

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Coming Events

In Memoriam:

William (Bill) Wasserfall

In Memoriam: Bob McKinney

Janette Dean Award

Eastern Bluebird in Orchards

Piranga—A new tool for bird banders!

Other resources for banders

Advertisements

Photo Gallery

COMING EVENTS:

- **Ontario Bird Banding Association Annual General Meeting** , February 25 & 26, 2012.
Bird Studies Canada Headquarters and National Data Centre, Port Rowan.
- **North American Banding Council Annual General Meeting**, April 27-30, 2012.
Bird Studies Canada Headquarters and National Data Centre, Port Rowan.
- **Baillie Birdathon**: May 2012. Support your local bird observatory or the OBBA by sponsoring the OBBA's Birdathoner! For more information visit: www.birdscanada.org/support/birdathon.

HAVE A COMING EVENT OF NOTE FOR THE ONTARIO BIRD BANDING COMMUNITY ?
LET THE EDITORIAL TEAM KNOW !!!

FROM THE EDITORS

1 This issue highlights a wide variety of valuable resources and opportunities for banders. Bill Read also provides a brief synopsis of some of his bluebird work, and we acknowledge the 2011 recipient of the Janette Dean award, Jon McCracken. The OBBA also celebrates the lives of one of its founding and most influential members, William Wasserfall, and another long-term member and supporter of the OBBA, Robert McKinney. Thank you to all the contributors to this issue.

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7 As always, you can help to fill the OBBA newsletter by sending us news and events from your banding operation, research, or any other interesting notes related to bird banding in Ontario.

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9 **Send material for publishing anytime to Stu Mackenzie—**
stu.a.mackenzie@gmail.com

10 **CALL FOR SPEAKERS:** The OBBA is looking for speakers for the 2012 AGM. If you have any ideas for suggested speakers or have a project you would like to share with the OBBA, please contact John Brett— john.brett@utoronto.ca

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IN MEMORIAM: William (Bill) Wasserfall (1922 –2011) Dr. David Hussell

This past winter OBBA lost another founding member, long-time supporter, and friend: William (Bill) Wasserfall died in Markdale, Ontario on 22 February 2011, after several years of declining health. He was in his 89th year.

On 19 November 1955, a meeting was held at Bill Wasserfall's home. Others present were Alf Bunker, Bill Gunn, Reg James, and Frank Smith. Plans were made to form the Ontario Bird Banders Association (later renamed the Ontario Bird *Banding* Association). The first formal meeting was held on 24 March 1956, at which Bill was appointed Secretary-Treasurer. Bill was not only a founding member but was a major driving force behind OBBA's development over the next 20 years.

William John Ralph Wasserfall was born in Croydon, Surrey, England. In World War II he became a Petty Officer in the British Navy and served in the Fleet Air Arm. He was fortunate to be stationed in Canada and met his future wife in Dartmouth NS, where she was a radar plotter in the RCAF. After the war he immigrated to Canada, married Margaret Elizabeth (Betty) Jennings, and moved to Toronto where he started his own company, Adelaide Electric Ltd.

I don't know when or how he developed his interest in birds and banding, but he was an early participant in the Point Pelee banding station, initiated in 1954 by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (FON). By 1957 the future OBBA was essentially in charge of the Point Pelee station and FON formally turned it over to OBBA in 1958. Bill was the organizer of the Pelee station until John Roberts took over in 1961.

Bill once told me that in the 1950s he visited every banding permit holder in Ontario to get to know them and encourage them to join OBBA. So it is not surprising that by the time of its first meeting OBBA already had 30 members from among the 50 or so Ontario permit holders. Bill was a member of the OBBA Executive Committee or Board nearly every year until 1975 and served in several positions over that period, including Secretary- Treasurer or Secretary (until 1959), President (1961-1963), Vice-President (1966-1967), and Treasurer (1968-1972).

Bill was also one of the founders of Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO) and an active participant throughout the 1960s and 1970s. His construction skills were invaluable in those early days when Observatory work seemed to consist of equal (or sometimes unequal) parts of banding and building. Equally valuable were Bill's unobtrusive mentoring skills: he was the kind of person that people like to work with; consequently work got



Bill with a beloved Herring Gull in the early 1960's on Lake Erie. Photo: LPBO

done not through any obvious plan or leadership, but simply because Bill was doing it and others pitched in to help. He was always supportive of the slightly younger group, including myself, who worked hard to establish LPBO.

