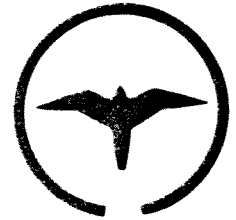


ONTARIO BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION



BANDING DEMONSTRATION- Harold Richards

Dec. 1980

In Ontario we are fortunate in having numerous Provincial Parks and Conservation Centres. They have many dedicated staff members who are fostering a love of nature and promoting conservation. Often they wish to include a bird-banding demonstration in their programs. If you are invited to conduct such a demonstration, don't hesitate to accept. It provides an opportunity not only to band many birds related to your own personal project, but also to foster good public relations and to rouse latent ornithological interest that lies dormant in many people.

In recent weeks, I received an invitation from Mr. Alan Foster who is the Curator of the beautiful Kortright Conservation Centre near Kleinberg. I made twelve visits to the Centre to demonstrate banding to family groups and school classes. Only about three hundred and thirty birds were caught, but the audiences were not dissatisfied.

Fortunately, there were no bird casualties. Not one bird was injured. Such situations certainly demand extreme care. My assistants and I kept up a running commentary and explanation as birds were removed from the nets. The viewers seemed convinced that it was a humane and safe operation. Even the Chickadees cooperated relatively well, and the one Sharp-shin that streaked by did not make a net-kill.

Of course, the avian traffic fell off on a Sunday afternoon when many people were wandering near the nets. But the "no-bird" periods provided an opportunity to talk to waiting audiences about the purposes of banding and the importance of examining every dead bird to see if it wore a band. They now know how to report such bands.

Incidentally, the importance of clear enunciation became evident during this project. I noticed one lady taking notes. However, I was not prepared for the report that appeared the next day in the society column of a Toronto newspaper. It told how she had watched me band "Ruby-crowned Kinglets" and "Nashfield War-birds".

The viewers seemed fascinated by the methods of identification, ageing, and sexing - especially the skulling. Some beginners may be able to make a few more identifications at their feeders next winter. Judging by conversations, sales of bird-feed will not slump, in spite of exorbitant prices.

The reactions of children were particularly gratifying. When a youngster was allowed to hold a bird for a few moments and then release it, his/her facial expression seemed to indicate that he/she was "hooked" on birding for life.

TOWARDS TWO HUNDRED- David Brewer

The Guelph Banding Group started in 1971 when Toni Salvadori and David Brewer obtained a banding permit. Over the years, operations expanded both in numbers and geographically, and several other banders became involved as sub-permittees. The biggest impetus was given to our efforts when operations began at Mountsberg, near Campbellville, under the direction of Martin Wernaart. In the last year, we have split the group into four, each part now operating under a master permittee; however, we still retain a common system of keeping records so that all records are available to everybody, and still regard ourselves as the "Guelph Group".

Earlier this year, out of curiosity, I started to tote up the number of species the Group has banded in almost ten years of operation. I was surprised to find that the answer was 191 species. This includes a few birds which were not caught wild, but were found injured or sick, rehabilitated at the Mountsberg Centre, and banded before release. The value of doing this was recently illustrated when we got a recovery in Ohio of a Bald Eagle which had been released two years previously, showing that the painstaking work of rehabilitating specimens of endangered species does sometimes pay off. However, most of the 191 were banded in the usual manner.

This year we were fortunate that Neal Bredin, who held a summer position with the Halton Region Conservation Authority at Mountsberg, was able to spend a considerable effort in banding in the Authority's areas. Our first step towards our two hundredth species occurred on July 31st, when Neal netted a Carolina Wren at Mountsberg; the bird, a juvenile (indicating breeding somewhere not too far away) had never before been recorded in Wellington County. Shortly afterwards, Neal was able to catch two birds near Kelso that we had never handled before - Brewster's Warbler and Lawrence's Warbler; unfortunately, being hybrids of species that we had banded before, they didn't count.

With the fall migration, Neal transferred his attention to shore-birds on the Mountsberg mudflats. Most of the birds caught were Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers (including a retrap from James Bay), but inevitably, we caught smaller numbers of other species - Solitary Sandpiper, Snipe, Knot, Semipalmated Plover to name a few - and then on August 29, two Bairds Sandpipers and one Western Sandpiper, both new species. A week later Neal caught another Western. Interestingly, neither bird had a particularly well defined decurved bill, and could easily have been missed by a casual observer.

