

# ONTARIO BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION

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## NEWSLETTERS NUMBERED

You may have noticed that this issue is given a designated Volume and Number. For some of the "old hands" this is simply following an old procedure used years ago on all OBBA Newsletters. Anne Lambert felt that we had lost a sense of continuity as well as making it difficult to file our Newsletters without the Volume and Number of each issue. Thanks to her hard work and a generous gift from Gene Richards, Bruce Duncan was able to assemble a complete set of OBBA Newsletters. This set now resides in the archives.

It appears that our first volume was published in 1956. Thus this is our 30th year of publication and thus our 30th volume. Historically we managed about four issues each year. We will make an effort to follow this general pattern. Thus we should have an issue in April, July, September and December. The April issue should include the minutes of the Annual Meeting, while the December issue should include information about the upcoming Annual Meeting. Other issues will include whatever the editor has on hand. Hopefully, regular issues will promote regular contributions from our members.

## SPECIAL THANKS

Gene Richards has kindly donated a complete set of **ONTARIO BIRD BANDING**, plus a large number of **THE RAVEN**, newsletter of the Algonquin Park Nature Centre to the OBBA. These have been placed in the Long Point Observatory / OBBA library at Port Rowan where they are available, as is all other material, for use by OBBA members. We thank Gene for her gift.

## HELP , HELP, HELP

I hope you are enjoying this issue. But I would like to remind you that I do not have a bank of articles. Why not write a short note about what **YOU** are doing with your banding projects? I am certain all the members would be interested. I know I would !!! Please ???

SHOULD WE PLAN A MEGA-PROJECT --- Sandy Middleton

David Brewer's article in the last newsletter (see p.4), a review by Robert Arbib (AUK 102: 233-234) and David Lambie's plea for copy, has prompted me to respond.

For years I have voiced my concern that much of the banding in North America lacks focus. For many banders the procedure is an irresistably fascinating hobby in which the bander can trap, handle, photograph, admire and band large numbers of attractive animals. The game becomes infectious, and the goal then becomes to see how many individuals of how many species can be banded ( we all know the lengths that some will go to to get that rarity!). When challenged as to what is being accomplished, the bander always has a hazy notion that somehow a contribution is being made to science. But is that the case ?

I submit that with few exceptions our knowledge will not be enhanced by continuing massive and indiscriminate banding. From my own experience I know how much effort must be expended to gain information on distance movements of my birds. But luckily that is not the main reason for for my banding. Rather I am much more interested in the fluctuations in sex and age ratios in the population, in the daily movements of that population, and in the return rates to the banding sites from one year to another. Yet much of that vital information is no longer recorded by the banding scheme (e.g. no retraps are reported within the 10' blocks). Why? Because the record keeping system is snowed under by reams of now largely useless data on band numbers. The placing of a band on a bird's leg tells us nothing. However, what data are collected from that bird at the time of banding, and what subsequently can be recorded about its movements (yes, even as a multiple retrap) can tell us much. We now need to expand our knowledge on local population biology, and not in most cases, on migratory movements.

As Robert Arbib points out in his review of 50 years' work by the British Trust for Ornithology; "American amateurs are plunging into breeding bird atlassing with a vengeance. In banding, Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys and Censuses, Winter Bird-Population Studies, colonial nest records, nest record cards, raptor migration studies and radar work, we are producing mountains of data and -- alas -- molehills of analysis". For some time I have shared that view.

With these two observations in mind, it was with delight that I read David Brewer's suggestion that for a common species such as the Chickadee, "a concentrated and organized effort, Province-wide, might well yield some very interesting results". I have independently made this suggestion in the past, but it has always fallen on deaf ears. Is the time now ripe for such a venture ?

Let us seriously look at David's suggestion. As an organization I am sure we could mount such a project. In so doing we could start to generate a mountain of analysis to offset the mountains of data described by Robert Arbib. In addition the project could provide a focus for the OBBA that would still permit banders to carry out their hobby, but would in all likelihood produce a substantial contribution to science in which all participants could be justifiably proud. Is this a topic that could be explored at next years meeting? Any comments would be greatly appreciated.

## BIRD BANDING EPIDEMIC IN GUELPH

The following letter appeared in the **GUELPH DAILY MERCURY** on December 6, 1984 in the "letters to the editor".

" Someone in the Edinburgh Road South area has got a bird-banding outfit for Christmas and just couldn't wait to use it. Every bird at our feeder, including cardinals, chickadees, jays and sparrows has been banded. Every one, that is with the exception of one smart sparrow.

