



The Murreletter

Society for Northwestern
Vertebrate Biology

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June 2004

President's Message

Our annual meetings are a shuffle of the deck of our membership, and there's a new deal to get the "hand" attending our venue in any given year. This year in Ellensburg, I was very glad to see so many folks "dealt" again that had remained hidden in the deck during our Arcata meeting last year. It was a Full House! Walking into the mixer the night before was like a family reunion. That is exactly why we move locations every year!

I must say that my adrenaline was pumping from the outset of the meeting this year ... at first it was "meeting anticipation" from the new viewpoint of President, but then the FIRE happened. The Fire Alarm blared 15 minutes before the plenary session and the building was evacuated. Quizzical looks were being exchanged as we stood out in the 30 odd degree morning air and someone said "Did you smell smoke?" Well, yes. The lobby fish tank pump had shorted. My quip was that the fish had noticed their taxon was somehow left out of the Fire Session, planned for later in the meeting! Amazingly, the building was given the all clear with only a slight delay. This was largely due to Central Washington University's quick action (and I think they had Plan B in place pretty quick too, if we'd had needed it). I would like to give a warm thanks to them for being our hosts and to our meeting on-site organizers from the Northwest Scientific Association (NWSA), Karl Lilquist and Alan Sullivan; they shouldered most of the nitty gritty tasks to get the show going. Excellent job, you two! Also, our main man on the job was Washington VP Dick Weisbrod.



Thank you Dick, your multiple trips from home in the San Juan's over the mountain to E-burg were much appreciated. And thanks to Dick's wife Rita for her unflagging support accompanying him on each trip! They now know the best restaurants in Ellensburg, if you need to ever get a recommendation. Thinking back on the meeting now, I was especially heartened by the participation by the local scientific community.

The work being done by students at Central Washington University was fantastic to see! In retrospect, I wish we had

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organized best student paper and poster awards to more formally recognize student contributions. Perhaps it's better to not have to choose though, too many good candidates.

It was great to have a joint meeting with lichenologists, the Washington Chapter of The Wildlife Society, and NWSA, and it broadened the meeting's scope dramatically. Having thematic sessions on ecological topics such as Shrub Steppe and Natural Areas allowed a crosswalk of disciplines that we don't always see. I heard positive comments from several folks about these sessions. We'll organize such cross-taxonomic sessions again for sure.

Burr Betts, our journal editor, is organizing abstracts for the Fall issue of *Northwestern Naturalist*. The SNVB Executive Board made a tough decision a couple of weeks ago to only publish the abstracts from papers or posters on vertebrates.

I expect we will see cost creep in the next years as annual dues, page charges, and annual meeting registration fees need to reflect the rising costs of doing business.

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Society for Northwest Vertebrate Biology

*... the oldest scientific association devoted to the study
of terrestrial vertebrates in the Pacific Northwest.*

- Established in 1920.

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Who we are...

The Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology was founded in 1920 as the Pacific Northwest Bird and Mammal Society. Long recognized as the pre-eminent union of ornithologists and mammalogists in the Pacific Northwest, the society adopted its current name in 1988 to reflect an expanded taxonomic scope that included amphibians and reptiles. The scope expanded again in 1999 to include fish. Today the society strives to promote close working relationships among ornithologists, mammalogists, herpetologists, and ichthyologists in our region; foster exchange of scientific information and interest in the study of vertebrates; and offer a forum for these activities through meetings and publications.

Membership

All persons or institutions interested in the study of birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles are eligible for membership. Individual members receive the Northwestern Naturalist and the Murreletter, our newsletter. Other SNVB publications, such as Northwest Fauna, are available at a reduced rate. Other privileges of membership include notification of all meetings of SNVB, power to vote in SNVB meetings and elections, and the privilege of holding office in SNVB.

**For more information or
to become a member:
<http://www.snwvb.org>**

The Murreletter

The Murreletter is published 3 times yearly and is distributed to the members of the Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology. Submission of stories, meeting announcements and other material of interest to members of the society is encouraged. Submissions should be sent to Murreletter Editor Richard Nauman. To receive the Murreletter electronically please provide your current email address to SNVB Treasurer Julie Grialou.

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The Exec Board is strategizing to maintain an organization that can continue to offer scholarships, fee waivers and other benefits to our members.

