



# NEWSLETTER

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## **JAMAICA REPORT**

### **Christian Friis**

Picture two young banders from Canada in a lush forest filled with unfamiliar calls embedded in the heart of Jamaica in Cockpit Country. Karst limestone hills cut the landscape into isolated communities, presenting a simultaneously beautiful and intimidating surrounding. It's 25 January 2005. Back home, snowdrifts continue to build; the Canadian winter is in full effect. But for Stu Mackenzie and Christian Friis, sweaters are traded for sweat-soaked t-shirts. They are leading Bird Studies Canada's (BSC) third Caribbean bander training workshop, under BSC's Latin American Training Programme.

BSC's first two workshops were held in 2002 in Jamaica. This year's workshop was hosted by one of the original participant's, Susan Koenig, at her now established Windsor Research Centre (WRC). In collaboration with the Windsor Research Centre, the programme received the support of BirdLife International, with funding from the United Nations Environment Program – Global Environmental Facility and the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica. The original workshops invited participants from Jamaica only; this year's group was selected from a number of Caribbean countries - Puerto Rico, Cuba, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic. A total of eight participants joined the workshop for what became an excellent two weeks of fun and training.

*(continued on page2)*

## **WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

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The first morning at the Windsor Great House, our digs for the duration of the workshop, saw what would become somewhat familiar by the end of our stay - Jamaican residents and AOU migrants in the same net. For the most part everything was new. My understanding of moult and plumage cycles could be thrown out the window. Birds were seemingly moulting at random, some followed a pattern that deviated among individuals and some were hopeless. What did become clear was a distinction in feather wear, which was used to help age some of the endemics Susan had some fix on by this point. In others it was only noteworthy; it might lead to something after further trapping.

Stu and I were in somewhat of a beginner phase for the first day. Orienting ourselves, getting familiar with protocol and trying to identify the new families of bird species. On top of it all, we had to plan the workshop in order to teach the participants about a banding operation in the Tropics. This came with relative ease, as training is a major component of the work we do at Long Point Bird Observatory. What took some work was trying to explain what each bird was showing in its plumage. It's funny. After banding in North America for a few years and getting familiar with migrant passerines, one gets used to being told what to look for in the wing or in the tail, what the moult pattern typically shows at any given point in the year; thanks Mr. Pyle. Since much of this information is lacking in the Tropics, one has to rely on feather wear, shape and so on. Of course, what all of this means is in development and North American schemes can be helpful, but certainly not for species for which there are no representatives found in North America. This is where Susan stepped in. Having been involved in banding for a few years at Windsor Research Centre she has found trends and has figured out a thing or two about the species we were capturing. Where Stu or I came up empty, Susan undoubtedly had extremely helpful information; whether it be, "That's a typical SY bird" or, "Good Luck!" we relied on her input for ageing many of the Jamaican species.

Much like any workshop, the first few days were interesting. People began to get comfortable with each other after the first training exercise: A brilliant activity devised by Stu which had the participants set up three nets with three poles. Working together they figured it out and became buddies almost immediately. We then had the crew set-up one of the five sites we would use during the workshop - Sugarbelly's Circle. Sugarbelly was our cook for the workshop. Thanks to him we were not just well fed, but well stuffed! Thanks, Sugar. After the net set-up exercise, the crew got a taste of what would become routine, as we relocated every other day; residents are smart and figure out when nets are up in one location for too long.

From then on we were up essentially up and out every day before the sun and usually at a new site as well. We handled a total of 292 Caribbean species and 85 migrant (AOU) species. Of the 292 Caribbean species, 158 were Jamaican endemics. By far the most abundant capture was Bananaquit (*Coereba flaveola*) with 72 total captures, followed closely by the endemic Orangquit (*Euneornis campestris*) with 56 total captures. Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Dendroica caerulescens*) was the most abundant AOU capture with 18 total captures.

Banding was not the only technique shown during the workshop. An integral part to any banding operation, vegetation surveys, was demonstrated. We spent a morning doing veg analysis to show the participants the importance and practice of vegetation monitoring. The principles are simple enough, but essential to any banding operation - what effect does habitat have on the net and its capture rate. This is certainly important for any new banding operation set-up in the Tropics.

This is the whole point of workshops like this one: to train prospective banders from the Tropics so they can set-up stations in the home country and monitor avian populations - both resident and migrant. There is an immediate need for more of these workshops to take place in as many different tropical countries as possible. The more home-grown ornithologists we can establish now, the more they can create in the years to come.

It's one thing to understand the population dynamics of migrant populations and the perils they face here in North America, it is another to have an understanding of the population dynamics and perils faced where Neotropical migrants, who spend 60 to 80 % of their time outside of North America. Look for a detailed banding report in the upcoming OBBA journal.

