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## Comments on Presenting the Skutch Medal to Mercedes Foster

By Michael Braun

North American Ornithological Conference, Veracruz, Mexico, October 2006

On behalf of the Council and members of the Association of Field Ornithologists, it is my pleasure to award the Alexander F. Skutch Medal for Excellence in Neotropical Ornithology to Mercedes S. Foster. Mercedes Foster has had a productive and influential career in neotropical ornithology spanning more than 30 years and covering subjects ranging from reproductive biology and behavior, to biodiversity inventory and capacity building for science and conservation in Latin America.

Mercedes completed her Ph.D. at the University of South Florida in 1974, then spent several years at the University of California at Berkeley before moving to Washington to become a Curator of Birds for the US Fish and Wildlife Service (now the US Geological Survey) at the National Museum of Natural History, a position she has held since 1980.

Mercedes is best known for her work on the life history and reproductive ecology of manakins, which she has approached with a holistic perspective, combining years of careful fieldwork with museum and theoretical studies to gain a balanced view of the whole system. Her work extends to the interplay between life history and breeding systems of birds, the fruiting phenology of their major food plants, and to more general aspects of frugivory and its impact on seed dispersal.

Mercedes has always maintained an active field program, and she has made major contributions to biodiversity inventory. She served as the Ornithological Coordinator of the legendary Cerro de la Neblina Expeditions to southern Venezuela in the late 1980s, and as editor of a major series of volumes on biodiversity measurement and monitoring.

She has also been active in outreach, serving as Scientific Advisor to the National Biodiversity Inventory and the National Museum in Paraguay, and as Coordinator of the Latin American Library Enhancement Project.

Although it did not influence the selection process, it did please the Selection Committee and Mercedes greatly when perusal of the AFO archives revealed that Mercedes Foster's name appeared prominently on a very short list of ornithologists that Dr. Skutch had named as worthy potential recipients of the medal that bears his name.



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*The Skutch Medal awards began in 1997, in honor of the 75th anniversary of AFO. The award recognizes career accomplishments, particularly, although not limited to, research relating to life history studies of Neotropical birds. Criteria may include encouragement and mentoring of students, particularly Latin Americans, and making research accessible to the public through popular publications, as well as publishing work in scientific journals. A goal of the award is to recognize individuals whose careers will stand as models of excellence in Neotropical Ornithology.*

# Annual Meeting of the Association of Field Ornithologists

## July 26–29, 2007 • Orono, Maine

The 2007 meeting of the Association of Field Ornithologists will be held on the campus of the University of Maine in Orono, July 26–29. Orono is centrally located along the Gulf of Maine and within 40 minutes of world-class birding, hiking, camping, and sightseeing. Maine offers a rich array of birds but pelagic birding and whale watching are guaranteed crowd-pleasers at this time of year.

Contributors will present studies in ornithology during regular paper sessions. A special symposium will feature the contributions of long-term banding studies in the region. More information on registration, abstracts, housing, and field trips and other activities can be found on the AFO website ([www.afonet.org](http://www.afonet.org)). Applications for a place on the program will be due **June 1**. For questions about the meeting or any of its activities, please contact the local meeting organizer, Dr. Rebecca Holberton, The Laboratory of Avian Biology, 221 Murray Hall, Dept. of Biology, University of Maine, Orono ME 04469, (207) 581-2526, <[rebecca.holberton@maine.edu](mailto:rebecca.holberton@maine.edu)>

### SOCIAL EVENTS

#### Thursday, July 26

- Opening Reception 6:30 P.M. – 9:30 P.M.