Next year, we are looking forward to a joint meeting with the Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society, in Corvallis, during the week of 21-25 February. Please note the earlier date! There will also be an earlier abstract deadline...likely November. Plan ahead! Our members that have had conflicts with Spring Break vacations or obligations will have their opportunity to come next year. This will be a larger event at La Sells Stewart Center, OSU. Both our new and past Oregon Vice Presidents, Drs. Wendy Wenthe and Janet Erickson, have offered their help to organize, and from TWS we are working with Mark Penninger and Bruce Campbell. I am on tab to get a pre-meeting Biodiversity Workshop planned, sponsored by the USDA Forest Service PNW Research Station. This Workshop will be inclusive of many agencies and institutions, and is intended to capture both where we are at with biodiversity conservation and visioning out to the future, where we are headed and where we need to go. More on that later.

In 2006, we have brought up the notion of meeting in our inland region, perhaps Missoula! It's definitely time to shake up things eastward, don't you think? We are looking for interested folks to get that going, let us know if you can help.

Have you seen our website lately? It's undergone a facelift thanks to Brian Biswell, Marc Hayes, Tara Chestnut, and Kathryn Ronnenberg!

Happy field seasons for those of you tied to homeotherms and poikilotherms revving up activities with the warmer weather!

Cheers, Dede Olson

Election Results

The SNVB Board wishes to congratulate our newest members Wendy Wenthe (OR VP) and Steve Herman (Trustee) on their election victories. We also would like to thank our outgoing members Janet Erickson (OR VP) and Brent Matsuda (Trustee) for all their hard work. Also, many thanks to Ian Reid and Virgil Hawkes for running for office, and we hope you both try for another position in the future.

Student Scholarship Program

The SNVB Board is pleased to announce our new student scholarship program. Using the 2005 meeting as our benchmark, SNVB will provide the opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students to compete for a scholarship for projects engaged in vertebrate research and monitoring within the geographic scope of the society, northwestern North America west of the Great Plains and north of the Mojave Desert. One scholarship of up to \$1000 will be awarded annually. Scholarships are intended to support travel, equipment, and supplies for student research (proposals requesting salary support will not be considered). Scholarships will be announced at the society's annual meeting, held each spring..

We need volunteers for the scholarship committee! The committee will develop selection criteria, review applications and make award recommendations to the board. The work will take approximately 10 to 20 hours, most of which will be in January and February. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Tara Chestnut by email (tarachestnut@zhonka.net).

- Tara Chestnut

Northwest Naturalist Editor's Report

There is some very good news! Our efforts to get Northwestern Naturalist abstracted have finally paid off. This coming September, we'll be included in BioOne, which is a searchable database of journals printed by Allen Press. This company prints many of the most widely read journals in science. As a result, papers in Northwestern Naturalist should be easier to find by authors doing literature searches. We hope inclusion in BioOne will make our next attempt at getting abstracted by Biosis and Current Science more successful.

-Burr Betts



Arizona Retreat (Pre-Herp Trek 2004?)

After too many days of great gray owl surveys being cancelled by a continual deluge of rain in Oregon, I decided it was time to dry out. But rather than inundate my sinuses with California's lovely Central Valley smog, I decided to skip town for a few days and head further south in pursuit of the sun, and find out what all the hype was about (as Americans tend to hear Canucks pronounce it) with those former water-logged SNVBers who bailed on the Pacific Northwest for the open expanses of Arizona (namely Elissa Ostergaard and Larry & Janet Jones).

Inspired by the August issue of the Murreletter which described in great detail Herp Trek 2003 where all manner of incredible herps jump out as soon as you set foot in Arizona, I loaded up with film and expectations of chasing gila monsters, roadrunners and rattlesnakes, alongside the craziest of former Washington VPs (both Elissa & Larry). However, not content to survey from his motorcycle, Larry befell a mishap while attempting to adorn himself as a hood ornament on a car not even 3 days before my arrival (next time I won't give him as much warning). Fortunately he was wearing a helmet (which is actually not required by law in Airyzona), but busted his leg up so bad he could no longer leapfrog in the field.

So to ease his pain and lack of mobility, we picked up a get-well gift for him from the local Herps R' Us in the form of a backpack consisting of plastic snakes, frogs, and other critters (including palm trees which were smaller than the snakes). And a squishy tortoise and lizard he could squeeze in frustration during his pending surgery. This was the closest we could do to "bring the field to Larry" so that his sanity (and that of Janet's) would remain intact. Then I forced Elissa to take me out birding and, dragging her Ultimate boyfriend Matt in tow, we headed off to Catalina State Park, where we saw every bird species in Arizona but roadrunners. Okay, maybe a slight exaggeration. We didn't see any Mexican spotted owls either (although I thought I saw a flash of a sombrero flying through the trees). What was really cool was seeing a *Pyrrhuloxia*, a type of cardinal but with a common name indicative of someone on crack (it actually sounds like a new model of SUV to me).

