ONTARIO BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 1978

Banding Workshop - The banding workshop held on September 23, 1978, by Peter Lockhart at his property near Newtonville, Ontario, was quite successful, especially for me as it was the first time that I had been involved or even close to a banding project. I learned the basics of banding birds such as how to set up and take down mist nets, how to skull birds for the purpose of determining the age, measuring the wing chord to determine sex, how to record the data obtained and of course how to put the band on the bird. I would strongly urge anyone, whether you know how to band or not, to attend these well managed and set-up workshops. The birds that we banded are as follows:-

White-Throated Sparrow	- 34	Blackpoll Warbler	- 1
Swainsons Thrush	- 1	Brown Creeper	- 1
Myrtle Warbler	- 4	Swamp Sparrow	- 1
Wilsons Warbler	- 1	Red-Eyed Vireo	- 2
Magnolia Warbler	- 2	Lincolns Sparrow	- 1
Tennessee Warbler	- 2	Grey Catbird	- 1
Black-Throated Blue Warbler	- 4	Total	56

A special thanks to Harold Richards for getting me there from Toronto and to Harold, Peter and David Brewer for showing me the ropes first hand.

Kevin David Gilhooly

Ageing and Sexing Redpolls - The following information came from Patuxent via C.W.S.

"We have had numerous requests for information on ageing and sexing redpolls. Do not use The WBBA Worksheet by Collins and West or the key by Brooks (Bird-Banding 44:13-21). All redpolls should be aged and sexed as follows:-

1 A. Most breast feathers completed colored red or bright pink giving a solid red or pink effect ..... ASY-M (Jan-Jul.), AHY-M (Aug-Dec.).

1 B. Breast light-pinkish, mottled pinkish-white, or pinkish buff, or without pink ..... See 2

2 A. January through July ..... AHY U*
2 B. August through December ... See 3

3 A. Skull incompletely pneumatized .. HY U

3 B. Skull completely pneumatized..... AHY U

*Sex by brood patch or cloacal protuberance during breeding season.

(Signed by George M. Jonke)

Harold Richards

Grants Available for Bird Projects - The James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for grants to support projects on Ontario birds in 1979.

The Fund's aim is to encourage field studies by amateur naturalists and to support projects which increase or disseminate knowledge of birds in their natural environment or contribute to their preservation. Priority will be given to projects which involve volunteer naturalists in research or field work and to applicants who do not have access to other sources of support. Individual grants will not normally exceed $750. Applications are due by December 31, 1978, and should be submitted on application forms obtainable from the Secretary, James L. Baillie Memorial Fund, c/o Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario, N0E 1M0.

The James L. Baillie Memorial Fund distributed about $3,000 to six grantees in 1978. The Fund is financed in part from the proceeds of the Jim Baillie Memorial Bird Count (Baillie Birdathon) and the Trustees welcome additional donations, which are tax deductible, and should be sent to the address given above. Trustees of the Fund are Fred Bodsworth (Chairman), Clive Goodwin, David M. Scott, Terry M. Shortt, J. Murray Speirs, Ronald R. Tasker, and James Woodford.