#### Friday, July 27

- AFO-sponsored Professional-Student Luncheon, students only. (*Students should consult the web site <[www.afonet.org](http://www.afonet.org)> for details*) 12:00 P.M.–1:30 P.M.
- Poster Session and Reception 6:00 P.M.–8:00 P.M.
- Maine Lobster Bake Buffet Dinner 7:30 P.M.– 9:30 P.M.  
*Maine Lobster Bake includes steamed Maine lobster; steamed Maine mussels and clams, red potatoes, corn on the cob, cole slaw, flaky biscuits, Maine blueberry pie, apple pie, lemonade, ice tea*
- AFO Student Social at Orono's Bear Brew Pub (cash bar) 9:30 P.M. – 11:30 P.M.

#### Saturday, July 28

- Pre-banquet Social Hour 6:00 P.M.– 7:00 P.M.
- Closing Ceremonies and Banquet 7:00 P.M.– 10:30 P.M.  
**Free to students registered for student presentation awards!**  
*Dinner choices are: (1) Prime rib, Maine's Yukon Gold baked potato, fresh garden vegetable medley; (2) Chicken Wellington (chicken breast and duxelles wrapped in puffed pastry), baby glazed carrots, steamed broccoli; (3) Grilled fresh salmon with maple glaze, wild rice, snap peas, and carrots; or (4) Curry-sesame tofu with brown rice, pea pods, red peppers*

### HOUSING

Off-campus housing and transportation information is provided on the AFO meeting web site. AFO has secured reduced conference rates and has been able to hold a set of rooms with several local hotels (rates and availability good until June 26, 2007; Conference Reference Name is "AFO Conference"). After this date, rooms not reserved will become available to the public at the full price.

Please use the form on page 4 to reserve on-campus housing. Rooms will be available from Thursday noon until Sunday noon. Anyone requiring extra accommodation should contact Rebecca Holberton (see address above and on page 3).

### FIELD TRIPS

During the meeting, there will be on- and off-campus field trips. Most of these will be organized by the same people at Maine Audubon who received much acclaim for their trips offered during last year's American Birding Association meeting in nearby Bangor. Pelagic birders will take the famed Friendship Five fleet (150+ people capacity/boat) out of Bar Harbor (one hour from Orono) to see many species of alcids (including Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, murre, guillemots), gulls, 5–6 tern species (including Arctic and Roseate terns), sea ducks, whales and so much more. Manx Shearwaters and Northern Gannets are regularly seen on these trips at that time of year. Black Terns breed at several inland sites and many shorebirds pass through the Gulf of Maine region in July and August. Landbird trips include opportunities to see Spruce Grouse, Black-backed Woodpecker, Blackpoll Warbler, and many other "northern specialties." The campus is situated along the Stillwater River and offers great birding trails through field and forest. Crossbills, Gray Jays, and Boreal Chickadees are common breeders in the area, and Bald Eagles nest near campus. See page 5 to learn more about the field trips and to register.

Attendees can also try their hand at flyfishing with early morning classes offered by our local guide.

### CALL FOR PAPERS

All members and guests of AFO are invited to contribute to the scientific sessions during the annual meeting. Paper sessions will be scheduled for Friday, July 27, and Saturday, July 28. A poster session will be held during the Friday reception. To be considered for a place on the program, please review the abstract guidelines online at [www.afonet.org](http://www.afonet.org), follow the required format, and **submit your abstract by June 1, 2007**. The number of spaces for oral contributions is limited and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Contributed oral papers are limited to 15 minutes, including questions and any technical difficulties that may arise. If we are unable to accommodate your request to give an oral presentation, you will be contacted and given the option to present a poster. Posters should not exceed 122 cm high x 152 cm wide

AFO is offering Student Presentation Awards during this year's meeting. The student presenting the best oral paper and the student presenting the best poster will each be recognized at this year's banquet on Saturday, July 28.

**All abstracts must be received by June 1, 2007.** Abstracts may be submitted by email <[wwright@maine.edu](mailto:wwright@maine.edu)> or by post (Mr. Wesley Wright, Abstract Coordinator, Laboratory of Avian Biology, 221 Murray Hall, Dept. Biol. Sci., Univ. of Maine, Orono, ME 04469, No faxes, please!

