

A Few Changes

The ABA is changing. It has to. We have to. We're nearing the end of the first decade of the 21st century, and the ground rules have fundamentally changed. We birders communicate today by Facebook and Twitter. We swap .wav files of the flight calls of Type 4 Red Crossbills. We use iPhones to post to the listservs the news of a rare bird.

Our attitudes and values are changing, too. Birders—especially younger and entry-level individuals—are more attuned than ever before to bird conservation. Birders are increasingly interested in bird ecology and behavior.

One thing about the ABA is not changing, though. If anything, the ABA is retrenching on a particular point. *We are recommitting ourselves to our grassroots heritage.*

Honestly, the organization strayed a bit from its grassroots foundations these past several years. But we are back on track. In renewed partnership with ABA members, the staff and board are formulating major new initiatives for the organization. We are also reinvigorating the grassroots character of our core products.

Like this magazine.

Check out our new approach to the *Birding* photo quiz (pp. 58–61)—and thanks to our young staffers Cameron Cox and Noah Strycker for coming up with the idea. Check out the articles by Catherine P. Ortega (pp. 52–56) and Rick Romea (pp. 36–42), which relate the experiences and impressions of real-life birders out in the field. And please do read Donna L. Dittmann and Steven W. Cardiff's tome on hummingbirds, beginning on p. 32. The subject matter is advanced, but the presentation is straightforward. Donna and Steve achieved an important breakthrough in ornithology simply by carefully watching birds at their feeders.

In particular, check out our new "People and Places" column, which debuts in this issue of *Birding*. In keeping with our recommitment to a grassroots outlook for the ABA and *Birding*, we want for *you* to share with fellow ABA members news in the birding and bird conservation realm. No want-ads or personals, please. Other than that restriction, though, we welcome any and all contributions. Please e-mail Ted <tfloyd@aba.org> your submissions. Write them in the third person, and please shoot for 125–150 words.

— Ted Floyd, *Birding* Editor
Robert G. Robinson, ABA President and CEO

Conserving Birds on Military Bases

U.S. Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey (Dem.–Calif.) announced in June of this year an agreement between the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to transfer the decommissioned Skaggs Island Naval Station to San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, California. The transfer of this site will provide habitat for more than 20 threatened and endangered species, making it the crown jewel of North San Francisco Bay wetlands restoration efforts. Skaggs Island is the Bay Area's premier site for observing wintering raptors and the site of the San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival's "Hawk Heaven" outings. The transfer enjoys widespread community support, from such sources as Sonoma, Marin, Napa, and Solano Counties, the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, Save San Francisco Bay, and the California Coastal Conservancy. ABA Board Chairman Dick Ashford, former mayor of nearby Sonoma, California, will attend the transfer ceremonies.

Partnering for Gulf Coast Migrants

One of the major offerings of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory is its Site Partner Network, consisting of conservation partners in the U.S., Mexico, and Cuba. Two more partners were added earlier this year: the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center and the Matagorda County Birding Nature Center, both in Texas. The Site Partner Network now consists of an impressive 67 sites, conserving more than nine million acres of stopover habitat for trans-Gulf and circum-Gulf avian migrants. Millions of migratory birds depend on this habitat each spring and fall to complete their migration to and from the breeding grounds. Find out more about the Site Partner Network online <gcbo.org> and join in the effort to preserve stopover habitat for neotropical–nearctic migrants.

Bird Conservation in Peru

CECCOT (Centro de Educación, Ciencia, y Conservación–Tambopata) is a new conservation organization in southeastern Peru focusing on long-term research and environmental education. Operating from a rustic field station on a private reserve near the frontier town of Puerto Maldonado, the center has initiated semiannual bird-banding trips to mark and monitor resident birds. In three trips so far, 246 individuals of 59 species have hit the nets, including such surprises as Little Cuckoo, Black-spotted Bare-Eye, and Green-and-rufous Kingfisher. Perched on the Tambopata River just across from the enormous Bahuaja Sonene National Park, the center's 40 acres, unlogged since the mid-1970s, serve as a laboratory for studying avian ecology amid the development becoming common here



Caption: **Chestnut-capped Puffbirds** (*Bucco macrodactylus*), like this adult netted by CECCOT researchers, probably nest amid the steep banks of stream channels on the grounds of the CECCOT field station. Near Puerto Maldonado, Peru; April 2009. © Dan Froehlich.

and across Amazonia. Migrants like Swainson's Thrush and Buff-breasted Sandpiper add a whiff of home for birders from North America. More information is available online <CECCOT.org>.