I cannot see bands on the squirrels' legs though this is not to say the are banded.

I wonder if it is safe to venture out myself.

Banding an occasional bird of a species for scientific purposes is necessary, I am sure, but this is an epidemic. Anyone who says that birds are not inconvenienced by these aluminum bands should first show me the one that he is wearing for life around his own leg.

It must be equal in proportion to the one he bands his feathered friend. If he is already wearing such a trinket, he will know how his friendship is valued by the birds.

..... Jim Foster (address given) "

**EDITORS NOTE** --- We went to see Jim Foster about his letter, prepared to do battle with a "nut". Instead, we found a thoughtful man who was genuinely concerned about the stress banding places on the birds and the scientific value of banding. He clearly was no nut !!!! He had lived in Britain, Australia and Canada and knew the birds of his areas quite well. (He sure knew more about British birds than I do !!!)

At any rate, I think he has come to accept that banding is done by people that share his concern about wildlife. Although we did not convince him totally of the value of banding, he is quite satisfied that banding does not place the bird in an unacceptably high stress situation. Thus a victory for the OBBA !

Yet Mr. Foster's letter raises an important question. What is the OBBA doing to promote an understanding of the aims and objectives of banding? Should we consider producing educational materials on banding? What should we do to head off concerns of people like Mr. Foster ?

## ANOTHER GULL SOLUTION

The following article appeared in the **GLOBE AND MAIL** on Saturday, March 30, 1985.

The Canadian Wildlife Service may authorize Metro Toronto to collect and dump gulls' eggs and nests to reduce waterfront gull population by almost 50 per cent.

A plan drafted at a recent meeting of the CWS with officials from the Metro Parks department and water pollution control representatives provides for tethered hawks and owls to scare away ring-billed gulls.

However, according to Alderman Anthony O'Donohue, if this method does not work the CWS is prepared to consider egg collection. He said the plan would be to collect eggs in garbage bags and bury them in landfill sites.

## **ANOTHER GULL SOLUTION .... continued**

The CWS and Metro hope to reduce the Leslie Street spit gull population from 76,000 to less than 40,000. A colony of 8,000 pairs of gulls on Muggs Island would be cut in half by stringing monofilament line over the nesting areas.

The Metro parks department has agreed to install the wires and patrol the area to pick up birds that become entangled in the lines.

While gull control efforts may succeed at the Leslie Street spit and Muggs Island there is concern, says Mr. O'Donohue that the birds may begin nesting elsewhere along the Metro waterfront.

## **MORE COLOUR MARKING TO WATCH FOR**

(from the American Ornithologists' Union News Letter)

ITEM # 1 -- 66 American Kestrels holding winter territories in south Florida were color marked during Dec. 1984 and Jan. 1985 in conjunction with a study of sexual segregation by habitat. Each marked bird carries an impeded central tail feather which extends approx. 2 cm beyond the other rectrices. The impeded feather has been dyed yellow (and will gradually become yellow-orange) and marked with a two-digit number. Please report date, location, and if possible the two-digit code to **John Smallwood, Dept. of Zoology, 1735 Neil Avenue, Ohio State Univ., Columbus, OH 43210**

ITEM # 2 -- Bobolinks will be color marked again this year in upstate New York. We believe many of the early birds we mark at our permanent study sites are still in migration. Birds are banded with FWS bands and then color marked by painting their tail with model airplane paint. Tails are painted with white, red, blue, black, yellow, and green using 1-2 vertical or horizontal stripes. Vertical stripes are read from left to right (from behind the bird), horizontal from the base of the tail to the tip. Birders in grassland habitat in New York or north in May are especially alerted. Please report date, time, and location of sightings to **Thomas A. Gavin, Dept. of Natural Resources, Cornell Univ., Ithaca, NY 14853** and to the **Bird Banding Laboratory, Laurel, MD 20708**.

## **MICHIGAN BIRD BANDERS ASSOCIATION MEETING**

A joint meeting of the Michigan Bird Banders Association and the Inland Bird Banding Association will be held at the Hoyt Conference Center, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan, on October 25-27, 1985. There will be accommodations and meals available at the center. The program begins on Friday night with a presentation on the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory located in the U.P. of Michigan. Saturday will be devoted to paper presentations and business meetings. Saturday evening will be a banquet with a speaker. Sunday is tentatively set for a tour of the research facilities of the University of Michigan.

For further information contact **John J. Flora, 3636 Williams, Dearborn, Michigan, USA, 48124**.

