



# NEWSLETTER

## **THE ONTARIO BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WILL BE HELD ON FEBRUARY 24 & 25, 2007**

Please note the location will again be at Bird Studies Canada in Port Rowan. As per the pattern set previously, a two-day event is scheduled with the format of the Saturday agenda following that of previous years. Winter banding, workshops and practical presentations will be the focus of the Sunday sessions.

**Registration Fee** - To cover costs there will be a \$5.00 fee for members and non-members.

**Lunch Arrangements** - Coffee and donuts will be served. There are restaurants in Port Rowan, arrangements will be made with a local restaurant for those who request it at registration time. Cost is not available at this time.

**Evening Social** - On the Saturday there will be a social evening at the home of Lorna and Eric Machell in Lynedoch. Directions will be available at the meeting. Food will be provided at a charge to those attending. Members planning to attend may BYOB.

**Bucket Raffle** - As in previous years a bucket raffle will be held. Any member wishing to donate a prize should bring it to the meeting. The contact person for the Bucket Raffle is Bill Read. Bill can be reached at [info@billreadsbooks.com](mailto:info@billreadsbooks.com)

**Show and Tell** - On the Sunday there is an item on the agenda entitled "Show and Tell. Attendees are invited to bring a small number of slides/photographs, actual traps, nest boxes and/or designs, or other items of interest, and encouraged to show them to the group.

**Book sale** - Bill Read has a wide selection of books dealing with natural history, including field guides. 10% of proceeds will be donated back to OBBA so this is a good opportunity to add to your personal library while supporting OBBA. Contact Bill beforehand at [info@billreadsbooks.com](mailto:info@billreadsbooks.com) if you want him to bring a specific book.

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## **OBBA AGM AGENDA SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2007**

|                |   |                                      |
|----------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 09:00 to 10:00 | Registration  |                                      |
| 10:00 to 10:20 | Business Meeting  |                                      |
|                | Introductions – Eric Machell  |                                      |
|                | President’s Report – Eric Machell   |                                      |
|                | Treasurer’s Report – Audrey Heagy   |                                      |
|                | Election of an Auditor – Audrey Heagy   |                                      |
|                | Nominations & Election of 2007 Executive – Audrey Heagy                           |                                      |
| 10:20 to 10:40 | Bird (slides and specimens) Quiz  |                                      |
| 10:40 to 11:00 | Coffee Break  |                                      |
| 11:00 to 11:30 | “Grasslands Birds and Habitat Restoration”  | Mary Gartshore                       |
| 11:30 to 11:45 | Station Report  | Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory |
| 11:45 to 12:15 | Report from Banding Office and BANDIT overview                                    | Lesley Howes/Louise Laurin           |
| 12:15 to 12:30 | “Banding in the Western Hemisphere“   | Stuart Mackenzie                     |
| 12:30 to 14:00 | Lunch   |                                      |
| 14:00 to 14:30 | “Orientation behaviour of migratory Yellow-rumped Warblers during fall migration” | Trina Fitzgerald                     |
| 14:30 to 15:00 | “New Birds in South America”  | David Agro                           |
| 15:00 to 15:30 | Results of the Bird Quiz  |                                      |
| 15:30 to 16:00 | Coffee Break  |                                      |
| 16:00 to 16:15 | Presentation of the Janette Dean Award  |                                      |
| 16:15 to 16:45 | “Research at the Royal Ontario Museum”  | Mark Peck                            |
| 16:45 to 17:00 | Bucket Raffle   |                                      |
| 17:00          | Close of day one of general meeting   |                                      |
| 18:30          | Social evening at Lynedoch  |                                      |

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## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2007

|                |  |                              |
|----------------|--|------------------------------|
| 07:00 to 09:00 | Ground Trapping and Banding (Venue to be announced at AGM) |                              |
| 09:00 to 09:30 | Travel to BSC HQ   |                              |
| 09:00 to 09:30 | Coffees, Mingle for Ideas, and Show and Tell               |                              |
| 09:30 to 10:00 | Bandit Program Hands-on Session                            | Louise Laurin                |
| 10:00 to 10:45 | Station report   | Ausable Bird Observatory     |
| 10:45 to 12:00 | Trap designs, types of mist nets                           | Martin Wernaart/David Okines |
| 12:00 to 13:00 | Free time, lunch   |                              |
| 13:00 to 14:00 | Empidonax Flycatcher Identification                        | Stuart Mackenzie             |
| 14:00 to 14:30 | Coffee   |                              |
| 14:30          | End of Annual General Meeting.                             |                              |

