

The Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy

Research • Education • Conservation Action

WINTER 2011

NEWSLETTER

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SEA DUCK AVIARY GRAND OPENING

The Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy (LRWC) celebrated the grand opening of a new sea duck enclosure with a September reception held on the Conservancy grounds. A beautiful fall day, friends of LRWC and a ribbon-cutting ceremony highlighted the event. Spectacled eiders, king eiders, harlequin ducks and long-tailed ducks can now be viewed at LRWC, providing an uncommon display of waterfowl diversity which will greatly enhance our educational outreach.

What began as a casually discussed vision to develop a small section of our stream for sea ducks, truly turned into reality as it became a community project. Generous grants from the Sidni K. Undercuffler Memorial Trust Fund of the Watertown Foundation, the American Pheasant and Waterfowl Society and Connecticut Waterfowlers funded the construction costs. Excavation work for the enclosure pond was donated by John Fairbairn of J&M Landscape Design and LRWC volunteer Clint Herdman. Once completed, our Adopt-a-Duck donors provided funds to stock the aviary with a diverse and exciting array of sea ducks. Many thanks to all those who made this vision come to life!



Ian Gereg (LRWC), Watertown Foundation President Susan Atkins, Sue Sheaffer (LRWC), and benefactor Ed Undercuffler at the ribbon cutting ceremony

SATELLITE TELEMETRY RESEARCH CONTINUES

LRWC remains active in several collaborative research projects designed to improve conservation planning through the use of satellite telemetry. We are in the final stages of developing a large-scale evaluation of duck movements, distributions and habitat use in mid-continent North America. Our most recent field effort occurred in Saskatchewan last October, where our Ducks Unlimited Canada partners captured 20 mallards and outfitted them with solar-powered GPS satellite transmitters. An additional 20 mallards will be outfitted with transmitters this winter in Arkansas. These 40 mallards mark the last field trial of a three-year planning study to evaluate the feasibility of tracking mallard movements throughout the year. The ultimate goal is to provide an unprecedented evaluation of how ducks use the habitats that have been restored, protected and maintained under continental habitat conservation programs, including the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. This effort would benefit not only mallards, but also the myriad of waterfowl and wetland species using these habitats across North America. You can learn more about LRWC satellite telemetry projects, involving mallards, black ducks and Greenland white-fronted geese, by visiting our website.



Young biologist-in-training Zach Kosterky releases a mallard with a transmitter in Saskatchewan

Visit our website at www.lrwc.net

TUNDRA SWANS AT LRWC

North America is home to two native species of swan: the large but uncommon trumpeter swan, and the smaller but more common tundra swan. Swans are always a favorite with visitors at LRWC, and we recently acquired five tundra swans to enhance our education program. The breeding range for tundra swans extends as far west as the Alaskan North Slope and across northern Canada to eastern Hudson Bay. Formerly known as whistling



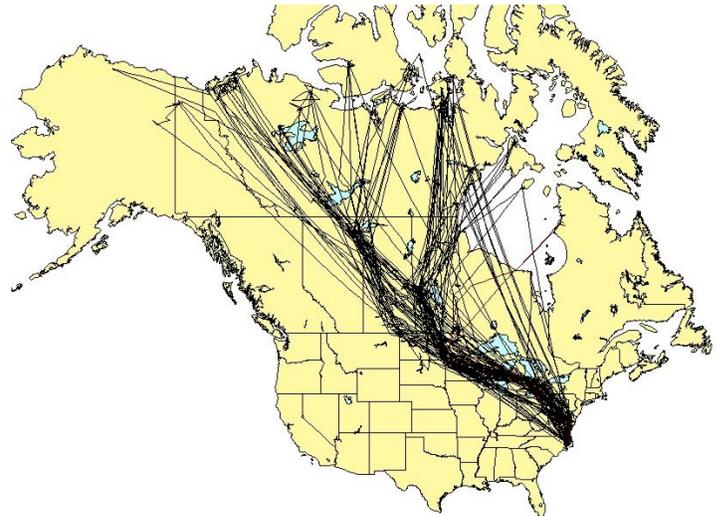
LRWC tundra swans

swans, tundra swans are managed as two populations in North America. The Western Population spends the winter from southern British Columbia to central California, while the Eastern Population (EP) winters primarily in North Carolina, Maryland and Virginia. Their long distance migrations (up to 5,000 miles!) and the remoteness of their breeding range means that it is difficult to identify breeding and migration habitats. Knowledge of seasonal movement patterns and the specific habitats used on migration is a critical need for conservation planning.

The addition of tundra swans to the LRWC collection compliments recent research done on tundra swans that involved both Executive Director Sue Sheaffer and

Research Scientist Rich Malecki, prior to their joining the LRWC team. Joined by Cornell University doctoral student Khristi Wilkins and biologists from North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia, the collaborative research effort used satellite telemetry to document migration routes and habitats of EP tundra swans. The results of the satellite telemetry work were recently published in the journal *Wildfowl* (2010, Volume 60:20-37).

Researchers learned that, unlike ducks and geese which



Annual movements of Eastern Population tundra swans

can complete a fall or spring migration within a few weeks, EP swans spend an incredible 5 months each year migrating in the spring and fall. They are on the move for almost half of the year! These large birds require frequent stopovers during migration to rest and refuel, which highlights the importance of migratory habitats to swans. Satellite telemetry allowed researchers to identify seven critical sites that were routinely used during migration. The information gained through satellite telemetry is being used for conservation planning to protect and enhance these important migratory habitats, to help ensure the longevity of this majestic species.

PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS OF INTEREST

Sheaffer, S. E. 2010. The foundation for evaluation of mid-continent mallard distribution, movements and habitat use: 2010 fall pen study to evaluate transmitter performance. LRWC Final Report to the Mississippi Flyway Mallard Study Committee.

Wilkins, K. A, R. A, Malecki, P. J. Sullivan, J. C. Fuller, J. P. Dunn, L. J. Hindman, G. R. Costanzo. and D. Luszcz. 2010. Migration routes and Bird Conservation Regions used by Eastern Population Tundra Swans *Cygnus columbianus columbianus* in North America. *Wildfowl* 60:20-37.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dr. Susan Sheaffer, Executive Director



Young whistling ducks in training as Avian Ambassadors

Happy New Year! 2010 was a year of growth and transformation for LRWC, and I am excited about the promise of continued progress in 2011. We entered 2011 with a new membership program in place, designed to broaden our base of support for the years ahead. Our education program gets a boost this year, as we welcome to our staff Lauren Coyle, our new Environmental Educator. Lauren will work with Director of Aviculture and Education Ian Gereg to develop unique programs that promote conservation awareness, allowing us to reach more people and more places than ever before. Even our squad of Avian Ambassadors is growing, as a black-bellied whistling duck, white-faced whistling duck, mandarin duck, and an Australian wood duck have recently joined ranks with Woody, our imprinted North American wood duck who sparked an environmental interest in so many students last year.

Not to be outdone by the education program, LRWC research and conservation efforts are also going strong. We had great success last year using satellite telemetry to document movements and habitat use by Connecticut black ducks, Greenland white-fronted geese and North American mallards. Our group of marked birds provided valuable insights about their daily movements and the habitats they use throughout the year. Our work is just beginning, as we will use this information not only to improve conservation efforts for the species studied, but also to generate additional funds for much needed research for other species of concern.

My resolution for the New Year is to keep the momentum going with the continued growth of LRWC programs. Did you recently sign up for a 2011 membership? Donor contributions play a vital role in sustaining our programs, and I thank you for helping LRWC continue its legacy of environmental stewardship. If you are interested in joining, turn the page and discover our membership benefits. You can help LRWC remain a strong and vital resource for waterfowl research, education and conservation by joining today!



Nathaniel Delgado and Woody, our Avian Ambassador

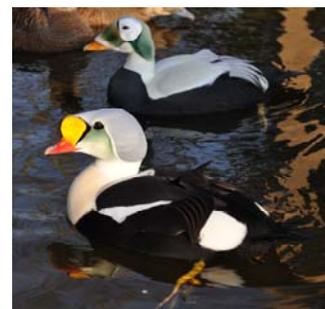
SAVE THE DATES!

6th Annual Duck Day

Sunday, June 5, 2011

Annual Fundraiser

Saturday, June 4, 2011



Male king eider (front) and male spectacled eider in the LRWC sea duck aviary



Volunteer Peter Litwin working on the LRWC shop

CLASSROOM CONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY

Education is central to the mission of LRWC. Last year we launched an Education Initiative, designed to expand our education program in order to meet the growing demand for environmental education both locally and within the northeast. The first phase of this initiative includes the creation of an on-site classroom that will allow students to learn about wildlife and conservation with an interactive and hands-on approach. The LRWC classroom will be constructed by renovating the section of our rearing barn which currently holds the maintenance shop. Scheduled to be completed this spring, the transformation of our shop into a classroom means that we need to find housing for the shop. LRWC member Peter Litwin has graciously volunteered his time not only to help with the classroom renovation, but also to construct a new maintenance shop for LRWC. Many thanks to Peter for his hard work and dedication to LRWC!

LRWC Membership — Join Today!

Membership Benefits:

- Quarterly newsletter
- Access to members-only section of the website (coming in 2011)
- Invitations to special events
- One free tour per year (Type and size of tour varies by membership.)

**Corporate memberships are available.
For more information, please call the LRWC office.**

**Gift memberships are available at
www.lrwc.net or by phone.**



Individual Membership \$35

One free regularly scheduled* tour per year with one guest.

Family Membership \$60

One free regularly scheduled* tour per year for a family of two adults, and up to six children under the age of 18.



Family and Friends Membership \$200

One behind-the-scenes tour for up to six people.
Time and date to be mutually arranged.

Frequent Flyer Membership \$500

Experience the seasons with two unique tours at LRWC, one in the spring and one in the fall. Behind-the-scenes tours for up to eight people, with time and date to be mutually arranged.



*Regularly scheduled tours are on Sundays at 2pm in May, June, September and October.
Reservations must be made by calling the **LRWC office: 860/567-2062.**

LRWC 2011 Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

I wish to join at the following level:

Individual \$35 ___ Family \$60 ___ Family and Friends \$200 ___ Frequent Flyer \$500 ___

I wish to make an additional contribution to LRWC in the amount of: _____

Total Amount: _____

Make checks payable to: LRWC

Payment Method: Check ___ Credit card ___ Money order ___

Name on card _____ VISA MasterCard AMEX

Card number _____ Exp. _____ Security code (CVV) _____