

**ORNITHOLOGICAL COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007**

The Ornithological Council is pleased to provide its 2006-2007 annual report, prepared in July 2007, at the conclusion of our fiscal year (30 June 2007). When it is transmitted to each society, at the time of the society's annual meeting, significant updates for matters covered in this report will be provided.

The Ornithological Council also submits three quarterly reports. The annual report necessarily duplicates some of the information in the three previous quarterly reports, as this report is cumulative for the entire year. Nevertheless, it focuses on the most recent quarter (April-June 2007) and provide the current status of each matter previously reported.

Please contact either your society representatives or OC Executive Director Ellen Paul [e-mail: ellen.paul@verizon.net; phone 301/986-8568] for further information on any matter of interest to you.

The Ornithological Council seeks to:

- *Ensure that the best ornithological science is incorporated into legislative, regulatory, and management decisions that affect birds;*
- *Enhance the ability of ornithologists to pursue professional activities; and*
- *Promote the influence of ornithology in public affairs.*

In accordance with this mission, we concentrate on issues that affect researchers and scientific societies, including such topics as permits, animal welfare issues, and research funding. We also promote the use of ornithological science in the development and implementation of public policy that affects birds.

We thank our member societies for their continuing support, as we continue to strive to be a valuable resource that these societies provide to their members.

David E. Blockstein, Ph.D
Chair

Ellen Paul
Executive Director

In the period covered by this report, OC accomplished much, including the following.

Permits

- Over the past year, the OC assisted numerous institutions and ornithologists in obtaining U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and/or U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) import permits or permit amendments and assisted in resolving specific import problems. Among those we assisted are ornithologists at Villanova University, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Yale University, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, University of New Mexico, University of Nevada Las Vegas, California State University San Bernardino, Field Museum, Boston University, Oregon State University, University of Chicago, Museum of Comparative Zoology, and Virginia Tech.

- OC continues to work with staff at USDA Veterinary Services to improve import permit procedures. A highlight of this ongoing effort was a training session facilitated by the OC and held at the National Museum of Natural History, entailing a visit in May by some 25 staffers from the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, none of whom had ever visited a research collection. In addition to establishing rapport, the visit served to establish an important connection with the USDA staff training program. We have already discussed the possibility of participating in other training programs, including sessions for the Customs and Border Protection Agricultural Quarantine Inspectors, who inspect shipments and enforce import restrictions and permit conditions at the ports.
- OC Executive Director Ellen Paul met with Deputy Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett to discuss the National Park Service specimen ownership issue. Scarlett invited the OC to submit a proposal to facilitate transfer of ownership of biological specimens collected on public lands managed by the National Park Service (NPS). With the help of curators and collection managers at the National Museum of Natural History, members of the AOU Collections Committee, and with the input of the Natural Science Collections Alliance and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, a proposal was developed and submitted in early June. In a related matter, the OC submitted extensive comments on the NPS' proposed bioprospecting policy, which impacts scientists because it would require all permittees who take biological specimens from the parks to share the benefits of any commercial use of the intellectual property derived from those specimens with the NPS. It also has the potential to reduce access to the parks for scientific research, because NPS staff may have to devote more time to the development and monitoring of benefits-sharing agreements, and may not have the resources needed to issue noncommercial research permits.
- In the related matter of airline transport regulation, the OC obtained and distributed information to ornithologists about dangerous goods shipping regulations, initiated a dialogue with FedEx about that company's prohibition on the shipping of dead animals, and began an effort to resolve a problem with DHL pertaining to the clearance of imports. We also investigated delays in imports through Kennedy International Airport and established a liaison with the Customs office at that port. We delayed publication of the revision of the import permit guide so that we could obtain and include information from these companies, as well as updated information and procedures from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Animal Welfare