Shortly afterwards, we got two more species - Wilson's Phalarope (two birds) and Greater Yellowlegs. The remarkable thing about the latter is that it took us so long - it is, after all, perfectly common, and in the past has gone over, under and around our nets, as well as bouncing out a few times. Anyway, finally, one stuck.

Meantime Martin Wernaart produced a Shoveller from his duck-traps, and finally on September 20th, Bryan Wyatt, at his banding station near Guelph, caught a long-overdue Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

So that leaves us at 198 species. How to make the 200? I must admit to feeling a little ashamed at even admitting to the ambition - we are, after all, not banding birds to play at numbers games, but to obtain scientific information, and the capture of an individual bird is unlikely to advance that very far objective. But, having said that, 200 is a nice, round and respectable total for ten years work. We will, probably, simply catch something totally unexpected. Three species, the Carolina Wren, Summer Tanager, and Harris' Sparrow, were in fact only added to the Wellington County list when they appeared in our mist-nets. Are there any obvious contenders among birds which do occur regularly? We handle quite a lot of Traill's Flycatchers; doubtless with much persistence and a millimetre rule we could turn these into both Willow and Alder Flycatchers, both of which breed locally. We've pretty well had all the likely ducks and quite a few unlikely ones as well; I suppose Common Goldeneye is a vague possibility. Pine Grosbeaks are very difficult to catch, even when there is an invasion; perhaps we should hope for a repeat of the 1972 invasion of Boreal Chickadees, when unaccountably we failed to catch any. With appropriate effort, I'm sure we could get Short-billed Marsh Wren and Clay-coloured Sparrow, both of which are sparse breeding birds in this county. Or a Broad-winged Hawk perhaps? Or a Saw-whet Owl? The list is still quite lengthy; would anybody else like to predict how we'll make our double century?

HERMIT TRUSH SEXING- Kathleen Klimkiewicz

At the present time, the Bird Banding Laboratory is not accepting the use of wing chord measurements to sex this species. The range of wing chord measurements from Chan Robbins' Operation Recovery Data (80mm-100mm) indicates that a measurement of 91mm lies very close to the mean. In fact, the mean for a sample of 1,537 HY males and females was 90.9mm. These samples are from populations of Hermit Thrushes in the East and would be similar to that obtained in Ontario. The measurements for this species do not indicate any reliable cut-off for sexing. There are simply too many races and there is too much geographical variation.

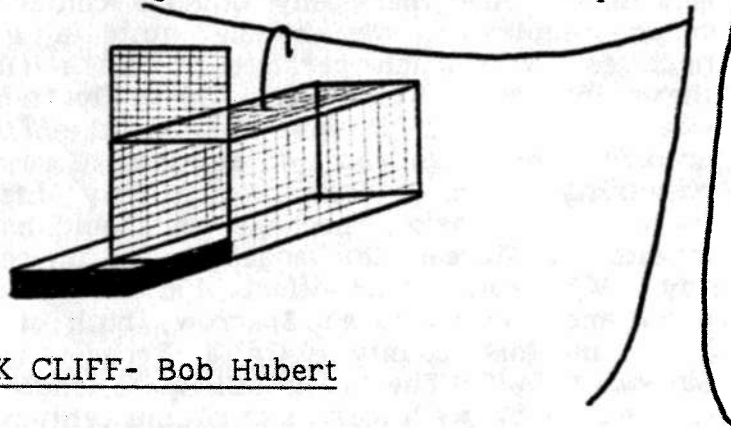
13 YEAR OLD GRACKLE - Harold Richards

An old Grackle banded in Toronto, July 6, 1968, with band 963-05698. Retrapped August 4, 1978, the worn out band removed and replaced by 1063-58365. Retrapped again June 27, 1979 and again September 1, 1980. He is at least 13 years old.

