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INTERNATIONAL

Genetic Testing Reveals 15 New Bird Species

19 February 2007 – An article published this week in the journal “Molecular Ecology Notes” announces the discovery of 15 new genetically distinct candidate species of North American birds. It concludes that for 15 well known birds, such as the Common Raven, Western Screech-Owl and Hermit Thrush, there are actually two look-alike cousins which should be considered as separate species. They are reproductively isolated and have DNA that diverges from each other by at least 2.5 per cent. There are also 17 bird groupings of two or more recognized species for which ‘barcodes’ are more than 99% similar, suggesting very recent speciation and/or interbreeding of the populations. Examples of such groupings include: Ross’s Goose and Snow Goose; Laughing Gull and Franklin’s Gull; and Common and Hoary redpoll. The full paper is available [online here](#).

The Canadian and U.S. co-authors of the study used DNA ‘barcoding’ to analyze samples from 643 North American bird species. Scientists identify animal species by comparing mitochondrial DNA sequences using electrophoresis. Closely related species have similar but distinctive barcodes, while individuals within the same species show very little variation in their barcode sequences. The barcodes are being recorded in a database that will allow scientists to easily identify species by comparing their DNA to samples on file in the reference library.

Many members of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN) participated in the research project by providing feather samples and related data for the study. Assistance from the CMMN banding stations enabled the researchers to analyze a large number of DNA samples from numerous species and locations across Canada. An article on the CMMN’s contributions to this project appears in the Spring issue of *BirdWatch Canada*.

LPWWRF Director Participates in International Bird Flu Study



20 February 2007 – Scott Petrie, Research Director of the Long Point Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Fund, recently returned from doing fieldwork in northern Nigeria. Dr. Petrie and researchers from the United States, Netherlands, Italy and Sweden were attaching satellite transmitters to White-faced Whistling Ducks, Comb Ducks and Gargany.

Nigeria has a very high prevalence of Avian Influenza (H5N1) in domestic poultry. The purpose of the project is to study the movement patterns of long- and short-distance migratory waterfowl to predict how H5N1 will spread if it is transmitted to free-ranging waterfowl.

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Government to Identify Critical Habitat for Piping Plover

14 February 2007 – In response to a threatened legal action by a coalition of conservation organizations, the Canadian government has agreed to amend the published recovery strategy of the endangered Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) and to identify critical habitat for the species on the Prairies. The original draft failed to identify critical habitat, which is a required element of a recovery strategy as specified by the federal Species at Risk Act, on the grounds that the criteria for identification had not been established. Last week's announcements are being celebrated by Nature Canada and other coalition members as a constructive move toward settling the court case.

The government has also announced that it will address a backlog on recovery planning for over 50 endangered species.

Remembering Arthur Langford, Former BSC Executive Director



12 February 2007 – Dr. Arthur Langford, 96, passed away peacefully on February 9 in Simcoe, Ontario. Arthur established the biology department at Bishop's University in Lennoxville, QC and was a professor of biology there for 39 years. In 1983, he became the Executive Director of Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO), now Bird Studies Canada. During his tenure, Arthur made a concerted effort to open LPBO to the public, welcoming visitors to learn about the science of bird migration and the local area's remarkable natural history. He also promoted a more attractive incentive package for naturalist clubs participating in the Baillie Birdathon. Arthur promptly went on to set the record for the highest Birdathon amount raised by an individual in a single year (excluding guest birders), raising more than \$11,500 to benefit LPBO and the Norfolk Field Naturalists.

Following his retirement in 1984, Arthur and his friend and fellow naturalist, Doug Tarry, often discussed their vision for youth education. This shared vision soon led to Doug's major endowment gift to Bird Studies Canada. Establishment of the Doug Tarry Natural History Fund brought lasting support to the annual Young Ornithologists' Workshop, a special Internship Program for teenagers, and other educational activities that help youth foster a deeper understanding of natural history.

In addition to his avid participation in Birdathon, Arthur was an important contributor to BSC's headquarters campaign. The "Arthur N. Langford Atrium" is named in his honour. He was also very involved with the Norfolk Field Naturalists Club and the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation. Arthur was a tireless advocate of environmental causes. Even at age 95, at a time when was legally blind and hard of hearing, he was still giving the occasional impromptu, informative speech at naturalists' meetings and other public events.

Arthur Langford was an inspirational and influential conservationist, a gifted naturalist and dedicated scientist, and an outstanding teacher and mentor. He left us with a lasting legacy of knowledge and wisdom.

