



THE BIRDING COMMUNITY E-BULLETIN

November 2009

This Birding Community E-bulletin is being distributed through the generous support of Steiner Binoculars as a service to active and concerned birders, those dedicated to the joys of birding and the protection of birds and their habitats. You can access an archive of past E-bulletins on [the birding pages of the National Wildlife Refuge Association \(NWRA\) website](#) OR on [the birding webpages for Steiner Binoculars](#).

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RARITY FOCUS

On the morning of 12 October, a Brown-chested Martin was discovered by Jeremiah Trimble, Matt Garvey, and Marshall Iliff at the Cumberland Farms on the Halifax/Middleboro town line in southeastern Massachusetts. One race of this species is an austral migrant from southern South America, and there are only five previous convincing sightings for North America since 1983 (Massachusetts, Florida, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Arizona), including several with complete documentation (i.e., specimen or photograph).

This bird appeared to be a juvenile of the "fusca" subspecies, the migratory race from southern South America, identifiable by a series of black teardrop-shaped dots down the central belly.

Austral migrants are species or subspecies which breed in southern South America, but migrate north during the southern (austral) winter to spend that season in northern South America or southern Central America. In Brown-chested Martins, the "fusca" subspecies forms huge post-breeding flocks, often associated with other swallow species, and moves north to northern South America and Panama, where individuals remain from March to October/November. The mid-October Massachusetts martin, much like more regularly vagrant North American Fork-tailed Flycatchers in the fall, was apparently a reverse migrant that moved north into the United States when it should have been headed for southern South America.

The Cumberland Farms martin was seen by many dozens of observers between 12-14 October. During its stay, the martin was accompanied by a number of other swallows, mainly Tree and Barn swallows, but also several

seasonally late Northern Rough-winged, Bank, and Cliff swallows.

Photos by Jeremiah Trimble can be viewed here:

www.flickr.com/photos/jrtrimble/sets/72157622448089005/

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IBA NEWS: NOVA-SCOTIA/MASSACHUSETTS CONNECTION

Biologists from Mass Audubon's Coastal Waterbird Program, the USGS (Patuxent Wildlife Research Center), and Bird Studies Canada were excited to find a dozen Canadian-hatched Roseate Terns at staging sites on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, over a 38-day period from 14 August to 21 September 2009. The Canadian-banded terns were banded as chicks during the summer of 2009 on Country Island, Nova Scotia, by staff from Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service. Each juvenile tern carried color leg-bands which made them visible among thousands of Roseate and Common terns staging at eight different sites on Cape Cod. Not insignificantly, Country Island where the terns were banded is a Important Bird Area (IBA) in Nova Scotia. In addition most of the color-marked terns were also relocated at one of two highly significant Massachusetts IBAs located on Cape Cod.

The meticulous survey of color-banded terns at these IBA sites is vital to improving our understanding of the nesting, staging behavior, and migratory timing of Roseate Terns, a species classified as Threatened in Canada and Endangered in the northeastern U.S. Such observations also underscore the significance of IBAs in prioritizing habitat significance at the landscape level. Currently the northeastern population of Roseate Terns which is principally located between the south shore of Long Island, New York and Nova Scotia, Canada, contains approximately 3,000 pairs, with Massachusetts supporting the majority of the population. In 2009 the Massachusetts population was comprised of approximately 1,300 pairs.

You can find more on these particular terns from Bird Studies Canada:

<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/organization/newsarchive/10-09-09.html>

For additional information about worldwide IBA programs, and those across the U.S., check the National Audubon Society's Important Bird Area program web site at:

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/>

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RARE CROW REDISCOVERED

Last month we described BirdLife International's launch of a remarkable campaign to search for 47 rare bird species thought to possibly be extinct:

<http://www.refugeassociation.org/birding/octSBC09.html#TOC02>

This month, we describe the discovery of a nearly as rare species. Although not among the 47 "most wanted" on BirdLife International's list, the discovery of the Banggai Crow (*Corvus unicolor*) in Indonesia was highly significant. The species, first described in 1900, was recently rediscovered on Peleng Island and just announced last month.

The rediscovery was spearheaded by Indonesian researchers and assisted by Pamela Rasmussen, an assistant professor at Michigan State University. . For more information see:

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/10/091013104340.htm>

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SECOND STOPOVER BREEDING DOCUMENTED

It is generally thought that most migratory North American songbirds nest in temperate North America, then start migrating to the Neotropics in the late summer and early autumn bound for the Caribbean, southern Mexico, Central America, or parts of South America for the winter.

In the spring these species turn around and return to where they nested, either by retracing their same route, or sometimes by following a different path.

Although the distance of these migrations can be challenging, and the dangers posed by inclement weather, predators, and the loss of suitable stopover habitat may seem daunting, at least the timing of the annual cycle sounds straightforward. However, for some songbird species this cycle may be far more complex than traditionally thought.