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### Accommodations for the AGM

#### Local Bed and Breakfasts - all listed at [www.bbcanada.com](http://www.bbcanada.com)

Abigail's Bed and Breakfast [edgewood@kwic.com](mailto:edgewood@kwic.com) 519-586-8777

The Bay House [www.thebayhousebb.com](http://www.thebayhousebb.com) 519-586-3337

Brambles Bed and Breakfast [taylorpm@amtelecom.net](mailto:taylorpm@amtelecom.net) 519-586-9173

Brookvale Bed and Breakfast Ltd. [brookvale@amtelcom.net](mailto:brookvale@amtelcom.net) 519-586-9155

The Coach House on Erie (519) 586-2832

Country Garden Bed and Breakfast [www.bbcanada.com/3603.html](http://www.bbcanada.com/3603.html) 1-877-310-5133

Green Valley Bed & Breakfast (519) 586-3799

Kinda Cute 519-586-9744 or 1-866-900-1104 (toll free)

Marsh Landing Bed and Breakfast [mfoster7@aol.com](mailto:mfoster7@aol.com) 519-586-7777

The Peacock Roost (519) 586-9607

Seasons House [mmudford@sympatico.ca](mailto:mmudford@sympatico.ca) 519-586-7096

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**Birdathon** - Christian Friis will be participating in the 2007 Baillie Birdathon for the OBBA. Please help his endeavour by pledging your support. The OBBA website will have a direct link to a personal donation page for Christian in March, where you can donate online. Other options for sending pledges are via email to [friis.christian@gmail.com](mailto:friis.christian@gmail.com) or mailing a cheque made out to "Bird Studies Canada" to 637 Broadview Ave. Toronto, ON M4K 2N9. There will also be a pledge form available at the AGM.

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## In Memoriam -John Baxter Miles - 1942-2006

A mentor has been defined as a wise and trusted teacher or guide. For me and for so many throughout Ontario, John Miles was a mentor well beyond this definition.

I was lucky to have joined the Kitchener Waterloo Field Naturalists around 1979-80, about the same time that John did. Little did I know the influence that this man would have on me, and indirectly on so many others in so many ways. I first got to know John on either organized or impromptu outings, often riding in the back seat behind John. Typically he would have a cigarette in his mouth and the windows fully rolled down to listen for birds as his eyes searched for birds on the road in front of him, in the ditches, or in the trees across fields. John introduced me to ever so many “lifers”, which he suggested should cost me \$100 per species. As time went on, I suggested that inflation should cost me \$500 per new species. Little did I know that John prepared for these trips in a number of ways that I have endeavoured to emulate. John was famous for his ability to discern the exceptional species amongst the common, because he was so experienced in bird behaviour.



Bill Smith wrote poignantly and with obvious emotion, “Hi Neil! We lose another great one. The shock of Bruce (Duncan) is not over yet and once again we lose another, John. John and I have been close since 1959. In the early years John was like a big brother. We lived close together in Northern Ontario. In the last couple of years I stayed at his place banding. He led many great field trips for many clubs and in the last 40 years or so has done more Christmas Bird Counts than any other person. In my heart, we have truly lost a great one.”

I was introduced to Bill through John when he brought Bill and others to our property to catch his first winter Chipping Sparrow. John introduced me to so many other great birders and banders over the years. Perhaps the strangest was an occasion at Pelee when I was searching for my first Hooded Warbler amongst some May Apples. John had stopped to speak to birders he knew and was chatting to this guy named Bob. We moved off together and it was then that John asked me if I knew Bob. I said that I didn’t think so. He revealed that this was Bob Bateman, Robert to the rest of the world.