PREDATOR PROOF POTTER TRAPS - Merrill Wood

I have been able to keep Gray Squirrels and Chipmunks out of my ten Potter Traps by hanging them from a fine wire (#6) which is about 50 feet long between two trees, and away from other trees and shrubs. Each trap has an aluminum bottom which is turned up one inch on the sides and back to prevent sunflower seeds from falling out. The bottom extends out as a front porch for 5 inches and the outer edge has hardware cloth ($\frac{1}{4}$ " mesh) extending out $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches to make it easy for a bird to land. The entire trap is sprayed with flat black paint.

A screen-wire bottom is not satisfactory because birds injure their feet by getting their claws caught. Rock Doves are no problem for me.



NOTES FROM HAWK CLIFF- Bob Hubert

Mist nets are used to capture the smaller raptors at Hawk Cliff such as Kestrels and Sharp-Shins, but because of the numerous Chickadees during the latter part of October, the nets had to be taken down. At one period, 12 Chickadees had to be removed from the nets. There were about 50 Chickadees in the bushes around the station at Hawk Cliff.

On the wires along the road in front of the banding station 19 Bluebirds were on the wires on October 20th. The following day there were 21 and on the following day 20 were on the wires. They would drop to the ground and feed along the road way. They would arrive at about 10 A.M. and remain several hours before flying west.

BIRD-BANDERS GUIDE TO AGE AND SEX - Merrill Wood

We have been informed that this book is out of print and has not been available for several years. It will not be reprinted or printed again at the request of Mr. George Jonkel who wishes to publish this material. Requests for this type of material should be forwarded to the Banding Laboratory.

WINTER PROJECT - SNOW BUNTINGS

O.B.B.A. is endorsing a cooperative project to study the movements of Snow Buntings during the winter months. We need banders and assistants at various locations who are willing to spend at least one day per week trapping and banding while the Snow Buntings are moving through our area. In addition to banding, plans are being made to colour mark birds at two or three selected locations. It will be important to receive information regarding the sighting of colour marked birds. We will need the help of all winter birders. Duties will consist of baiting an area that the birds frequent trapping, banding, and keeping records.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this project in any way, please contact Peter Lockhart, 86-520 Rossland Rd. E., Oshawa, Ontario, L1G 2X5, and indicate the approximate area that you would like to operate in. We would also like to know if you have a banding permit or would be willing to assist someone else.

Although the main emphasis for this project will probably be in Ontario, because that is where most of our members reside, we would like to invite our friends and members south of the Great Lakes and the state of Michigan to join in this project.

Last winter was rather disappointing because it was relatively mild with very little snow. Lets hope this winter is different. A flock of 50 Snow Buntings and a Snowy Owl were already sighted in Port Hope during October.

FORM 3-137b - Harold Richards

Probably many young banders have never seen this obsolete form. Years ago, we were required to submit it at the end of the year along with banding schedules.

On Form 3-137b, we reported the recapture of birds which returned to our banding stations twelve months after they were banded. It also recorded the number of previous returns of the bird.

At present, we are told to keep our records of "returns" but we do not report them to Ottawa.

No doubt in your studies you are anxious to get "recoveries". Would "returns" also be useful? Would it serve a useful purpose if each member of O.B.B.A. reported his "returns" to our secretary on a form similar to 3-137b? The data could then be stored in one place and made available to any student who could use the information.

If a significant number of people notify our President, Peter Lockhart, that they could use "return" data, we might organize a scheme for collection.

BAND RECOVERY - Rob Nisbet

Band number 704-11713 was affixed to Ring-billed Gull (L, U) by a member of the Toronto Bird Observatory on the Leslie Street Spit, Toronto on July 3, 1979. Rob recovered this band in a Great Horned Owl pellet which he found in the Red-Wing Orchards, Lot 1, Conc. 2, Ajax, on May 6, 1980. The pellet appeared to be weathered and Rob estimates that it had been laying there since late fall 1979.

GOLDFINCH PROJECT - Sandy Middleton

As many of you are aware, I have been working with American Goldfinches Carduelis tristis for a number of years. Inevitably, this work, though dealing with many aspects of the bird's biology, has led me into banding relatively large numbers of individuals of all ages and in all seasons. Although I was aware of the difficulties experienced by previous workers in extracting reliable population information from passerine banding data, I naively imagined that if I banded enough numbers, I would overcome this problem. Now with a sample of over 7000 banded goldfinches, I find I still have difficulty in establishing a reliable estimate of survival in the local population. For example, analysis of winter ASY male data at Guelph provides an estimate of survival at $55\% \pm 29.2\%$; hardly a convincing statistic, and certainly well below the 95% level of reliability now widely accepted in biology.

