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Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) (Photo by Darroch Whittaker)

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Downy Woodpecker (Photo by Isabelle Devost)

Editor's Message

Rob Warnock and Marcel Gahbauer

Welcome to the first issue of *Picoides* for 2012. As discussed in the President's message (*see page 3*), this promises to be an eventful year for SCO-SOC and other long-standing ornithological groups, thanks to the proposal for a new Society For Ornithology (*see the official announcement from the recent meeting on page 4*). We encourage all members to attend the North American Ornithological Conference in Vancouver this summer, where this proposal will be discussed further, with input from everyone welcome. Registration is now open for the conference, and abstracts are due by the end of February (*see page 11 for details*).

The middle third of this issue focuses on current research in Canadian ornithology. We feature a report from last year's Taverner Award winner, Vanya Rowher (*see pages 5-6*), an article on gull research in Montreal (*see page 7*), and abstracts from two recent M.Sc. graduates affiliated with that gull project (*see pages 8-9*). We are always pleased to put the spotlight on work coming out of Canadian research groups, and look forward to receiving more submissions for our next issue. See the box on the final page of this issue for instructions on submitting material.

With sadness, this is the second consecutive issue of *Picoides* to feature a memorial tribute, in this case to Navjot Sodhi (*see page 10*). We round out this issue with a new instalment of the information exchange (*see page 12*) and as always a book review (*see page 13*).

Our next deadline for *Picoides* submissions is May 15, and we hope to have the issue available for you to read by early June. Before that, we ask that you consider participating in the 2012 Baillie Birdathon, or supporting someone else who is taking part. It is the oldest sponsored bird count in North America, raising significant funds annually for bird research and conservation. Participants identify as many bird species as possible within any 24-hour period in May and are free to plan their day however they want, ranging from a "big sit" in one place to a "big day", actively trying to set a record for species in a given area. The money raised benefits Bird Studies Canada, the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund, and participating migration monitoring stations and conservation organizations (designated by participants to receive a portion of funds raised). For more information, to register as a participant, or to sponsor someone else, please visit: http://www.gifttool.com/athon/AthonDetails?ID=1914&AID=1845.

We wish everyone a safe and wonderful spring. Take care out there.

The Editors

Correction: There is an error in the report about the student award at the Moncton SCO-SOC annual conference in the last issue of *Picoides*. The best paper presentation award went to Agnes Lewden, but she is not from UNBC as reported. Agnes was from University of Quebec at Rimouski (UQAR) and completed her Masters degree in September 2011. We apologize for this unintentional error.

Black Guillemot (Photo by Sarah Guidre Parker)

President's Message

The much anticipated meeting to further discuss the organization of a new Society For Ornithology (SFO) in the Americas is now over. Many of you will have already heard that there is a move to merge all ornithological societies in the Americas, for the purpose of developing efficiencies in publications and providing innovations that will reverse the general decline in memberships seen in the larger societies over the last decade. The SFO meeting was held in a hotel in Dallas, Texas last month. Below we include the press release of that meeting for all interested members of SCO-SOC. There is still much work to do, including having the councils of each participating society determine whether they want to join SFO! Attendance at the meeting did NOT imply that any particular society would necessarily vote to merge with this larger body.

The Dallas meeting was attended by Society Presidents or Vice-Presidents of all major general ornithological societies in North America (including me as your representative), Council members of the American Ornithologists' Union (which included many of the past-Presidents of the AOU), plus the President of the Neotropical Ornithological Society (representatives from the Waterbird Society and the Raptor Research Foundation were not present). Interestingly, the most contentious topic was how this new society might become more international. It was clear that the small, original organizing committee had not fully developed ways to incorporate the different needs of non-US countries. However, some models were proposed including 1) outright dissolution of national societies (like SCO-SOC), 2) 'chapter' status (e.g., the model used by the Wildlife Society), 3) national status (i.e., the model used by The Nature Conservancy (e.g., SFO: Canada) and 4) affiliate status (e.g., Bird Life International affiliates like Bird Studies Canada). The exact models were not discussed and will be by a new sub-committee of the newly formed organizing committee as the old committee was abolished at the end of the Dallas meeting. There was a clear statement that the new SFO should represent ornithology in the Western Hemisphere, although this may be a long-term goal.

Much of what was proposed was good and further details will emerge by next month in the form of a draft plan. There was discussion about our journal, Avian Conservation and Ecology, filling the shoes of the conservation journal of SFO. There was also a genuine feeling that SFO would be diminished without full participation by Canadians (and not just through their individual memberships in SFO which I assume would happen anyway). Fred Cooke, participating as a past-President of the AOU, was particularly forceful on the need for further thoughts on this topic.