And I still got to go herping too. Larry had previously arranged a herp survey with colleagues for the federally threatened Chiricahua leopard frog with which I was able to tag along even with Jaguarundi Jones back at the ranch. And we actually found an adult! And a pond full of their tadpoles! It was quite

amazing to experience an oasis of riparian habitat alongside a beautiful stream set in a canyon in the middle of the Sonoran Desert.

There were canyon treefrogs everywhere, occasional black-necked garter snakes, and lizards aplenty. But no gila monsters! And not a single rattlesnake. Then again, 6 guys lumbering down the canyon probably provided enough warning to any sensible creature in the area. We did however, find a Sonoran mud turtle, which I thought was super cool until I picked it up and discovered the reason why it's also called a "stinkpot." When I expressed my disgust at the outhouse-like odour to the critter, Larry's boss stepped away, suspecting I was referring to him. Hopefully Larry still has a job to return to when his leg heals. So it was a great day in the field, my first experience in the Sonoran Desert and Arizona. But I am still perplexed as to the logic behind apple orchards and endless rows of greenhouses in the middle of the desert. Water table? What water table?

I accompanied Elissa on one final early morning "urban" bird survey for her work (AZ Game & Fish) where it was refreshing to not see a single robin the whole time. And we were able to witness a western tanager and Bullock's oriole hanging out together – both males. Super cool. Spent a few hours at the Desert Museum in Tucson, which is actually more like a zoo of sorts, with huge enclosures with free-ranging native critters. After straining unsuccessfully to spot a javelina (peccary) in the enclosure, I left the museum feeling somewhat disappointed, until Janet & Jaguarundi Jones pulled up in the parking lot and pointed out a javelina to me as it walked out of the bushes and strutted right by us. Of course my camera was already packed away.

Although I was unable to wrangle with rattlers, and the only gila I saw was a woodpecker, I may have caught a fleeting glimpse of a roadrunner on my way to meet Elissa for birding. I was enthralled with Larry's personal home collection of snakes (you'll have to ask him which species) and Elissa's backyard of adopted guard tortoises. I was told to return after late July during the monsoon season, which is the best time of year to observe explosive breeding everywhere. Apparently the herps do it then too. Herp Trek 2004? Count me in.

P.S. Sorry, but I have no photos of Larry in cast, nor could find any on the Internet (thankfully), and did not have trip photos processed as this article went to print.

P.P.S. Don, Rebecca and Elke, no more excuses. Even if you haven't paid your taxes.

-Brent Matsuda



Northern Leopard Frog Recovery Program in British Columbia

Northern Leopard frogs (*Rana pipiens*) were once common to the marshes of the Kootenay River. In the late 1970's through the 1980's, populations began to disappear across their range in Western North America. Today only a single population can be found in BC, located near Creston, in the wetlands of the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area (CVWMA). This population is listed as Endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and is subject to the Species at Risk Act (SARA). While it is difficult to ascribe a single cause for their mysterious disappearance, factors such as habitat alteration due to wetland reclamation, hydroelectric development, and alteration of hydrological regime, disease, the introduction of non-native fish species, and pollution have all likely contributed to their demise. For the past three years, a multi-jurisdictional recovery team has been working to prevent this population from become extinct. To date the team has completed a draft Recovery Strategy as required by SARA, enhanced breeding habitat, and has embarked on an ambitious reintroduction program where tadpoles are raised in captivity and released as frogs in an effort to increase their distribution and ensure the survival of the existing population. In 2001 and 2002, approximately 2500 leopard frogs were raised in captivity and released back into the CVWMA. In 2003, we released over 5100 frogs in the CVWMA and southern East Kootenays. In 2004, we will continue our reintroduction effort to establish populations and improve their habitat. In addition to these efforts, the CBFWCP and partners work closely with public groups to raise the awareness of the plight of the leopard frog and the importance of wetland habitats.

For more information, please contact Doug Adama (adama@rockies.net).

