

# ONTARIO BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



JUNE 1983 NEWSLETTER

Please send articles to:  
Erica Nol  
151 Ruggles Ave.  
Richmond Hill, Ont.  
L4C 1Y3

## 1983 Membership Renewal Notice -- Bob Hubert

Many OBBA members have not renewed their memberships for this year (1983). If there is a red dot in the margin to the left of this reminder, please remit your dues (\$8.00: regular; \$10.00: family; \$2.00: student) to: Mr. Robert Hubert, 10 Paulson Court, St. Thomas, Ontario, N5R 1M9.

I would appreciate it if those who have not renewed would do so immediately.

## Minutes of the Annual Meeting -- Anne Lambert

Approximately 80 people attended this year's annual meeting which was held for the first time at the Ramsey Wright Zoological Laboratories (U. of T. campus) on 15 March 1983.

Erica (Ricky) Dunn called the meeting to order at 9:45 am, and chaired the meeting in place of Peter Lockhart, President, who was unable to do so (as the result of a bad back). Ricky welcomed those present, and instead of the traditional self-introductions of everyone attending, she asked if there was anyone attending from out of province (there was not). The minutes of the 1982 Annual Meeting were not read, but were assumed to have been printed in an OBBA newsletter. Despite the lack of the minutes, it was resolved that they be adopted unseen.

Peter Lockhart then presented the President's Report. He was pleased to note the presence at the meeting of Colleen Hyslop, representing the Banding Office in Ottawa. The past winter was very poor for the Snow Bunting banding project. Due to exceptionally mild conditions, few Snow Buntings moved into southern Ontario. Only 31 were banded during the winter. Those involved in banding Snow Buntings are Don Pope, Harold Richards, and Wayne Ferguson (Toronto area); Janette Dean (Ottawa); Bob Hubert and Marshall Field (St. Thomas); Martin Wernhaart and David Brewer (Mountsberg/Guelph area); and Peter Lockhart (Newcastle). Peter suggested that others could begin banding Snow Buntings at additional sites in Ontario and asked anyone interested to contact him.

OBBA's first "Band-Out" was held at Long Point Bird Observatory on September 11-12. Attendance was quite good and although birds were scarce at each of the four banding sites, the weekend was considered a success. It is expected this will become an annual event. The location for 1983 has not yet been decided, but Presqu'ile Provincial Park has been suggested as one possible location.

Peter thanked those involved in banding demonstrations in 1982: Bruce Duncan, David Brewer, Wayne Ferguson, Heather Howkins, Don Pope, Harold Richards, and Peter Wigham. These took place at Sault Ste. Marie, Kortright Nature Centre, the Niagara Region Conservation Authority, and the Credit Valley Conservation Authority.

The renovation of the OBBA trailer continues. Assistance with the remaining renovations would be most welcome. The trailer is presently at Peter Lockhart's house near Port Hope. Peter may be contacted at 416-786-2091.

Peter thanked members of the Executive for their work in the past year and their help with the Annual Meeting. He specially thanked Chris Risley for arrangements regarding the meeting place and the speakers, and Erica Nol and Bruce Duncan for editing the OBBA newsletter and journal, respectively.

Bruce Duncan then spoke as chairman of the Nominating Committee. He thanked the following retiring members of the Executive for serving in 1982: Erica Dunn, Heather Howkins, Don Pope, and Chip Weseloh. He presented the following slate of officers for 1983:

President: Peter Lockhart

Vice-President: Chris Risley

Recording Secretary: Anne Lambert

Membership Secretary/Treasurer: Bob Hubert

Newsletter Editor: Erica Nol

Journal Editor: Bruce Duncan

Other Directors: Ron Weir, Anne Nash, Ralph Westendorp, Richard Poulin

This slate is still short one position, which has yet to be filled. No nominations were presented from the floor. David Brewer moved, seconded by Fred Barrett, that the nominations be closed, and the motion was carried. The nominees were therefore declared elected.

Bruce Duncan then proposed a motion to increase the OBBA membership dues beginning in 1984. An increase is needed to bring income into line with increasing costs of producing and mailing the OBBA journal and newsletter. The fee schedule would be changed as follows:

Regular membership      \$8 to \$10

Family membership \$10 to \$12

Student membership \$2 to \$5

The motion was seconded by John Miles and carried.