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Bicknell's Thrush – Phantom of the Highland Forest

22 February 2007 – A new brochure produced by Bird Studies Canada, Atlantic Region, will make Maritimers more aware of a little known species at risk that nests in their foggy forests – Bicknell's Thrush. Two bilingual versions of the brochure have been produced, one for New Brunswick and one for Nova Scotia, with the cover featuring the art of Sackville, NB, graphic designer and artist Robert Lyon. The brochures include a map of Bicknell's Thrush global range in the high elevation forests of northeastern North America, and describe its habitat preference in each province. In Nova Scotia, Bicknell's Thrush nest in *krumholtz* – forest dwarfed by harsh climatic conditions – which is found in the highlands and along coastlines of Northern Cape Breton. Though this secretive species is seldom seen, visitors to Cape Breton Highlands National Park can hear its ethereal song echoing through the forest near Paquette and Benjie's Lakes and at Branch Point Lookoff. In New Brunswick, Bicknell's Thrush nest in dense, stunted, coniferous forests typical of northern New Brunswick highlands, but are also found in regenerating clearcuts and conifer plantations that mimic dense forest habitat of natural breeding sites. It can be heard singing at dusk or dawn on the mountain trails of New Brunswick's Mount Carleton Provincial Park.

The Brochure was produced through BSC's High Elevation Landbird Program (HELP) with funding from Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program, Shell Environmental Fund, and TD Friends of the Environment Foundation. HELP monitors species like Bicknell's Thrush that breed at high elevations and remote locations – areas seldom covered by other volunteer bird monitoring programs. BSC will distribute the brochure to local Maritime communities near Bicknell's Thrush breeding areas, through schools, parks, tourist information centres, and naturalist groups. If you would like a copy of the brochure, or would like to HELP monitor Bicknell's Thrush, please contact BSC Atlantic Region at 506-364-5047, or by e-mail: bwhittam@bsc-eoc.org.

Volunteers Needed for Wetlands Monitoring in Ontario

23 February 2007 – Wanted: Ontario wetland enthusiasts. No experience necessary! Bird Studies Canada's Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP) is seeking volunteers to be trained as amphibian and/or marsh bird monitors.

The following Training and Orientation Sessions are being held throughout the province, and anyone interested in participating in the MMP is welcome to attend.

- **Belleville:** Thursday 1 March 7:00 p.m.: Surveying Frogs and Toads; Contact Terry Sprague at tsprague@kos.net.
- **Windsor:** Saturday 3 March 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Contact Wanda Haydt at aqsurvey@bsc-eoc.org.
- **Kingston:** Saturday 3 March 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.; contact John Cooke at dad2cjlrm@yahoo.ca.
- **Belleville:** Friday 9 March 7:00 p.m., Marsh Bird Monitoring, contact Terry Sprague at tsprague@kos.net.
- **Barrie:** Saturday 17 March 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; contact Wanda Haydt at aqsurvey@bsc-eoc.org.
- **Port Rowan/Long Point:** Saturday 24 March 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; contact Wanda Haydt at aqsurvey@bsc-eoc.org.
- **Ottawa:** Monday 26 March 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.; contact Wanda Haydt at aqsurvey@bsc-eoc.org.
- **Cornwall:** Wednesday 28 March 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.; for more information contact Jordan Kevan at jkevan@riverinstitute.ca, (613) 936-6620 ext. 224.
- **Arnprior:** Tuesday 3 April; for more information contact Ryan Zimmerling at rzimmerling@bsc-eoc.org.

For more information please email the contact provided or phone Wanda Haydt at Bird Studies Canada (1-888-448-2473 ext. 214). The Belleville sessions are funded by the Great Lakes Sustainability Fund, while all other sessions are funded by Toronto Dominion Friends of the Environment Foundation.

Ontario Nature Hosts “Save the Boreal Forest” Events

23 February 2007 – Ontario Nature is working with other conservation partners and First Nation communities to urge the provincial government to protect the boreal forest. Special events are being delivered across the province to showcase the tremendous boreal forest and to highlight conservation efforts. A list of scheduled events is available on the [Ontario Nature web site](#). For more information about Ontario Nature or the Boreal Forest Campaign please contact Jen Baker, Boreal Campaign Coordinator, at 1-800-440-2366, ext. 224 or email jenniferb@ontarionature.org.

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