

# inging It

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Newsletter  
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- 2 From the Executive Director
- 3 Bird Sightings August 1997
- 8 Books for Birders Eric Salzman
- 9 Children's Books Judy Uehlein
- Birdfinding Insert Copper Pheasant; Japan
- 11 Milestones
- 12 ABA Tours
- 13 Events Calendar
- Classifieds
- 16 RBA Updates

## Birding the French Pyrenees

Alice M. Geffen and Carole Berglie

Some birds just beckon. Their very names are alluring, evocative: Ibisbill, Hyacinth Macaw, Lammergeier. It was the Lammergeier—the *bone-crusher*—that called us to the high plateaus and craggy peaks of the French Pyrenees.

A chain of mountains that extend across southwestern Europe between France and the Iberian Peninsula, the Pyrenees are some 270 miles long, with heights of over 11,000 feet. The Parc National des Pyrénées (in France) and the Parque Nacional de Ordesa y Monte Perdido (in Spain) join together to protect a vast montane wilderness that is also home to Ibex, Chamois, Marmot, and a host of other mammals, including the endemic Pyrenean Desman—a mole-like creature with a long, flattened nose—that lives its life in the cool mountain streams. The Pyrenees are also the only place in western Europe where Brown Bears can still be found; even Lynx are known to occur in the more remote areas of these parks. Surely this would be the place where we could at last see a Lammergeier.

Our quest began in Paris with a very long day's drive south to the city of Pau, where we headed up into the mountains. There, among the glaciers, waterfalls, cliffs, and high meadows we would search for the Lammergeier as well as for some of Europe's other mountain specialties: Eurasian Griffon, Egyptian Vulture, Eurasian Capercaillie, Wallcreeper, Alpine Accentor,

(continued on page 4)

## Wintering Trumpeter Swans

Ruth Shea

Once widespread and abundant throughout much of North America, by 1900 Trumpeter Swans were nearly extinct. Overharvesting eliminated Trumpeters from all but the most remote sites in Alaska and the Rocky Mountains. After 80 years of protection and restoration efforts, there are now over 20,000 Trumpeter Swans in the US and Canada. Approximately 16,000 nest in Alaska and adjacent portions of the Yukon and British Columbia, and winter along the Pacific Coast south to Oregon. The remainder summer in or near the Canadian Rockies (2,600), the Greater Yellowstone area (400),

(continued on page 6)

## Update: Kirtland's Warbler

The June issue of *Birding* magazine contained an article on the status of the endangered Kirtland's Warbler ("Closer Look: Kirtland's Warbler" by Paul W. Stykes, Jr.). Updating that information are the figures just in from the 1997 census of this warbler, which breeds only in very restricted areas of Michigan's Upper and Lower Peninsulas. This year's warbler count turned up 728 singing males in Michigan; additionally five singing males were located in northern Wisconsin, for a total of 733 (up from last year's count of 692). Most of the Michigan birds were found in the warbler's traditional

(continued on page 7)

## Horseshoe Crab Update

In the July issue we told you about the New Jersey moratorium on the harvest of Horseshoe Crabs in the Delaware Bay. Now that the moratorium has expired, New Jersey's governor, Christine Todd Whitman, has announced new restrictions on the crab harvest, designed to end the mass harvesting of the species. This is good news for the huge numbers of shorebirds whose arrival on the Bay coincides with the spring egg-laying by the crabs; the eggs are one of the bird's primary food sources on the Bay. In fact, the Delaware Bay is one of the Western Hemisphere's major stopovers for these birds as they are enroute to their northern breeding grounds. As part of the state's press release on the new regulations, the governor stated that "it's clear that we need to assure a food supply for the spring migration of shorebirds..." Discussions are also underway with the states of Delaware and Maryland on a potential regional plan to address the future of the Horseshoe Crab—and, correspondingly, the future of migratory shorebirds—on the Delaware Bay.

## Shorebird Habitat on Alaska's Homer Spit

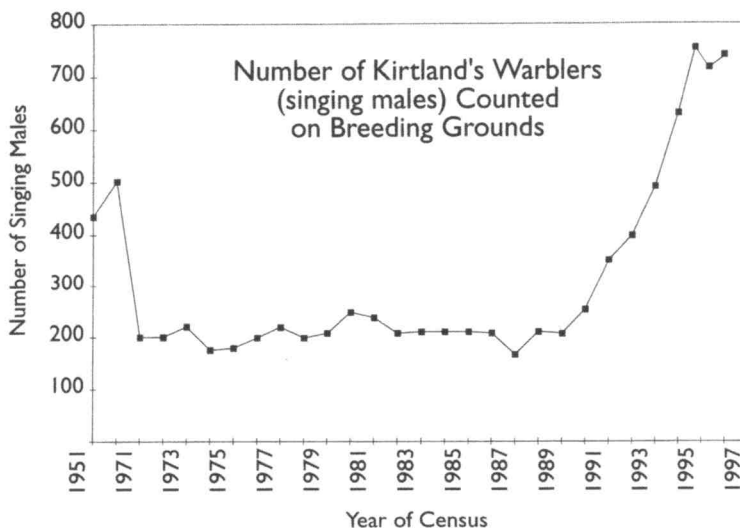
Another of the world's major shorebird habitats is the area of the Homer Spit in Alaska. Funds are being sought from the "small-parcel program" of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) Trustee Council to acquire critical shorebird habitat along the Homer Spit and adjacent Beluga Slough bordering Kachemak Bay near Homer, Alaska.

Kachemak Bay, which hosts over 100,000 migrating shorebirds each spring, was recognized last year as a site of "international importance" as part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. This is also the site of the highly successful and popular Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival each May. The encouraging news is that the City of Homer supports this acquisition, the owners of the properties are willing to sell, and the Trustees of the fund seem favorable toward the acquisition. Birders could provide valuable support by sending a letter in favor of the proposal to: Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council, 645 G Street, Suite 400, Anchorage, AK 99501. This is a fine opportunity for ABA members to link avitourism with meaningful bird conservation.

## Kirtland's Warbler

(continued from page 1)

nesting grounds in ten northern Lower Peninsula counties, but a record 19 singing males were also discovered on the Upper Peninsula, where the production of young birds was confirmed just last year.



The size of the Kirtland's Warbler population is restricted by the amount of suitable nesting habitat, for which the bird has very specific preferences: dense stands of young Jack Pines interspersed with small, open areas. Wildlife biologists are working to expand the acreage of suitable nesting areas for the warbler, in combination with a vigorous campaign of cowbird control. Without both intensive habitat management and continued cowbird control, the fate of the Kirtland's Warbler would be in question.

See the chart at left for an overview of the bird's population history since the census-taking began in 1951—it's one of the success stories of the Endangered Species Act.

### Winging It Submittals

*Winging It* welcomes your submittals on birds, birding, and birders. Birdfinding articles are, of course, one of our mainstays, but maybe your interests lie elsewhere. We'd love to hear from you. Very short submittals—milestones, RBA updates, items for the "Events Calendar," and the like—should be sent to us in writing (preferably typewritten), by mail, fax, or e-mail (addresses below). *Please do not call us with these; no matter how short they are, we need them in writing.*

Longer articles should be submitted as typewritten, double-spaced copy. If you prepared your article on computer, send us a 3.5" diskette; we can handle almost any word processing software (but not from a Mac, sorry!). Disks must be accompanied by hard copy, please.

### Winging It mail

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