Bob Hubert presented the Treasurer's Report (see report in next newsletter). Ricky Dunn moved, seconded by Fred Barrett, that it be accepted and the motion was carried.

After a coffee break, Jan McDonnell spoke on the effects of lakeshore development on loons. Studies conducted by the O.M.N.R. in the Muskoka area produced evidence of lower breeding success of loons resulting from the proximity of cottages. Long-term effects on the loon population have yet to be determined.

### Station Reports

George Fairfield reported that Toronto Bird Observatory had a relatively slow year, with a disappointing total of 3800 birds banded, including 1500 Ring-billed Gull juveniles on Leslie Spit. Saw-whet Owl banding peaked in the period Oct. 16-24. Several new species were banded during the year, and unusual sightings included a Western Tanager on Aug. 21. Exceptional numbers of Cedar Waxwings were noted during the first 3 weeks of August with a peak of 150 on 15 August.

David Brewer reported that the Guelph Banding Group banded over 10,000 birds under several permits. He called this "the year of the Redpoll" for the Group: over 2000 Common Redpolls and 5 Hoary Redpolls were banded. Increasing success with duck trapping at Mountsberg was reported.

An official representative of Prince Edward Point Observatory was not present; however Ed Keith, who banded at PEPO in October reported that Saw-whet Owl bandings were down for the year, and that several nights of rain prevented banding during the peak migration time. Nonetheless, PEPO reportedly banded its 3000th Saw-whet during the season. Passerine banding was apparently discontinued in 1982.

Don Fowler reported a relatively poor year in terms of numbers banded at Hawk Cliff Raptor Banding Station. Hawk Cliff suffered another attack of vandalism on Sept. 9th. Three banding stations were wrecked. Salvaging of equipment and reconstruction of makeshift banding stations was begun immediately, and the station was operational in time for the Hawk Cliff Weekend on Sept. 18-19. The weekend was well attended and was an excellent one for migration. More nest boxes for kestrels were erected around St. Thomas, bringing the total to about 100. 74 kestrel nestlings were banded last year.

Joanne Dean reported on the various activities of the Ottawa Banding Group in 1982. These included the operation of a new station at Innis Point near Ottawa, which proved only a moderately good site (some better potential sites near Ottawa were considered too

"public" for successful banding). Ottawa banders were also involved in a CWS Black Duck banding project on the Ottawa River. They plan to continue banding, perhaps at other locations, in 1983.

Roy Smith reported that in contrast to most of the other stations, Long Point Bird Observatory had a very good year, with its third highest banding total: approximately 16,150 birds. This included record high totals for a number of species, including Saw-whet Owl (81), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (32) and Louisiana Waterthrush (4). One Louisiana Waterthrush was recovered a few days later at Point Pelee. LPBO's third Yellow-throated Warbler was banded during the year. Roy noted two events of particular importance for LPBO in 1982. One was being fortunate enough to have Roger Tory Peterson as the featured birder in the Baillie Birdathon, which last year raised a record \$43,000; and the second was the departure of David Hussell as Executive Director. Roy payed tribute to David's contribution to LPBO over the past 8 years, and announced that the new Executive Director will be Dr. Arthur N. Langford, a retired biology professor from Lennoxville, Quebec. This year's Baillie Birdathon will be held on the 7th of May, and DBBA members were invited to participate.

Chris Risley addressed the meeting with the purpose of getting members' views on a location for next year's Annual Meeting. Several options were presented and a vote was taken, in which members had one vote to indicate their preference. Results of the vote were as follows:

option	approx. cost per person	vote
1. same as this year	\$2-3	29
2. same as last year	\$5	5
3. at another place where lunch would be provided	\$10-12	6
4. no opinion	---	9

Thus, the majority indicated a preference for the Ramsey Wright Zoological Laboratories location.

The afternoon session began with an address by the featured guest speaker, Dr. Robert Payne, from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Dr. Payne described his research on song learning in Indigo Buntings. In his study, trapping and colour-banding enabled individual identification of breeding birds, and as well the aging of birds as SY or ASY. In combination with this banding program, songs of individuals on territory were recorded over successive breeding seasons. Indigo Buntings exhibit great variety in their songs, and the ability of individuals to change their song and to learn new songs from neighbours. The work described by Dr. Payne is enabling song learning to be understood in the context of overall reproductive strategies. The speaker was thanked for this most interesting presentation by Harold Richards.