John took up birdwatching as a young boy. The legend began. He was a strong LPBO/BSC supporter from its earliest days. He probably participated in more Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) over the years than any other Canadian since he participated in 10 or 11 each winter. He also established and compiled more counts than BSC can count. He was the compiler at Long Point from 1963 to 1968, served on the LPBO Advisory Committee for many years and on the Board of Directors for a total of 12 years at various times from 1968 through 1998. In 1996, John established the Haldimand Bird Observatory faithfully manning the Selkirk banding station. Over the course of some forty years, he very likely banded more birds in Ontario than anyone else since he was certified with one of the lowest licence numbers for bird banding issued when he was in his early twenties. Meanwhile John was a member of the Ontario Field Ornithologists, leading regular outings annually. He was also a Past-President of the

Hamilton Naturalists' Club and a member of the Ontario Barn Owl Recovery Programme. John was a member of the KWFN from 1979-1989 and served part of that time as President. During that same time, John was also compiler for the Kitchener CBC, a regular participant in the Baillie Birdathon, and a member of the Board of Directors for the FON.

John's knowledge and recollection of bird sightings and behaviour was often to be found not just on those outings but in lengthy statements and accounts filed on various internet Listservs. Cindy Cartwright wrote two days after John's death, "John was a good friend, a willing ear, and never hesitated to offer additional information. At a meeting last night, I was asked a historical Long Point question and my first thought was 'I'll email John and find out.' Sadly, those days are gone and I will miss him."

John and Sue Gregoire, Field Ornithologists at Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory, Burdett, N.Y. wrote, "We regret to inform you that we lost a friend yesterday and our profession lost a dedicated Field Ornithologist and mentor to many. John Miles contracted pneumonia after enjoying his most successful fall season. John was an old fashioned field biologist who did everything the proper way and was on site in order to be open a half hour before sunrise every possible day during the migration - despite having a 45 minute commute to get there. His professional ethics and sharing of knowledge will stand as a shining example for us all."

Elsie Taylor wrote, "John's been a significant influence in my life with respect to the birding world, and always generous with his knowledge and time. He will be missed by me, no question." Elsie wrote a great summary of the outing in the March 2006 issue of The Heron. Typically, I was in the backseat on a cold windy day, but true to a Miles' expedition we saw over 40 species, no "lififers" that day, but became so much more memorable in retrospect since it was to be the last birding trip that we'd take together and one that we had so greatly enjoyed.

Many shared those cold drives amidst smoke and freezing temperatures. During those outings, John in his sonorous voice would quietly explain some of his knowledge as follows:

- Check out the roads and side roads to see what is there in advance of outings, CBCs, etc.
- Where you see Northern Harriers, watch for Short-eared Owls.
- A dark bird amongst Snow Buntings should be a Longspur
- Check every goose in a flock of Canada Geese; there might be a Snow Goose.
- Know the bird sounds; you may never see the bird itself.

I have attempted to apply John's skills in my own birding and when I lead outings. Some years ago, John called me and asked if I could participate in the Fisherville CBC. I could not say no. It was payback time to the man who had taught me so much. As it happened, I broke my leg shortly after agreeing. John would not let that deter me from participating, so I arranged to meet John a weekend or two before the actual count day. He had prepared maps of "my area" complete with notes where various species had been seen. While I was trying to repay John, he had given me a rich area which included habitat for both Long-eared and Short-eared Owls along with a Lake Erie shoreline.

If one looks for symbolism in some events, one may attach some significance to the day of John's funeral. As some of us entered the funeral home, two small flocks of Tundra Swans flew over as if in a final salute. This year on the Fisherville CBC we saw a mature Bald Eagle flying south toward Lake Erie, a first for that species in that area for our party. It was such a satisfying sight. It suggested to me that John might have been giving us a final message...to look up and then check each gull on Lake Erie just in case there was an exceptional species.

I, along with so many others, will miss the legendary John Miles. His like is not to pass our way again. Lucky were those to have known his skills and experienced his knowledge.

Respectfully submitted,

*Neil E. Taylor*

The Ontario Bird Banding Association offers deepest condolences to the families of John Miles and Bruce Duncan; full obituaries will be published in the next issue of "Ontario Bird Banding".

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## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Renew your membership (renewal form in this issue)</b> | <b>due now</b>     |
| <b>EBBA Annual General Meeting in Brewster, MA.</b>       | <b>March 23-25</b> |
| <b>Deadline for submissions for July 2007 newsletter</b>  | <b>July 1</b>      |

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## **BANDING HIGHLIGHTS**



A Blue Winged Teal that was banded by Martin Wernaart, Terri Groh and their two boys on August 05, 2006 at Long Point Provincial Park was shot in Puerto Rico on November 11, 2006.

Martin has been responsible for showing many people how to band ducks. This photo is from the demonstration at the 2006 OBBA AGM.