THANK YOU O.B.B.A. MEMBERS --- Fran Hubert

In the five years that Bob and I have been receiving memberships there has never been a greater response to renewal notices. Some members have even sent renewals for 1986.

If you have just recently sent your renewal in to me and this last mailing had a red sticker on it indicating that you were not paid for 1985, just ignore it. The notice of unpaid members was sent out on April 8 so memberships renewed after that time might not be caught. Thanks again for being so prompt. You have made walking to the bank a real pleasure.

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

This year's Annual General Meeting in Toronto was an interesting affair with brief but informative talks on banding in and out of the province. The minutes appear at the end of this newsletter and give you the details. Martin McNicholl deserves the credit for putting everything together on our agenda while Peter Lockhart and Anne Lambert provided the refreshments and arranged our bookings at the Planetarium and Locke House. Special thanks to them !!!!

Thanks also go to the retiring members of the executive: Chris Risley and Erica Nol, who are now hard at work in British Columbia ( setting up a B.C.B.B.A., we hope); Peter Lockhart, Anne Lambert and Bob Hubert who has passed the treasury keys over to his wife, Fran.

I am anticipating that 1985 will be an important year for the Ontario Bird Banding Association. Martin McNichol, Anne Lambert and I will take a close look at the Constitution and current makeup of the organization and suggest changes , if they are needed. The journal will be different as well. After considerable discussion and much help and information from some of our sister organizations in the U.S., the executive decided not to affiliate formally and become partners in the publication of **North American Bird Bander**. Instead, we will publish a single, large issue of **Ontario Bird Banding** each year -- at least for the time being.

Doing so will mean that our journal continues, reduced in issue number but not in the amount of material. This should also save us quite a bit of money, one of the more important reasons we considered changes in the first place. Besides station reports, articles and reviews, an annual summary of banding in Ontario will be published, much in the manner of the Western Bird Banding Association's annual banding report. We are hoping the **EVERY** bander in Ontario will submit 1984 totals to us for inclusion in the summary. If you haven't done so yet, please do so now (better late than never) and they will be included. Send them to me at Box 512 , Caledonia, NOA 1A0.

O.B.B.A. currently has two co-operative banding projects in progress: a study of House Finch dispersal co-ordinated by Ricky Dunn and a Snow Bunting study co-ordinated by Wayne Ferguson. Both could use more banders. Wayne's project could use the help of someone to examine the banding statistics available so far. If anyone is interested in either project please contact me. Both projects were well described at the Annual General Meeting, by the way.

(PRESIDENT'S NOTE ---continued)

Speaking of the Annual General Meeting, I have a pair of black galoshes (size 10) and leather mitts that were left at the Planetarium. If you own either, let me know.

Steve Wendt of the Banding Office has given us copies of the CWS brochure on Bird-banding in Canada for handout at demonstrations or workshops. I also have lots of the new O.B.B.A. brochure (put together very nicely by Wayne and Ferne Ferguson) and will send both out to anyone who requests them. You might like a few dozen of our own brochures for local libraries, naturalists' clubs, nature centres etc. If you have old brochures which list memberships at lower than \$12 (family) , \$10 (individual), \$5 (student under 18), Fran Hubert asks that you destroy them and ask me for the new ones. Don't forget to mention us to people who may have an interest in banding -- we can use both new members and , as Steve Wendt mentioned, more good banders.

The Baillie Birdathon is being held at Long Point, on Saturday, May 11 this year. It's a fund-raising count for those of you unfamiliar with it: 75% of the money raised goes to the Long Point Bird Observatory and the Jim Baillie Memorial Fund for Bird Research, while 25% comes to the O.B.B.A. for those sponsoring our representative. That's me , this year. O.B.B.A. can certainly use the funds -- why not fill in the form on the last page of the Newsletter? I am hoping to see 130 or more species on that day and would like to raise \$300 to \$400 in total. Thanks for helping out.

Good banding this spring and summer.

..... Bruce Duncan

MORE ABOUT THE CWS CUTBACKS

Several members of the OBBA have indicated that each member of the OBBA should actively voice their opposition to the reduction in funding to the CWS by the federal government. Several of the executive members have written letters expressing their concerns as have a few members of the general OBBA membership. You are all urged to consider the matter clearly and write to your local M.P. about the matter. There have been excellent articles in **MacLean's** and **Equinox** as well as the January 23 feature on the CBC programme **The Nature of Things**. Since the announcement, unofficial sources have indicated that upwards of 100 letters per day have been received by the Ministry. This deluge has led to the partial reinstatement of 3 projects:

- a) Porcupine Caribou Herd Study
- b) Effects of Spruce Bud Worm Spray on Forest Birds
- c) Herring Gull Contaminants Monitoring Programme

This means that letters do have an effect. We urge you to write to your local M.P. and the Minister and the Prime Minister. Even if those people do not reply, they will recognize your reasoned concern and hopefully, the pressure will cause further reinstatements.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 9 March 1985

Approximately 65 people attended the meeting, which was held at the McLaughlin Planetarium.

