 24 Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources employees and contract banders, six CWS employees, two Sir Sanford Fleming College instructors, one US Fish and Wildlife service employee, one University of Windsor student, one member of the Ontario Bird Banding Association, one New York State Waterfowl Bander and one other.

Topics covered included federal permits for migratory birds, an overview of the Bird Banding Program, band trap designs, trap site selection, duck wing ID, winter and spring waterfowl banding, the use of stainless steel bands on waterfowl, northern goose banding, handling waterfowl, mist netting waterfowl, rocket net use and airboat for waterfowl capture.

The workshop also held a Canadian Council of Animal Care training session on the use of migratory birds in research. This session included information on the ethics of using wildlife in research, and included common waterfowl diseases, euthanasia techniques and human safety considerations. All who attended this session received a certificate of attendance.

Following the workshop, those who were interested took the North American Banding Council exam for certification as a waterfowl bander or trainer. Twelve people achieved NABC bander certification and eight people achieved NABC Trainer certification. Others, although they may have passed the exam, were not awarded the certificate because they do not have the required number of hours of field experience for certification. If they are able to increase their field time they can still receive bander certification.

The workshop provided increased knowledge and skill level, which will support applications for bird banding permits. Training in Animal Care is necessary for some projects. The workshop also provided opportunity for banders to share their skills and experience with others.

Workshop participants enjoyed the workshop and found the presentations and demonstrations useful. Overall participants learned a lot and appreciated the opportunity to share their experiences and techniques. Many recommended a similar format for next year.

Information Needed about Canadian Ornithologist, O.D. Boggs

I am a British conservation-ornithologist living and working in Peru. One of my current activities is a paper on the distribution of the Peruvian Plantcutter. I have note on Peruvian Plantcutter eggs recently co-published with Brad Millen at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in the Bulletin of the British Ornithological Club. (128 (4): 271, 2008)

Some of the data for this comes from the Royal Ontario Museum. A Mr. O.D. Boggs, a Canadian geologist who worked in the oilfields around Talara, northwest Peru, in the 1930s, collected specimens here. He collected quite a few specimens from Ecuador. I am in contact with Brad Millen at the ROM.

I am very interested in learning more about Boggs but cannot seem to find very much. There is reference he worked for Imperial Oil, but they have no record. There is a reference to a Mrs. O.D. Boggs attending a national ornithologists meeting in the USA in the 50´s.

We have reference that he lived in Toronto; from this specimen labels with other addresses appear to refer to Imperial Oil offices.

Ideally we would like to put a full name to this person, find out more about him, and see if maybe he left any field notebooks with family etc., which should go to a museum. I would eventually like to write something on this person, something short, to at least put it in black and white his (or her) contribution to ornithology here.

I live in Sullana, a town just south of where Boggs worked and know the species and area well, hence a particular interest to learn more about this person.

Any help would be excellent; we are running out of avenues to explore (the Toronto Police Dept. didn't reveal much!)

Thank you!

Jeremy Flanagan
E-mail: jnm.flanagan@gmail.com

Peruvian Plantcutter.
Photo by Jeremy Flanagan

Book Review

Lynch, Wayne. 2007. **Owls of the United States and Canada.** UBC Press, Vancouver, BC. Hardcover. 28.6 cm by 23 cm. 256 pages. 168 colour photographs, 19 maps, 2 tables. $44.95 CAD. ISBN: 978-0-7748-1459-1.

This coffee table sized book is much more than a coffee table book of spectacular owl photos. Well-known wildlife writer and photographer, Wayne Lynch, took all photos and wrote the text. These photos are truly outstanding and a strength of the book as they greatly enhance and illustrate the text. These photos successfully capture the beauty and behaviour of owls.

The text is meticulously researched and very easy to read. The text is not written as a scientific paper with references inserted in the text but as a nice flowing narrative or story with a careful, limited and strategic use of data and no use of statistical tests. Dr. Lynch successfully and clearly communicates the information to a wide audience from the layperson to the professional owl researcher. He makes the information 'come alive' with his personal stories and anecdotes from key owl researchers. The author frequently compares North American owls with owls from Europe and other species. On occasion, European examples are used when North American examples were not available such as frequency of and loudness of begging calls by owlets. It is full of interesting facts about owls such as 39 species of invertebrates parasitizing the nests of Burrowing Owls and a Burrowing Owl hold the world record of largest recorded food cache by an owl with over 200 prey items!

