

## VIRGINIA P. JOHNSON RECEIVES WFO'S ALAN M. CRAIG AWARD

In 1987, Western Field Ornithologists instituted the Alan M. Craig Award, to be given "on an irregular basis for exceptional service to the organization." After considerable discussion last year, WFO's board of directors decided to resurrect this award and to set about seeking and evaluating nominees.

Ultimately there was little question of whose service has been so exceptional as to deserve the award: Virginia (Ginger) P. Johnson, who has served WFO continuously throughout its existence. The award was presented at WFO's annual meeting in Palm Desert on 16 October 2010 and included a framed print of Sabine's Gulls in flight, specially created by Andrew Birch.

Since 1970, when she was one of the founding members of the organization and one of the founding editors of *California Birds*, Ginger has volunteered her time to produce our journal. Her sketch of a Sabine's Gull provides the logo that has identified us since the outset.

Before the advent of the computer age Ginger painstakingly assembled each issue by hand, cutting the typeset copy and arranging it into pages for the printer. After this task became electronic, she continued working on other basic steps of quality control in production of a journal, checking the work of the typesetter to ensure all corrections are made properly and all the illustrations are in place. Every issue of *Western Birds* bears the stamp of Ginger's high standards. As we publish ever more color photographs, the importance of another of her roles looms ever larger. In the process of printing, eight pages are still printed on a single large sheet, which is folded and cut into what printers call a signature. WFO pays for color in the journal on the basis of the signature, so we maximize the bang for our buck when we distribute the maximum number of color photos onto the minimum possible number of signatures. For each issue with color photos, Ginger finds this minimum and directs the photos' placement, often reordering the articles, in a process equivalent to solving a complex puzzle, requiring balance, ingenuity, and good judgment. By ensuring we maximize our efficiency, Ginger has saved WFO thousands of dollars over the years. Ginger's work has contributed substantially to *Western Birds*' improvement and WFO's financial health at a time when the economy is sagging and many organizations and publications are struggling.

In addition to her work on *Western Birds*, Ginger continues her work as an experienced bird bander, monitors Least Tern colonies in San Diego, participates regularly in the San Diego Christmas bird count, and participated in the San Diego County bird atlas. She enjoys birding with her many friends in San Diego and the Southwest and has taken numerous birding trips farther afield.

Ginger's work has been quiet and behind the scenes, but every member of WFO and every reader of *Western Birds* benefits from her diligence and dedication. In a span of 40 years each of us must face crises, and Ginger has been no exception. Yet through all the ups and downs she has kept working on our behalf on every issue of the journal published since its inception in 1970. Such steadfast dedication to WFO's mission merits recognition with the Alan M. Craig award and inspires our heartfelt thanks.

The award's name honors another individual who, like Ginger, was both a founding member of the organization and a founding editor of *California Birds*. In 1973, when the organization expanded its range of interest and *California Birds* became *Western Birds*, Alan became the journal's editor. He guided the publication in that role for another 14 years. Fittingly, Alan was the first recipient of the Alan M. Craig Award. Ginger is the second.

*Philip Unitt and David E. Quady*

