

(I don't like this letter; but for now, you can see the length, and place it in the newsletter, and I'll edit it later)

Welcome to the first issue of our first newsletter! If you are receiving this issue, then you are one of our Charter Members. Thank you for your support of the Western Foundation!

For now, we plan to publish 2 newsletters per year, and as we grow, we may expand the number of issues. I want this outlet to serve as a reference guide for you to see the main projects we have initiated. We cannot summarize everything here, however, so please be sure to check our website (www.wfvz.org) for additional details.

I wish you a wonderful holiday season, and a fulfilling and peaceful 2004.

Sincerely,
Linnea S. Hall, Ph.D.,
Director

Open House

On November 15th, 2003, we hosted our first large-scale party at the Foundation building in Camarillo. About 130 people attended, including Mayor Jon Sharkey of Port Hueneme, Pam Hawthorne and Hamed Hejran of Vivitar Corporation, Jan Osterhaven from the office of Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks, and many other members and supporters from the community.

A presentation was made by our Director Dr. Linnea Hall, our Board members Kathy Harrison Killelea and Dr. John Moss, and our Collections Manager René Corado. René, in his own, unique style, really impressed the audience with his ability to ask for money without asking for money (you had to be there!)

We hope to make this Open House event an annual fall tradition, so hope to see you there in 2004!

Guatemala Bird Diversity Project

The Western Foundation has been conducting inventories of eggs, nests, and birds with emphasis in the tropics since the 1960s. The research projects that the WFVZ conducted in Malaysia, Madagascar, Samoa, Ecuador, Chile, Mexico, and Costa Rica contributed to the Foundation's collections, which currently are composed of more than 190,000 sets of bird eggs representing approximately 4000 species, over 18,000 nests, and 54,000 study skins.

Historically, Guatemala was poorly represented in our collections. In 2001, we initiated a long-term research program to document Guatemalan birds, nests, and eggs. Our Collections Manager, René, has been conducting this project with the cooperation of the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala (USAC), and the Museo Historia Natural de Guatemala.

There are three objectives to our research: (1) to document the biodiversity and distribution of species in various localities in Guatemala, especially those areas in immediate threat of deforestation; (2) to acquire information on the breeding phenology and migratory patterns of species in Guatemala; and (3), to train Guatemalan biology students and university staff in fieldwork and preparation techniques, and to assist them in the conservation of their resources.

In the first year we conducted fieldwork in two separate localities, and were assisted

by USAC students. (For details about our study sites and pictures, please see our website, www.wfvz.org). In the second year we conducted research in three localities. Luckily, the forested area near Guatemala City that was scheduled to be cut down in 2002 was still there from the first year, and we were able to continue our research there. In 2003, we revisited a forested area near Guatemala City and the locality of El Progreso (please see map below), and we also worked at two new field sites.

From our work in Guatemala we have obtained valuable specimens from previously uninvestigated areas, and have acquired additional information on the timing of breeding and migration. The voucher specimens we have collected have been divided between the WFVZ and USAC, so that staff at the Museo Historia Natural de Guatemala can build their reference collection to have a more complete record of the species that occur in Guatemala.

René will be conducting some winter fieldwork at the end of December, 2003, to add to our knowledge about migrant and resident bird biology. We also hope to secure a grant in 2004 to expand our research over the next 2 years to begin including long-term population monitoring (banding and counts) of species occurring in areas that are being the most rapidly altered due to forest clearing for agriculture and building.

If you are interested in our work in Guatemala, please feel free to call Linnea for information on how you can support the project and learn more about Central American bird diversity!

Expansion of the Foundation

In August 2003 we purchased 20 new specimen cabinets and 130 metal drawers to store the large number of specimens we've acquired and prepared this year, and to relieve the overcrowding of our cabinets. To integrate the cabinets into the collection required the relocation of almost every cabinet in the collection (over 600!), and the subsequent shifting of all the specimens among drawers so that they remained in taxonomic order. It took 4 weeks for Assistant Collections Manager Bridget Greuel, Volunteer Gary Collins, Collections Manager René Corado, and Director Linnea Hall to move all the cabinets, and it has taken the next several months for Bridget to shift all of the specimens.

Although the new cabinets have alleviated some of the crowding of the study skins and eggs, more cabinets (another 20) will be needed soon. If you are interested in helping us purchase additional new cabinets, please contact Linnea at "linnea@wfvz.org". Each cabinet costs approximately \$1,300 (with drawers). If you sponsor a cabinet, we'll happily put your name on the front!

Another expansion project we are embarking on for 2004-2005 is the construction of a multi-purpose room that can accommodate about 50 people, and can be **heated** during the winter! We plan to convert our primary storage area into a room that can serve as a classroom to teach Ornithology and specimen preparation courses; host the Conejo Valley Audubon Society (which meets monthly at our facility) in style; provide accommodations for students from local schools to conduct hands-on projects when they visit the Foundation for tours; and allow guest speakers to have a comfortable room in which to pontificate!

2004 will be the year to raise the funds to construct the multi-purpose room. If you would like to contribute to our fund-raising campaign for this project, please contact us at the Foundation right away!

Education Outreach

We are currently in the process of launching our "Birds in the Classroom" project, designed to provide teaching materials, for free, to middle school and high school science teachers in Oxnard to use in their life sciences classes. We are targeting these "teaching kits" for use in schools in Oxnard because these schools have large Latino and other ethnic student populations. Relatively few Latinos, African-Americans, and Filipinos pursue higher degrees in the natural and life sciences in the United States, and we believe that materials addressing

aspects of these sciences could encourage such students to both continue their education and pursue advanced training.

The teaching kits will contain eggs, nests, and study skins of local bird species from our collections, and lesson plans that instruct teachers in ways to present these materials so that they not only are creative and enjoyable, but also will dovetail with California's Science Content Standards to teach about basic bird biology, biodiversity, and ecology. We also will provide literature that discusses the professional field of ornithology, including career options, local college and university programs in ornithology, and sources for more information.

Each teaching kit costs us about \$165 to create. We want to produce 20, to loan, for free, to teachers. If you would like to support this project, please let us know soon, because we want to get this project underway!

Our Needs

Have some extra money lying around that you don't know what to do with? We have an idea – send it to us!! Seriously, we have the following needs this coming year, and would love to have your assistance. Any amount helps us with our mission to “*obtain, protect, and manage ornithological collections in a manner that ensures their continued survival and accessibility to the international research community, educators, and students.*”

We currently need: a copy machine (\$4,000); 20 more specimen cabinets (\$1,300 each); archival boxes for field notes (\$1,400); a laptop computer and a desktop computer for library database searches (\$2,000 total).

To contact us:

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