Peter Lockhart, Acting President, brought the meeting to order at 9:45 and welcomed members and guests. No amendments were proposed to the minutes of the 1984 Annual Meeting (published in the June 1984 Newsletter). Erica Dunn proposed, seconded by John Miles, that the minutes be adopted as written; motion carried.

Peter read a message from the President, Chris Risley, who had moved to Vancouver in November 1984. Chris reported that the past year was a good one for OBBA. The financial difficulties of late 1983/early 1984 were overcome, thanks in part to prompt renewals by members. Activities and projects which continued in 1984 included the annual Band-Out, the banding training program (now coordinated by David Agro), the Snow Bunting project (led by Wayne Ferguson), and of course the Journal and Newsletter. In addition, a new OBBA brochure was produced by Wayne Ferguson, with help from Anne Lambert and Kathie Lambert; and a House Finch banding project was initiated and is being coordinated by Ricky Dunn and Shelia Smith. Chris also made note of LPBO's double banding project (which OBBA was involved in initiating), and concluded that OBBA's program is in a healthy state.

Bob Hubert, Treasurer, presented the financial statement for 1984 (published in the February 1985 Newsletter). There were no questions arising from this statement, and Bob Hubert moved, seconded by Ed Keith, that it be accepted; motion carried.

Bruce Duncan, Journal Editor, informed the meeting that 1985 will bring a fundamental change in the journal. In place of multiple issues, there will be a single lengthier issue per year. In addition, the size (linear dimensions) of the journal will be increased to approximately that of North American Bird Bander (about 8 1/2" x 11"). One section of the journal will report on the activities of individual Ontario banders, using information solicited directly from banders. The journal will also contain reports from banding stations and observatories, as well as articles and papers. Bruce expressed a desire for submissions of short articles from members, and for photographs or pen and ink drawings of birds. He concluded by inviting questions or comments. Ed Keith asked why it was necessary to change the journal size. Bruce replied that he felt the new format would be easier to read and easier to produce; and that for technical reasons, the larger format would better accommodate the increased length (thickness) of a single issue volume.

On behalf of the Nominating Committee (which consisted of Bruce Duncan, Chairman, George Fairfield, and Anne Lambert), Anne Lambert presented the following slate of officers for 1985:

President:	Bruce Duncan
Vice-Presidents:	John Miles David Shepherd
Treasurer and Membership Secretary:	Fran Hubert
Recording Secretary:	David Agro
Members at large:	Wayne Ferguson David Lamble Martin McNicholl Nigel Shaw Peter Wigham

Past President: Chris Risley  
 Journal Editor: Bruce Duncan  
 Newsletter Editor: David Lamble

As there were no further nominations from the floor, Ricky Dunn moved, seconded by Dave Brewer, that the nominations be closed; motion carried. The nominees were therefore declared elected.

The business meeting thus concluded, Dave Brewer presented the first of the station reports. The Guelph Banding Station had a very active year, with about 12,000 birds banded. Banding highlights included Sedge Wrens (banded by Dave Lamble), and two Acadian Flycatchers (at Mountsberg). Dave commented that the Guelph Banding Station is now in a good position to train banders, and would welcome inquiries from interested people.

The remaining station reports were given after a 20 minute coffee break. Don Fowler reported a very poor year for Hawk Cliff Raptor Banding Station, with low banding totals of accipiters in particular. A lack of good weather conditions was felt responsible. On the brighter side, 22 Peregrines were observed (the highest count ever) and three banded; and about 250 Kestrel nestlings from about 90 nest boxes were banded.

Dave Shepherd reported that Long Point Bird Observatory had an excellent year with just under 20,000 birds of about 120 species banded (the highest annual total ever), despite fall weather conditions that were not conducive to trapping birds (an absence of cold fronts). Birds banded included one new species - Short-eared Owl - and a new race - Audubon's Warbler. This year's success was attributed to LPBO's new permanent banding station at Old Cut Road on Long Point, which was operated full-time in 1984 and which has proven to be an excellent banding site. Many of the record high banding totals for individual species were due to banding at this site, which seems to be particularly good for some of the rarer warblers. LPBO's double-banding project (in which address only bands are being placed on birds banded with the 4 smallest band sizes), began in the fall of 1984.