Thank you to all of the players involved in getting me to and from Jamaica. From Jon McCracken to the participants themselves. To Susan Koneig for opening my eyes to the finer details of feathers and Mike Schwartz for making life smooth at WRC. A huge thanks to Sugarbelly for the mean meals. And, of course, thanks to the birds for continuing to teach me.

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## **MEMBERSHIP BROCHURE**

### **Terri Groh**

A membership brochure has been included with this issue of the newsletter. OBBA would appreciate it if you would pass on a brochure to a fellow banding enthusiast to increase our membership. Membership with the OBBA includes a newsletter, an annual journal and active representation for issues dealing with banding in Ontario and Canada. OBBA holds an annual general meeting with speakers on a wide variety of bird banding topics, banding workshops, and opportunities to meet and share with other banders. However, it is not what OBBA does for you, but what can you do for the OBBA.

OBBA also supports North American banding, holds a membership with the Eastern Bird Banding Association and the North American Banding Council, and sends representatives to their annual general meetings each year. OBBA supports training and certification programs, and will be hosting a certification session this year. OBBA is in contact with Canadian Wildlife Service, Ottawa, and Bird Studies Canada, keeping abreast of any new information and issues associated with bird banding.

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## **NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE**

The 2006 Annual General Meeting will be held March 25 & 26 at Bird Studies Canada, Port Rowan. We will be celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ontario Bird Banding Association and there will be a special luncheon on Sunday. Details will be available in the January 2006 newsletter.

Nominations for the Janette Dean Award, given each year to a person who has made a significant contribution to banding in Ontario, should be forwarded to Audrey Heagy.

This spring a new banding station is being set up in Pinery Provincial Park, on the Lake Huron shore near Grand Bend. It will be staffed entirely by volunteers. The Park has agreed to give us the free use of one of their staff houses for the duration of the project, which will be from about April 20 - June 1. Volunteer help is solicited; those with current permits would be especially welcome, but trainees can also be accommodated. Please contact David Brewer at (519)-763-0997, or [mbrewer@albedo.net](mailto:mbrewer@albedo.net) Help is especially needed in the first two weeks.

It seems that banding pliers are no longer being made and will shortly be at a premium. Anybody who has spare pliers (with the band-opening peg) is encouraged to donate them to the Association; we will be able to arrange a tax-receipt for their value. Please contact Audrey Heagey if you have a spare pair, of any size.

# *NEWS RELEASE*

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## 100 YEARS OF BIRD BANDING IN CANADA

**OTTAWA –September 22, 2005** – Billions of migratory birds leave Canada each fall after breeding season, travelling south to winter destinations in the southern U.S.A, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South American. This fall will mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canadian efforts to track the destinations of our migratory birds.

On September 24, 1905, James Henry Fleming placed a band on the foot of an American Robin in his backyard in Toronto, Ontario, in the hopes of discovering where it went for the winter. The band contained a message to contact him if the robin was found. One hundred years later, over 900 banders place bands and markers on over 300 000 migratory birds each year in Canada.

“Bird banding is used throughout the world, as a basic tool for bird research and monitoring,” said the Honourable Stéphane Dion, Minister of the Environment. “Banding allows biologists and wildlife managers to study behaviour and ecology, monitor populations and protect endangered species. The study of birds can also be used to address human health and safety concerns such as West Nile virus.”

Environment Canada’s Bird Banding Office and the [United States Geological Survey's Bird Banding Laboratory](#) have jointly administered the North American Bird Banding Program since 1923.

More than 66 million birds have been banded in North America with close to 4 million encounters for 980 species and subspecies since 1908. Banding and recovery data collected in Canada contribute to ornithological research and the conservation and management of North American migratory birds throughout the Western Hemisphere.

“The information that has been attained in the last 100 years of bird banding in Canada has been phenomenal for the scientific study and conservation of birds,” said Minister Dion. “Few other methods have resulted in such success.”

At the beginning of the twentieth century a bird band was a simple hand stamped aluminium band placed around the leg so a bird could be identified and tracked. Now, a century later, that same method is still used, except for birds that spend a lot of time in the water require bands made of stainless steel.

Bands come in different sizes and designs to accommodate a variety of sizes of birds. Hummingbirds are so small that each band must be cut and individually shaped for each bird, whereas larger birds of prey such as hawks and eagles require lock-on or rivet bands so that they cannot be removed by powerful beaks.

Some studies require that individual birds be identified from a distance. In these cases other marking devices such as colour bands, neck collars, plastic streamers, wing tags, nasal saddles, feather clippings, and paints or dyes are sometimes used in addition to the basic bands.

Canada’s bird banders are highly skilled in bird capture, handling, identification, aging and sexing. Banders must hold a scientific permit issued by the federal government to capture and band migratory birds.