Recent Selected Recoveries from Mountsberg

1087-38262	Black Duck	20 Oct. '76	Williamston, N.C.	7 Jan. '7
1087-38827	" "	2 Nov. '76	Cotton Plant, Ark.	10 Jan. '7
1107-08956	" "	16 Nov. '77	Waccassassa Bay, Fla.	3 Dec. '7
1087-39748	" "	11 Oct. '77	Clear Creek, Ky.	8 Jan. '7
1107-08750	Mallard X Black Hybird	18 Nov. '77	Nichols Pt., Md.	27 Dec. '7
704 -03031	Blue Winged Teal	6 Aug. '76	St. Rose, La.	21 Sept. '
704 -03487	" " "	8 Aug. '77	Bayou Blue, La.	4 Jan. '7
704 -03017	" " "	2 Aug. '76	Caroni Swamp, Trinidad	1 Nov. '7
696 -08912	Wood Duck	18 Sept. '76	Elloree, S.C.	18 Jan. '7
696 -08919	" "	18 Sept. '76	Fort Gordon, Ga.	16 Sept. '
826 -93075	" "	5 Sept. '77	Bennettsville, S.C.	12 Jan. '7
856 -68735	Gadwall	9 June '77	Poplar Branch, N.C.	6 Jan. '7
678 -25416	Canada Goose	28 June '77	Earleville, Md.	7 Jan. '7
678 -25430	" "	28 June '77	" "	7 Jan. '7
856 -68718	American Coot	24 Apr. '77	Back Bay Beach, Va.	22 Dec. '7
833 -22843	Mourning Dove	11 June '77	St. Andrews, S.C.	26 Dec. '7
833 -22859	" "	2 July '77	Soperton, Ga.	? Jan. '7
693 -89458	Common Grackle	24 June '77	Blue Licks, Ky.	28 Jan. '7

Mountsberg is situated one mile south of Highway 401, about 50 miles west of Toronto. The Mountsberg Banding Station is a part of the activities of the Guelph Banding Group.

Banding Impressions - I received my sub-permit and began banding here April 17, 1977. Since my help (and budget) was limited, all my banding was done using two or three mist nets. I did not band after June 6th and did not resume until August 9th. Most of the White Throats and Kinglets had gone by the time I began banding. In the fall I made some futile attempts to catch saw whets. I decided not to disturb nestlings as predators are a problem here. In spite of these "didn'ts" I banded just over 600 birds of 48 species. Most numerous were:-

Yellow-Rumped Warbler	-	136 (all in fall)
House Sparrow	-	111
White-Crowned Sparrow	-	82
White-Throated Sparrow	-	57
Dark-Eyed Junco	-	43
Song Sparrow	-	33

Probably the most interesting bandings were an Orange-crowned Warbler, a Pine Siskin and 8 Rough-winged Swallows.

I am aware that some banders refuse to give the time of day to House Sparrows and I'll admit they are pests. However, I found them interesting and I also feel they are ecologically important not only as competitors with native species but as vectors of disease. Many of the House Sparrows I caught late in the summer were badly afflicted with a species of mange mite that causes roughened, deformed mandibles. I caught a Cardinal that was also affected. Dave Hussell was kind enough to send me some information on another species of mite which causes the condition known as scaley (humblefoot) leg. It was not established how the mite was spread; however, the researchers do not indicate that they attempted spreading the mites by the means which poultrymen suspect and that is that when a host bird dies within minutes the mites look for another host. Thus, the most likely candidates are nesting birds or colonial roosting species. It is also known that House Sparrows and other species are vectors for Equine Influenza, etc. So, I would greatly appreciate it if other banders would take the time to closely examine any House Sparrows caught and let me know if they find any abnormalities, etc. I also suspect there is more movement on the part of this species than we have perhaps thought so in addition to checking them for parasites and signs of disease, I will continue to band them.

Preliminary data indicates a seasonal difference in sex ratios so this information may be helpful too.

Hatching year birds can easily be determined both by feather growth at earlier stages and by the presence of yellow at the gape and on the soles of the feet. It is not possible to sex them until a molt is begun at which time young males will show some chestnut feathers on the shoulder and perhaps a dark feather or two at the throat. I now suspect the birds still showing some yellow on the soles of the feet in late winter - March/April - are SY birds. It also appears that SY M lack the white lore spot while AHY M have two white spots, one in front of the eye and one behind - what do others think?

I also kept careful notes on plumage in the Yellow-rumped Warblers and while I do not now attach any significance to this the following may be of interest.

Question:- Are HY myrtles browner with less yellow and more indistinct facial markings than AHY birds? Is there an apparent age or sex difference in either markings or wing chord length? Any information would be appreciated.

I caught the Swallows by making the mist net more conspicuous rather than less. I stretched a piece of baler twine along the top of the net thus encouraging birds to perch. Their habit of dropping and then rising to a perch traps them. I wish I had tried this earlier. Think it may have been tried some at LPBO too.