Message de la présidente

La rencontre tant attendue visant à poursuivre les discussions sur la fondation d'une nouvelle Société ornithologique des Amériques (SFO) est maintenant terminée. Plusieurs d'entre vous ont déjà entendu dire que des discussions sont en jeu afin de fusionner toutes les sociétés ornithologiques des Amériques dans le but d'augmenter l'efficacité dans les publications et d'innover afin d'inverser le déclin général des adhésions observé dans les plus grandes sociétés ornithologiques au cours de la dernière décennie. La réunion a eu lieu dans un hôtel de Dallas, au Texas, le mois dernier. Ci-dessous, nous reproduisons le communiqué de presse de cette réunion pour tous les membres intéressés de la SCO-SOC. Il y a encore beaucoup de travail à faire, y compris la décision du Conseil de chaque société participante de se joindre ou non à la SFO! La participation à la réunion ne signifiait pas que la Société devait nécessairement voter afin de joindre cette Société plus englobante.

La réunion de Dallas réunissait les présidents ou vice-présidents de toutes les grandes sociétés ornithologiques de l'Amérique du Nord (y compris moi-même, en tant que votre représentante), les membres du Conseil de l'American Ornithologists' Union (qui comprenait la plupart des présidents sortants de l'AOU), ainsi que la Presidente de la Société ornithologique néotropicale. (aucun représentant de la Waterbird Society et de la Raptor Research Foundation n'étaient présents). Fait intéressant, le sujet le plus controversé fut de déterminer comment cette nouvelle société pourrait devenir plus internationale. Il était clair que le petit comité d'organisation d'origine n'avait pas pleinement développé les moyens d'intégrer les différents besoins des pays autres que les États-Unis. Toutefois, certains modèles ont été proposés, y compris 1) la dissolution pure et simple des sociétés nationales (comme SCO-SOC), 2) le statut de «chapitre» (par exemple, le modèle utilisé par la Société de la faune), 3) le statut national (c.-à-dire le modèle utilisé par Conservation de la nature), 4) le statut de membre affilié (par exemple, Études d'Oiseaux Canada dans Bird Life International). Les modèles exacts n'ont pas été discutés et seront soumis à un nouveau sous-comité du comité d'organisation nouvellement formé, étant donné que l'ancien comité a été aboli à la fin de la réunion de Dallas. Il y avait une déclaration claire que le nouveau OFS devrait représenter l'ornithologie dans l'hémisphère occidental, bien que cela puisse constituer un objectif à long terme.

Une grande partie de ce qui était proposé était bon et d'autres détails apparaîtront ici le mois prochain sous la forme d'un projet de plan. On a discuté de notre revue, Écologie et conservation des oiseaux, qui jouerait le rôle de revue de conservation de la SFO. Il y avait aussi un sentiment qu'une véritable SFO serait diminuée sans la pleine participation des Canadiens (et pas seulement par leurs adhésions individuelles dans la SFO qui, je suppose, surviendrait de toute façon). Fred Cooke, participant en tant que président sortant de l'AOU, a particulièrement insisté sur le fait que de nouvelles réflexions sur ce sujet étaient nécessaires.

Your council will continue to discuss SFO both between now and the NAOC meeting in Vancouver, and in Vancouver at the Council meeting and the AGM. I hope that many of you will also be there to participate in this discussion. In the meantime we will have a 'discussion link' on the Ornithology Exchange (ornithologyexchange.org) so that members can let me know what they think about the merger and the role of SCO-SOC. Members can also, of course email me or any council member directly. In the next several months your council will have to make the decision to send three representatives to the new organizational committee to discuss further plans for this new society. Each participating (or potentially participating) society will be sending three reps as a next step in the discussions.

Ornithology is clearly alive and well in the Western Hemisphere, as it has been for the last 140 years. But it may very well be time for some significant changes.

Respectfully yours,

Erica Nol

Votre Conseil continuera de discuter à la fois de la SFO entre le moment présent et la réunion de la NAOC à Vancouver, et à Vancouver lors de la réunion du Conseil et de l'AGA. J'espère que plusieurs d'entre vous seront également présents pour participer à cette discussion. En attendant, nous allons avoir un «lien Discussion» sur le site ornithologyexchange.org afin que les membres puissent me laisser savoir ce qu'ils pensent de la fusion et du rôle de la SCO-SOC. Les membres peuvent aussi, bien sûr, m'envoyer un courriel ou l'envoyer à un membre du Conseil directement. Dans les prochains mois, plusieurs membres de votre Conseil devront prendre la décision d'envoyer trois représentants au nouveau comité organisateur pour discuter des plans supplémentaires pour cette nouvelle société. Chaque société participante (ou potentiellement participante) enverra trois représentants en tant que prochaine étape dans les discussions.

L'ornithologie est clairement bel et bien vivante dans l'hémisphère occidental, comme elle l'a été au cours des 140 dernières années, mais il se peut très bien que le temps de quelques changements significatifs soit arrivé.

