ONTARIO BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 1981 NEWSLETTER

OBBA 1982 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, 13 February 1982

Royal Ontario Museum Planetarium Lecture Room

Meeting Agenda

9:15	Registration (Fee $1.00)
9:45	Introduction of Members and Guests
10:00	Minutes of 1981 Annual General Meeting
10:05	President's Report
10:15	Treasurer's Report
10:20	Editor's Report
10:30	Election of 1982 Executive Committee Members
	Station Reports
10:40	Toronto Bird Observatory
10:55	Hawk Cliff Raptor Banding Station
11:10	Long Point Bird Observatory
11:25	Prince Edward Point Observatory
11:40	Guelph Banding Station
11:55	Break for Lunch
	Invited Speakers
1:45	Dan Strickland - Life History Studies of the Gray Jay in Algonquin Provincial Park
2:45	Coffee Break
3:15	Mike Cadman - The Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas
3:35	Nancy Flood - Delayed Maturation in the Northern Oriole
3:55	Rob Nisbet - Birds of Caribou Island, Lake Superior
4:15	Ross James - Birds of Sutton Ridges
4:35	Meeting Adjourned

An evening get-together will be held at the Locke House (F.O.N. Headquarters). Refreshments will be available. Additional details will be provided at the Annual General Meeting.

INTERESTING RECOVERIES

Bank Swallow -- David Brewer

For the last three years I have been banding Bank Swallows at a colony near Ancaster. My study has been largely concerned with colony site fidelity, relying heavily on retrap data. With a small passerine like a Bank Swallow one does not anticipate too many recoveries; in fact any recovery is strictly in the nature of a bonus payment. I was therefore more than agreeably surprised to get the following recovery details in my latest batch of recovery cards.

Details of Banding

1530-42417 HY-U 07-07-80 Copetown, Ontario 43 10' N, 80 00' W

Details of Recovery

Shot, band removed 16-11-80 Iquitos, Peru. 3 40' S, 73 10' W

Iquitos is situated in eastern Peru, on the upper waters of the Amazon. This recovery is the first of a Canadian banded Bank Swallow in Peru or in South America. In fact, based on the data available to me from the Banding Office for our banding reports, I am not aware of any recovery of a Canadian swallow, of any species outside the continental United States or Canada. Bearing in mind the large numbers of swallows banded every year, this is a sobering thought, but makes me all the more appreciative of my own recovery.

Cooper's Hawk -- Bruce Duncan

I had an interesting band recovery this spring of a Cooper's Hawk. I captured the bird on March 14, 1981 at our spring hawk banding station near Vinemount, Ontario, and noted it as an ASY female, band number 745-13126. The Fish and Wildlife Service notified me that it had been banded by Mrs. J. H. Stull at Waterford, Pennsylvania (near Erie) on March 18, 1975. It had been aged at that time as an ASY bird. This means that when I recaptured it, the bird was an after-eight-year individual. At Hawk Cliff, the oldest Cooper's Hawk recovered prior to this recoveryhas been five years of age. Interestingly, this Cooper's Hawk had orange-red eyes, not deep red as is commonly seen in older Sharpshins.

GUELPH GROUP MAKES 200 ! -- David Brewer

A few newsletters ago I wrote a note about the number of species that the Guelph Banding Group had handled in the ten years of its operation. Little by little we were creeping up, finishing at that date at 198. I am now glad to say that we have reached that 200.

The Canvasback that Martin Wernaart trapped this spring was perhaps predictable, though none-the-less, welcome. Canvasback are regular enough at Mountsberg, but prefer deeper water, and had so far eluded us. If we can catch Canvasback, perhaps there is some hope yet for Old Squaw and American Merganser.

However, species number 200 was totally unexpected. On October 17 Brian Wyatt and David Lambell, working at Guelph Lake, caught a LeConte's Sparrow. This is only the second record of this rare prairie species for Wellington County.

BLUE JAYS AT COBBLE HILL -- J. Murray Speirs

We moved to 'Cobble Hill', our home in the Rouge Hills section of Pickering in January, 1948, and soon had a few Blue Jays coming to our feeding station. On March 17, 1950, Lucie McDougall of Port Credit, paid a visit to our home and imparted some of her enthusiasm for banding by trapping and marking some of our birds. One of these was a Blue Jay, on which she placed band number 50-305001 on its right leg. We retrapped this bird on March 25, 1956 and added a gold band to its left leg and christened her 'Goldie' (the 'her' purely presumptive).