So far this year (1978) I have banded 100 birds using a maze type (homemade) ground trap on three occasions and one mist net on another, 65% of those banded were Tree Sparrows. I caught a Tree Sparrow banded elsewhere in January, band 860-68514, but have not received the data from the banding office as yet. We have had only irregular visits by Evening Grosbeaks so I have only succeeded in banding two. However, I caught and banded a Northern Shrike on March 10 as it attached a netted Tree Sparrow! I learned the hard way that I should wear gloves when handling a Shrike!

By using a net close to the house and by banding promptly in a cool room there seemed to be no unusual stress. I suspect that problems may arise during cold weather when birds are held in a heated room and then released to sub-freezing temperatures. Mist netting in sub-freezing weather can be hard on everyone as the cold makes fingers less dextrous so I avoid its use then.

Sincerely, Shelia Smith

Project Information Requested - The 1979 edition of the Directory to Co-operative Naturalists' Projects in Ontario is now being compiled. The Directory is designed to publicise volunteer naturalists' projects and attract wider participation in them. Selected project descriptions are published in the Nature Projects section in the Ontario Naturalist, as well as being included in the Directory.

Examples of projects in the 1978 Directory include Christmas Bird Counts, inventories of natural areas, and county plant and bird checklists. Most projects were bird studies, but there was an increase in projects on other subjects and it is hoped that this trend will continue.

If you are undertaking a project which you think may benefit from inclusion in the Directory, please write to David J.T. Hussell, Editor, Directory to Co-operative Naturalists' Projects, Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario, N0E 1M0, and ask for a project description form.

$17,000 Raised in Baillie Birdathon - More than 100 birders put their knowledge to good effect in raising about $17,000 in the 1978 Jim Baillie Memorial Bird Count ("Baillie Birdathon") held at several locations around Ontario in the two weeks April 22 - May 7. The birdathon got off to a good start with the primary count at Long Point on Saturday April 22, 1978, where about $13,000 was raised.

As well as the Long Point count, several naturalist's clubs sponsored the Baillie Birdathon in their own areas and shared in the proceeds, along with the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research and Preservation and the Long Point Bird Observatory. Such clubs were the Ottawa Field Naturalists Club (with participation by members of the Macoun Field Club), the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club, the Midland-Penetang Field Naturalists' Club (with the Brereton Field Naturalists also taking part), and the Saugeen Field Naturalists.

The sixty sponsored birders in the Long Point Baillie Birdathon recorded 134 species in the 24-hour count period. Alan Wormington had the highest individual count with 114 species. Clive Goodwin, author of the Ontario Naturalist Bird Report, was the most highly sponsored participant with 183 sponsors and total pledges of more than $34 per species. He worked hard to see 93 species and raised $3,200. Other heavily sponsored participants were Ricky Dunn, Ontario Bird Feeder Survey organizer, who recorded 92 species and raised $1,800, and Gerald McKeating of the Ministry of Natural Resources, who also saw 92 species and raised over $1,000. Among the under 16-year olds, David Agro did well to see 76 species and raise $200.

The large and small efforts of many others contributed to the success of the 1978 Baillie Birdathon. Representatives of seven naturalists' clubs made a particularly significant contribution to the event at Long Point. They were: Ross Bateman, Norfolk Field Naturalists' Club; Bruce Duncan, Kitchener-Waterloo Field Naturalists' Club; Marshall Field, St. Thomas Field Naturalists' Club; Spencer and Helen Inch, McIlwraith Field Naturalists' Club; Jean Turnbul Stratford Field Naturalists' Club; Stan Kozak, Guelph Field Naturalists' Club; and Alan Wormington, Hamilton Naturalists' Club. And, of course, special thanks goes to more than 2,000 sponsors who made it all possible.

Audubon Natural History Tours - Don Baldwin will be leading two tours in 1979.

March 16 - 31 to Venezuela
July 20 - 28 to Grand Manan

For further information write to Don at 401 Montrose Avenue, Toronto, Ont., M6G 3H2, or telephone (416) 536-5542.