- The OC Board of Directors approved the workplan for the revision of *Guidelines to the Use of Wild Birds in Research*. An Editor-in-Chief has been selected and we are in the process of selecting Section Editors. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare has granted \$15,000 to the OC for this project. The societies that loaned funding to the project will be repaid most of that funding when the NIH funding is paid to the OC (at the end of the project).
- OC Executive Director Ellen Paul has been invited to speak at the Sixth World Congress on Alternatives & Animal Use in the Life Sciences (to be held in Tokyo, August 2007). Her talk will highlight the differences between wildlife research and biomedical research, and how those differences impact implementation of the "3R principles" – that researchers, as far as possible, should attempt to replace animals with non-animal models, reduce the number of animals used in a study, and refine research methods. She will also stress the need for those who evaluate research proposals to consult with experts when evaluating research involving animals or methods outside the realm of expertise of those assessing the research protocol and will provide a list of resources for consultation of this nature.

- OC Executive Director Ellen Paul met with counsel for the Senate Agriculture Committee to discuss correction of an error in the 2002 Farm Bill that inadvertently extended USDA APHIS oversight to research involving wild birds; committee staff agreed that it should be corrected in the 2007 Farm Bill. The topic was also discussed with representatives of the Humane Society of the United States; that organization told the OC that it will not oppose the correction.
- The OC submitted comments, papers, and other information to the Canadian Council on Animal Care pertaining to that organization's draft guidelines for research involving birds. In May, we submitted comments pertaining to training materials pertaining to research involving birds.
- The OC facilitated the translation of the North American Banding Council's shorebird banding manual into Spanish. This project was funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Other policies that affect researchers and scientific societies, including funding

- Together with the Wildlife Society, the Society of American Foresters, and the Society of Rangeland Scientists, OC developed a strategy to address the statutory and agency policy restrictions that bar scientists who are employed by the U.S. government from serving on the boards of outside organizations. In June, we met with policy staff at the American Association for the Advancement of Science to solicit that organization's input and support, and also invited the American Institute of Biological Sciences to participate in the effort.
- OC was an active participant on the Federal Advisory Committee for the U.S. Bird Banding Laboratory, which has now completed its work. The report will be published by the U.S. Geological Survey and presented to the Department of the Interior Secretary. The USGS is working with the BBL leadership to analyze the costs/benefits of implementing each of the report's 50+ recommendations. The BBL will then complete its draft strategic plan, incorporating the Committee's recommendations where appropriate into a 10-year plan to which BBL and the USGS will be accountable. USGS Associate Director for Biology Susan Haseltine informed the committee members that she expects that the BBL needs to achieve most of the report's recommendations; however, conducting this analysis will assist in identifying those that need alteration or may necessarily be delayed due to resource, regulatory, or other constraints.
- OC submitted a letter of concern about the manner of implementation of peer-review policies in the Department of the Interior. The letter was co-signed by the Wildlife Society, the Ecological Society of America, and the American Institute of Biological Sciences. We continue to monitor the situation, as we remain concerned that the peer-review system will cause serious delay in the dissemination of research findings produced by USGS scientists, including presentations of that work at scientific meetings.
- Together with co-sponsors Smithsonian Ornithology Initiative (including the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center) and the American Bird Conservancy, the OC in May held its third annual birdwalk for members of Congress, the Administration, and their staffers. Our honorary hosts were Hank Paulson, (Secretary of Commerce) and Wendy Paulson, and the celebrity leader was Scott Weidensaul. A dozen Congressional staffers participated in this year's event, which focused on the impact of climate change on migratory birds.
- In June, the OC participated in the annual Capitol Hill reception and exhibit sponsored by the Coalition for National Science Funding, which promotes increased funding for the National Science Foundation. This year, our exhibit spotlighted a Research Coordination Network ("RCN") called MIGRATE, which brings together 41 scientists to form a new research and education platform to study long-distance migration. The poster was presented by Jill Deppe, who represents the Cooper Ornithological Society on the OC Board, and who is a collaborator in the MIGRATE RCN.