The book consists of eight chapters titled Anatomy of an Owl, Son et Luminère , Haunts and Hideaways, The Owlish Appetite , the Family Life, the New Generation, Predators, Pirates and Pests and the last chapter is Owls and Humans. The introduction is presented as a preface but actually should be a full chapter that describes the author's interesting relationship with owls and summarizes owl mythology. The author could have added some more space in the last chapter to some owl conservation successes and what we can do to help owls and other species.

Within each chapter there are 1 to 7 subheadings on a variety topics ranging from Weapons of Mouse Destruction, the Eyes of Owls, Roost Rewards, Foods that Fight Back, The Cloacal Kiss and Kleptoparasitism. The acronym HIPPO is new to me. HIPPO is short for Habitat destruction, Invasive Species and diseases, Pesticides, Population growth of humans and Overconsumption by humans. These are the key threats to owls and other species around the globe.

There 16 short text box essays on topics ranging from owl's skeleton, brooding, nest parasites, guardian owls, hybridization and Northern Spotted Owls and finding owls. These short essays nicely complement the text in the corresponding chapter.

In addition, there are two tables in this volume to compare the 19 North American owl species. The first table compares weights (actually should be mass) and wingspans and the second table compares clutch sizes and incubation periods.

This book has some common information with James Duncan's highly regarded book, *Owls of the World* (Key Porter Books, 2003) but the emphasis is clearly different. Wayne Lynch here focuses on more on owl anatomy, adaptations and natural history and less on owl conservation and mythology

The book concludes with an appendix of common and species names of all species mentioned in the text, an extensive reference list broken by chapter and a very detailed and useful index. Photos are also indexed and photo entries in the index are italicized. The Appendix could have been separated into the following sections: Invertebrates, Plants, Birds, Fish, Mammals, Amphibians and Reptiles to make it more user-friendly. References in this book are an excellent gateway into the owl literature.

The weakest part of the book is the identification guide. It is located at end of chapter one. It seemed to me that this section was tacked on as an afterthought. The range maps do not identify breeding

areas, year-around areas, wintering areas or migration routes. Most of the information here is typically found in bird guidebooks. The author does add some basic information on life spans and conservation status here. He could have added more information by using symbols to illustrate the natural history attributes of each owl species as in the Ehrlich, Dobkin and Wheye's *Birder's Handbook*. This section could have strengthened by highlighting regional differences in sizes and colour morphs and adding calls and voice information. The wingspan, body weight, clutch size and incubation period information could have gone here as well.

On one page of my copy, some text was smudged but still readable.

Aside from these relatively minor flaws, it is another spectacular wildlife book by Wayne Lynch. I did learn a large number of interesting things about owls. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the owls of North America.

Reviewed by Rob Warnock, E-mail: warnockr@accesscomm.ca

Randy Lauff (Antigonish, NS) feeds corvids, eagles and a few others on the skinned bodies of furbearers obtained from local trappers. In February, a Barred Owl (Strix varia) flew in and fed on the carcass of an otter. This was the first and so far only time an owl has been observed at his feeding station. A video of the event can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HjSrNP6QiFQ).

5th North American Duck Symposium and Workshop (NADS 5)

Long Point Waterfowl and the University of Guelph are co-hosting the 5th North American Duck Symposium and Workshop (NADS 5) to be held in Toronto from August 17-20, 2009. NADS 5 will showcase current research in duck ecology, conservation, and management from North American and European researchers. Examples of plenary sessions include “Riches of the Boreal Forest: Waterfowl Populations and Conservation Challenges,” “Predator Management at the Landscape Scale: The Delta Experience,” “Implications of a Changing Great Lakes Ecosystem for Ducks,” and “Linking Harvest, Habitat and Human Dimensions: An Update.”

NADS 5 is open to all who have a keen interest in duck ecology and management. Online registration for NADS 5 is now available. Limited early bird prizes are available for those who register before April 30. The organizers of NADS 5 would also like to announce the third call for paper and poster presentations. Please check out the NADS 5 website at: http://www.northamericanducksymposium.org/ for detailed information on paper and poster submissions and descriptions of plenary sessions.

9th Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference and Workshop
February 25-27, 2010 in Winnipeg, MB

Patterns of Change: Learning from our past to manage our present and conserve our future!

Mark your calendars! Plan to join us February 25-27, 2010 for the 9th Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Held every three years since 1986 in a Canadian Prairie Province, this premiere conference brings together researchers, ranchers, land managers, consultants, Aboriginal groups, educators, nature enthusiasts, and many others to share information, ideas and new approaches to sustaining native prairie landscapes and endangered species.