The North American Bird Banding Program relies on the public to report found bird bands. Canadians who find a banded bird or a bird band are asked to note as much information as they can about the bird and its band and contact the Bird Banding Office ([http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/nwrc-cnrf/migb/01\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_e.cfm](http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/nwrc-cnrf/migb/01_1_1_1_e.cfm)) or toll-free at 1-800-327-BAND.

For more information about bird banding or assisting as a volunteer with a banding project, contact one of the many bird observatories across Canada. Volunteering is the best way to learn the challenging skills necessary to become a bird bander. For a list of bird observatories across Canada view the [Canadian Migration Monitoring Network](http://www.bsc-eoc.org/national/cmmn.html) website at <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/national/cmmn.html>.

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## BANDING HIGHLIGHTS

This is your opportunity to informally share the excitement of your banding encounters with others. Banding highlights are submitted by either the original bander or the recapturing bander.

John Miles reports several birds that he banded at Selkirk (Haldimand Bird Observatory):

NSOW, banded Oct 26/04, retrapped LPBO, Nov. 3/04

WTSP, banded Sept 30/04, retrapped Leroy Percy State Park, Feb. 14/05

RCKI, banded Oct. 25/04, retrapped Presque Isle St. Park PA, Nov. 3/04

GCTH, banded Sept. 28/04, retrapped Holiday Beach, Oct. 7/04

NSWO, banded Nov. 1/03, recovered Elkins WV, Oct. 24/04



photos by Carl A. Pascoe



GCKI, originally banded by R. K. Bell on Oct. 6/04 near Jordan Run WV, was retrapped by Antonio Salvadori on Sept. 27/05. This Guelph area group consists of four banders: Antonio Salvadori, John Burger, Dallas Johnston and Richard Frank. They normally band between 4 to 5,000 birds per year and possibly they band more birds than any other group in Canada outside of Observatories and the like. Their main targets have been: AMGO, BCCH, COGR, BARS, ATSP and BLJA.

Moulting AMGO, originally banded by Antonio Salvadori Apr. 9/03 and recaptured at HBMO Sept. 4/04.

## EXCITEMENT AT HOLIDAY BEACH MIGRATION OBSERVATORY

Two banded Northern Saw-whet Owls captured on the same evening in mid-November caused a great deal of excitement in the banding lab at HBMO this year. The first owl was one that Jason Sondergren had banded at HBMO in the fall of 2003 – the very first owl return for this banding station. Jason had the original data on hand to compare to the recapture information. Everyone present was thrilled!

The second owl was a foreign recapture and the band number was familiar to the visiting bander, Cindy Cartwright. A quick phone call home confirmed that Cindy had banded this owl three weeks earlier at her banding site near Oliphant. What are the chances of the original bander being present at another station when their owl is recaptured? It was a night we'll remember for a long time!

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## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

As 2006 approaches it is once again time to renew your Ontario Bird Banding Association membership. Please find enclosed a membership renewal form and send it to Joanne Dewey in order that you can continue to receive our newsletter and journal.

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## ORNITHOLOGICAL ACROSTIC

David Brewer

It has been suggested from certain quarters in the Association which I will not identify, that even with the answers given, my acrostic logic was so tortured that further explanation is necessary. I emphatically deny this, but in response to popular request....I should, I suppose, start off by apologizing for some of the more appalling puns. As for the remainder...

Clues across.