# REGISTRATION FORM—AFO Annual Meeting

July 26–29, 2007 • Orono, Maine

*Each person attending must submit a separate form*

Name for badge (first, last): \_\_\_\_\_

Employer or affiliation (for badge): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (daytime): \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Registration Fees (per person)

	<i>Until May 1</i>	<i>May 1– July 1</i>	<i>After July 1</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular	\$140	\$180	\$220	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-member	\$170	\$210	\$250	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Companion/Spouse*	\$120	\$160	\$200	\$ _____
<b>*Access to social events only</b>				
Name for badge _____				
<input type="checkbox"/> Student**, AFO member	\$110	\$150	\$190	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Student**, non-member	\$140	\$180	\$220	\$ _____
<b>**Copy of student ID required</b>				
<b>Sub-total for registration</b>				\$ _____

## Social Events

*Thursday, July 26*

Opening Reception (cash bar) *no charge*

*Friday, July 27*

AFO Professional-Student Luncheon, **students only** *no charge*

Poster Session and Reception (cash bar) *no charge*

Buffet Dinner, \$32 per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_

AFO Student Social (cash bar) *no charge*

*Saturday, July 28*

Pre-banquet Social Hour (cash bar) *no charge*

Closing Ceremonies and Banquet \$35 per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Free to students registered for student presentation awards!**

Check here if you qualify for a free banquet ticket.

**Select dinner choice below**

Prime rib

Chicken Wellington

Salmon

Curry-sesame tofu

**Sub-total for social events** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Field Trips

**Field trip subtotal from page 6** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Housing and meals

**Housing and meals subtotal from page 6** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL ENCLOSED** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## RELEASE

*This release must be signed  
before registration can be accepted.*

Each registrant desires and intends to participate in field trips and other activities of the annual meeting of the Association of Field Ornithologists. Therefore, each registrant knowingly and voluntarily grants to AFO and its officers, the University of Maine, and members of the organizing committee and others engaged in activities connected to this meeting, a full release from any claim, liability, or cost of any nature on account of personal illness or bodily injury, loss of life, or loss of or damage to property directly or indirectly arising as a result of participation in this meeting.

Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**PAYMENT INFORMATION**—Check or money order only. Cash accepted during on-site registration only. Please make checks payable to AFO 2007 Conference and mail to Dr. Rebecca Holberton at the address below. If you have questions, please call 207-581-2526 or email: [rebecca.holberton@maine.edu](mailto:rebecca.holberton@maine.edu).

Cancellations must be received by July 1, in writing to Dr. Rebecca Holberton and are subject to a \$50.00 fee.

Refunds, processed after August 1, will be the total registration fee (not including seabird field trips) minus the \$50.00 service charge.

*For questions about this meeting, contact the meeting organizer:*

**Dr. Rebecca Holberton**

The Laboratory of Avian Biology

221 Murray Hall

Dept. of Biology, University of Maine,

Orono ME 04469

Phone: 207-581-2526

email: [rebecca.holberton@maine.edu](mailto:rebecca.holberton@maine.edu)

## AFO/AUDUBON SEABIRD FIELD TRIPS

### Early registration required

AFO and Maine Audubon have secured these trips exclusively for this meeting. Early registration is required to secure these rates. Sign up early to get on board—availability after July 1 cannot be guaranteed. July through August is prime time for seabird and whale watching in the Gulf of Maine. Please note that, for these seabird trips, cancellations made after July 1 may not be fully refundable. Be aware that, except in extreme weather conditions, trips are rarely cancelled. Only under captain's cancellation are refunds made.

This is only a partial list of field trips! For complete information about these and the many other AFO field trips, see the AFO meeting website ([www.afo.org/meetings/2007](http://www.afo.org/meetings/2007)). Participants wishing to sign up for field trips not listed below can do so by consulting the information for each field trip online.

