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*Newsletter of the Biometrics  
Working Group, The Wildlife Society  
Edited by Bill Gould  
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## **Message from the Chair**

*Doug Johnson*

I find Letters from the President (or Chair) in the newsletters of most organizations to be pretty boring. The presiding officer (the presider??) tells stories about what great things the organization is doing, and how proud he or she is to be playing a part. But that it's really the members who make the organization the success it is. And the presider (not to be confused with The Decider) calls on all members to become even more active in the group.

Does that sound typical of a newsletter?

But, dang it, that's all true for the Biometrics Working Group. It's been a success since the get-go. We've been blessed with a large cadre of active members who are willing to serve as officers, organize symposia and workshops, and engage fully in TWS and BWG activities. Our symposia and workshops are well-attended and receive many accolades. We are doing a good job of letting TWS members know about biometric techniques that are *useful* to them. And we get deserving students involved the TWS.

We owe a debt of gratitude to all of our past officers and the other active members of the BWG who have made all of this happen. Personally, I especially owe a lot to Bill

Thompson, who tries very hard to get me to perform my duties. So, to conclude, our group is doing great things, I'm proud to be a part of it, but it's you the members who make it work. So, keep it up!

Now, can we talk about something else, like Brett Favre returning to the Green Bay Packers for a 17<sup>th</sup> year?

[Remainder of column eliminated by newsletter editor, due to lack of space]

## **Anchorage meeting highlights**

Last year Anchorage provided a great setting for the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of The Wildlife Society. The BWG sponsored one workshop and one symposium. Steve Dinsmore and Terry Shaffer offered the workshop, *Approaches for Modeling Avian Nest Survival* that was well attended by 30 participants from diverse backgrounds in academia, state and federal governmental agencies, and the private sector. The full-day workshop introduced participants to recent advances in avian nest survival modeling. The morning session provided a broad overview of approaches to modeling nest survival, highlighting recent model development in program MARK and SAS. The afternoon session included discussion of more advanced topics in nest survival analyses, additional examples in program MARK and SAS, and a wrap-up discussion and workshop evaluation. The workshop

ended in mid-afternoon to allow time for some participants to work with the organizers on their own data analyses.

Melinda Knutson and John Sauer organized a half-day symposium, *Objectives and Metrics for Monitoring Wildlife on Public and Private Lands* that was also a hit with over 100 people attending at various times throughout the session. Several papers from the symposium are expected to be published in a special issue of the Journal of Wildlife Management sometime in the future so keep an eye out for this series of upcoming papers. Thanks go out to all of the workshop and symposium organizers for executing another round of educational sessions and furthering the use of biometrics within wildlife biology.

## **Future Meetings of Interest**

The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Wildlife Society will be held in Tuscon, Arizona, during 22-26 September 2007. Conference program highlights, including workshops and a symposium sponsored by BWG, can in due time be viewed at [www.wildlife.org/conference/index.cfm](http://www.wildlife.org/conference/index.cfm)

The International Statistical Ecology Conference will take place at St. Andrews, Scotland, on July 9-11, 2008, immediately preceding the International Biometrics Conference in Dublin, Ireland. Plenary speakers will include Ken Burnham, Anne Chao, James Clark, Jim Nichols, Shirley Pledger, Roger Pradel and Carl Schwartz.

## **Upcoming Workshops**

Estimation of population change from count data -*John Sauer*

At the upcoming Tucson meeting, a full-day workshop entitled 'Estimation of population change from count data' is being offered by

Patuxent personnel John Sauer, Bill Link and Andy Royle. The workshop is being sponsored by the BWG. Analysis of population change from survey data is often controversial, and substantial challenges exist for analysts of surveys that are based on count data. Because most count surveys collect information simultaneously for many species, patterns of occurrence and population change can vary greatly among species and analyses that work for some species may not be well-suited for other species. In this workshop, we will describe current methods used to analyze data from count-based surveys such as the BBS and CBC. Our focus is in estimation of change in abundance using hierarchical log-linear models fit using Markov-chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) methods.

Introduction to Modern Methods for Analyzing Capture-Recapture Data  
-*Trent McDonald and Bryan Manly*

The purpose of the workshop (scheduled for Saturday) is to improve understanding of modern capture-recapture analysis methods through (1) a deeper understanding of the underlying motivations behind broadly applicable capture-recapture models, and (2) simple exercises to illuminate practical estimation issues. The full day workshop will be based on a subset of material in the *Handbook of Capture-Recapture Analysis* (2006, Princeton University Press). The morning session of this 1-day workshop will be devoted to modeling of data from closed populations, while the afternoon will be devoted to modeling of data from open populations. They plan to use a combination of MARK, CARE, and their MRA package for R.