Jiangsu Wild Bird Society

As birding continues to catch on in China (see *Birding*, March/April 2006, pp. 54–59), there has been a natural proliferation of bird clubs and ornithological societies in that country. One such organization is the Jiangsu Wild Bird Society, which provides a broad spectrum of activities for birders of all skill levels. The aims of the society are to promote awareness of bird conservation issues and to spread basic knowledge about birding. Bird photography is a particular emphasis of the society. Public outreach is a key to the varied successes of the Jiangsu Wild Bird Society, which gets information out via lectures in schools and universities, plus interpretive signage in public parks. The society has received support from such diverse sources as Swarovski Optik and Chinese government agencies. For more information, check out the Jiangsu Wild Bird Society's website <freebird.org.cn>.

Intergenerational Birding

Based out of Moorhead, Minnesota, Birds For Brains brings kids closer to seniors and everyone closer to nature by supplying birdfeeders to assisted-living facilities and

keeping the feeders filled throughout the year with donated seed. Kids visit the facilities regularly, getting a chance to study birds and to interact with older humans. The project has enjoyed great success, and the reaction from seniors and kids (and birds) has been wonderful. Currently, the project organizers are trying to identify an organization to take over the program so that it might expand to other communities and become a non-profit that can accept donations. In the future, Birds For Brains expects to supply binoculars and birding guides to each assisted-living facility in the program. Also planned is research on how this initiative affects attitudes and learning in both kids and seniors. Learn more about Birds For Brains online <littlebirdsonline.com/BirdsForBrains.html>.

Economic Impact of Birding

A report released this past July by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shows that birders contributed \$36 billion to the U.S. economy in 2006, the most recent year for which economic data are available. The report, *Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis* <library.fws.gov/Pubs/birding_natsurvey06.pdf>, shows that 48 million Americans watched birds in 2006. Participation rates varied but were generally greater in the northern half of the country. The five states with the greatest birding participation rates were Montana (40 percent of the adult population), Maine (39 percent), Vermont (38 percent), Minnesota (33 percent), and Iowa (33 percent). The report identifies who birders are, where they live, how avid they are, and what kinds of birds they watch. Along with demographic information, the report provides an estimate of how much birders spend on their hobby and the economic impact of these expenditures.

Kittatinny–Shawangunk National Raptor Migration Corridor

A group of wildlife biologists has submitted a formal petition to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar asking him to designate a Kittatinny–Shawangunk National Raptor Migration Corridor. The petition text is on the Raptor Corridor Project website <raptorcorridor.org>. This landscape, encompassing 2.1 million acres, consists of a 250-mile-long stretch of the Kittatinny–Shawangunk Ridge and adjoining lands, crossing parts of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Federal designation by Secretary Salazar will provide prestigious national recognition for a treasured landscape known around the world for its famous autumn raptor migrations. Forest songbirds, bats, and other fauna also use the ridge and



Proposed National Raptor Migration Corridor. Map by © Kei Sochi.

corridor for their migrations. The designation would be an important and unique conservation advocacy tool. Currently, 255 organizations and individuals endorse the request. Ornithologist and author Donald S. Heintzelman originated the idea for the National Raptor Migration Corridor.

Nebraska Bird Surveyors Sought

Birders with the Wildcat Audubon Society in Nebraska have been conducting breeding bird surveys in Nebraska's Panhandle for the past three years. Every Saturday from late May throughout the month of June, birders search for evidence of breeding birds in designated blocks. Volunteers search for evidence of nesting activity, such as Eastern Phoebes feeding young at a nest, Western Kingbirds carrying nesting material, Brown Thrashers paired up, or House Wrens singing. Wildcat Audubon volunteers are conducting these surveys under the auspices of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union. The ultimate goal is to publish a new

breeding bird atlas to replace the one from 20 years ago. According to survey participant Ann Duey, "The surveys have given our field trips a special purpose, and enhanced our birding skills by encouraging us to note specific bird behaviors."