Respectueusement vôtre,

Erica Nol

Strategic Planning for the Proposed Society For Ornithology (SFO)
10-11 February 2012, Dallas TX

Over the last several decades, profound changes with far-reaching consequences have occurred in the practice of science and in the diversity and capabilities of communication options (e.g., electronic publication; open access journals). These changes apply to all scientific fields and have produced a cascade of effects that challenge scientific societies generally and ornithological societies in particular. It is time for the ornithological community to embrace these challenges and benefit from the opportunities they offer.

The Committee for the Development of the Society for Ornithology has formulated a new vision for the future of ornithology in the Western Hemisphere that aims to advance the scientific understanding of birds, enrich ornithology as a profession, and promote a rigorous scientific basis for avian conservation through research, publications, education, and outreach.

The SFO Committee met with the AOU Council and presidents of the Association of Field Ornithologists, Society of Canadian Ornithologists/Société des Ornithologistes du Canada, Cooper Ornithological Society, Neotropical Ornithological Society, and Wilson Ornithological Society to explore avenues to re-vitalize ornithology and its professional organization.

The Committee had considered various options and developed a draft proposal. Key components of this tentative plan includes formation of a non-profit society governed by a Board of Directors composed of professional ornithologists and members of the philanthropic and business community; management by a professional staff; a new suite of journals, monographs, and books; cutting edge innovations in communications; a renewed dedication to science in support of conservation; and international efforts in outreach and education that span all ages and career stages among members.

After two days of discussion, the group elected to move forward by developing a structure for a Society for Ornithology that will result in dissolving the original Committee to make way for a new committee with equal representation from all interested ornithological societies.

In the coming months, members of all interested societies will be asked for input into the planning process. Please watch for a message from your society president within the next month that will link you to relevant documents and encourage comments from all interested ornithologists. A public forum for discussion will be held at the NAOC V in Vancouver, BC in August 2012.

2011 Taverner Award Report

Fitness consequences and selective mechanisms favouring local nest morphologies in Yellow Warblers (*Dendroica petechia*)

Vanya G. Rohwer, Queen's University

Imagine the difficulties associated with transporting a small, flighty insectivorous bird to a new location, releasing it with every intention of following and recording its behaviours in the new environment, only to watch, helplessly, as it takes flight and disappear out of sight.

The observation of geographic variation in phenotypic traits has played one of the most significant roles in inspiring research and developing the underpinnings of evolutionary theory (Darwin 1859, Wallace 1878, Mayr 1963). Despite the extensive studies of geographic variation in phenotypic traits in birds, few studies (with the exception of intraspecific signaling) have experimentally tested the fitness benefits of geographically variable behaviours, precisely because of the difficulties associated with transporting small, flighty insectivorous birds. However, geographic variation in behaviours that result in a physical structure, such as the nest of birds, provide a unique opportunity to test the benefits of geographically variable behaviours (Dawkins 1982). Below, I describe my master's research that uses reciprocal nest transplant experiments to examine the selective mechanisms favoring divergent nest building behaviours of Yellow Warblers (*Dendroica petechia*) breeding near the town of Churchill in northern Manitoba and at the Queen's University Biological Station (QUBS) in southeastern Ontario.

Figure 1: Representative nests of Yellow Warblers breeding near Churchill, Manitoba (left) and at the Queen's University Biological Station in southeastern Ontario. Nests from Churchill are larger, constructed with materials that provide good thermal insulation, and have thicker nest walls. (Photo by Vanya Rowher)

Yellow Warblers have one of the widest breeding distributions of all North American wood warblers (Lowther et al. 1999), suggesting that populations may adapt to diverse challenges at different breeding sites. Churchill, Manitoba lies along the northern limit of the Yellow Warbler breeding range. Here, environmental conditions are colder, windier and drier during the breeding season compared to southeastern Ontario, and these differences in environmental conditions correspond well to observed differences in nest morphologies (Briskie 1995, Rohwer and Law 2010) (Fig. 1). In addition to differences in climate between breeding sites, several factors such as nest predators, Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*), and nest ecto-parasites may also influence the evolution of divergent nest building behaviours in Yellow Warblers.

During the summers of 2008–2011, I conducted nest transplant experiments between Churchill, Manitoba and the QUBS. To conduct a nest transplant, I made an effort to approach each nest after the female left for an off-bout, occasionally flushing the female during incubation. Using a bent kitchen spoon, I carefully removed the eggs and kept them safe in a cotton-filled yogurt container while I removed the nest, and replaced it with a transplant nest. Transplant nests were either local nests constructed by a different female (control) or non-local nests constructed by females from the other breeding location (experimental). Finally I returned the eggs into the newly transplanted nest. Despite the often-dramatic changes in nest appearance, nearly all females accepted their new nest; of over 200 nest transplants only 7 females did not return to their nests. Those that returned exhibited varied responses. Some approached the nest with visible caution, perching on the nest rim, inspecting, then leaving only to return in minutes. Other females returned to the nest and continued incubating the eggs as if nothing had changed. None of the Churchill females that received experimental nests from southern Ontario added material to the nest. This observation suggests that nest building behaviour is a discrete event that, if resumed during incubation, would detract from time spent on the eggs.