Joanne Dean spoke on behalf of the Ottawa Banding Group, which had a good year with the biggest banding total yet (about 5800) at Innis Point. Fall migration was slow and steady, and good overall, in contrast to other stations. There was also banding in and around Ottawa, mainly in winter, and there have been good results with subsequent band encounters of grosbeaks banded by OBG (eg. from Michigan, Tennessee). Banding also continued at Andros in the Bahamas (where a banded Indigo Bunting was trapped - details still awaited). OBG now has a regular newsletter; membership is growing; and the training of new banders will continue.

A report on Prince Edward Point Observatory by Ron Weir was read by Ed Keith (Ron Weir was unable to attend). PEPO's banding program continues to be centred on waterfowl and Northern Saw-whet Owls. Owl banding in 1984 was way below normal (about 110 Saw-whets banded) with a light and late migration of owls. Poor weather conditions (again, the lack of cold front passages) were probably partly responsible, however the very low proportion of hatching year birds (roughly 1:4, HY to AHY) suggested a poor nesting year.

Ed Keith then reported on the activities of the Southwestern Ontario Bird Observatory. In the past year, this station obtained its permits, and put much effort into setting up its operation (48 nets were set up), with the intention of concentrating on owl banding. In total, 4 Saw-whet Owls and 4 Eastern Screech-Owls were banded. No doubt, the conditions affecting PEPO also affected this site.



Eric Machell represented Toronto Bird Observatory in place of George Fairfield (who was unable to attend). TBO has a fairly successful spring, but a quiet, disappointing fall, like the other stations. Owls totalled only 20 Saw-whets and one Long-eared Owl. The operation was improved by the presence of a new banding trailer at Mugg's Island. TBO is continuing to grow; there was an increase in the number of active banders in 1984, with an influx of keen young members. A pilot winter banding program, headed by Nigel Shaw, has been tried over the past (1984-85) winter, north of Toronto.

After lunch, Martin McNicholl introduced the afternoon program, the first speaker being Steve Wendt, Chief, Populations and Surveys Division, Migratory Birds Branch, Canadian Wildlife Service. Presenting the viewpoint of the Banding Office, he discussed the purpose of banding and the general status of banding in Canada. One aim of banding is to gather information on the distribution and migration of birds through recoveries. A report on Canadian band recoveries over a 50 year period, the result of a collaboration between the Banding Office and OBBA (Dave Brewer), will be published fairly soon. The question of recovery rates (as they relate to analysis of recovery data) was raised, using some statistics from this upcoming publication. Over the years, various questions, such as the usefulness or desirability of banding during fall migration, or of banding nestlings, have been discussed; however the position of the Canadian Banding Office is that it does not discourage any banding. It is hoped that reporting rates (i.e. band encounters) can be enhanced by training more bird banders. The possibility of a national organization representing banders was raised yet again; and the importance of OBBA's potential to coordinate the efforts of bird observatories was emphasized.

The next two speakers described OBBA's banding projects. Wayne Ferguson outlined the aims and methods of the Snow Bunting Project, which involves colour-marking Snow Buntings (colours vary with banding locality) in order to learn about their winter movements and flock behaviour, and presented some interesting background material on the species. Intensive publicizing of the project has produced some information from the public on sightings of colour-marked birds. Dr. Erica Dunn described the House Finch project, which brings together banders and people having House Finches at their backyard feeders. The aims of this project are to document the spread of the House Finch in Ontario and to determine which age group(s) are doing the dispersing.

Harry Lumsden, a Research Scientist with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, described the Ministry's program to reintroduce Trumpeter Swans to southern Ontario by fostering them in Mute Swan nests. Five full grown Trumpeter Swans resulting from this project are alive today, and the coming years should see the addition of more individuals until a viable breeding population is formed. A number of interesting aspects of swan biology and ecology have been revealed by the program, and an animated question period followed this talk.

The final speaker, Charles Francis, presented a fascinating picture of banding in the forests of Malaysia, where many of the basic questions of species composition, populations levels, and habitat requirements are priorities for study. Running a 24 hour banding operation, Charles found himself studying bats (not to mention owls and nocturnal primates) in addition to interesting tropical birds such as babblers, bulbuls, and spiderhunters.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30, and was followed by a social get-together at FON's Locke House.

Anne Lambert  
Recording Secretary

