

ONTARIO BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION

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Please send articles to
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FROM THE PRESIDENT

We had a great time on October 20 at the Royal Botanical Gardens Nature Centre and so did the visitors who showed up. It was our fall meeting date with banding demonstrations in the morning and slide presentations in the afternoon. The weather was cool, the wind became brisk and the birds co-operated by the dozens. There seemed no end to the Juncos, Waxwings, Whitethroats, Blue Jays, Goldfinches, Kinglets and Myrtle Warblers from the time nets were opened at 9 o'clock until lunchtime. Between 100 and 125 birds were banded in the interested presence of forty or fifty visitors over the morning.

Len Simser provided the nets and bands and even set up a duck trap. With Len, Dave Brewer and Martin Wernaart banding and explaining procedures to the public, the morning seemed to go very quickly.

Following lunch, Chip Weseloh presented slides and overheads on the Canadian Wildlife Service's banding of Cormorants in the Great Lakes and Lake-of-the-Woods areas. The wintering grounds for most Cormorants are the areas in the Gulf of Mexico from Florida to the Mississippi delta. But the migratory pathways vary considerably depending on natal area. These are preliminary data and should be even more interesting as further banding is done and recoveries come in.

Finland and the Finnish banding scheme were part of Juhani Kahrumaki's presentation. There is a strict examination that potential banders must pass before being licensed there. As well, licenses are normally issued stipulating the few species that may be banded, thus concentrating research on particular birds. Juhani's slides of nestling hawks and owls (his specialty) were very good and his encounter with a Capercaillie at the last was quite intriguing.

The final presentation was on banding at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton by Len Simser. Len is the latest in a long list of banders (going back to the thirties) to have worked on birds in the area. He also is among the top two or three in the effort he has put into it. Today, Swifts, Bank Swallows, Gulls, Terns, and Black-crowned Night Herons are banded in addition to general mist netting and demonstrations. Judging from the morning's results, the RBG has tremendous potential for all sorts of banding projects.

There was a draw for a National Geographic Field Guide won by Mr. Braidford, of Hamilton. At the end of the afternoon, Dave Brewer wreaked havoc on the 25 keen banders and birders still present with a slide quiz full of the most difficult pictures of native species liberally spiced with European birds (and I'm NOT being harsh, simply because I scored rather low). Rick Ludkin of York was the best identifier with score of 51 out of 80 and won a new Peterson Bird Guide -- which he probably doesn't need having done so well on the quiz !!!

I think everyone enjoyed the day and the majority felt we should plan a similar fall meeting for 1986. Len Simser and Barb McKean deserve our special thanks for their work in arranging things at the RBG and to Chip, Juhani, Len and Dave -- thanks for your entertaining presentations in the afternoon.

On another matter, I am still hoping to complete our Newsletter collection in the OBBA Library as mentioned in the last Newsletter. No-one has contacted me yet about the issues we're missing. Please check the list given in that Newsletter and let me know if you do have any. Thanks.

OBBA's membership stands just now at about 200. We certainly could use more members, both for their financial contribution and, we hope, their more active participation in banding. Do you know someone who might enjoy our publications, meetings or co-operative projects? Why not give them a Christmas surprise of a year's membership in OBBA, or encourage them to join. We depend upon you, the membership, for direction, support and ideas. The more members, the better OBBA can be in every respect. Can you add ONE more member to our roll???

SOUTHERN ONTARIO WING-TAGGED BALD EAGLES

The Canadian Wildlife Service and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources are currently involved in a five year program to increase the southern Ontario population of Bald Eagles through the release of young birds at Long Point on Lake Erie. To assist in the assessment of the program's success, we are soliciting reports of colour-tagged eagles. All birds released so far will be in juvenal or sub-adult plumage as they do not develop adult plumage until 4 or 5 years old. Birds released in 1983 were marked with green wing-tags bearing black alpha- numerics while those released in 1984 and subsequent years are marked with medium grey tags with black alpha- numerics. All released birds have Fish and Wildlife Service leg bands. Sixteen Bald Eagles have been released since 1983.

Anyone observing a colour-marked Bald Eagle is requested to record the following information: location of sighting; time; tag colour; tag location (left or right wing); any visible markings on tag; any visible leg bands (left or right leg, colour, visible markings); and any additional remarks (eg. apparent condition of bird).