With the gold band 'Goldie' became an easily identified individual and no longer had to be retrapped to be identified. Later in 1956 we saw her again on November 7 and 9. In the spring of 1957 she showed up on March 4 and in 1958 on April 11. In the fall of 1958 she showed up 11 times between October 28 and December 28. She spent the winter nearby : we saw her in 1959 on January 13, February 11 and 24 and as late as May 5. She returned in September, 1959 and was seen every month in the winter of 1959-60 until April 11, 1960. Again she showed up on November 2, 1960 and was seen at intervals until January 29, 1961. She came back again on May 6 and 8, and in mid-November, 1962 and the final records were made with 6 visits between February 3 and 19, 1963. Since young jays are usually hatched in June and come to our feeders, begging from their parents in late June or early July, 'Goldie' may have been hatched in June, 1949, so at last sighting she was approaching her 14th 'birthday' and may have been much older as we had no age record for her when banded: the method of distinguishing adults from immatures by their barred 'shoulders' was not common knowledge at that time.

Doris, my wife, trapped and banded three jays on May 10 and 11, 1950, following Lucie's visit. She noted that they were a joy to band, not biting like chickadees or grosbeaks, and not screaming like woodpeckers, but patient and silent during the process. They weighed 82, 84 and 88 grams -- about the same as Starlings.

Another Blue Jay was banded on April 12, 1956, with 50-314306 on its right leg and a blue band on its left leg: it weighed 94 g at that time. Because of its portliness and rather boisterous behaviour, we assumed that 'Blue Boy' was a male. We saw him regularly from September 1956 until April 1957. We had 42 sightings from January 24 until May 21 1958 and 46 from August 24 to December 31, 1958 and in 1959 he appeared every month except August until December 29. During 1960 he was here from New Year's Day to December 31. In 1961 he was seen 9 times in January, 5 in February, 11 in March, 14 in April, 16 in May, 9 in June, 3 in August, 15 in September, and last on October 2, 1961. If it had been hatched in 1955 it was at least six years old when last seen (and may have been much older if an adult when banded).

Our final colour-banded jay we simply called 'Red Left' (with 50-314311 on its right leg and a red band on its left leg), banded on November 16, 1963. We saw it 6 times in December 1963. In 1964 we saw it 6 times in January, 7 in February, 3 in March, and 7 times in April to April 17; and once again on October 21. It then skipped until September 26, 1965, we then saw it twice in October, twice in November and on December 23. In 1966 it appeared on January 12, February 24, 6 times in March, and 3 times in April to April 21. In 1967 it came three times in November. In 1968 it was seen on April 14, 20 and finally on April 21. If this bird was hatched in 1963 it was approaching its fifth 'birthday' when last seen and may have been older if an adult when banded.

These three documented cases suggest that Blue Jays are relatively long lived if well fed at feeders. 'Goldie' and 'Red Left' tended to come irregularly, chiefly in the colder months, while 'Blue Boy' was evidently a resident bird (the gaps in his record are due to our absences rather than his).

We always put our government bands on the right leg so when a jay showed up on January 12, 1962, with a band on its left leg we christened this 'foreigner' 'Al left'. It was noted each month in 1962 until on July 2, 3 and 5 it came to our feeder with young: it later came frequently from September 1 to December 31, 1962. It was noted every month in 1963 and 1964. In 1965 we had only five records. In 1966 we saw it 9 times in the spring; in 1968 in early May and in 1969 in June and July feeding young and in 1970 in October. By this time it was at least 10 years old. On October 27, 1974, we saw a left banded jay at Cobble Hill again, perhaps a new bird: if this was our old friend it would have been 14 years old.

On July 10, 1976 a young bird showed up with a plain, unnumbered, band on its left leg (such as pigeon or poultry fanciers might use). This bird has shown up every year since and was last seen on January 7, 1981, in its fifth year.

Apart from the longevity records of these banded jays we take pleasure in noting their other activities. In 1973 one was building a nest on April 22 and two young came to our feeders on May 28 (a very early date). On August 4 1973 several young were noted following adults (a very late date, and possibly offspring from a second brood). More usual dates for the appearance of young at our feeders are in late June and early July.

On July 14, 1973, I noted that a Blue Jay was mimicking a Red-shouldered Hawk. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish which bird is calling.

