

**ORNITHOLOGICAL COUNCIL
QUARTERLY REPORT
July – September 2007**

The Ornithological Council is pleased to provide a quarterly report spanning July – September 2007. These quarterly reports supplement the annual report prepared at the end of each fiscal year (30 June).

Please contact either your society representatives (see attached list) 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. We welcome your input at any time, and are particularly interested in hearing about issues or problems that we may not be addressing.

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.*

Our work focuses on permits, animal welfare issues, research funding and other policies that affect ornithologists and ornithological societies.

In the period covered by this report, OC's activities were as follows:

Permits

In the past three months, OC...

- received a response from the National Park Service (NPS) regarding the specimen ownership policy. The letter made clear that the NPS would not change its policy. At that point, the only other recourse would have been to try to persuade Congress to address the matter. We decided against pursuing this strategy unless other scientific societies were willing to work with us. However, in September, a further communication from the Deputy Secretary of the Interior made it apparent that notwithstanding the NPS letter, the matter is still open and that no decision has yet been reached. We continue to await further word from the Deputy Secretary.
- worked with ornithologists at the following universities and museums on USDA, USFWS, and state permit issues: Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, New York State Museum, University of Michigan, California Academy of Sciences, University of Wyoming, Brigham Young University, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, University of Maine, and Coastal Carolina University.
- continued efforts to persuade FedEx to eliminate or modify its prohibition on the shipping of dead animals. As of August, FedEx has agreed to accept dried specimens, but has not yet agreed to accept fluid-preserved specimens. The Ornithological Council invited the FedEx representatives to meet at the American Museum of Natural History, but the FedEx representatives have instead asked that we hold the meeting in Memphis. We are in the process of arranging that meeting.

Animal welfare

- Jeanne Fair, editor-in-chief for the revision of *Guidelines to the Use of Wild Birds in Research*, is in the process of selecting section editors and developing review and research instructions. In preparation for this revision, OC Executive Director will survey member societies and ornithologists in Central and South America, and the Caribbean to determine the permit and animal welfare policies and procedures of the countries where they work.
- OC Executive Director Ellen Paul gave an invited talk at the 6th World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences, held in Tokyo in August. The organizers of the Congress provided travel and lodging costs. Paul's talk was the only talk pertaining specifically to wildlife research.
- OC's participation in international animal welfare organizations, including the World Congress and the International Council on Laboratory Animal Science, is particularly important and timely, as efforts are underway to harmonize national policies and procedures on an international basis.
- The Scientists Center for Animal Welfare has distributed copies of the current edition of *Guidelines to the Use of Wild Birds in Research* to its members.
- OC provided information to the Puerto Rico Department of Health regarding West Nile virus, avian monitoring methods, bird banding resources, and ethical standards for capturing, marking, and taking blood samples. We also provided the names of a number of ornithologists in Puerto Rico who could assist the Department of Health in their surveillance efforts.

Other policies that affect research and scientific societies (including funding)

- OC continues to work as a member of an ad hoc coalition, currently comprised of the Wildlife Society, the Society of American Foresters, the Society of Rangeland Scientists, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Society for Conservation Biology, 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 September, we met with policy staff at the Tri-Societies (Agronomy, Crop Science, Soil Science) to solicit that organization's input and support, and also invited the American Institute of Biological Sciences to participate in the effort. We learned in August that the Department of the Interior is about to issue a new policy. After obtaining a copy of that policy, which has not yet been formally issued, it appears that the new policy will pose a greater barrier than does the current policy.

Providing scientific information about birds and ornithology

- OC answered a number of requests from students, ranging from high school to the graduate level, about educational requirements and opportunities for a career in ornithology. In addition, OC Executive Director participated in a student-organized workshop at the AOU meeting in Laramie about careers in ornithology. She spoke about careers in policy, including AAAS and Presidential Management internships, and jobs in scientific and conservation organizations.
- OC Executive Director Ellen Paul met with Andrew Lakoff, a sociologist at the

University of California San Diego, who is studying the interactions among scientists, government agencies, and the public with regard to H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and also referred him to a number of ornithologists with expertise in this area.

Informing ornithologists about policy issues

- OC provides information via the Ornithological Newsletter, our BIRDNET website, Ornith-L, OCNET, AVECOL, and NEOORN. In August, Jeanette Bider, the creator and owner of Ornith-L offered to transfer ownership of that listserv, which has approximately 800 members, to the OC. We accepted the offer and ownership has now been transferred. The listserv will be hosted on the server of the National Museum of Natural History. Smithsonian staff were exceedingly helpful in handling all technical aspects of the transfer. We will continue to limit policy discussions to OCNET and reserve Ornith-L for discussion of scientific ornithology, as it has been apparent over the years that there is a genuine desire and need for a listserv that is dedicated to scientific matters. While some are interested in both science and policy, we don't want to risk losing the many subscribers who prefer to focus on one or the other.
- CIPAMEX asked OC to organize a workshop on the role of scientific societies in public policy for the CIPAMEX annual meeting, to be held in Campeche in October. Invited speakers include ornithologist Ernesto Enkerlin (Director of Mexico's Commission of Natural Protected Areas), Patricia Escalante (a past president of CIPAMEX), and Juan Carlos Cantu (director of government affairs for Defenders of Wildlife in Mexico). Current CIPAMEX president Raul Ortiz Pulido will lead a discussion following the panelists' presentations.
- As a routine practice, we inform individual ornithologists of policy matters relevant to their research interests or that we know to be of interest to them. For instance, in this period, we notified many ornithologists who study Guam's birds about the development of a comprehensive conservation plan for a national wildlife refuge on Guam.

Organizational matters

The OC Board will meet on 5 November 2007.

Mercedes Foster has resigned as a representative of the Neotropical Ornithological Society; Deanna Dawson has been designated to replace her, pending government ethics clearance. The American Ornithologists' Union has appointed Chris Farmer to replace Brett Burk as its second representative. Tony White has resigned as a representative of the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds.

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