

PEOPLE AND PLACES

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE ABA FAMILY

Birding welcomes your contributions to “People and Places.” Please e-mail your submissions to Ted Floyd <tfloyd@aba.org>. Submissions must be 125–150 words in length. No want-ads. Other than that, all birding-related news items will be eagerly received.

Duck Numbers Increased in 2009

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that 42 million ducks were present by early summer on mid-continent wetlands. This figure is 13% higher than the 2008 estimate, and 25% higher than the 1955–2008 long-term average. Species by species, the 2009 results were generally positive. For example, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, and Canvasback populations all were substantially higher than in 2008. Numbers of scaup were up, too, although still well below the long-term average. The major reason for the uptick in duck numbers was the weather. Increased rainfall and snowmelt, especially in the north-central U.S., resulted in lush grasslands and abundant standing water—prime conditions for breeding. But conditions were not uniformly good. The western portion of the survey region experienced continuing drought conditions, with southern Alberta experiencing a 19% decrease in the number of ponds with standing water.

— contributed by Bill Stewart

North American Birds Online

The American Birding Association is delighted to report that the journal *North American Birds* (NAB) is now permanently archived in searchable format on S.O.R.A., the Searchable Ornithological Research Archive <<http://tiny.cc/GHYjK>>. NAB, published by the ABA, is the quarterly journal of ornithological record for North America, including Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean region. This digital archiving of NAB was made possible by a generous financial contribution from ABA board member Tony White, who tells *Birding*, “When I offered to finance putting NAB and its predecessors on SORA, I knew it would benefit the birding and ornithological communities. I did not realize it would be a marriage aid as well. At a recent conference, one birder came up to me and said I had possibly saved his marriage as he could now tell his wife that he would get rid of all those back issues.”

— contributed by ABA staff

AOU Meeting Highlights

Ornithologists from all over the world gathered in Philadelphia, the cradle of American ornithology, to attend the 127th meeting of the American Ornithologists’ Union, which opened with a reception on 12 August 2009. Plenary addresses were delivered by such luminaries as Scott Weidensaul, Robert E. Ricklefs, Erich Jarvis, Bridget Stutchbury, A. Marm Kilpatrick (2008 winner of the Ned K. Johnson Young Investigator Award), Gail Patricelli, Trevor Price, and W. John Smith. In addition to the plenary and keynote lectures, there were 329 oral presentations, including several by undergraduates, and 121 poster presentations. Awards were presented to Joanna Burger (Brewster Award), Mary and Charles Brown (Coues Award), Scott Derrickson (Schreiber Conservation Award), Renee Duckworth (Johnson Young Investigator Award), and M. Ross Lein (Jenkinson Award for service to the AOU). The 128th meeting will be in San Diego, California, 7–11 February 2010 <<http://tiny.cc/3dgkw>>.

— contributed by Edward Burt

In Memoriam: Laurence C. Binford

A major figure in California birding was lost when Laurence C. (“Laurie”) Binford passed away at his cabin at Agate Harbor, Michigan. He was 74. Binford was curator of birds at the California Academy of Sciences during the 1970s, and he was among the most important birding mentors for many Bay Area birders. His quest for accuracy and honesty was legendary, yet the qualities that endeared him most to birders were his dry wit and wry smile, and his good-natured grousing about everything all day long. And when the day was done, he’d make you a mean Manhattan. Binford moved from California after his retirement, splitting time between Michigan’s Keweenaw Peninsula and Baton Rouge. He was slow and meticulous but when he finally published something, it immediately became a classic. Binford’s last publication was *Birds of the Keweenaw Peninsula* (2006). A biographical essay is available online <<http://tiny.cc/5alTJ>>

— contributed by Don Roberson

Hall–Mayfield Award

The Wilson Ornithological Society (WOS) invites members of the ABA and other individuals doing research on birds to apply for the George A. Hall–Harold F. Mayfield Award. This



A U.S. government survey of breeding waterfowl revealed that **Northern Shoveler** and other duck species experienced population recovery on mid-continent wetlands in 2009. Cascade County, Montana; May 2009. © Alan G. Nelson.



In this photo of the late **Laurence C. ("Laurie") Binford**, note the signature ashtray and emptied Manhattan. And the wry smile. *Eagle Harbor, Michigan; 15 October 2006. © Joe Kaplan.*

award is designated for and limited to independent researchers without access to funds and facilities available at colleges, universities, or governmental agencies, and is restricted to non-professional ornithologists, including high school students. Any kind of avian research is eligible. One award of \$1,000 is given annually. All application materials must be received by 1 February 2010. Membership in the WOS is not a prerequisite for applying for the Hall–Mayfield Award. The Research Awards Application Form must be used, available at the WOS website <<http://tiny.cc/JkUEW>>.

Please consult the website for additional information about applying for awards, including requirements and rules regarding general eligibility, proposal guidelines, and the application format and form.

— contributed by *E. Dale Kennedy*

Citizen-Science Wildlife Data

Puget Sound Bird Observatory (PSBO), a new Washington non-profit, gathered founders and land-use mediators for a July 2009 conference to brainstorm about the role wildlife data can play in land-use decisions. Mobilizing and training citizens to do point-counts, to band birds, and simply to record their observations is an important part of PSBO's mission. Moreover, encouraging birders to record their observations in publicly accessible data storage like eBird can make such collective datasets a significant factor in land-use planning, especially where local statutes require the consideration of species' vulnerabilities other than those federally listed, as in Washington state. In landscapes changing due to climate change as well as real estate speculation, empowered citizens can contribute wildlife observations to help save sites at risk and even document population change in real time. Details of the conference are available at PSBO's website <pugetsoundbirds.org>.

— contributed by *Daniel R. Froehlich*

ABA Logo Change

In 1971 the fledgling American Birding Association unveiled a brand-new logo: the Red-billed Tropicbird, *Phaethon aethereus*. The tropicbird was a perfect testament to the spirit of the age. According to a brief note in *Birding* at the time, the species "signifies both 'the rare bird' and the far-ranging qualities of the hobby and sport of birding." And on the page opposite, the mission statement of the organization boldly proclaimed, "The American Birding Association exists for the sole purpose of promoting birding as a hobby and a sport."

That was 38 years ago.

The birding community has experienced profound change since the early 1970s. There are millions of birders in North America today, the vast majority of whom started birding quite recently. Today's birders are keenly interested in bird behavior, bird populations, and especially bird conservation. For sure, today's birders delight at the prospect of finding "the rare bird," but there is so much more to modern birding.

The Red-billed Tropicbird was a marvelous logo in its day, but it does not reflect the vision and ambitions of today's birders. Therefore, the ABA is going to change its logo.

Yes, we're going to change our logo, and we want you to decide what the new logo will be. By the end of the month, the ABA website will be set up to accommodate online voting for the organization's new logo. We will be notifying members by e-mail as soon as the voting begins.

One thing has not changed at the American Birding Association. After all these years, we remain a member-oriented, grassroots organization. You are the heart and soul of the ABA. Please vote for the ABA's new logo, and please accept our invitation to involve yourself as broadly as possible in the future of the ABA.