To date, we have shown that in Churchill, experimental nests (from southern Ontario) have colder average and minimum temperatures compared to control nests. Consistently warm nest temperatures are important for embryo development, nestling growth, and energy budgets of incubating females. Thus these results suggest that cold ambient temperatures favour the construction of larger, better-insulated nests by Yellow Warblers breeding in Churchill. Additionally, Churchill females that received experimental nests took shorter off-bouts during incubation. Females did not change the frequency of their off-bouts, nor did males increase the frequency at which they fed their females. Females appear to absorb some costs associated with poorly suited nest morphologies, suggesting that females invest heavily in current reproductive efforts rather than future breeding attempts. This is consistent with life-history strategies of birds breeding at high latitudes. We have found no differences in hatching or fledging success of experimental nests in Churchill compared to controls. Interestingly, several species of birds and nest building rodents share a pattern of constructing larger nests in colder regions. This pattern suggests that large nests of Yellow Warblers breeding in Churchill are not a chance observation and those environmental factors such as temperature favor larger nest size at this sub-arctic breeding site.

Nest transplants in southeastern Ontario have revealed no differences in nest temperature, rates of Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism, hatching success, or nest predation between control and experimental nests. Currently, we have no data to address possible changes in parental behaviour or nestling growth rates. What then favours the construction of smaller nest size in Yellow Warblers breeding in southeastern Ontario? One factor that our experiments do not consider is that nests of different size and composition require different amounts of time and energy to construct, and these factors likely contribute to divergent nest morphologies. Females breeding in Churchill make on average 1,500 trips to construct their nests while females in southeastern Ontario make on average 500 trips (V.G. Rohwer unpublished data). Because Yellow Warblers breeding in southeastern Ontario suffer high predation rates and consequently re-nest 4 or 5 times during a single breeding season, and because they are not constrained by cold sub-arctic temperatures, we suggest that trade-offs in the use of time and energy in nest construction favor the smaller nest size in southeastern Ontario.

Figure 2: Female Yellow Warbler sitting on the nest she constructed near Churchill, Manitoba (Photo by Vanya Rowher)

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Student Research

A Study on the Behaviour of Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) in Montreal

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Figure 1: Gulls are marked with blue or yellow plastic bands with 3 alphanumeric codes (Photo by Mathieu Tremblay)

Many gull populations have increased exponentially both in Europe and North America during the last century. This followed an increasing availability of anthropogenic food sources found at landfills or obtained due to garbage mismanagement and food handouts as well as in intensively managed agricultural lands. More than 70,000 pairs of Ring-billed gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) breed in several colonies near Montreal.

Citizens often complain to their municipal administration about various problems associated with urban gulls: excessive noise, damage to property, risk of bacterial contamination, etc. Gulls are also associated with aircraft hazards. Concerned citizens often request reduction of gull numbers but any action needs to be part of a management plan that requires adequate knowledge about the ecology of the population. However, little is known about the distribution, movements, habitat use, and population dynamics of Ring-billed gulls. The objective of our research is to study the foraging behaviour and population dynamics of this species in urban and suburban settings.

We are focusing our research on Deslauriers Island, located 3 km downstream from Montreal in the St. Lawrence River where 48,000 pairs are nesting. The ongoing study aims to provide up-to-date information on population dynamics including breeding success, dispersal, and survival rates. Over 5,500 gulls have been marked since 2009 with US Fish & Wildlife Service metal bands and blue or yellow plastic bands with 3 alphanumeric codes (Figure 1). We have accumulated nearly 2,000 sightings so far. We also used miniature GPS data loggers to study the foraging movements of gulls during the breeding season. In addition, we used Argos-GPS PTT to track post-breeding dispersal and migration patterns. We also conducted a survey among citizens to gather information about their perception about gulls and the related problems (Figure 2). Because landfills are very attractive to gulls, we compared the effectiveness of different scaring programs (falconry, culling, rubber shooting, etc.).

Different patterns of post-breeding dispersal have been identified with some birds staying in the Montreal area until they undertake their migration, others dispersing to stop-over sites en route to their wintering areas and still others dispersing to areas outside their direct migration route before they reach their wintering area. Other results are published in the students' M.Sc. thesis abstracts section (*see pages 8-9*).

Our results will be used by Environment Canada to draft a first management plan for Ring-billed gulls in southern Quebec. A regional committee composed of stakeholders (landfill managers, municipalities, wildlife control companies, farmers' representatives, etc.) is also participating to the project by working within an integrated management framework. For more details about the project or to submit an observation, please visit our web site at gull.uqam.ca. You can also follow us on Facebook (Goeland UQAM) and Twitter (Goeland_UQAM).