It would not be unusual to observe in Ontario, birds released from similar programs in the United States. These birds also have coloured wing tags but not green or gray. Information on these birds is equally important and should be recorded as indicated above.

While it may not be possible to obtain all of the above information, any reports of colour-marked eagles should be reported by writing or phoning Gary McCullough or Jeff Robinson at the following locations:

Bald Eagle Release Program
Canadian Wildlife Service
152 Newbold Court
London, Ontario
N6E 1Z7

Phone: 1-519-681-0486 (London)
1-519-586-2703 (Port Rowan)

LONG POINT BALD EAGLE PROGRAMME

[The following material is a summary of an article by Jeff Robinson, CWS, in the Long Point Bird Observatory Newsletter Volume 17 No. 2 Summer 1985]

The Bald Eagle was once a common sight along the north shore of Lake Erie, with estimates of one nest per mile of shoreline from Port Stanley to Point Pelee. (this could mean 100 pairs of Eagles) However, the extensive use of pesticides in the '50s and '60s severely depressed successful reproduction and very few remained by the early '70s. By the late 1970s only 5 active nests existed in Southern Ontario.

The 1970s saw the collapse of the eastern Bald Eagle population throughout North America. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation modified the ancient falconry practice of "hacking" to raise young eagles in the east. Using young birds from Alaska or those from captive breeding programmes and transferring these to artificial nest sites, it was hoped that upon fledging the young would adopt these areas as "home". The New York model proved successful and was used as a model for a similar programme on Long Point in Lake Erie.

Long Point was used because a successful nest is present and suitable habitat is available to support at least 2 more breeding pairs. There is plenty fish in the surrounding waters and the area is relatively undisturbed.

Birds were obtained from the Lake-of-the-Woods area because there is a large, healthy population there and the population has been monitored for almost 30 years by Dr. J. Grier of North Dakota State University. Using Dr. Grier's census, birds are taken from different nests each year, to maximize the gene pool available in the new site. Also, only one eaglet is removed from nests with two or more youngsters, to minimize the stress on the existing population.

All birds are aged and sexed by standard methods in an attempt to make the new population evenly divided between males and females. Birds are "hacked" in pairs of approximately the same age.

The young are collected and flown to London (Air Canada does so free of charge!!) where they are transferred to vehicles and taken to Long Point. The eaglets are held during this time in individual boxes and are constantly monitored by Dr. W. Rapley DVM, Director of the Animal Care Services, University of Western Ontario. Under favourable conditions, the eaglets arrive in their new home from 24 to 36 hours after being removed from their nests around Kenora.

The birds are held in compartments approximately 1.5 metres square, in which an artificial nest serves as the central focus. The compartments are covered on 3 sides by wooden dowelling to allow for good circulation. There are many wooden perches and a large chute permitting the introduction of food items without the attendant being seen. This prevents any "taming" of the birds. The birds are fed a variety of food items -- fish, muskrats and Japanese Quail (*Coturnix* species) -- twice a day.

The young birds are held for 7 to 8 weeks and then are released. The release occurs with the compartment doors being opened in the darkness and perch poles placed near each door. As the light enters the compartment, the eagles move to the perch poles and begin exercising. This exercise occurs for several hours until the eagles lift off. Some of the first attempts are unsuccessful and "crash-landings" in the nearby marsh cause the observing staff to wade through the mire to help the youngsters to higher ground.

The project will run, at least, until 1987. By this time, any of the six birds released in 1983 that survived, would be sexually mature and hopefully nesting. However, the mortality of eagles, especially in their first year, is extremely high and may mean more birds might have to be released. At the moment the release of 24 to 28 birds is projected. Hopefully such a group will provide a good base for Great Lakes Eagle population.

DID YOU KNOW???

The first person to band a bird in Canada was a man named Henry Fleming. He apparently did so on September 24. The year was 1905.

The first person to "band" a bird in North America was the famous Audubon-- however, did you know that the bird species was the Eastern Phoebe and that he simply put silver chords around their legs and had 2 of the 5 nestlings return? I don't have a recovery rate that high !!!

ANOTHER EDITOR ERROR

In volume 30 No. 3 of the Newsletter, an article indicated that Rev. Charles Long was searching for information on the plummages of the American Robin. Unfortunately, the address of Rev. Long was not included. For those with some information, you may contact Rev. Long through the ROM at the address listed below.