Providing Scientific Information about Birds

- OC nominated ornithologist Clait Braun to serve on a USFWS federal advisory committee to guide the agency in a review of its voluntary siting guidelines for wind energy farms. The OC, believing that this effort required strong ornithological expertise, was pleased to nominate Dr. Braun, who serves on the National Wind Coordinating Committee's Grassland and Shrub Steppe Species subcommittee and who has extensive experience in multistakeholder processes, having chaired the USDA's federal advisory committee for Wildlife Services. The OC also nominated ornithologist David Flaspohler to service on the Forest Service Research Advisory Committee, a group that makes recommendations to the Forest Service on the allocation of the funds in its many research program to various areas of scientific inquiry.
- Together with co-organizer Dana Hawley (National Zoo), Fabian Correa (Mexican Department of Health and CIPAMEX), and Scott Newman (U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and Pacific Seabird Group representative to the OC Board), OC presented a very successful full-day symposium on avian zoonotic disease at the NAOC in Veracruz, Mexico in October 2006. We have been asked to organize these talks and related papers into a "Studies in Avian Biology" volume.
- OC submitted comments to the Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology of the White House National Science and Technology Council regarding that subcommittee's draft report on ocean and coastal science priorities.
- OC provided BirdLife International with information about proposed endangered species listings and the value of those listings for species outside the United States.
- In December, OC entered into a Memorandum of Cooperation with the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) of the U.S. Geological Survey to help improve the ornithological content of the NBII. Work began in January, when we contracted with a professional survey designer to develop an online survey. This survey is intended to determine what information natural resources managers use when making decisions about bird conservation and management, where they find this information, and what additional information they would like to have. The survey has been distributed to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff in the Division of Refuges and Ecological Services, state wildlife management agencies, staff of the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service, and land managers in the Nature Conservancy and the National Audubon Society. We are now commencing our analysis of the responses, and are planning a focus group meeting to obtain more detail and insight on the subject. We will then work with the scientific community to devise ways to provide more data and other forms of scientific information about birds via the NBII.
- OC completed a significant update and revision of its peer-reviewed fact sheet on the impact of avian influenza on ornithological research. OC member society CIPAMEX translated the peer-reviewed fact sheet into Spanish. The translation has been posted on BIRDNET and notices were published on NEOORN and on the CIPAMEX and NOS listservs
- In April, OC completed a critical literature review for the Grassland and Shrub Steppe Collaborative of the National Wind Coordinating Committee's Wildlife Workgroup. Sarah Mabey, Ph.D served as the principal investigator on this project.
- We answered occasional inquiries from the press and the public, some of them forwarded from the OSNA Business Office. Most recently, for instance, we assisted a Science magazine reporter in identifying experts on Bald Eagles for an article pertaining to the proposed de-listing, management plan, definition of the term "disturb," and the issuance of incidental take permits. Recently, we provided

information about the management of birds at aquaculture farms to the Seafood Quality Standards Coordinator for Whole Foods Markets.

Informing ornithologists about policy issues

OC provided information via the Ornithological Newsletter, our BIRDNET website <<http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET>>, Ornith-L, OCNET, AVECOL, and NEOORN. Regular topics include policies that affect ornithology (such as those pertaining to permits, animal welfare, and research funding), matters of scientific integrity, and bird conservation and management issues. We also contacted individual ornithologists to alert them to developments in matters of interest to each of those individuals. Examples include endangered species incidental take permits, habitat conservation agreements, and recovery plans.

Organizational news

The OC management plan was completed and approved, subject to the addition of a statement of ethics for board members. The Board also conducted what will be an annual evaluation of the Executive Director. At least on an interim basis, the Board decided to use the evaluation assessment protocol used by the American Institute of Biological Sciences. At its April 2007 semi-annual meeting, the OC Board re-elected David Blockstein as Chair and Jeff Spendelow as Vice-chair. There were no other candidates. Although the bylaws do not have term limits for officers, the Board recognized that best management practices call for rotation among officers, subject to the availability of members willing to fill leadership roles. Blockstein is actively encouraging other Board members to take on officer responsibilities in the next year.