Figure 2: A gull fitted with an Argos-GPS PTT at Sainte-Flavie (near Rimouski QC) during the post-breeding dispersion in 2011 (Photo by Cécile Girault)

Recent Canadian Ornithology Theses

Patenaude-Monette, Martin. 2011. Caractérisation des habitats d'alimentation du Goéland à bec cerclé (*Larus delawrensis*) dans le sud du Québec. M.Sc. Thesis. Département des sciences biologiques, Université du Québec à Montréal, Montréal, QC.

GPS data loggers were attached on the two median rectrices with waterproof tape
(Photo by Cécile Girault)

Foraging birds face several constraints that stem from the state of themselves and their offspring, as well as from the heterogeneous distribution of food resources and predation risk that both vary in space and time. These constraints likely shape trade-offs involving time, energy, nutrition, and predation risk, leading to a sequence of spatial locations visited by foraging birds. However, few studies have addressed the determinants of foraging movements at the landscape level. Here, we document the processes leading to habitat use by foraging Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis)* nesting in a large colony in suburban area using fine-scale movement data collected by GPS (n = 109 birds) as well as *in situ* gull surveys and gut content analyses. Resource selection functions and residence time analyses showed that, during incubation, gulls primarily selected intensively cultured lands, which are closer to the colony but provided an intermediate mean energy intake based on calorimetric analyses. According to ground surveys, gull abundance in agricultural lands was greater on bare soil and increased during periods of soil preparation and seed sowing. According to the models, gulls strongly selected landfills and shipment centres throughout the breeding season as these sites provided the highest mean energy intake. Nevertheless, only a few individuals, maybe specialized, highly selected these localised and limited sites. Distance to the colony and the deterrence programs conducted at some landfills probably increased foraging costs. Our approach based on a combination of methods and derived from an energetic trade-off perspective offers a framework to understand animal foraging movements. Combined with data on individual breeding performance, this could provide relevant information on the mid-term benefits of habitat choice.

Racine, François. 2011. Disponibilité et utilisation d'information sociale sur les sources de nourriture dans une colonie de Goélands à bec cerclé (*Larus delawarensis*). M.Sc. Thesis. Département des sciences biologiques, Université du Québec à Montréal, Montréal, QC.

Bird colonies are potentially rich sources of social information that can be used to compensate for the numerous disadvantages of communal life. It can reduce uncertainty about habitat quality, nest location, mate choice or food source quality and location. We focussed on Ring-billed Gull's (*Larus delawarensis*) potential use of social information about food resources while rearing their chicks in a colony. We first determined if social information was available in the colony, whether it was available through a reliable cue and whether birds used it by following knowledgeable individuals. We combined data obtained from observation of flight paths of gulls leaving the colony with foraging tracks obtained from birds fitted with GPS data loggers. We specifically asked whether departure bearings and other flight characteristics could serve as a reliable information cue. We found that reliable information cues about feeding sites location could be obtained by observing bearings of gulls leaving the colony. Also, by choosing to follow a randomly selected individual flying away from the colony a bird stood a good chance of reaching a food location. To test whether gulls

Data were collected from blinds where two observers watched one randomly selected enclosure per day
(Photo by Martin Patenaude-Monette)

followed individuals, we searched for grouping of departure times and bearings for different time spans and analysed the influence of nest position within the colony on the food type brought to the chicks. We found that gulls nesting in the same neighbourhood did not exhibit temporally clumped departures nor did they tend to leave in the same bearing as their previously departing neighbours. The food types brought to their chicks was similar for all gulls, regardless of their position in the colony. We conclude that no information appears to be obtained from nest neighbours but we could not exclude the occurrence of information sharing at other locations of the colony. Stopovers on nearby water or along the shore of the colony after a short flight from the nest may allow exchange of information. As we found a relationship between feeding grounds and breeding sector on the colony, there could also be information sharing mechanisms that do not result in temporally clumped departures that must be explored in future studies.

Brant in Nunavut (Photo by Sarah Baldo)

Student contributions wanted for *Picoides*!

SCO-SOC encourages students to submit material for *Picoides*.

In particular, we would like each issue to feature abstracts of at least one or two recently published theses. They must be from students at a Canadian university, but need not necessarily focus on Canadian birds. Abstracts should be 250-400 words long, preferably accompanied by one or two relevant photos.

In addition, we welcome articles describing aspects of student research in greater detail; these should focus on a subject relevant to Canadian ornithology, require references, and may be up to 1000 words long, again preferably accompanied by one or two photos.

Ph.D. and M.Sc. positions in conservation of prairie birds

A large-scale project on effects of oil extraction on prairie birds will start in May 2012. Research will address effects of oil wells on abundance, nesting success and behavioural ecology of songbirds with a special focus on effects of infrastructure noise. The project will include a large-scale experimental component. Research will take place in Alberta. Successful applicants will collaborate with other students, research assistants and a post-doctoral fellow to conduct fieldwork.