Rev. Charles Long,
c/o Department of Ornithology,
Royal Ontario Museum,
100 Queen's Park Crescent,
Toronto, Ontario.
M5C 2C6

MOTHERS ARE A HELP SOMETIMES -- David R. Lamble

Some time ago my mother was going through the family archives and found a letter addressed to me and dated June 1, 1957. In itself, that is insignificant -- but what surprised me, was it was sent by the U.S. Department of the Interior. It was my first note of appreciation and I was only 11 years old.

The reference was to a Starling banded by a D.D. Dow in London, in September, 1956 and recovered by me, in London on May 4, 1957. I remember finding the Starling and searching for others. I have since wondered if that was the beginning of my obsession for banding.

At any rate, I only mention it since it pointed out several interesting things. Firstly, the turn-around-time from Patuxent was less than 30 days. Secondly, postage was only 3 cents. Thirdly, the letter indicated, as of 1957, seven million birds had been banded and an additional half million were added each year. [I believe we now band 2 million birds per year in North America] .

CONFUSION IN BUDAPEST

A recent broadcast on Radio Budapest (Hungary) indicated that there was a project initiated to protect the "ELUSIVE GREAT BASTARD", the largest bird in Europe. David Brewer was consulted on this new bird species and commented that that particular species was far from endangered. In fact, in some locations, such as the Sargent's Mess at Catterick Army Camp, this unique organism is positively abundant.

DID YOU KNOW??

A female ostrich will encourage other females to lay eggs in her nest. The original female then arranges the eggs of the other females on the outer edge of the nest. Here they are more prone to predation and are unlikely to receive sufficient warmth to hatch. Thus, an apparent generosity by the dominant female assures her own eggs' survival and diminishes the chances of the secondary females. This means the female can recognize her own eggs???

WILD BIRD CLINIC A SECRET -- G. Honeyman
[this article was taken from the University of Guelph newspaper]

Hidden in the dark recesses of OVC [Ontario Veterinary College], the Wild Bird Clinic [WBC] must be one of the best kept secrets of the University of Guelph. Although relatively unknown on campus, the WBC has become known throughout Eastern Canada and the USA in the three years since its inception.

Part of the recognition comes from being able to combine the treatment and release of the injured birds with an opportunity for hands on experience open to all members of the University Community. The success of the clinic depends on lifting the "cone of silence" so that all who are interested can become involved, since it is run entirely on a volunteer basis.

The treatment and rehabilitation of birds handed in to the clinic is the responsibility of fourth year Vet students under the guidance of Drs. B. Hunter and H. Wojinski.

Hawks, Owls, Geese, Ducks and Herons are often turned in. Resident at the clinic is a permanently damaged Turkey Vulture, Screech Owl and Broadwing Hawk. It is the daily maintenance of these resident birds, as well as the medical cases, that are the responsibility of the volunteers. Two volunteers and one supervisor are on duty each night. During which time there is a chance to identify, feed and examine birds of prey. The three hour shift usually leaves plenty of time to learn how to handle these birds so neither the handler nor the bird is any worse for wear.

THE PASSING OF A BANDER

A longtime bander and member of OBBA, Ed Keith died in November. Ed had helped out at all of the bird observatories in Ontario in the past and was particularly fond of Saw-whet Owl banding. In the past two years, he and Ruth Grant set up a large mist-net operation for migrant owls near Windsor.

We will miss Ed at our Annual General Meetings and send condolences to Ruth and to his family.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

At the Annual General Meeting, several Constitutional amendments will be voted on (as required by our Constitution). A two-thirds majority of members present is required for the passage of each amendment. These have all been approved by the Executive at the latest Executive meetings. The proposed amendments are :

- A. Clause 15: "shall annually appoint an editor for the OBBA journal" should be changed to "shall annually appoint editors for the OBBA journal and newsletters."
- B. The second paragraph of Clause 15 should be numbered Clause 16 and the following Clauses should be renumbered accordingly.
- C. Clause 21: "shall present an annual report for adoption" should be changed to "shall present annual reports from at least the President, Membership Secretary, Treasurer and Journal Editor for adoption."