1977-78 Bird Feeder Survey

Erica H. Dunn

The second winter of the Ontario Bird Feeder Survey (OBFS) proved a great success on several counts. A larger number of people took part--501, well distributed across the province--and several notable changes in bird populations from those of the previous winter allowed us to test our ability to detect such changes.

Blue Jay was again the species most commonly found at feeders, visiting 95% of them at least once during the season. In 1976-77, House Sparrow was the most abundant species, but in 1977-78, that distinction was held by Common Redpolls (see Table 1).

The Redpoll invasion began near Christmas time, and constituted one of the largest influxes in recent years. In 1976-77, redpolls did not even rank among the top 20 species at Ontario bird feeders. Pine Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins were also relatively abundant. Although Evening Grosbeaks were found throughout the province in good numbers, they proved less abundant on average than in 1976-77, due to lack of repetition of the huge influx into eastern Ontario which occured in January 1977 (Figure 1).

The trend amond more southerly finch species differed from that of northern species. American Goldfinches were present in about the same numbers as in 1976-77, while Purple Finches declined. Reports from the U.S. indicate that Purple Finches were found there in very large numbers, indicating that they, like the northern species, moved further south than usual last winter.

Of the feeder species resident in Ontario in the winter, noteable increases were seen in Gray Jay and Black-capped Chickadee, while declines were found in Boreal Chickadee, House Sparrow and Cardinal. Blue Jay and Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers remained relatively stable. Most of the species which migrate substantially out of Ontari in the winter

Table 1. Top 20 bird feeder species in Ontario, 1977-78.

Species	% Feeders visited	Abundance*
Blue Jay	95	3.2
Common Redpoll	88	9.8
Black-capped Chickadee	87	5.0
Evening Grosbeak	83	7.1
Dark-eyed Junco	80	1.4
Downy Woodpecker	77	1.0
Starling	75	3.6
House Sparrow	71	8.2
Tree Sparrow	70	2.1
White-breasted Nuthatch	66	0.7
Hairy Woodpecker	65	0.9
Common Grackle	62	0.5
Brown-headed Cowbird	50	0.8
Red-winged Blackbird	47	0.4
Cardinal	45	0.5
Song Sparrow	44	0.1
American Goldfinch	43	1.1
Mourning Dove	42	0.6
Red-breasted Nuthatch	28	0.3
Pine Grosbeak	25	1.2