Masters positions will be within the 2-year Masters of Natural Resources Management program, and the Ph.D. position will be within the Ph.D. of Environmental and Natural Resources Management program, at the internationally recognized Natural Resources Institute at the University of Manitoba. This is an interdisciplinary program designed to prepare students to either enter the workforce or continue academic research upon graduation. In addition to the ecology component, courses cover conservation biology, economic, social, policy, and legal issues relevant to natural resources and environmental management and conservation. Visit http://umanitoba.ca/institutes/natural_resources/ for more information on the academic programs.

Applicants should be prepared to demonstrate background and interest in avian or prairie ecology and conservation, plus strong research potential and academic background. Applicants eligible for an industrial NSERC (GPA over last 2 full-time years B+ or higher; please see http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/PG-CS/IPS-BESII_eng.asp for more information) will be strongly preferred; this program will provide a full stipend/scholarship. Apply with CV, unofficial transcripts, writing sample (e.g. essay / manuscript), and 3 references (email and phone numbers) to Dr. Nicola Koper at koper@cc.umanitoba.ca. More information about Dr. Koper's lab can be found at www.conserveprairiebirds.org or by emailing Dr. Koper. Applications should be submitted as soon as possible. Applications submitted after January 31, 2012 will be considered if positions remain open.

Navjot S. Sodhi - remembering a conservation advocate and avian ecologist

Ian Warkentin, Environmental Science (Biology),

Memorial University of Newfoundland - Grenfell Campus, Corner Brook NL

Navjot Sodhi passed away in June 2011 at age 49, a few weeks after being diagnosed with an aggressive lymphoma-type cancer. Navjot was best known for raising awareness of issues in tropical ecology and conservation science over the past 15 years through research conducted with great passion from his position at the National University of Singapore. However, Navjot's research origins were based here in Canada and he was just about to return to this country to take up a professorship at the University of Toronto starting in 2012.

After obtaining his B.Sc. and M.Sc. at Panjab University in Punjab, India, he moved to the University of Saskatchewan where he worked with Lynn Oliphant, completing his Ph.D. in 1991 on the foraging ecology of Merlins in Saskatoon. This is where we met, during a two-year overlap in our respective Ph.D. tenures at Lynn's lab. From his Ph.D. research, Navjot published a series of papers about Merlin breeding biology, as well as contributing to the original and subsequent revised account of the Merlin for the Birds of North America series. He then took up a post-doctoral position with Cindy Paszkowski at the University of Alberta, publishing several papers on the habitat use and breeding biology of warblers living in fragmented forest ecosystems. This was followed by a year spent at the National Institute for Environmental Studies in Japan where he worked on wading birds.

Navjot's research, and his impact on conservation, truly flourished when he started working at the National University of Singapore in 1995. Focused on the various environmental tragedies being inflicted upon the Asia-Pacific region, his writings promoted better governance for managing tropical forests, stronger regulation of international trade in endangered species, the value of indigenous custodianship of biodiversity, and the need to eliminate government and corporate corruption as it influenced both biodiversity and the fate of underprivileged people living in and around conservation areas. Navjot's work centered on birds initially but then broadened out to other taxonomic groups, particularly insects and amphibians. His research ranged from studies of particular species to community-level assessment, from basic science to the examination of social policy issues with a bearing on the conservation and functioning of tropical forests. At the time of his death, he had published 130 peer-reviewed articles and had written or edited 7 books. You could say he wrote the book on *Tropical Conservation Biology* (the title of one of his books) and he had just co-edited, with Paul Ehrlich of Stanford University, the textbook *Conservation Biology for All.* Navjot specifically negotiated with Oxford University Press that this text be available electronically for free to people in developing countries only one year after initial publication – his goal was unfettered access to the basics of conservation biology for students and scientists in the developing world where such knowledge is truly lacking. Recent estimates place the number of downloads for this text at 85,000, indicating both the need for such information and the vision of Navjot in providing the opportunity to access it.

An enormously productive scientist, Navjot was perhaps not your stereotypical academic in some ways. His normal attire, whether at departmental meetings or lectures, included flip flops, shorts, a tattered t-shirt and a backward facing baseball cap. He had a quirky sense of humour, a flair for the use of colourful language, and a hyena-like laugh. Navjot derived great pleasure from poking a stick in the eye of conventional thought and those who purveyed such ideas. No doubt, some of this behaviour was his response to the frequently pompous and always officious nature of bureaucratic Singapore – but it was also part of his persona; as was the daily ritual of a morning break in the lab to discuss the latest papers published or to sketch out a figure on the board that could well appear next as part of the next paper to appear in some highly-ranked conservation journal. This, at-first-glance, apparently laid-back personality disguised Navjot's intense desire to defend nature in all its glory, and his passionate pursuit of that next publication to further the cause. To this end, he worked diligently with the students under his mentorship, but also had the ability to bring together groups of dedicated and highly talented scientists from around the world to work as partners. He teamed up with some of the most influential minds in the field to champion his cause. Navjot's death is a loss to his family, friends and colleagues; as well as to the world of conservation and avian ecology.