- D. Clause 22: the entire clause should be changed to "The Association shall endeavour to hold additional general meetings annually."
- E. Addition of a Clause 32 reading, " Upon a vote of the general membership, the directors shall be empowered to dissolve the Association and turn over its properties to the Long Point Bird Observatory. The vote shall be by mail with a count being taken 60 days after the mailout."

The amendments A - D simply reflect current practice of OBBA. Amendment E establishes a procedure for dissolution, something we should have in the Constitution, although we hope never to use it.

A number of copies of the current Constitution will be available at the Annual General Meeting.

OBBA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

DATE: Sunday, February 16, 1986.

LOCATION: McLaughlin Planetarium lecture room (next to ROM, Queen's Park Cr., Toronto)

[NOTE: the change from our usual Saturday meeting was made in order to arrange for our main speaker]

SCHEDULE: (tentative)

- 0915-0945 Registration
- 0945-0950 Welcome & Introductory Remarks
- 0950-1010 President's Report & Proposed Constitutional Changes (Bruce Duncan)
- 1010-1020 Treasurer's Report (Fran Hubert)
- 1020-1030 Editor's Report (Bruce Duncan)
- 1030-1040 Election of 1986 Executive
- 1040-1100 Coffee
- 1100-1215 Station Reports

- 1215-1330 Lunch

- 1330-1430 Adventures with Saskatchewan Raptors: Owls, Ospreys and Other Friends. (Dr. Stuart Houston)
- 1430-1500 Cormorant Banding (Geoff Hogan)
- 1500-1600 "Bluebirds of Happiness" -- a film about John Lane's Manitoban Bluebird Trail.

Slide Quiz

Guelph Banding Group: 15 Year Report (David Brewer)

There may be additional short presentations. Door prizes, as well as prizes for the high scores in the slide quiz will be presented.

An evening social will be held at Locke House, FON, Headquarters. Time and other details to be announced at the AGM.

DID YOU KNOW ???

The Kiwi lays the largest egg (relative to its body mass), while the Ostrich lays the smallest. The Kiwi egg is 25% the mass of the adult, while the ostrich egg is 1.3% the mass of the adult.

NEXT EXECUTIVE MEETING OPEN TO MEMBERS

The next meeting of the OBBA executive will be held on Sunday, January 26 at 1:30 pm (1330 hours) in the Metro Toronto Region Conservation Authority Headquarters, 5 Shoreham Drive, Downsview. Any members of the Association who are interested in attending this meeting are welcome. The Executive feels that we should open some of our meetings to members so they can see what we're doing and provide input.

Some of the agenda items will be:

- 1) Details of the Annual General Meeting
- 2) Duties of the 4 Directors-at-Large
- 3) Discussion of a major co-operative banding project.

DIRECTIONS TO MTRCA HEADQUARTERS

From the corner of Jane St. and Steeles Ave., turn south on Jane and proceed to the first set of traffic lights which is Shoreham Drive. Turn east, go about 0.5 Km and the headquarters is on the right side, just past the bridge over Black Creek.

SNOW BUNTING RECOVERY -- Peter Lockhart

Since January 29, 1978, when I banded my first snow bunting, I have become increasingly anxious for a foreign recovery. Despite banding 2906 snow buntings in that time, the recovery just has not appeared (until now).

My foreign recovery occurred when Donald Simpson of RR # 1 Cobden, Ontario, caught a Snow Bunting wearing band number 1321-54354, on January 27, 1985. Cobden is located on the trans-Canada Highway 27 Kilometres northwest of Renfrew, Ontario. The bird was released alive and will, hopefully return to the original banding site near Newcastle Ontario.

Interestingly, the original banding date of January 28, 1984, was almost 1 year between encounter dates.

A VISITOR FROM TEXAS -- David R. Lamble

As you all remember, we were invaded by Pine Siskins in February and March of 1985. In fact, there were so many Siskins around, some even stayed far south of their nesting grounds during the summer. Here in Guelph, we had several confirmed records of nesting.

At any rate, during the process of banding almost 2000 Pine Siskins, I encountered a foreigner. I assumed it was one from the Maryland area, where we have had several previous recoveries. However, it was not so. In fact, it had been originally banded February 1, 1981 near Houston Texas, by a Dr. Hinderstein of the University of Texas. It had been banded as an AHY-U. I encountered the bird March 17, 1985. That made the bird at least 5 years old.