-Doug Adama

Species at Risk 2004 Pathways to Recovery Conference

The Species at Risk 2004 conference, held in Victoria, BC March 1- 6 was a major success, with close to 1,000 participants. Over the 6-day period, a wide variety of events, workshops, discussion sessions, and talks were held. Numerous field trips were available for participants and their families including sea kayaking, hiking in old-growth forest, beach seining, and birding. In addition, two evening public lectures were held at the Royal BC Museum presented by Dr. Richard Hebda and Dr. Thomas Lovejoy, the latter of which was also the keynote speaker at the Banquet. Day 2 encompassed a Species at Risk Recovery Training Workshop attended by over 400 participants.

The main component of the conference included more than 230 scheduled talks held during 8-9 concurrent sessions over a 3-day period, and over 100 posters were displayed. Recurring themes throughout the conference included the effects of climate change on species at risk and recovery efforts, the ecology of species and habitats at risk, legislation and compliance, reintroduction programs, recovery planning, integrating traditional knowledge, and the role of NGO's.

The first of three plenary sessions focused on species recovery in a global context, including talks from Africa, New Zealand and India, and the importance of marine ecosystems. The second plenary outlined the framework of species at risk legislation and regulations in Canada and the U.S., while the third session highlighted how species recovery fits into the context of biodiversity conservation.

Overall, the conference was well attended, and individuals and groups were given an excellent opportunity to interact, and establish contacts, with others working to save species and habitats at risk.

For more information on the conference see: <http://www.speciesatrisk2004.ca/>

-Elke Wind



The American Endangered Species Act and the Canadian Species at Risk Act: Lessons from across the border?

The 3 years that I have lived in California since uprooting from the rainy climes of BC have been eye-opening. Joining a population of 30 million+ Californians (exceeding that of Canada as a whole), has taken adjustment. Climate and food were easy; the gun psyche, racecar highways, and cell phone society were new to me. As was corporate consulting, environmental legislation, and entire dialects consisting of acronyms.

As a naïve Canuck, I always thought it was great that Americans had endangered species legislation – something that Canada had yet to accomplish when I headed south of the border in 2001. It was only in 2003 that Canada finally passed the Species at Risk Act (aka. SARA, which despite the coincidence, was not meant as a homage to Ms. McLachlan). The first parts of SARA came into effect in March 2003, with the last of the transitional phases to occur on June 1, 2004. What follows is a displaced Canuck's (general) synopsis of legislated attempts to protect sensitive species on both sides of the border. Much of the information presented here was gleaned from the recent Species at Risk conference held in Victoria, British Columbia, in March. (Note: The opinions expressed here are solely that of the author and are not intended to disrupt Canada-US relations nor escalate hockey rivalry).

The American Endangered Species Act (ESA) is a powerful piece of legislation. Most biologists tend to agree that when the ESA was passed in 1973, no one had any idea just how powerful it would become. And to the dismay of industry and more than a few administrations, how difficult it would be to avoid. For example, an information sheet regarding the protocol to be used on army bases in areas inhabited by the Desert Gopher Tortoise (a threatened native of California & surrounding states), informed personnel to check under vehicles for tortoises before driving off. If observed, they are instructed to contact their commanding officer immediately such that protective measures may be taken, such as having a "certified" tortoise expert relocate the animal to safety. In other cases, the detection of a threatened or endangered species in the area is strong enough to cause immediate stoppage of activity. Many Americans can still recall the snail darter, a small fish, and the northern spotted owl, both

of which shut down multi-million dollar industrial operations in different parts of the USA in two separate decades. In an ideal world of environmentally-conscientious people, this would be acceptable. But in the business world, inhibiting progress inflates expenses, and the ESA has become a thorn in the side of countless developers and entrepreneurs.

In the USA, before any activity is to be initiated in an area where threatened and endangered species (T&E) have been historically recorded and/or potential habitat for the species still exists, the parties responsible (usually the landowner) must assess the habitat for the potential for the species to be present. This often-times requires extensive and expensive surveys to be carried out by qualified staff (in some cases certifications are necessary) adhering to a strict protocol set forth by the permitting agency or agencies (can be State, Federal, local, or some combination of such). If the species is detected during the surveys or assessed as likely to be present, then mitigation measures must be provided to minimize impacts on any T&E species. Only when these measures are approved will permits be issued to proceed with the proposed activity, with heavy fines and loss of permits imposed on violators. All at the cost of the individual or organization proposing the activity. This, in a very generalized nutshell, is the procedure in the USA (there are many other considerations, such as Habitat Conservation Plans, which I do not have room to discuss). Most American biologists are familiar with the process.

