

WFO PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: STATE OF THE ORGANIZATION

The beginning of my term seems an ideal time to report on the overall health of WFO and on our plans for the future.

During the past year, WFO's board of directors commissioned an independent review of our finances and also took a close look at how well we are positioned to meet our primary goal of promoting field ornithology throughout our region. As part of that process, we spent an entire day prior to the Petaluma conference reviewing the status of the organization and beginning work on long-term and short-term plans. The key conclusions from the financial review and our planning session:

1. WFO's financial health is good. We have adequate cash on hand, and our finances are well managed.
2. While our annual membership dues cover the costs of publishing *Western Birds*, we depend on income from annual conferences, special field trips, and donations to cover the rest of the organization's expenses.
3. Our membership level is stable, but we feel we are reaching only a small fraction of the people whose interests should make them ideal WFO members.
4. We should do more to promote *Western Birds* as a unique and welcoming outlet for publications on field ornithology.
5. To adapt to the digital era, we ought to offer electronic (in addition to physical) versions of our publications (e.g., *Western Birds*, *Rare Birds of California*).

Over the course of the year I will share with you the specific actions WFO will take to address these issues.

As one example of the changes we are making, we decided to reward our members by giving them first access to spots on our special field trips and early registration for our annual conferences. The most popular workshops and field trips at our recent conferences filled in the first few weeks of registration, and our special field trips to Cuba (2010 and 2013) and to the south-central Sierra Nevada (2011) filled within days. From now on, WFO members will get early access to all such events. Life members and patrons will be able to register one week in advance of other WFO members, and other WFO members will be able to register one week in advance of the general public. Of course, this early access is dependent on our having current email addresses for members. If you are not sure we have your current email address, please send it to me (erpfromca@aol.com).

We are also looking at a number of ways to reach out to people who would benefit from joining WFO but may not know about us. That's where all of you can help. Send me your ideas about reaching these potential members. Best of all, take the time to tell your friends and acquaintances about us. When I meet people I think might be interested in WFO, I give them my 30-second "elevator speech," the gist of which is that WFO is for scientists with an interest in birding or field ornithology, and for birders with an interest in the science of birds.

I look forward to the coming year and hope to see many of you at our next annual conference (Olympia, Washington, 22–25 August).

Ed Pandolfino