Reminder – NAOC 2012

IMPORTANT NEWS about the 5th North American Ornithological Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, 14-18 August 2012.

Registration is now open. Early bird registration rates are being offered until 15 May 2012. For information on registration rates and to register online, please visit: http://www.naoc-v2012.com/registration

The deadline for receipt of abstracts for all oral and poster papers is 29 February 2012. The program will include several workshops, to be scheduled before and after the conference. http://www.naoc-v2012.com/program.

ANNONCES IMPORTANTES concernant la 5e Conférence nord-américaine d'ornithologie, Vancouver, Colombie-Britannique, Canada, 14-18 août 2012.

L'inscription est maintenant ouverte. Les tarifs pour l'inscription hâtive sont valides jusqu'au 15 mai 2012. Pour toute information au sujet des frais d'inscription et pour s'inscrire en ligne, vous êtes priés d'aller à http://www.naoc-v2012.com/registration (en anglais seulement).

Les résumés (pour toutes les présentations orales et les affiches) doivent être reçus au plus tard le 29 février 2012. Le programme comprendra plusieurs ateliers, qui auront lieu avant ou après la conférence elle-même. http://www.naoc-v2012.com/program (en anglais seulement).

(en cas de désaccord, l'anglais prévaut)

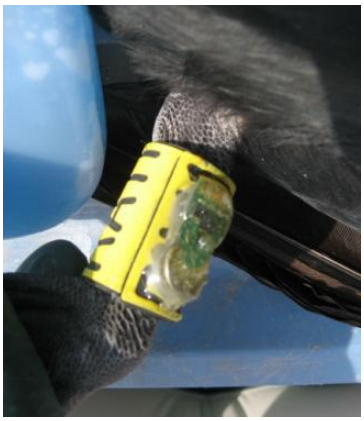
Western Sandpipers are among the shorebirds common in the Vancouver area in August (Photo by Marcel Gahbauer)

Information Exchange

Watch for Banded Caspian Terns and Double-crested Cormorants

(Raphaël Lavoie, lavoie.raphael@gmail.com)

We installed archival geolocators on Caspian Terns during summer 2010 and on Double-crested Cormorants during summer 2011 at Hamilton Harbour on Lake Ontario with yellow Darvic bands with black alpha-numerical codes (RA-01) to track their migration route. Please report any sighting (number, date and location) to Raphaël Lavoie, Ph.D. student, Queen's University.



Double-crested Cormorant with geolocator band (Photo by Raphaël Lavoie)

History of the La Perouse Bay Snow Goose Project: Information Needed

(Fred Cooke, f.cooke1@btinternet.com)

I am in the process of writing a history of the La Perouse Bay Snow Goose Project from its inception in 1968 until I left the project in 1992. So far I have written more than 60 pages and am trying to contact people who may at one time or another have been involved with the project. So far more than 60 people have been in touch with me but I hope that I can contact more people who were involved or were at the Queen's University Tundra Biology Station and share their experiences.

Attention Grad Students – Book Review Opportunities!

There are opportunities for graduate students and others to submit book reviews to *Picoides*. Are there reviews of new and recent bird book titles you like to submit to Picoides? We welcome book reviews from SCO-SOC members including graduate students. Titles we have received recently include:

- Petrels, Albatrosses, and Storm Petrels of North America
- Birds of India
- Birds of Melanesia

If you are interested in reviewing these books, please let Rob Warnock know as soon as possible at warnockr@accesscomm.ca and he will arrange a review copy be sent to you from the publisher. Please supply your mailing address in your e-mail.

Male Ruddy Duck (Photo by Alex Bond)

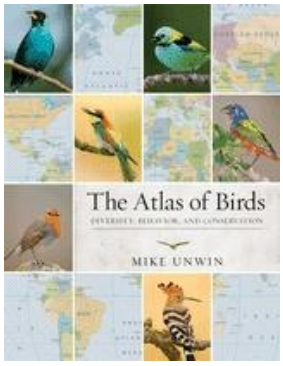
Raptor Population Index report features mostly positive trends

The Raptor Population Index (RPI) is a cooperative partnership involving Bird Studies Canada, the Hawk Migration Association of North America, HawkWatch International, and Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, and incorporating data from over 200 independent monitoring stations across the continent. A report released by RPI on 2 February 2012 shows that the majority of North America's 26 migratory raptors have stable or increasing populations. Among the results of note, the strong growth in Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, and Bald Eagle numbers appears to be tapering off after a couple of decades of rapid increases. The only concerns reported are a continuing decline by American Kestrel, and a widespread drop in Golden Eagles at western sites. Full results of the 2011 analysis are available at http://www.rpi-project.org/2011/, including graphs and trends for each species.