Before a coffee break, numerous door prizes were given out. Prizes, ranging from "Sound of Nature" records to a pass to the Metro Zoo, were generously donated by     \*    . The draw was supervised by Fern and Wayne Ferguson, who organized the event. In addition to door prizes, there were prizes for the person present who had held a banding permit the longest time (won by Harold Richards) and the shortest time (Wayne Ferguson), and the person who had banded the most birds in 1982 (Martin Wernhaart, who banded around 6500!).

Mike Morris then addressed the meeting, describing a study on the breeding biology of American Redstarts in New Brunswick. Many interesting bits of information were related, and a discussion of the possible reproductive strategies of second year males was reminiscent of last year's presentation on Northern Orioles. The final speaker, David Sherry, described experiments designed to elucidate the role of memory in food storage in chickadees and tits. Through an ingenious series of experiments, remarkable memory abilities were demonstrated in these species.

The meeting was followed by an evening get-together at FON's Locke House, at which a buffet dinner (arranged by Heather Howkins) was provided.

\* - Dan Gibson Productions Ltd., Kortright Centre for Conservation, Metro Toronto Zoo, Open Air Books, Pickering Naturalists and Toronto Bird Observatory.

#### Critique of "Houston's Rule" -- Erica Dunn

I read with interest Stuart Houston's article "Mortality in Ringing - A personal view" in the last OBBA Newsletter, and agree with many of the points he makes. I would like to comment, however, on "Houston's Rule"; namely, "If the mortality rate [as a result of banding] is higher than the recovery rate, the mortality rate is too high."

I assume that Houston would not adhere to the implied corollary; that is, if the banding mortality is lower than the recovery rate, that rate is acceptable. Clearly, banding mortality of 10-20% is unacceptable regardless of recovery rate.

In the case of species with low recovery rates, however, I still feel that Houston's Rule should not be indiscriminantly applied. For example, take warblers, which normally have a recovery rate of less than 0.1%. First, it may take years of banding warblers before you get any recovery, but a mortality rate of 1 or 2 per thousand does not seem to me excessive. Because the recovery rates of warblers are so low, virtually nothing is known of migration routes or wintering areas of particular populations. A single recovery for such a species, therefore, has a higher value than a record for a commonly recovered species, and one could argue that a somewhat higher banding mortality rate than "normal" might be acceptable in order to get a recovery at all.

Further, the amount of information gathered from the bird in the hand is, in many cases, far more valuable than any potential recovery information. Just as scientists accept the sacrifice of some animals in physiological studies, for example, so should we accept a small amount of mortality, regardless of recovery rate, when we are gaining information on timing of migration by age, sex or fat class; plumage and moult and various other topics.

Lastly, I would mention the value of studies which rely on returns and resightings of banded birds, rather than on recoveries, to provide information on mortality rates, site fidelity, behaviour, breeding biology, local movements, etc. That no individual may ever be recovered elsewhere is immaterial, and acceptability of banding mortality cannot be judged on the rate of recovery.

I do not wish by this discussion to imply that I think consideration of mortality rate during banding is unimportant - I think it is. I do think, however, that "Houston's Rule" ought to be bent under well-considered circumstances.

#### Colour-marked Eagle Gets Around - Bruce Duncan

On October 2, 1982, while catching and banding hawks at Number 7 Station, Hawk Cliff, I saw a Red-tail stoop, flare over the lure bird and sit on a nearby fencepost to consider the situation. After a couple of minutes, it began to gaze skyward and very shortly flew off. This was obviously a sign that another hawk was coming in and I played the lure bird in anticipation of its arrival. Suddenly, an enormous shadow moved across the ground in front of me and the pigeon on the line went bananas. I looked up through the eye slit to see an immature Bald Eagle at 10 feet, slowly cruising by and glancing with mild interest at the pigeon act below. This bird at this range appeared massive. It was black-brown with white mottling over the body and had a lighter brown area from the neck to the chest; it also possessed a yellow patagial marker on the right wing.