Patterns of Change is the conference theme. Through compelling plenary sessions, stimulating workshops and enlightening poster displays, participants will ponder the many changes that have shaped the past and those that are imperative to our future on the Prairies.

Prepare to enjoy the hospitality of Friendly Manitoba! This conference is a great opportunity to catch up on old friendships and forge new ones. We hope to see you there!

For more information please contact:

Shannon@plannersplus.ca
Toll free: 1-866-532-6155
Tel: (204) 253-8623
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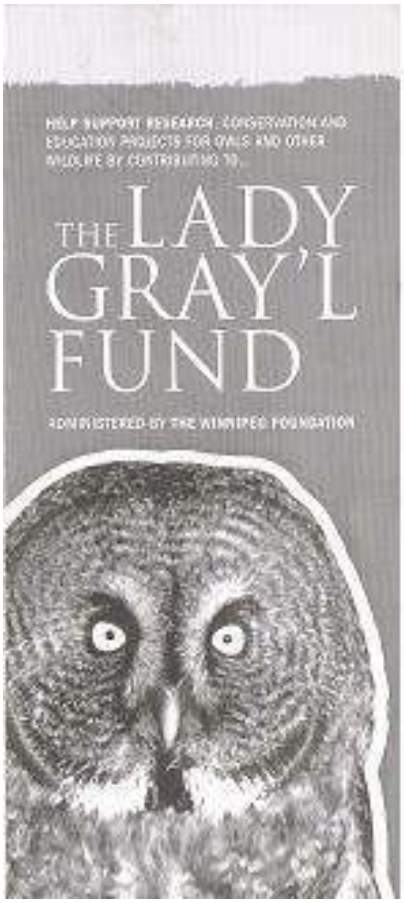

LADY GRAY'L, a Great Gray Owl that served to educate and entertain many people, died of natural causes on October 13, 2005. This famous owl, taken from a nest as an injured chick in May 1984, was *21 1/2* years old when she died. For her full story, see the book *Lady Grail, Owl With A Mission* by R. Nero. Along with her handler, Dr. Bob Nero, Lady Gray'l was a frequent visitor to schools, shopping malls, nursing homes and at various conservation programs. Together they educated thousands about conservation. She was the most travelled owl in Manitoba, the most photographed individual bird in North America, and her name is well known beyond our own provincial borders.

It should be noted that Lady Gray'l and Dr. Nero played a major role in having the Great Gray Owl selected as Manitoba's official bird emblem in 1987. And in her memory, a fund has been established at The Winnipeg Foundation.

PURPOSE OF THE FUND

The LADY GRAY'L FUND will be used to fund research, conservation and education projects directly relating to owls and other wildlife. Priority will be given to owls and Manitoba-based projects. Only projects sponsored by charitable organizations within Canada are eligible for funding.

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Please make cheques payable to **The Winnipeg Foundation,** with a memo on the cheque stating: **"Lady Gray'! Fund". *Thank you!***

Mail to: The Winnipeg Foundation 1350 - One Lombard Place Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B OX3

For more information, contact The Winnipeg Foundation at (204) 944-9474.

The Winnipeg Foundation registered charity no.: 119300960 RR0001

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This form is provided for you to use when renewing, and to post or forward to others who might be interested in joining. Please feel free to renew or join for more than one year if desired: this will cut down on administration and the need to send you reminders every year. Donations are also gratefully accepted (the SCO is a registered non–profit society and issues tax receipts). For more on the SCO, please visit our website http://www.sco-soc.ca/.

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	- Fred Cooke Award	_____

All donors of $10.00 or more will receive a receipt for tax purposes; sustaining members will receive a $25.00 receipt for tax purposes for each year of sustaining membership, and life members will receive a $250.00 receipt. The SCO is a registered non–profit society and issues tax receipts.

Please make cheques payable to **The Society of Canadian Ornithologists.**

Mail to:

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SCO Membership Secretary
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beaudet.lamothe@sympatico.ca

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Ce formulaire peut être utilisé lors d'un renouvellement ou pour adhérer à la SOC. N'hésitez pas à le transmettre à d'autres ou à l'afficher pour assurer une plus grande diffusion et de nouvelles adhésions. Les renouvellements et les adhésions pour plus d'une année sont privilégiés; cela réduit les frais d'administration et l'envoi de rappels annuels. Les dons sont acceptés (la SOC a le statut d'organisation à but non lucratif et peut émettre des reçus pour fins d'impôt). Pour en savoir plus sur la SOC, vous pouvez visiter le site http://www.sco-soc.ca/.

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