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## **ON-LINE NEWSLETTER**

Each year the cost of mailing the OBBA newsletter to members increases in January when Canada Post raises their rates. Anyone interested in helping OBBA decrease expenses can opt to access their newsletter from the OBBA website by sending Cindy Cartwright an email at [pom@bmts.com](mailto:pom@bmts.com) Visit the OBBA website at [www.ontbanding.org](http://www.ontbanding.org) and click on the "members-only" tab on the left side of the page. The user name is **obba** and the password is **obbanews** You can either read the newsletter on-line or print a copy with colour photos. Additional articles and items that could not be included in the newsletter due to space limitations are also posted in this section.

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## LONG POINT BIRD OBSERVATORY

### Stu Mackenzie

Posted below is a simple banding summary of the Long Point Bird Observatory's 2006 migration monitoring season, our 47th. We had our third highest banding total since 1960 with 27,607 birds banded of 160 species and forms bringing our grand total to 716,918 of 274 species and forms. Numerous milestones are labeled on the chart.

We added two new species to our banding list, a second-year, male Townsend's Solitaire banded at our Tip station on June 6, and a hatch-year, male Varied Thrush banded at our Old Cut field station on October 26. Pictures of the Varied Thrush and other highlights from the 2006 season can be viewed on the LPBO sightings board - <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/lpbo/sightings.html> .

Six species had the highest banding totals since we began in 1960; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Blue-headed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, and Fox Sparrow. It is interesting to note that most of these species are late temperate migrants, so high banding totals could simply be an artifact of a concentrated late fall push.

The vireos are interesting in that many are showing significant increases based on long-term population trend analyses which can be viewed online at <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/national/migmain.jsp> for the LPBO and other Canadian Migration Monitoring Network member stations from across the country.

Blue-headed Vireo: Spring +0.78 %/year ; Fall + 3.05 %/year  
Philadelphia Vireo: Spring +1.38 %/year ; Fall -0.17 %/year (p>0.05)  
Red-eyed Vireo: Spring +2.74 %/year ; Fall -0.17 %/year (p>0.05)  
Warbling Vireo: Spring + 4.57 %/year ; Fall + 3.71 %/year

More information about the programs of the Long Point Bird Observatory, Bird Studies Canada and the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network can be found online at [www.bsc-eoc.org](http://www.bsc-eoc.org) .

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## YOU'VE GOT MAIL...

The best part of the editor's job is receiving interesting letters, email and sometimes phone calls from OBBA members. In December, Dr. Stuart Houston called me to discuss the Banding Highlights in the November 2006 issue. The call was to clarify the following report: "Herring Gull band that was placed on a local HERG by Howard Krug on June 8/68 was found on Chantry Island on Sept. 14/06".

Dr. Houston told me that it is a bander's responsibility to follow up and verify details of phenomenal recoveries. Since Howard is no longer, Dr. Houston was calling to clarify that the band was not found on a live or recently dead gull. The band was found on the skeleton, and there is no way of knowing how long the bird actually lived after banding by Howard.

Then we had a very interesting conversation about banding Northern Saw-whet Owls, Turkey Vultures and other information. Dr. Houston holds one of the lowest permit numbers that are still active and his permit was the only permit knowingly issued under-age. 2006 was his 64<sup>th</sup> year of banding, and the 55<sup>th</sup> year for his wife, Mary. They are still actively banding in Saskatchewan.

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# THE WASP PROJECT

**Chris Earley**

Many of you have already met the featured creature of this newsletter article. If you haven't, allow me to formally introduce the introduced *Polistes dominulus*, more commonly known as the European Paper Wasp. And if you've decided that you don't want to meet this new neighbour on the block, I'm afraid it's too late. In North America, the European Paper Wasp was first reported in the late 1970's in Massachusetts. In just over 15 years it could be found throughout the northeastern states and into Canada. It is also found in the western part of the continent, too. And just so we don't feel too special, the European Paper Wasp has been accidentally introduced to South America and Australia, and it has been spreading its range in its native European, Asian and North African homeland as well.

So, what does this have to do with birds? Well, the European Paper Wasp can build its nest in a variety of locations: inside aluminum ladder rungs, under eaves, in between siding boards, under garbage can lids. But, one of their favourite nesting sites are bird nest boxes.