Biologists studying songbirds stopping in western Mexico during southward migration found that for some species there is actually be a "second breeding season" occurring during that migration. Amazingly, Sievert Rohwer and his colleagues have discovered that at least five species - Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Orchard Oriole, Hooded Oriole, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Cassin's Vireo - regularly engage in a second breeding season during their stopover in the lowland thorn forests of coastal Sinaloa and Baja California Sur before reaching their western Mexican wintering destination. This second breeding season occurs during the local winter, which lasts

western Mexico wintering destination. This second nesting occurs during the local monsoon season, which lasts from June through August.

Further investigation of these findings is surely necessary. The discovery of this surprising dual breeding season may reveal a flexibility in the lives of these birds that was previously unknown. This discovery underscores the fact that future conservation plans may need to consider additional new factors when being established. How many more North American species engage in these complicated breeding systems is unknown. Similarly, how many "migration stopover sites" may also prove to be "vital breeding sites"?

These findings appeared in the PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES in late October. To see this summary, visit:

http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2009-10/uow-fef102109.php

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WETLAND ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

A new practical guide has recently been published by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature). The guide is intended to enable concerned individuals to assess a wetland by considering its biological, ecological, developmental, and economic values.

The toolkit shows how an assessment (including that of the species in the wetlands) can strengthen wetlands conservation. It specifically outlines the steps in designing, preparing for, carrying out, and communicating the results of an integrated wetland assessment.

While primarily written for situations in developing countries, the lessons in this 144-page toolkit can be useful at other locations as well. The three main sections in the toolkit cover the integrated assessment process, the tools themselves, and examples describing detailed case studies.

This is an invaluable tool to help counter the serious and rapid loss of wetland bird habitat, and it is available free for downloading at:

http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iwa_toolkit_lowres.pdf

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BOOK NOTES: BULLY!

The United States has never had a bird enthusiast in the White House more important, innovative, or effective than Theodore Roosevelt. Although TR's bird-and-wildlife interests have played minor roles in other historical biographies, it is Douglas Brinkley, in his recent *THE WILDERNESS WARRIOR: THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE CRUSADE FOR AMERICA*, who most effectively puts this president's conservation zeal front-and-center (HarperCollins 2009).

Some birders will revel in Roosevelt's near-endless enthusiasm for ornithology as a youth; others will be amazed by his creative dedication to federalizing innovative Refuges, Parks, and Forests while serving as U.S. President. In any case, it's all here in one hefty volume. The American view of wild creatures and wild places was never the same after the administration of the 26th President of the U.S. (1901-1909).

If nothing else, at 940 pages, this book seems to include practically everything that TR ever did concerning wildlife, nature, and the outdoors. Still, it's far better to have a bit too much than a bit too little!

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WIGEON TO GRACE 2010-2011 STAMP

Last month's Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest had five eligible species qualify as images in the contest: American Wigeon, Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teal, Gadwall, and Wood Duck. With over 220 art entries, almost 60% were renditions of the popular and showy Wood Duck. The winning artwork, however, depicted an

American Wigeon, and the artist was a long-time contender. This year, Robert Bealle of Waldorf, Maryland - an artist who placed second 26 years ago - finally won this prestigious art competition. His painting of a male American Wigeon will appear on the 2010-2011 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation [Duck] Stamp (to be released next July), with 98% of the proceeds of the sale of the stamp going directly to secure wetland and grassland habitat for the Refuge System.

For a look at the impressive image and to read a news story of Bealle and his artwork, see this piece from the WASHINGTON POST:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/27/AR2009102704127.html>

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TIP OF THE MONTH: WHEN YOU THINK GIFTS, THINK COFFEE

We'll be looking at the Thanksgiving holiday before you know it, and then next month, it will be Christmas!

It has been three years since we have mentioned this opportunity, but holidays like Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Hanukkah are a perfect time to share bird-compatible shade-grown coffee as a wrapped gift or party offering. In fact, this is an ideal way to initiate a serious bird conservation conversation, while enjoying a good brew to go along with it.

It's surprising how many people – even "bird people" – are still unaware of the link between forest-interior birds and full shade-rich coffee agriculture. Shade-coffee habitat mimics natural forests in the Neotropics and can potentially benefit birds with every cup of coffee served.

This is a great time of year to make that special effort to track down shade-grown, bird compatible coffee from a local supplier. If possible, see if you can find "triple-labeled" coffee - shade grown, organic, and fair traded - for gift-giving and holiday visits this year. And remember, by doing this you will help make a difference to bird conservation, and that's what counts.