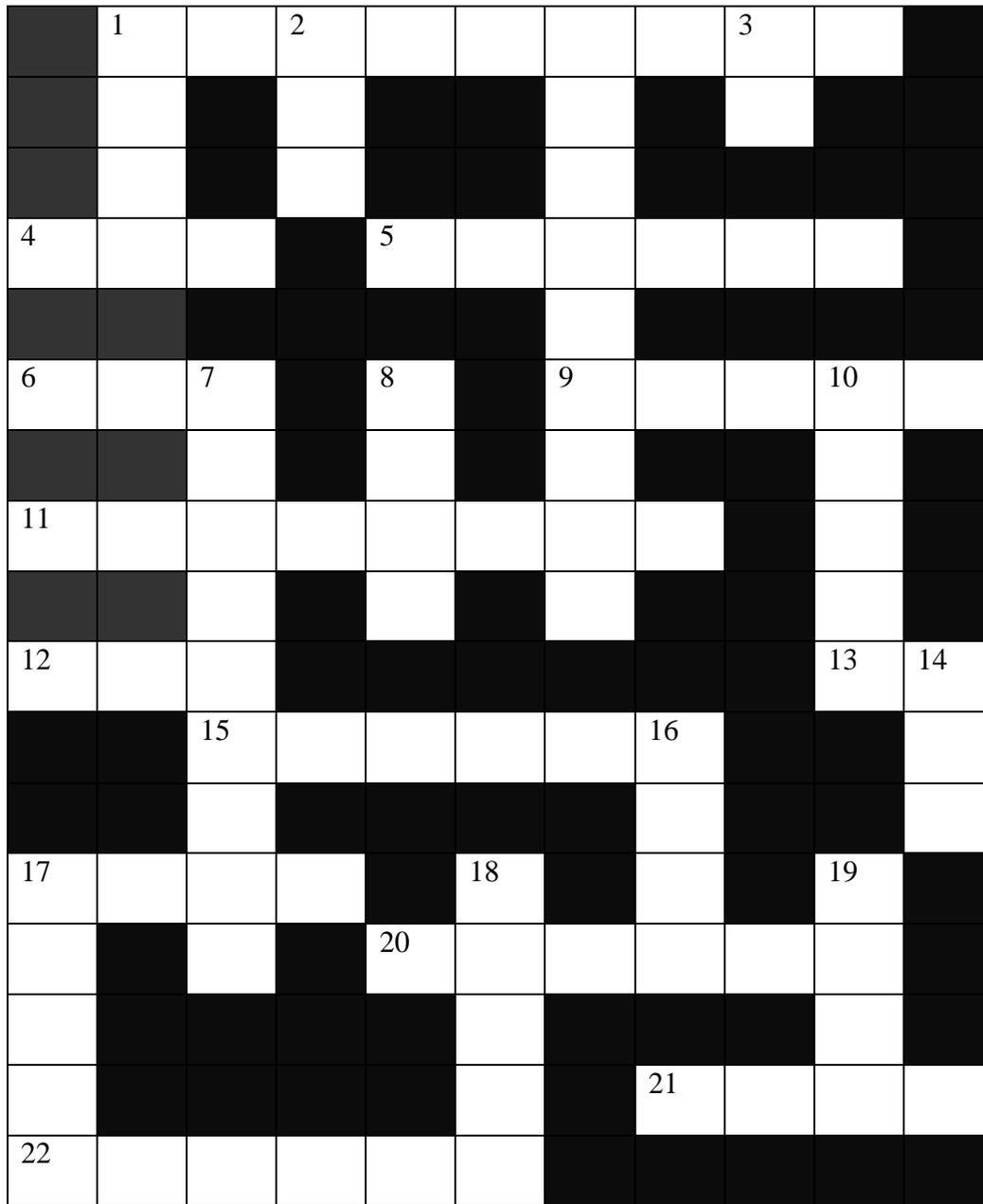
1. Well, I suppose, it does help if you're Scots....Likewise 17 down.
4. Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard"
5. Koko's song when he was trying to win over Katisha, and incidentally avoid having his head cut off.
- 13 (See also 3 down). There are only two two-letter birds, the Ou (more correctly the O'u) (*Psittirostra psittacea*) and the six species of Oo (O'o). Since the Episcopal exclamation clearly refers to the Bishop's O'o (Moho bishopi), 13 across has to be Ou and 3 down Oo. Incidentally, most of these oos and ous are on the verge of extinction (in fact two are already gone), while the Superciliated Hemispingus and the Guttulated Foliage-gleaner remain abundant in their respective ranges; obviously brevity is not the soul of avian success.

Clues down.

- 2a. From John of Gaunt's famous "This England" speech; also the Cormorant Helicopter, which Jean Chretien spent half a billion dollars of our money, in penalty costs, not buying....
7. Obviously the reference is to Samuel Taylor Coleridge  
God save thee, Ancient Mariner!  
From the fiends that plague you thus!-  
Why look'st thou so?-With my crossbow  
I shot the Albatross.
14. Sorry, I was stuck for a three-letter ornithological word beginning with u; although I later discovered that there is a Hawaiian Shearwater called the Uae....
19. Everybody, surely, has read Harry Potter by now?

Surprisingly, I got three correct solutions back almost immediately; perhaps not surprisingly, all were from close acquaintances with some familiarity with my warped mentality. They were the Hussells in Ottawa (apparently with the invaluable assistance of Jeremy), Martin Wernaart and Terri Groh, and Dave Shepherd and Julie Cappleman. The last-named cheated somewhat by sending in their answer by e-mail, but I guess they win. As for a prize, I visited them in Newfoundland recently, which should be prize enough for anyone; saw lots of Great, Sooty and Manx Shearwaters and ate an Eider Duck...

Editor's Note: The original acrostic appeared in the November 2004 issue of the newsletter which is available on the OBBA website [www.ontbanding.org](http://www.ontbanding.org). The original clues can be found on page 7.




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## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

**Renew your membership  
(membership renewal form enclosed)**

**January 1**

**Deadline for submissions for January 2006 issue**

**January 16**