### Thursday, July 26

- Machias Seal Island Puffin Trip I—Leaves out of Jonesport, 2–3 hours boat time, 15-person capacity, includes round-trip van transportation between Orono campus and the dock, and box lunch\* (select one below). Participants will land on the island and get close to the birds.  
 \_\_\_ beef sandwich \_\_\_ turkey sandwich \_\_\_ vegetarian  
 Non-AFO member/non-student = \$95.00, AFO non-student member = \$ 80.00, student = \$55.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Sunday, July 29

- Gulf of Maine Pelagic Trip—**Note: To comply with new federal regulations, passengers must bring photo ID for this trip** (for entering international waters). The Bay King has been chartered by AFO and Maine Audubon to meet the needs of those interested in true pelagic birding. Cruising aboard the 111-foot power catamaran designed for speed, stability, and optimum viewing, we'll reach prime birding areas quickly, covering a large area up to 40 miles offshore that is typically accessible to birders only when on the ferry (The Cat) to Nova Scotia. Expect to see gannets, shearwaters, puffins, razorbills, guillemots, eiders, jaegers, terns, a variety of gulls, and phalaropes, and many more! Experience the grandeur and mystique of the Gulf of Maine! See the whales! View the lighthouses dotting the rugged, rocky Maine coast, and the mountains of Acadia as you return to port. This is an exciting opportunity to add to your life list. Don't be left out! Leaves out of Bar Harbor, 5–6 hours boat time, 150-person capacity, includes round trip coach transportation between Orono campus and the dock, and box lunch\* (select one below):  
 \_\_\_ beef sandwich \_\_\_ turkey sandwich \_\_\_ vegetarian  
 Non-AFO member/non-student = \$80.00, AFO member non-student = \$ 75.00, student = \$50.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Machias Seal Island Puffin Trip II—Leaves out of Jonesport, 2–3 hours boat time, 15-person capacity, includes round-trip van transportation between Orono campus and the dock, and box lunch\* (select one below). Participants will land on the island and get close to the birds.  
 \_\_\_ beef sandwich \_\_\_ turkey sandwich \_\_\_ vegetarian  
 Non-AFO member/non-student = \$95.00, AFO non-student member = \$ 80.00, student = \$55.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 \*All box lunch meals includes sandwich, dessert, fruit, and drink

## HOUSING

Arrival Date \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date \_\_\_\_\_

Total Number of Nights \_\_\_\_\_

Will you need shuttle service from the airport or bus station to campus?  Yes  No

Include flight information, if known \_\_\_\_\_

Do you need special accommodation?  Yes  No  
 (i.e. wheelchair access)

### On-campus housing

Prices listed below are for registration before May 1; prices in parentheses are for registration after May 1. Towels and bedding are provided.

#### Residence Hall (York Hall)

- Single Room  
 No. nights \_\_\_ x \$46.90 (\$51.90) per night \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Double Room  
 No. nights \_\_\_ x \$30.50 (\$35.50) per person/night \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sharing with \_\_\_\_\_

#### Suites (Edith Patch House)

- Single Suite  
 No. nights \_\_\_ x 52.50 (\$57.50) per night \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Double Suite  
 No. nights \_\_\_ x 35.00 (\$40.00) per person/night \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sharing with \_\_\_\_\_

### OPTIONAL:

#### Residence Hall Meal Plan

Check only those desired.

#### Thursday, July 26

- breakfast: \$6.50 \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- lunch: \$8.25 \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- dinner: \$10.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### Friday, July 27

- breakfast: \$6.50 \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- lunch: \$8.25 \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- dinner: \$10.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### Saturday, July 28

- breakfast: \$6.50 \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- lunch: \$8.25 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### Sunday, July 29

- breakfast: \$6.50 \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- lunch: \$8.25 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### Meal package

- 3 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 2 dinners):\$ 56.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Sub-total for seabird trips** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Sub-total for housing and meals** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# The Alexander Skutch Project

ALEXANDER F. SKUTCH, ornithologist, botanist, naturalist and philosopher, is considered the scientist with the longest and most prolific trajectory in the study of birds in Central America. Dr Skutch dedicated more than 65 years to the study of Costa Rican birds and published more than 40 books. Born in 1904 in Baltimore, Maryland, he established his residence in southeastern Costa Rica in 1941, where he acquired 195 acres of forest. He lived there with his wife, Pamela Lankester, until he passed away in 2003. Dr Skutch named his estate “Los Cusingos”, using the local name of the Orange-billed Toucan (*Pteroglossus frantzii*).