From an outsider perspective, this seems very thorough. But the power of the legislation has also formed many opponents, much to the detriment of conservation efforts. There are extreme cases where landowners or developers degrade habitat (knowingly or not) or kill or remove T&E species before habitat assessments or surveys can be conducted, in hopes of receiving approval without having to offer mitigation measures because the species is no longer detected or the habitat is considered unsuitable.

These were considerations that Canada had to carefully weigh in passing the Species at Risk Act. In the past, pre-cursors to SARA were discussed and tabled for a number of years, but were fought by industry – understandable after they had seen what happened in the USA. In its current form, it was passed with "baby teeth," as described to me by a member of the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC); But it's a start. And perhaps the baby teeth will be replaced with bigger teeth as SARA matures.

Probably the biggest difference between the Canadian and the American Acts is where the legislation is effective.

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In the USA, the ESA applies pretty much everywhere, including private lands. In Canada, SARA only applies to federal lands, with a great deal of faith in stewardship initiatives to get private landowners to do their bit for conservation and protection through the Habitat Stewardship Program. The provinces and territories are given the first opportunity to protect listed species through their laws, with an override option for the federal government to enact a "safety net" should the federal Minister of the Environment feel that a species or its residence is inadequately protected. And unlike the American counterpart, a recovery strategy and critical habitat designation will be drawn up for every listed species within specified timeframes of the listing. Management plans will be developed for species of special concern. Recovery strategies and management plans will involve people, organizations and governments with an interest in the species, and every step of the process will be visible through posting on the Public Registry.

It is hoped that this process will avoid the multitude of lawsuits occurring in the USA filed by individuals or organizations suing the federal government for not adhering to the ESA (tying up a great deal of court time and costs). In an attempt to keep politics from swaying the listing process, the Canadian government is relying on the recommendations of COSEWIC, a non-governmental advisory group to SARA consisting of experts across the country formed to advise the federal government on issues pertaining to Canadian species at risk including classification criteria, species status reports, and reports on the administration of SARA. A great deal of effort is being done to maintain science in the process, through the presence of COSEWIC and involving methods such as population viability analysis to assess population trends of species and any changes that may occur over time.

Will SARA work? Only time will tell. I can only hope that Canada was sensible enough to thoroughly review the problems that Americans have faced with their endangered species legislation, and will seek their advice on how to deal with issues while maintaining conservation efforts. And if SARA does prove to be highly effective, then perhaps we can offer a lesson to our neighbours on dealing with their loopholes.

In the corporate world, money has the power to crush many things regardless of cause. As biologists, we must carefully weigh the science with our decisions, but also consider the economic implications of our decisions to avoid direct collisions with local communities and the corporate world. Canadians can learn a great deal from the USA on how to soothe the corporate beast and nurture a relationship as an ally rather than an invasive species. And perhaps American legislation can learn from Canada as SARA takes effect and evolves. Perhaps then we can eliminate political boundaries to develop effective legislation that benefits sensitive species on both sides of the border by eliminating the border altogether.

-Brent Matsuda

E-Murreletter Update

We are now distributing the Murreletter as a PDF email attachment. We will continue providing paper copies to those who have requested them. If you are receiving a paper copy and would like an electronic version please contact me (RNAuman@oregontrail.net) or Julie Grialou (jgrialou@parametrix.com) and provide your current email address.

-Richard Nauman

Sampling Lentic Amphibians in China

I received an email from our colleague in The People's Republic of China, Wang Yuezhao of Chengdu Institute of Biology, Academia Sinica, Sichuan, that the Chinese translation is completed of Northwest Fauna #4:

Olson, D.H., W.H. Leonard, and R.B. Bury (eds). 1997. Sampling amphibians in lentic habitats. Northwest Fauna 4: 1-134.

This has been in the works for about 6 years now, but the wheels of progress are rolling, if slowly! This translation was approved by former SNVB President Larry Jones! It is another example of how the hard work of a single individual can make a difference. Hats off to Wang Yuezhao! Publication now pends approval by the permission authority in Beijing, and financial support. I am hopeful that this effort will keep rolling along.

-Dede Olson

For more information about the
Society for Northwest Vertebrate Biology

Check out our updated web page:
<http://www.snwvb.org>

**Canadian Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Network
Annual Meeting
September 24-27 2004**

The 9th annual CARCNET/RÉCCAR general meeting will be held in Edmonton on .
For more information visit the web site <http://www.carcnet.ca> or contact Kris Kendell at
kris.kendell@gov.ab.ca (780-422-4764).

Early registration and abstracts are due 30 July 2004.

