

ONTARIO BIRD BANDERS' ASSOCIATION

BANDING NEWSLETTER NO. 3

October 16th, 1956.

The Point Pelee fall project got under way with great cooperation from the banders, and rather less from the birds. Small birds were noticeably fewer this year, and they kept well under cover while large numbers of hawks patrolled the point. A full report of this later.

Mist nets have become increasingly important during the past year both in Canada and the United States, and are taking not only more birds than before but more varied species: because of their flexibility they can be used in almost any habitat. It must be kept in mind constantly that nets can be potentially dangerous if they are not operated with sufficient care or if they are left unattended. At this time of year it must be remembered that in cold weather any bird must be handled with extreme care, for the human hand can chill a bird dangerously in a very short time.

With more people becoming "bird conscious" the banding programme must be carried on with discretion as well as common sense. The public can be extremely critical where individual knowledge is limited, and of course adverse criticism reflects on everyone.

With most, banding has progressed beyond the "hobby" stage. Each bird handled might hold the key to some unanswered question. The bander can make any number of notes: plumage, weight, sex, parasites. Many banders have a wealth of valuable information buried in their notebooks, information we hope they will share with the rest of us. And others are building up careful notes for the future.

WE NEED YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL NEWSLETTER!

MEMBERS' NEWS

RUSS RUTTER of Huntsville has a fine banding station as we discovered when we dropped in to see him in mid-August. Two miles outside Huntsville, his shrubbery and adjoining woodlot and fields were attracting more birds than we had seen elsewhere in the north. Russ has been using the trap shown in the last newsletter, and having considerable success with juncos, white-throated sparrows and chipping sparrows. Woodcock, night-hawks and chimney swifts have nested within a few hundred feet of his home. Russ writes an interesting nature column "Back off the Road" for the For-ester in Huntsville.

FRANK SMITH, who bands so many warblers at Rice Lake each year, reports that the warbler flights are much smaller this year for many species.

His yellow warbler catch by the middle of August was 50% less than the previous year. Not until September 18 did other warblers appear in large numbers. Most noticeably reduced in numbers were Canada Warblers, as well as Redstarts, Magnolia Warblers, Blackburnian Warblers, Black-throated Blue Warblers. Myrtle, Palm, Blackpoll and Bay-Breasted Warblers were in normal quantities. He estimates the local nesting population at Rice Lake was down about 70% from the previous year.

A most interesting capture was a Dickcissel believed to be the first banded in Ontario.

RETURNS

The most significant return at Point Pelee so far is a Barn Swallow banded by WISHART CAMPBELL at Point Pelee on May 17, 1956. It was recovered on June 11th, 1956, in Malan, Ohio, Erie County, roughly 44 miles south of Point Pelee and about 8 miles inland. This is the first concrete evidence we have of the unusual "reverse migration" where birds are seen flying south off the end of Point Pelee during the spring migration. One of the reasons for establishing the permanent trapping station there was to gather information about this phenomenon.

FRANK SMITH has had some interesting returns this year:

Bay-breasted Warbler	Banded Rice Lake, Sept., 1955 Shot Havana, Cuba, Nov. 1955
Black-throated Blue Warbler	Banded Rice Lake, Sept. 1955 Found dead, Columbia, S.America, Nov., 1955
Savannah Sparrow	Banded Rice Lake, June, 1951 Retaken, Rice Lake, June, 1956
Saw-Whet Owl	Banded Woodbine, Toronto, Oct. 1952 Retaken, Cherry Beach, Toronto, Nov., 1955
Tree Swallow	Banded Rice Lake, Aug. 1953 Retaken, Rice Lake, May, 1956
Grackle	Banded Rice Lake, 1950 Retaken, Nebraska, 1956.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members:

Herb. Southam,	148 Parkview Hill Cres., Toronto 13.
Alden Strong,	Westport, Ontario.
Cy Wolfling,	87 Westwood Rd., Alden, N. Y.
Doug. Dow,	30 Brookside St., London, Ontario.
Mrs. H. R. Quilliam,	R. R. 1, Kingston, Ontario.
Hal Richards,	37 Killdeer Cres., Leaside, Ontario.
Horace Dahmer,	174 Simeon St., Kitchener, Ontario.
Jim Woodford,	233 Roehampton Ave., Toronto, Ontario.
Mrs. Margaret Allen,	Fenelon Falls, Ontario.
Mrs. Ruth Brown,	451 Melrose Ave., Toronto, Ontario.
F. Dilling,	25 West Beach, P.O.Box 371, Bowmanville,"

Neil T. Kelly, 13137 Balfour Rd., Huntingdon Woods, Mich.
Rolla A. Parker, N. Y. State Conservation Dept., Albany, N.Y.
Russ Rutter, Box 794, Huntsville, Ontario.

TRAP DESIGN

The trap design sent in by NEIL KELLY which was reproduced in the last newsletter has been widely used, and has shown there is a need for effective yet simply made traps. An effective portable drip for this or any other trap can be made with a standard transfusion bottle and valve. The quart size lasts about 9 hours.

A standard windvane or stationary feeder can easily be converted into a trap by fastening a drop door on the front of it. The writer has found that Cardinals, Finches, Grosbeaks, Chickadees and Bluejays are easily taken by this method. If you are mechanically minded, the trip can be made with a small door buzzer and a push button, and can be run off your door bell system. When the buzzer is energized, the armature is pulled from under the trip bar. By using a cupboard latch on the door, it will lock in the down position.

For gathering cages, the birds can be collected from traps more easily if the end is glass or any clear transparent substitute.

Let us know what traps you are using and finding effective.

SAW-WHET OWLS

With October come the Saw-Whet Owls. Toronto and vicinity has produced by far the greatest numbers of these birds, possibly because the area is covered by banders experienced in owl finding. There are a few records east to Kingston, and west to Windsor. The peak flights appear to be about the third week in October; if you check any swamp area or small cedar or willow growths you may find Saw-Whets sitting there during the day. To capture them, you need only a long stick, or fishing rod, and a noose. The wire your bands come on is satisfactory for the noose. Tie the noose to the end of the stick, making sure it slides freely, then open it to a hole large enough to slip over the owl's head. The owl will sit watching you as the noose slides over its head - once the noose is below the skull, just give a sharp pull forward, and there is your owl. The noose is easily removed, and the owl isn't harmed. The size 3 band recommended is too small, and banders report that a 4 or 5 can be removed by the owl. Frank Smith and Gord Lambert use a cut down size 6 which is heavy enough to withstand the owl's beak. If you are fortunate enough to live in Saw-Whet areas, night netting produces good results. Some Toronto members had success last year, and plan to increase their operations this year.

SCREECH OWLS

Screech Owls may also be taken with a noose but a better method is to establish roosting boxes for them. REG JAMES of Willowdale has, over the last 20 years, erected some 1,200 roosting boxes within a 30-mile radius of Toronto. To make the box, take a nail keg with two good ends, cut a hole in the largest stave about 2/3 of the way up, large enough to insert your hand holding a tennis ball. Place some sawdust in the bottom. Nail the keg in a

cedar, tamarack or pine at a minimum height of 10 ft. with the opening plainly visible through the branches. Overlooking a marsh or stream is the best location or it can be placed at the edge of a road or field. Remember you will have to climb up to it, so don't put in an inaccessible place. Screech Owls don't appear to spend more than one consecutive night at the same roost, so you may have to make several trips to find the owl at home, even though you may have found signs of occupancy such as pellets, fish, mice or other victims.

To remove a Screech Owl from the box, spread your hand and press down over the bird, closing your fingers over its thighs. Screech Owls are very quiet and easy to capture during the day, becoming more wary and restless towards late afternoon.

NEXT MEETING

At the home of Frank Lovesy, 220 Gowan Ave., Toronto, on Monday, October 22, at 8 o'clock.

A badge has been designed for the Association and is available at \$1.00.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Wasserfall,
Secretary-treasurer.

Bw/LM.