

1970

ONTARIO BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION

JANUARY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY MEETING

The January meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 20, 1970, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. W.A. Martin, 5 Larwood Blvd., Scarborough, at 8 p.m. This is a members night. This meeting gives everyone a chance to find out just what has been happening over the past year. Members are asked to bring slides of their recent banding activities.

DECEMBER MEETING

The December meeting was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. G. Fairfield, on Tuesday, December 16, 1969, with 21 members present.

As there was no business to attend to, we proceeded with our speakers, Dr. R. Brown and Mr. E. Tull who gave an interesting and informative talk on the work they had done this past summer just off the coast of Newfoundland. The purpose of their summer work was to plot the various courses taken by sea birds during the summer months, to see what happens when the birds get out of sight of land. Dr. Brown showed several maps with observations of Fulmars and Kittiwakes plotted not only for the summer, but for the winter months as well. Mr. Tull illustrated the talk with many excellent slides of the area covered.

WARDEN REQUIRED FOR LONG POINT BIRD OBSERVATORY

Applications are invited for the position of Warden at the Long Point Bird Observatory for the 1970 season. The period to be covered is from April 1 to October 31, but it is realized that a suitably qualified person may not be available for the entire period, so applications and inquiries are invited from persons available for a substantial portion of this time. Remuneration will be up to \$325.00 per month, depending on qualifications. Duties will include observational work and banding during the migrational seasons, and studies of breeding birds during the summer, with the help of the LPBO members and others when available; and routine maintenance of the facilities of the Observatory at all seasons. A university student in biology, with banding experience would be suitable for this job, but applications will be considered from anyone who feels that he is adequately qualified.

Applications, stating qualifications, experience and time available, should be made in writing to W.J. Wasserfall, 22 Roycrest Ave., Willowdale, Ontario (Telephone 416/221-9676) before February 16, 1970.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the O.B.B.A. will be held on Saturday, February 28, 1970, at Upper Canada College Preparatory School. Registration will commence at 9:30 a.m.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

The membership dues are payable now.

Single - \$4.00 per year
Husband and wife - \$6.00 per year
Student (Under 18) - \$2.00 per year

If you are not able to attend the Annual Meeting, please send dues to the secretary now. Miss A. Wasserfall, 22 Roycrest Ave., Willowdale, Ontario.

CATCHING SHOREBIRDS AT LONG POINT BIRD OBSERVATORY

M. G. PAGE

At Long Point more shorebirds are trapped by mist-netting than by any other means. We use 100 foot, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch mesh nets exclusively. This size is very effective for the smaller waders but the larger ones often escape before they can be retrieved. Net invisibility is of course our most important problem, for shorebirds have very keen eyesight and frequent open beaches where there is little opportunity to conceal this trapping device. To overcome this problem we use black nets during the night and finer (30 denier) sand-coloured nets during the day. The black nets fade completely into the shadow of darkness and the sand nets disappear fairly well into the brown sands of the point. We find that the coarse meshed nets (50 denier) are better for use after dark because the birds are more easily removed from them than the finer 30 denier nets. This insures better treatment of the birds during nighttime trapping operations.

Nets must be erected where they are most likely to intercept flying birds. Therefore before we attempt to trap we examine the behaviour of the birds carefully noting the feeding and the roosting areas as well as the flight paths in between. If the birds are concentrated in a few, small, feeding areas, nets are placed in rows across these or the flight paths in between. The stronger their preference for such areas the better defined are the flight paths and the more readily the shorebirds are trapped. If these preferences are strong enough flocks of shorebirds fly into the nets time and time again before they alter their feeding pattern or learn to avoid the

nets. When the latter situation occurs trapping efficiency is often revived by moving the nets a few yards. This does not always work. When feeding occurs over a large area or many small ones netting in one place results in the birds moving to alternate areas. Although in this situation trapping efficiency is decreased the problem is partially rectified by thoroughly saturating the whole feeding area with nets. If a group of shorebirds is subjected to mist-netting day after day fewer and fewer birds are captured even though the nets are positioned differently every time. We have not been able to find a solution to this problem. We often use decoys in the feeding areas to increase the efficiency of the nets. Cardboard silhouettes are painted to represent Dunlin in spring plumage or Semipalmated Sandpipers in fall plumage. Twenty-five to thirty of these silhouettes are scattered in each netting area. We find that they are very effective in drawing birds to the nets if they are located in an area selected by the waders. If they are located outside of the selected areas they are totally ineffective.

Trapping in the feeding area works very well for Semipalmated Sandpipers and other species which collect around a few small pools at Long Point. For Sanderling and other species which frequent the vast stretches of sand beach in preference to the narrow confines of the pools netting in the feeding area is a total failure. These birds are often netted in their roosting areas. If there is a strong preference for a confined roost trapping procedures are the same as those in the feeding area. If a roost covers a large area "grand scale" netting procedures are employed. At Long Point Sanderling usually roost in flocks that are strung out over several hundred yards of beach. In this situation nets are erected over the lake so that they run perpendicular to the shore. A "set" consists of five or six rows of nets, two to three deep, and covers about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of shoreline. By walking or driving back and forth along the beach we flush Sanderlings into the nets all night long. Almost all of the Sanderlings that we capture are taken by this method.

Several other trapping devices are used at Long Point but none contribute significantly to the total number of shorebirds that are banded. On very dark nights we sometimes capture waders by jack-lighting them. We drive along the beach in a jeep or a Land Rover until the high beam picks up a roosting bird. One person plays the beam of a powerful hand lantern on the "target", the vehicle lights are extinguished, and two people hurry toward the bird. One carries the lantern, the other a landing net. Care is taken to insure that the beam of the lantern continually strikes the bird and that the approach of the trappers is as quick and as quiet as possible. On very dark and especially stormy nights small numbers of plovers and sandpipers are captured this way. Another trap that we sometimes employ is the

snare mat. This is simply a sheet of hardware cloth to which many 1 inch nooses are secured. Shorebirds run across these mats while feeding and pull one or more of the tiny, nylon n nooses tight around their legs. This device is not practical for trapping large numbers of shorebirds because it is time consuming to construct and very difficult to store and transport.

At Long Point we have developed successful but incomplete methods for trapping shorebirds. we catch Sanderling, dowitchers, Semipalmated, Least, Spotted and Bairds Sandpipers, Killdeers, Semipalmated and Piping Plovers but not yellowlegs, Black-bellied Plovers and Ruddy Turnstones. We hope the answer for the latter species lies in our continued experimentation with trapping techniques at Long Point Bird Observatory.

A. Wasserfall,
Secretary, O.B.B.A.