Although it circled twice, it never made any serious attempt at the lure and after a ten-minute show, began circling higher and flew off to the west (the direction it had come from). I subsequently discovered that this bird had been hacked near Batavia, New York, on a National Wildlife Refuge by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The reintroduction is part of a program by their Endangered Species Unit to bring the Bald Eagle back to New York State - there has been currently only one wild nesting pair in the State. Last year, 22 eaglets from Alaska were hacked in an "eagle condominium" and all, like the previous year's birds, were wing-tagged.

The bird seen at Hawk Cliff seems to have been wandering rather than migrating because ten days later, Dave Hussell spotted what was very likely the same bird at the Port Rowan sewage lagoons near Long Point. In addition, a wing-marked sub-adult was spotted at Shade's Mills Conservation Area near Cambridge in March of 1983. Unfortunately, the number of markings and the wing or wings marked were in dispute by several observers; nevertheless, by the colour of the marker, the eagle was a 1981 or 1982 release from New York.

Banders at Hawk Cliff have never caught a Bald Eagle but if enough are released in New York and get used to easy meals at the hack site, perhaps we can induce a wing-marked bird to take the plunge at one of our banding stations.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Ontario Field Ornithologists

The OFO is a new organization dedicated to increasing the knowledge of birds in Ontario. It was formed to unify the ever-growing numbers of field ornithologists (birders/birdwatchers) across the Province and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information among its members. In addition, the OFO will officially oversee the activities of the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC). Plans for the upcoming year include the publication of several issues of a journal, Ontario Birds, containing articles on such topics as: Field Identification Tips and Behavioural Observations; Species Distribution and Status in Ontario; Reports of the OBRC; Site Guides to Birdwatching Areas in Ontario; and Book Reviews.

The first issue of the journal was published in April, 1983. Field meetings have also been scheduled for Moosonee in early September. As well, a number of day and weekend field trips have been scheduled throughout the year to various parts of the Province. The chief emphasis of these excursions will be on bird identification for novice and more experienced birders.

If interested, we invite you to join the Ontario Field Ornithologists by contacting them at:

Ontario Field Ornithologists  
P.O. Box 1204, Station A  
Burlington, Ontario  
L7P 3S9

Membership Costs:

Life Member	\$200.00
Annual Member	\$ 10.00

OBBA Representative To FON Needed

As a Federated Club of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, the OBBA sends a representative each year to sit on their Board of Directors and represent our club and participate in operating the FON. For the past several years, David Hussell and Chris Risley have represented our club but now a new representative is desired.

The job entails attending a day-long Saturday meeting in Toronto held once every two months from September to June, a total of five meetings a year. You don't have to be a bander or an "expert" in naturalist affairs to be our representative, more important is simply an interest in providing direction to the FON and an ability to work with others on the Board to promote and achieve naturalist goals. Background materials are provided for each meeting and the discussions are always educational and thought-provoking. The representative also acts as a liason to the OBBA from the FON by occasionally contributing articles or items to this Newsletter on topics that are discussed at meetings. Does this sound like something that you would be interested in doing? If so, please contact: Chris Risley, 151 Ruggles Ave., Richmond Hill, Ont. L4C 1Y3; phone (416) 883-4689.

A New ROM Publication For Ornithologists

Breeding Birds of Ontario: Nidiology and Distribution. Volume 1: Nonpasserines. By George K. Peck and Ross D. James. 336 pages, illustrated. \$25.00. Available May 16, 1983.

The first of a two-volume set, this volume focusses on the non-passerine breeding birds in the Province of Ontario and contains descriptions of nidiology and breeding distribution of 138 species, each accompanied by a full-page distribution map. This comprehensive publication represents the summarization of all records from the Ontario Nest Records Scheme, a scheme begun in 1956 and now holding more than 80,000 data cards. This wealth of information is presented in combination with nesting and breeding records from many other sources, published and unpublished, up to 1980.

Illustration in this volume include line drawings of a selection of birds, and photographs of major habitats and breeding species. The introduction provides an explanation of methodology used in the presentation of data and a discussion of the forest and physiographic regions of Ontario. In addition, the text contains an index to the common and scientific names of the birds, a list of those plant species mentioned in the accounts of breeding, and a bibliography.

Breeding Birds of Ontario will be of interest to ornithologists, naturalists, and bird watchers. As a reference book, it should have a place on every library bookshelf. Please order from:

Publication Services  
Royal Ontario Museum  
100 Queen's Park  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5S 2C6

Cost: \$25.00 each. Please add 10 percent for postage and handling.