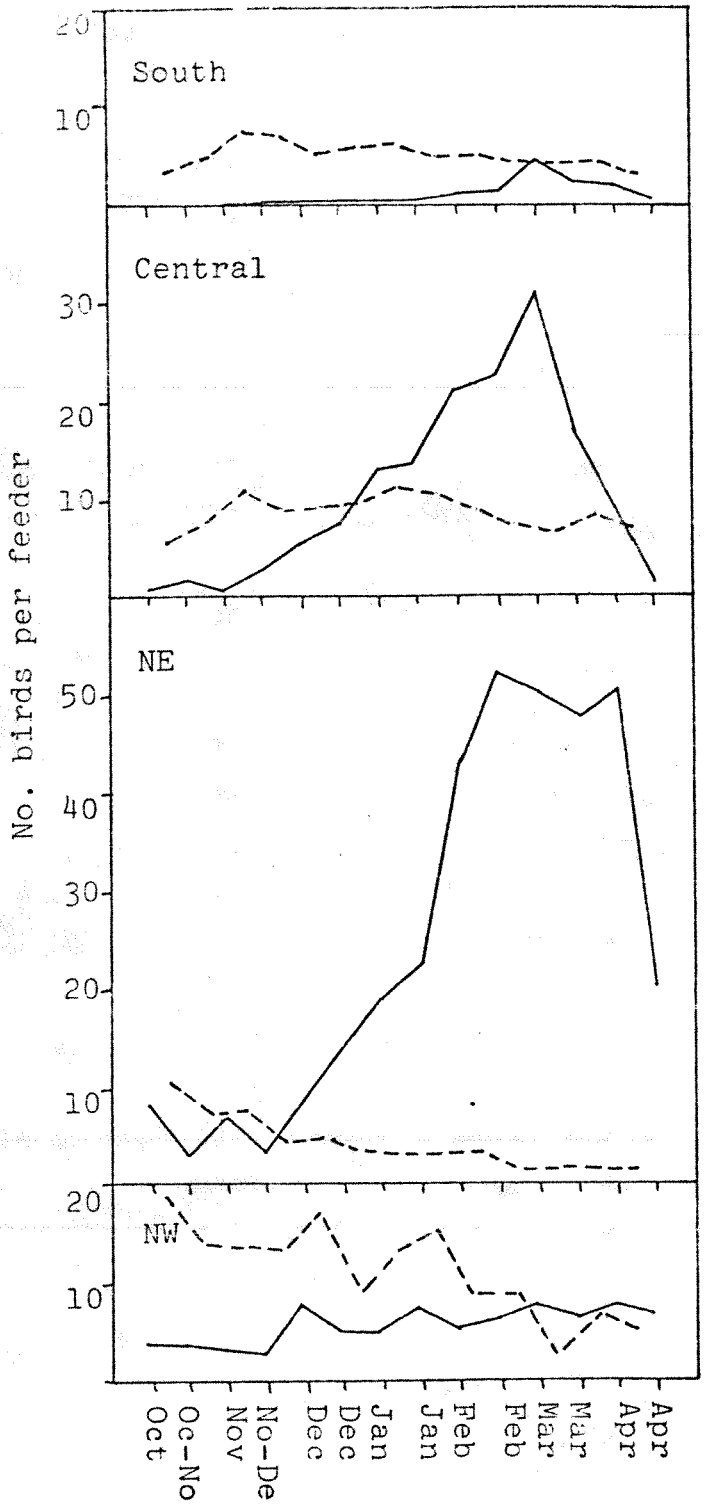

Figure 1. Bi-weekly abundance figures (average high count per feeder) for Evening Grosbeaks. Solid line shows numbers in 1976-77, dotted line indicates 1977-78. "South" covers, roughly, the area SW of Barrie and Trenton; "Central" covers north through Parry Sound and Pembroke, and eastern Ontario; "NE" includes North Bay west to Nakina, and "NW" covers the remainder, including Thunder Bay.

(blackbirds, Mourning Dove, Tree and Song Sparrows) were lower in numbers this past winter, at least partly due to a late start in their spring migration back into Ontario. Starlings and Dark-eyed Juncos, however, were present last winter in higher numbers than in 1976-77.

To test whether the changes we detected at feeders reflected overall population size changes, we compared the percentage change in OBFS counts between 1976-77 and 1977-78 to the changes shown by Christmas Bird Counts for the same years. In general, there was good correspondence and we feel that, at least for regular winter residents, we are able to detect population fluctuations. A noteable exception in the correspondence between the two types of counts, however, was shown by the two nuthatch species. Both Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches showed very large increases at feeders, while Christmas Counts detected numbers similar to or even lower than those of 1976-77. In the fall of 1977, very large numbers of both species were recorded passing the banding stations of the Long Point Bird Observatory as they invaded the U.S. Other authors have suggested that in these invasion years, food supplies in the winter range must be in short supply, and those few birds remaining behind should be more than usually dependent on feeding stations. Our data support this hypothesis.

OBFS participants also kept track of their costs last winter, and the results were surprising. The average expenditure was over $50. and the average amount of food used during the winter exceeded 225 pounds. In total, OBFS participants provided 57 tons of food to Ontario's birds and over $27,000 to feed suppliers!

The 1978-79 Survey is already getting underway, and we invite more participants from areas north and west of Sudbury, east of Ottawa-Kingston, and in far southern Ontario (Windsor-Sarnia-Niagara). For further information, or to obtain the complete report for the 1977-78 season (please enclose 50¢ per report), write to OBFS, Long Point Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0.