Although I get a little concerned at the lack of recoveries with my "dicky-birds", a recovery like this certainly alleviates any concerns.

DID YOU KNOW ???

Some cranes live into their 60's and 70's, in captivity. Also, some cranes migrate over the Himalayas at heights exceeding 9 000 metres. [that is approximately 30 000 feet]. Fossil cranes have been discovered from the Eocene period (54 - 38 million years ago).

SNOW BUNTING BANDINGS IN ONTARIO -- Wayne Ferguson

In February 1980, CWS granted permission to colour mark Snow Buntings in two areas in Ontario. Permits were issued to Marshall Field in St. Thomas, to use a red dye and to Peter Lockhart in Newtonville to use a green dye. These colour marking centres, combined with the efforts of Harold Richards, Don Pope, Bob Hubert, David Brewer and Martin Wernaart, banded over 6 000 Snow Buntings -- 1000 of which were colour marked.

Three more permits were subsequently issued, in January 1983: one to the Ottawa Banding Group, to use an orange dye; a second to the Toronto Bird Observatory, to use a blue dye; a third to W. Ferguson of Pickering, to use a yellow dye.

In December 1983, I accepted the position as project co-ordinator for the OBBA sponsored Snow Bunting Project. This involved maintaining links between all banders in the project and trying to publicize the snow bunting work to all amateur and professional groups that might have an interest. My responsibilities also required the assembling of any written materials on the Snow Bunting from around the world, so we might have a resource library to facilitate the project.

This data, combined with the banding effort, has allowed us to come to some firm conclusions on the winter movements of Snow Buntings from south-east and western Greenland to the wintering grounds in the Great Lakes region. However, this data has also left many unanswered questions concerning the winter movements from our North-West Territories to western Canada and the western United States.

In an attempt to seek more information on the western movements, we sent out a form letter to each of 54 Naturalist clubs in Ontario. That was in October, 1984. We had a positive response and one year later, I was fortunate enough to be invited as a guest speaker to the 50th Annual Conference of the Inland Bird Banding Association. This conference, held in conjunction with the Michigan Bird Banding Association, allowed our project to be outlined to over 100 individuals from 17 states. Valuable contacts have been made and it is our hope that these contacts will extend the OBBA project beyond our own provincial boundaries.

Publicity continued with announcements in the November 1985 issues of Seasons magazine and the Canadian Nature Federation bulletin, Nature. Hopefully, we have reached nearly 190,000 individuals with these adds. These additional "naturalists" could provide many additional sightings this winter.

However, it has been shown, over the past few years, that some of the colour dyes cannot be seen on birds in the field 3 weeks after application. Although we have had a few colour marked birds seen in the field, we have not had the responses we might expect. [one "pink" bird in Newfoundland in 1981, one green bird in Ajax in 1982 and one yellow bird in Keswick in 1985]. As a result, some of us have decided to colour band individuals as well as apply the dyes.

Therefore, if any observer should sight a colour marked and/or colour banded Snow Bunting, they should report as much of the following data, as field conditions will allow:

- 1) colour of colour band
- 2) band on left or right leg
- 3) presence or absence of colour dye
- 4) colour of dye, if present

NOTE Martin Wernaart and Dave Brewer will be double banding their Snow Buntings instead of colour marking, so you might watch for those as well -- but that is a little more difficult to note in the field.

Anyone noting such individuals should contact:

Wayne Ferguson,
Project Co-ordinator Snow Bunting Project,
28 Livingston Road, # 79,
West Hill, Ontario, M1E 4S5
[1-416-261-5079]

The Ontario Bird Banding Association has used this type of ground trap for trapping over 6000 Snow Buntings.

Materials needed are 14 or 16 guage welded wire 1x1. The over all size of the trap is not important. The entrance to the trap called the tunnel is the key in trapping high numbers. Do not leave traps unattend, Shrikes and Accipiters will be attracted to Snow Buntings caught in traps.

Bate used is cracked corn, wheat, millet, or #2 scratch. Do not use millet in high winds. Bate should be put in open fields where Snow Buntings have been sighted when the ground is covered with snow. It has been noted that high numbers of Snow Buntings gather at bate in severe winter weather.