Alexander Skutch remained for many years in his rainforest retreat, but in the early 1960s contacted the first conservation movement in Costa Rica and joined the Tropical Science Center (TSC) where he held a position on the Board of Directors for many years. In 1973 he met Dr. Gary Stiles. Dr. Skutch and Dr. Stiles completed the life habit studies for some 300 species of tropical birds. Other interests conveyed by Dr. Skutch in his books include the development of love, comprehension, compassion, and tolerance among human beings where respect for thy fellow neighbor becomes a central issue for evolution to continue and challenging ideas on how best to carry out research.

In 1993, upon Dr. Skutch's bequest, the Tropical Science Center joined efforts with several organizations and purchased Los Cusingos from him. The purpose of purchasing Dr. Skutch's estate was to preserve it as a bird sanctuary and a destiny for naturalists, ornithologists, bird watchers, and scholars, and to promote Dr. Skutch's legacy to ornithology, the natural sciences, ethics, philosophy, and environmental education. After Dr. Skutch's passing, the TSC and the National Museum of Costa Rica began restoration of Dr. Skutch's Costa Rican farm house to convert it into a museum so that future generations will be able to appreciate his message and life works. The TSC is now working to restore the 3km of trails in the forest surrounding Dr. Skutch's farm, create a botanical garden, rescue the archeological pre-Columbian remains onsite, create a visitor's center, library and study hall, and build an environmental education center for the local and international community.

The Skutch Project also includes protecting the biodiversity and endangered ecosystems of the surrounding area to the museum and bird sanctuary by providing environmental education programs in the local schools and helping local farmers convert to pragmatic sustainable income strategies (for example, bird-friendly coffee production, or birding tourism). This will not only increase the interconnectivity between the dispersed forest patches of the area—providing more habitat for the multitude of species that live here—but it will also provide local entrepreneurial and employment opportunities related to conservation, bird research, and eco-tourism to a depressed economic region of Costa Rica where many small farmers are losing their land to large agro and housing developers. With this project, many local job opportunities related to conservation will be created.

As part of the influence and impact this project will have on the surrounding areas, the TSC has identified the Alexander Skutch Biological Corridor, which is based on biological studies and has been recognized as part of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. It will connect the bird sanctuary with the larger La Amistad Biosphere Reserve. There are five farming communities within the corridor and the TSC is involving the local leaders, farming cooperatives and



*The restoration of Dr. Skutch's home is one of the top priorities of the TSC, since it reflects the life of a naturalist who modeled for contemporary society a simple way of life, with deep respect for, and search for harmony with nature, central to the TSC's mission.*

town councils in all phases of the project, with an aim to involve more youth and children.

The Tropical Science Center is in the process of implementing the Alexander Skutch Project over the next five years, and TSC funds have already been invested in the first phases of this project. It is expected that once the museum and bird sanctuary are open to the public and the different components of the project are in place, it will be economically self-sustainable through entrance fees and other entrepreneurial models, as is the common and proven approach of the Tropical Science Center for all its long-term projects. But it will take a team effort to get it to that point, and as a non-profit organization, the TSC is limited by the amount of funds it can dedicate.

***Thus, we are offering individuals, couples, corporations, and organizations the opportunity to be Founders of the Alexander Skutch Project.*** Founders will be recognized in stone in the botanical garden surrounding the museum, and will receive special recognition at the Inauguration Ceremony of the Skutch-Lankester Museum (scheduled for May 2007). Supporters and sponsors can also become Special Partners by providing in-kind donations. Special Partners also receive long-term recognition for their support in relevant publicity and event spaces. We hope to raise \$500,000 by Dec. 31, 2007 for the Alexander Skutch Project. Will you join us?