Courtship feeding is regularly practised by our jays. In 1977 it was noted here in March, April and May, and on seven other occassions.

Very large migratory flights pass over each fall from NE to SW. Our largest flight was of 560 birds in September 1974. The return spring flights are small in comparison, but evoke much comment from the overwintering jays and residents: usually these flights number in the 30's and 40's. ...All in all jay watching has been fun!

COSTA RICA TOUR -- David Brewer

David Brewer and Terry Pratt of Top Flight Nature Tours are leading a birding trip to Costa Rica from March 5 to March 21, 1982. Costa Rica, which is a politically stable and extremely beautiful country in southern Central America has one of the richest bird faunas of any area in the world. The tour will visit rich tropical forest, semi-arid areas, and high-altitude pararrio. David estimates a total of 300 - 350 species expected in the two weeks, including many families not found in North America.

Further details are available from David Brewer, RR 1, Puslinch, Ont. NOB 2JO.

AGING AND SEXING HOUSE FINCHES -- M. Kathleen Klimkiewicz

There are several problems involved in aging and sexing House Finches. Geographic variation and the effect of diet on the plumage coloration complicate the picture. Please do not use the article by McEntee (EBBA News, 1970, Vol 33) to age House Finches.

Birds in juvenal plumage cannot be sexed. However, sexing is possible as soon as the postjuvenal molt is complete. Birds with red, orange, or gold on the head, throat, rump, and/or breast are males. Females are brown-gray and seldom have nore than an occasional red or yellow feather.

Aging is another problem. Until the questions of geographic variation and diet effect are solved, females must be aged by skull pneumatization: incomplete = HY/SY and complete = AHY (January - October) and U (November - December). Males with pink edges to all wing coverts can safely be aged ASY (January - May) and AHY (June - December). Males which have gold or yellow-orange on head, throat, and rump can be aged HY/SY. All other males must be aged by skull pneumatization (incomplete = HY/SY; complete = AHY (January - October) and U (November - December).

-- from North American Bird Bander 5(3):96. Thank you Dave Broughton for supplying the copy of the article.

AMERICAN KESTREL IN THE FIREPLACE -- Bruce Duncan

Early in April of this year I received a telephone call from a lady who had, she felt, a rather unique problem: a hawk in her fireplace. She had heard through a friend that I was a bander and wondered if I might be able to help out somehow. The only hawk I could imagine getting into this sort of dilemma was a kestrel checking out all possible nesting cavities and being a little too headstrong at the top of the chimney pot. Mrs. Bradford's description of the bird fitted a male, sure enough.

After work, I drove down to Dunnville where the Bradfords live and was immediately shown to the recreation room fireplace. There behind the screen was a rather small dark and dusty shape which seemed almost willing to be picked up and removed from its little prison. Mrs. Bradford had provided a dish of dogfood and bowl of water for her little visitor who had taken advantage of the food and showed a bulging crop. He hadn't bothered to bathe, however.

Since he seemed quite unhurt and very soon began doing what all kestrels in the hand do best - biting - I decided that it would be quite all right to band him. That done and with a few nicks in my fingers, I let him go to sit up high in a nearby ash and complain about his recent treatment. Mrs. Bradford was delighted to have a happy ending to this little adventure and promised to watch for him through the summer. As for the kestrel - he had only a little soot on his tail, a leg band and a full crop to show for his one day imprisonment.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The Canadian Wildlife Service has been conducting studies on the effects of pollutants on the reproduction of fish-eating birds in the lower Great Lakes since the early 1970's. We now need historical data on Herring Gulls, Common and Caspian Terns, Night Herons and Cormorants in one or more colonies in the lower Great Lakes since 1950.

We want to establish when reproductive impariment was first noticed and the changes over time. This would be reflected in the number of chicks availible for banding and the number of chicks observed with congenital abnormalities (crossed beaks, missing eyes, extra feet or toes, etc.). Observations of unusually large numbers of unhatched eggs, dented, cracked or rotten eggs, dead chicks or adults would also be most useful.

If banders could, for each colony and year, report the number of chicks banded and the number and nature of anomalies encountered, this would be extremely useful for any of the above-mentioned species, as would more general observations of the kind mentioned above. Data from banders who have visited the same colonies each year for many years and have operated in a consistent fashion would be the most useful, but any data would be greatly appreciated. Data from colonies in the Niagara River and inland (i.e., the Muskoka lakes) will also be welcomed.

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