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SAN CLEMENTE LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE: INDIVIDUAL MASTER-BREEDER

Loggerhead Shrike is a species that has drastically declined over the past 75 years. It is now almost gone from the northeastern portion of its range, and the subspecies on Navy-controlled San Clemente Island, California, has been listed as Endangered on the federal list since 1977.

Since then, the U.S. Navy, the San Diego Zoo, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have been working on re-establishing this island subspecies. While the Island's Loggerhead Shrike population at one point dipped down to barely a dozen, there are now 80 breeding pairs in the wild and more than 60 individuals in captivity as a result of this cooperative California breeding program.

Interestingly, a single male Loggerhead Shrike on San Clemente has played a major role in reviving the subspecies population. Over the course of eight breeding seasons, "Trampas," a shrike hatched in captivity in 2001, has fathered 62 chicks. From those chicks have come 93 grand-chicks, 61 great-grand-chicks, and 25 great-great-grand-chicks.

OK: Let's hear it for Trampas!

While hopes are increasing for the San Clemente Loggerhead Shrike, there is still no official "Shrike Recovery Plan," although a draft plan was created about six years ago.

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BIRD SONG CARDS: IT WAS INEVITABLE

When did you get your first? When did they start? You know what we're referring to: those birthday-anniversary-graduation greeting cards with accompanying music. It's those cards that when you open them will greet you with a slice of "Wild Thing," or "Smoking in the Boy's Room," or "Crazy," or "Roxanne," or, goodness knows, something from "Hair."

Well, the next step in their evolution has now occurred: new greeting cards which contain real bird songs and calls.

Open one of these cards, and out will come 13 to 15 seconds of chirps, peeps, whistles, and croaks from a variety of birds. The cards were announced last month, produced by the U.K.'s Really Wild Cards along with accompanying bird recordings from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Each card also features a painting of the species selected from the Cornell Lab's art collection, along with information about the bird.

These cards are made from recycled or sustainable forest products. The sound chips run on lead-free lithium batteries and even the clear wrapper is biodegradable. (Note: despite the claim of the cards being environmentally friendly, all batteries should be treated as potentially hazardous.) A percentage of profits from the sales of the cards will fund projects at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The folks at Really Wild Cards expect to release a new set of bird-sound cards approximately every six months.

Take a look for yourself:

<http://www.reallywildcards.com>

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STILL TIME: 2010 NWR SYSTEM AWARDS

The National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation are still accepting nominations for the 2010 National Wildlife Refuge System Awards to honor outstanding accomplishments by refuge managers, refuge system employees, volunteers, and Friends Groups.

Some wonderful bird activities, projects, and volunteers have been highlighted in recent years. Nominations are due no later than 15 November 2009.

To learn more about the awards program, the monetary prizes, and nomination guidelines, and to download the required nomination forms, visit:

<http://www.refugeassociation.org/new-events/callfornom2010.html>

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FISH & WILDLIFE NEWS: MIGRATORY BIRDS OVERVIEW

Last month, the summer issue of the FISH & WILDLIFE NEWS was distributed. It was late, but it was worth the wait.

This particular USFWS publication is a special issue on "migratory birds," packed with briefs on partnerships, avian population status, waterfowl, JVs, NAWCA, refuge issues, bird appreciation: in essence, it is all about birds, bird habitat, bird education, and bird conservation.

It's worthy of a serious look and broad circulation. You can download a copy here:

http://www.fws.gov/news/pdf/News_Su09_web.pdf

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OUR SHAMELESS SELF-PROMOTION

Since the Birding Community E-bulletin is in its sixth year of publication and distribution, we continue to share some remarks from some of our readers. As previously noted, we are including a comment or two each month this year. These are being placed at the very end of each E-bulletin so you can simply stop reading at this point if you'd like!

"In this day of email overload, the Birding Community E-bulletin often garners a feeling of 'too long to read' for me. But somehow it seems that this is also one of the few emails I read as soon as it comes in... I am finding this to be an invaluable resource for birding and conservation information."

- Chris Eberly, Program Manager, Dept. of Defense Partners in Flight

"The Birding Community E-Bulletin puts my birding in a context - conservation efforts, political context, and scientific news. As birders, we are advocates for conservation, and the kind of information we get through the bulletin deepens our own understanding and makes us more effective in our conversations with others."

- Barbara Volkle, President, Friends of the Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge

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If you wish to distribute all or parts of any of the E-bulletins, we request that you mention the source of any material used. (Include the URL for the E-Bulletin archives if possible).

If you have friends or co-workers who want to get onto the monthly E-bulletin mailing list, have them contact either:

- Wayne R. Peterson, Director, Massachusetts Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program, Mass Audubon, 718/534-2046, wpetersen@massaudubon.org OR
- Paul Baicich 410/992-9736, paul.baicich@verizon.net

If you DON'T wish to receive these E-bulletins, contact either of us, and we will take you off our mailing list IMMEDIATELY.