To add to my problem, each sex and age category give differing results, not only in one comparable season but between seasons, i.e. summer months as compared to winter months.

In an attempt to verify my data, I have been privileged to share Hal Richard's data from Toronto, and Art Wiseman's data from Cincinnati, Ohio. Each locality has provided us with results that differ from my own, although the Toronto data are at least in the same range but the acceptability of the results are lower due to the smaller sample size.

The next step in trying to increase sample sizes even further was to check the records of the banding scheme with the support of C.W.S. Unfortunately, the data contained in the master files do not include current repeat data (birds recaptured in the same 10 minute block where they were banded and released within 90 days of the recapture) or return data (birds recaptured in the same 10 minute block where they were banded and released more than 90 days previously). The former data may be useful in terms of studying local movements etc. but the latter is vital to provide the raw data from which survival estimates can be made. Thus, to obtain such information it is necessary to contact each bander directly to see if he/she is willing to share his/her data in an effort to obtain the necessary return data needed to make the calculations. This will inevitably be a large and time-consuming job.

Already, I suspect many of you may think this is a totally fruitless task. You may be correct, but to date few, if any, extensive surveys have been completed for passerine species. The Goldfinch lends itself well to banding, both in summer and winter in many parts of its range, and may thus be a suitable passerine species on which to attempt such a collation of data. If I have any success in this venture, then I may be in a position to recommend changes in the compilation of data in the master files that will benefit future investigators in making use of the banding data. If I fail, I will at least know that the investigation has been made and we will have to live with the limitations inherent in passerine banding data.

I hope this may clarify my recent mailings requesting assistance on this project. I do not wish to coerce anyone into the release of his/her data, but if you have something that you are not planning on using, or would like to be part of this investigation, I would be delighted to hear from you. My address and phone number are as follows:

Dr. A. L. A. Middleton
Department of Zoology
University of Guelph
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1
phone (519) 924-4120 (Ext. 2721)

Finally, the contact I have already made with banders has proved fruitfull in illustrating differences in population behaviour and movements in different parts of the Goldfinch's range. If I fail in my main objective, who knows what else may turn up instead? In the meantime, good banding and thanks for your interest.

NOTE: The O.B.B.A. endorses this project and hopes that its members will contribute data to Sandy.

OBBA QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS - Peter Lockhart

The results of the questionnaire were both disappointing from the stand point that only 32 questionnaires were returned but encouraging because of the answers and suggestions. If you didn't return your questionnaire we are still interested in hearing from you - everyone's comments and ideas are important. 50% of the people who responded have a permit most of them their own Master Permit. Special interests range from studies of individual species to families. Other interests which do not involve banding include Photographing, Song Recording and one of our members even takes time out to do a little Ship-watching. 70% of those who answered indicated an interest in O.B.B.A. sponsored projects. I hope that all these people and others will contribute to the projects outlined in this newsletter. There is a strong desire by our members to assist others who have a specific project. If you have need of assistance please contact me and I will try to give you the name of someone in your area. We intend to publish a list of members in the future and hopefully indicate their interests. This should put more of our members in touch with one another especially those with common interests.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Its that time of the year again! Membership renewal. This year, there is a slight twist. We are providing the ability to renew your membership or take out membership in one or all of the Ontario bird observatories as well as renew your membership in O.B.B.A. Please complete the enclosed membership form and mail to the Membership Secretary.

NEWSLETTER MATERIAL

We are always in need of material for the newsletter. If you have an article or just a note that you would like to share with your fellow members, just drop me a line.

I recently received a note from a member who shared a similar experience to mine regarding the Prothonotary Warbler that I banded in May 1980. Hers was a few years earlier. If you have experiences like this, please share them with fellow members.

Peter Lockhart (President & Newsletter Editor)
86 - 520 Rossland Rd., E.
Oshawa, ON
L1G 2X5

MERRY CHRISTMAS

HAPPY NEW YEAR

AND

GOOD BIRDING!!