The best thing about European Paper Wasps for a diligent bird box line monitor is that they are fairly non-aggressive. While they are certainly capable of stinging and will do so, they are not aggressive like Yellow Jackets are. The European Paper Wasp seems to "know" this and one of their best defenses is a false one; they mimic Yellow Jackets. This means they are bright black and yellow, just like a Yellow Jacket, so much so that they can be hard to tell apart at first.

The best clue is to look at their nests. Paper wasps build a tier or level of cells out of the papery pulp they spit out. Yellow Jackets do this, too, but they also eventually cover the whole tier with a papery covering; think of those big, grey balls you see in trees in the fall once the leaves have fallen. Those are actually Bald-face Hornet nests, but the papery covering is similar to what their relatives the Yellow Jackets make. Yellow Jackets will use bird boxes occasionally and when you open those boxes, they will often attack instantly, stinging and chasing you, the intruder (from their point of view, anyway). On the other hand, paper wasps usually just go about their business when you open the box. Joe Kral, who monitors over 500 boxes near Guelph Lake, carefully removed 100's of paper wasp nests this year with a putty knife and was never stung. The wasps may not even be too aggressive towards birds, at least initially. In a preliminary study this summer, some early paper wasp nests were active at the same time that Tree Swallows were on eggs - in the same box.



European Paper Wasps seem to be very prolific. Joe had almost 40% of his boxes be invaded by paper wasps at some point in the summer. Bryan Wyatt, who was helping Joe this year, found 80 boxes with wasp nests in them before the end of May. A researcher in Michigan who has studied the native Paper Wasp, *Polistes fuscatus*, for many years on his university campus, has now had almost all of his wasp boxes taken over by the European Paper Wasp.

Joe Kral and Bryan Wyatt checking boxes  
photos by Chris Earley

Both the European and the native paper wasps may be excluding birds from nest boxes, too. Is it possible that they could be a bigger threat than introduced European Starlings or House Sparrows? And what about natural cavities? If this is a problem for nest boxes where monitors remove the wasp nests, what effect is it having on birds using natural cavities?

Native Paper Wasp – note they are darker overall and do not look like Yellow Jackets



Considering these wasps appear to be such a problem for birds using nest boxes across much of eastern North America, you'd think many researchers would be studying them, right? Wrong. It seems that no one really knows the effects of this invader on breeding bird success. I am starting a part-time Master's Project that will be focusing on the European Paper Wasp and its effects on cavity nesters and I am looking for volunteers who have bird box lines to be a part of the study. If you are interested in finding out more about this project or in being a part of the study, please contact me at [cearley@uoguelph.ca](mailto:cearley@uoguelph.ca). I will give you more information on the project. I will also add you to a list and once the study methods are finalized, I will provide you with more details. Then you can decide if the study is something you would like to join. Together, we might be able to add some pieces to this complex but intriguing puzzle!

Chris Earley is the Interpretive Biologist and Educational Coordinator at the University of Guelph Arboretum. He'd like to thank Joe Kral, Bryan Wyatt and Dave Lambie for their work last summer on the wasp project.

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

**Journal Reminder** - Please forward banding totals, station reports and any other material for publication to Terri Groh [naturesadvantage@amtelecom.net](mailto:naturesadvantage@amtelecom.net) or 25 Lakeview Cr, RR 1 St. Williams, NOE 1P0. Deadline for 2005 material is February 10, 2007. Your participation helps to provide an overall picture of banding in Ontario.

**North American Bird Bander** – Ontario is part of the Eastern Bird Banding Association area. The EBBA is one of three organizations that produce the NABB journal. John Miles felt strongly that Ontario banders should contribute information to the Atlantic Flyway Review in NABB. Please consider sending your banding totals to the NABB as a way of recognizing his contributions to banding.

**NABC test** - We are looking at taking the written part of the NABC test at the AGM. If anyone is interested in taking this part of the NABC test at the AGM, please contact David Okines by email [davidokines@aol.com](mailto:davidokines@aol.com) to express your interest. The cost of the exam is US\$25 and is payable in US funds only. The practical part of the test would take place at a later date.

**Bird specimens** - Any frozen birds may be brought to the AGM on Saturday and Mark Peck will take them to the ROM.

**Membership** – If you haven't already renewed your OBBA membership, please take a moment to complete the included membership form and mail it to Audrey Heagy or renew at the AGM.

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