Book Review

Unwin, Mike. 2011. The Atlas of Birds: Diversity, Behavior, and Conservation. Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ. 144 pages.

Paperback, 21.6 cm x 27.5 cm. $22.95 US. ISBN: 978-1-691-14949-9.



The Atlas of Birds discusses bird diversity, behaviour and conservation in an atlas format. The book begins with a competent introductory section with discussion of bird evolution, classification, adaptations and feathers. The second section briefly reviews where birds live. In this section, the author briefly discusses bird habitats at a biome level, number of species in countries, endemic birds, distribution of Important Bird Areas and the types birds found in various major sections of the Earth such as Africa. This section could have been expanded as I found information a bit too brief. The weakest part of the book is the 'Birds in Order' section. Each bird order gets only one short paragraph and global distribution on a world map. I was left hungry for more information about each bird order. Longer bird order accounts up to 2 pages would have been much better and would have strengthened the book.

A particular strength of the book is the 'Birds and People' section. The author does an excellent job describing the complex and conflicted relationships that humans have had with birds for millennia. Birds are important to all human cultures around the world as food and raw material, educational aids and an effective source of inspiration. Birds have been and continue to be celebrated in culture, religion and politics. The most interesting facts were the economic impact of bird watching in the US, how many times birds were mentioned in Shakespearean plays (over 500) and that over 70 bird species are depicted in ancient Egyptian artifacts and artwork.

The 'Birds under Threat' section succinctly reviews extinction, birds under threat and all of the major threats to birds including habitat loss and degradation, pollution, alien species, overexploitation, and climate change. These threats were clearly explained by the author, aided by a number of illustrations and attention grabbing facts such as the 1,244 bird species at risk of extinction and the amount of forest loss in Brazil, Indonesia and other tropical countries. The 'Protecting Birds' section is more positive and upbeat with a summary of key conservation activities by international organizations such as BirdLife International, highlighting a few conservation successes such as the California Condor captive breeding and reintroduction to the wild and some citizen science programs such as the Great Backyard Bird Count.

In the final section of the book, the author has provided an interesting table that summarizes key statistics for each country and internationally recognized self-governing territory in the world. These statistics from 2004 to 2010 include human population, land area, length of coastline, fisheries capture, carbon dioxide emissions per person, number of bird species, percentage of bird species that are endemic, number of threatened species, number and total land area in RAMSAR sites and whether it is a signatory to the CITES convention. The author rightly recognizes that these statistics change over time and includes this table as a useful comparable snapshot of each country in 2010. The author takes great care providing clear, concise and accurate information in an easy to read writing style that is accessible to professional ornithologists and amateur birders alike. He is able to convey complex concepts such as evolution using simple language and minimized technical jargon. The well-written text is bolstered with clear, sharp maps, photos and colour illustrations and text boxes with many really interesting facts such as the Ruby-throated Hummingbird has the fewest feathers of any bird at 940 feathers. The illustrations make the volume very attractive as well.

Topics in the book can be easily found through either the table of contents or the detailed index in the back of the book. There is a large bibliography to help readers to find more information about topics discussed in this book. This bibliography follows the organization of book, which makes it easier to find bibliographical sources. The only concern I have is the heavy reliance on online sources because online links and website addresses can change over time. However, the author has used reputable sources in his research for this book.

The Atlas of Birds succeeds to capture the amazing diversity and behaviour of birds and the threats and bird conservation efforts on a global scale. I learned a number of new things about birds from this highly educational volume and therefore I recommend this colourful and attractive book to anyone interested in birds.

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

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Bruce Falls	1992-1994				

Membership Information
www.sco-soc.ca/membership.html

SCO-SOC membership forms can be found at the link above. Current membership rates are as follows:

Student	$10.00 / year	
Regular	$25.00 / year	($35.00 / year outside Canada)
Sustaining	$50.00 / year	
Life	$500.00	

SCO-SOC Website
www.sco-soc.ca/index.html

The SCO-SOC website includes sections on membership, meetings, news, publications, awards, information for students, an overview of SCO-SOC, and links of interest to members and other visitors.

To suggest any additions or corrections for the website, contact webmaster Joe Nocera at joe.nocera@ontario.ca.

Submissions to *Picoides*:

Articles and photos relevant to Canadian ornithology are welcomed by the editors. If submitting photos, please save them in tiff or jpeg format with descriptive file names, and supply captions including common names of species, location, date, photographer, and any other notes of interest. Deadlines for submission are February 15, May 15, and October 15. Please send all submissions to Rob Warnock at warnockr@accesscomm.ca.

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