In addition, by becoming a Friend of the Tropical Science Center, a tax-exempt U.S. public charity, supporters of tropical research and conservation will help fund not only the Alexander Skutch Project, but many other important initiatives being developed and carried out by the Tropical Science Center throughout the world.

*The Tropical Science Center*  
([www.cct.or.cr](http://www.cct.or.cr))

*and The Friends of the Tropical Science Center*  
([www.friendsoftsc.org](http://www.friendsoftsc.org))

*For more information on how you can get involved in this historic project, please call 1.800.230.4926*

## AFO Afield

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KIMBERLY YOUNG

### Design

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AFO Afield a publication of the Association of Field Ornithologists (AFO), and is free to all members of AFO who reside in North America. Email letters and articles to <K108108@gmail.com>, or mail them to Editor, AFO Afield, P.O. Box 477, Etna, NY, 13062. **Send address changes to OSNA Business Office**, 5400 Bosque Blvd, Suite 680, Waco, Texas 76710 USA, or send email to <business@osnabirds.org>. For information about membership in AFO, contact OSNA at the address above or call (254) 399-9636.



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# 2007 AFO Annual Meeting REGISTRATION INFORMATION INSIDE

## 2006 E. Alexander Bergstrom Research Awards

by Cecilia M. Riley

In 2006 AFO received 52 domestic and 8 Latin America applications for the E. Alexander Bergstrom Research Award. As always, the program is highly competitive and the decisions were difficult! I would like to thank our esteemed Judges—John Arvin, Chandler S. Robbins (LA), Gene Morton, Becky Holberton, Mike Braun, Cecilia Riley, and Lee Robinson—for careful review and consideration of each proposal. Winners of the 2006 competition are listed below along with titles of their proposed research. Please visit the AFO website for full abstracts of their fine work. Congratulations to all of these young ornithologists!

### Domestic Category

**Nathan Marcy**—PRBO Conservation Science, CA. *Sampling bird populations to assist a cloud forest restoration project in Costa Rica.*

**Lena Usyk**—Central Michigan University, MI. *The ecology of Le Conte's Sparrows and other grassland birds at Munuscong Bay.*

**Ana Gabela**—University of Massachusetts, MA. *Site fidelity and human impact on the Medium Ground-Finch (Geospiza foris) on Santa Cruz, Galapagos Islands.*

**Megan Philips**—Stephen F. Austin State University, TX. *The foraging ecology and breeding biology of the endemic Yucatan Woodpecker, Melanerpes pygmaeus, in Quintana Roo, Mexico.*

**Jason Hill**—University of Connecticut, CT. *Estimating the demographic consequences of wetland fragmentation: Movement and survival patterns in a threatened salt marsh bird.*

### Latin America Category

**María Cecilia Sagario**—University of Buenos Aires, Argentina. *Breeding territoriality of granivorous birds in the central Monte Desert, Argentina.*

**Juan Alejandro Morales Betancourt**—Universidad de Caldas, Columbia. *Fruit consumption by four manakin species (Aves: Pipridae) in a native reforestation at the Colombian Central Andes.*

**Mieko Ferreira Kanegae**—Sao Paulo, Brazil. *Habitat use, home range and population study of Melanopareia torquata (Birds: Melanopareidae) in the Ecologic Station of Itirapina, São Paulo.*

The WESTERN BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION (WBBA) is an affiliation of people interested in bird banding as a useful tool in the study of the biology and migration of birds in western North America and Hawaii. Among other benefits, members receive the quarterly journal, *North American Bird Bander*. To learn more or to join, please visit our web site <[www.westernbirdbanding.org](http://www.westernbirdbanding.org)>