## **Upcoming Symposium**

*Steve Sheriff*

The symposium entitled 'Biometrics in Wildlife: Past, Present and Future' offered by Steve Sheriff, Gail Olsen and Chris Ribic was accepted as a half-day symposium. The purpose of the symposium is to provide wildlife managers and scientists a review of the state of the art for the major analytical methods they most often use with applications and insights into future developments. Besides the reviews, there will be talks devoted to example applications to show why the methodological advances matter to biologists. Topic speakers would address: 1) the major statistical developments of their quantitative approach, 2) the current state of the art and the why and how it should be used in wildlife field situations, and 3) issues that should be addressed to make the technique even more useful for the wildlife profession. This year, the topics presented will include abundance, occupancy and species richness estimation, survival estimation (including nest success) and resource selection.

The BWG is also co-sponsoring a Round-table entitled 'Sharing free wildlife and habitat data online: The good, the bad and the ugly.'

## **BWG Student Travel Grant**

The Biometrics Working Group is offering student travel grants of up to \$400 for TWS student members presenting papers or posters at the annual Wildlife Society meeting. The purpose of the grants is to promote student interest in biometrics. Applicants must be students and members of The Wildlife Society. Preference will be given to applicants who demonstrate strong statistical or mathematical skills. To be

considered, submit: 1) a request for award (1 page max) that documents your interest in applying quantitative methods to wildlife/ecological research; 2) a letter of support from a mentor or supervisor; and 3) an abstract of the paper or poster being presented at the meeting (formatted according to the meeting guidelines). Once the BWG web page is up, there will be a link to information and an application. The deadline for submission of travel grants is July 1, 2007. Please share this announcement with eligible students. For more information, contact:

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## **Treasurer's Report**

*Clint Moore*

The Working Group supported the travel of one of its symposium speakers, donated to the TWS IT and web technology fund, and hired the services of a web page designer. However, our account balance has increased from \$14,145 to \$14,871 thanks to substantial income generated by the nest survival workshop in Anchorage.

## **BWG Webpage Update**

*Bill Thompson*

Several BWG members attended a meeting for TWS section, chapter, and working group webmasters and interested members, which was hosted by Philippa Benson (TWS Director of Publishing and Information Resources) and Earl Wyatt (TWS webmaster), during the Annual Conference in Anchorage. The purpose of this meeting was to inform attendees of the parent

society's plans for updating and redesigning the TWS webpage, how this would serve the needs of sections, chapters and working groups, and the projected timeline for these changes. This meeting also offered an opportunity for attendees to voice their concerns and to suggest ideas for improving the webpage.

Given the amount of work that is scheduled to be performed on the main webpage, the BWG attendees unanimously concluded that it would be at least 6 months, and probably much longer, before Earl Wyatt would have adequate time to devote to updating and maintaining the BWG webpage. Therefore, the BWG Executive Board voted to allocate \$200 to contract a webmaster to temporarily move the webpage to a third-party site (Penn State University) and update its contents. Penn State will host our page for free until TWS is ready to host it again, at which time the webpage contents will be migrated back to the TWS server. As of now, our temporary webpage still requires some updating, but it should be ready within a week or two. I will notify members via email and provide them with the web address when the temporary webpage is ready for business. We will have a link on our TWS webpage that directs people to its new location. Many thanks to Duane Diefenbach for setting this up!

Our webpage should be viewed as a work in progress. We have updated its current contents and have added new links to the annual meeting minutes (2004-2005), BWG Student Travel Grant information and past recipients, and current and past officers. Nonetheless, there is still much to do. For starters, we would like to add links to: 1) electronic versions of ALL previous meeting minutes and treasurer's reports, 2) on-line course webpages and related resources, 3) publications of interest, and 4) video

podcasts of BWG workshops. The webpage also could use some sprucing up, e.g., relevant graphics and images. We are going to suggest to TWS that they host a forum on their server for the Working Groups and other interested TWS groups to facilitate communication both within and among these groups. The forum developed and maintained by Evan Cooch (<http://www.phidot.org/forum/index.php>) provides a useful template.

I would like to thank my fellow members of the web design committee, Terry Shaffer (chair), Steve Dinsmore, Duane Diefenbach and Chris Fennesbeck, for their help and suggestions. As always, we welcome feedback from BWG members on ways to improve our webpage.

The BWG webpage can currently be accessed at [www.wildlife.org/wg/biometrics/index.cfm](http://www.wildlife.org/wg/biometrics/index.cfm)

### **Member News**

*Lyman McDonald* has been appointed to a three-year term on the Scientific and Statistical Committee for the Pacific Fishery Management Council, Portland, Oregon. The Council has management responsibility for Pacific fisheries of coastal pelagic species, groundfish, highly migratory species, and salmon.

*Bryan Manly* is continuing to offer a course "Ecological and Environmental Sampling" through <http://www.statistics.com>. This course covers sampling methods and analyses used to study of the density and abundance of animals and plants, and other important biological variables. The theoretical basis behind methods is discussed, but the emphasis of the course is on understanding how to use methods effectively rather than the derivation of the equations used.

## **BWG Contact Information**

### **CURRENT OFFICERS**

Chair	Doug Johnson, USGS Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, <b>Douglas_H_Johnson@usgs.gov</b>
Chair-elect	Bill Gould, New Mexico State University, <b>wgould@nmsu.edu</b>
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