Bill took his skills elsewhere as well, assisting Marshall Field in setting up the Hawk Cliff Raptor Banding Station and John Roberts with spring expeditions to band Sharp-shinned Hawks at Whitefish Point, Michigan. Bill received his banding permit in 1953. Over the next 17 years he banded 5,201 birds on his permit of which 93% were gulls and terns, mainly on Mohawk Island in Lake Erie, or waterfowl, mostly at Long Point. (Thanks



Bill constructing the 2nd cabin at the Tip of Long Point in 1973. Photo: David Hussell

to Louise Laurin, CWS Banding Office for providing banding data). Much of his extensive banding at bird observatories was on station or other permits. Bill was not into amassing a personal banding list: his contributions to banding were in other ways.

My introduction to banding in North America was also largely via Bill. I first met him in December 1957 barely 3 months after coming to Canada from England. By 1958 I was regularly going on weekend trips to Point Pelee with Bill and other Toronto banders. This was before Highway 401 was complete, so the trip took several hours. It usually involved a stop in St. Thomas for a late-night cup of tea and a chat with Marshall Field. We would arrive at Pelee often in the early hours of Saturday morning, catch a few hours of sleep somewhere, band all day Saturday and much of Sunday, leave late, get home in time for another short sleep and go to work on Monday pretending to be wide awake. This routine was a bit too rigorous even for us youngsters, encouraging some of us to explore other prospects closer to Toronto, eventually leading to the founding of LPBO.

Bill had big hands and fingers, but he could extract tiny and large birds from nets with equal gentleness and

dexterity. He must also have had thick skin. On one occasion we set up nets early at Pelee and were soon swamped with an influx of Sharp-shins. It was one of those emergency situations where clearing the nets becomes the top priority. With no bags or other containers handy, I noticed that Bill was busily extracting Sharpies and stuffing them inside his shirt.

In the 1950s Bill started importing and selling Japanese mist-nets as a service to Canadian banders. For many years he was the only source of mist-nets in Canada. Also he sold net poles: steel electrical conduit from his business, conveniently fitted with connectors to convert two 5 ft sections into a 10 ft pole. He invented or made a variety of traps and supplied many banders with his carefully labelled pins (like giant safety pins) to hold different band sizes as well as the slotted cloth bags (sewn by Betty) to hold them in a convenient package for use in the field. Later he and his daughter, Kathy, took over Reg James' Conservation Enterprises and continued to supply nets and other banding equipment.

In the 1969, Bill & Betty bought a farm near Markdale and moved there permanently when they retired. Bill continued gardening and added farming and collecting paperweights to his interests. He kept up his contacts with several banding friends, including Marshall Field and Jim Anderson, as well as myself and Erica Dunn.

Bill was not a scientific ornithologist or writer. I was hard pressed to find any published writings other than numerous reports in early OBBA newsletters. His most important legacy was his influence on the organizations he helped to create and foster. The tradition of friendly cooperative banding projects, which I think of as a hallmark of OBBA, was there from the beginning, in part through Bill's influence. Likewise, his influence on people lives on. Following are some tributes from people who worked with him.

"He was a great person in so many ways. I have many memories of the very good times spent with him and the rest of the gang at Long Point. They were the best of times." (Gary Page)

"I have not seen Bill for about 30 years but I think of him often. He (and you and the others) did so much for me at LPBO and OBBA that I can honestly say that my life would have been totally different without you." (Bob Montgomerie)

"It was a great privilege to have known him; he was one of those people who made my transition into a new life in Canada so much easier; I hold his memory dear." (David Brewer)

In 1998, OBBA presented its Janette Dean Award to Bill for his contributions to bird banding in Ontario. Bill's oldest daughter, Anne, was Secretary of OBBA from 1967 to 1971. She died in a car accident in 1982. Betty passed away in 2007. Bill leaves his 3 other daughters, Kathy, Judy, and Valerie, (who provided some of the information herein) and several grandchildren.



OBBA co-founders, Bill Ansley, Bill Wasserfall, David Hussell, Pat Woodford, Jim Woodford, and Marshall Field at the OBBA 50th anniversary.

IN MEMORIAM: ROBERT K. MCKINNEY (1925-2011) Elizabeth Brooks

Robert (Bob) G. McKinney has long been a fixture in the Ontario and eastern North American bird banding community. Bob was a warm, interested and wonderful addition, along with his wife Chita, to many of the OBBA annual general meetings over the years. He continued to attend the meetings and show great interest in OBBA activities even recently when his health had made travel difficult. His contributions to the OBBA were always strongly valued by members of the OBBA.

Bob, born 27 July 1925, passed away peacefully at home on 26 October 2011. He received his first banding permit in 1950 and on 6 February 1953 received his permit to use mist nets. In his outstanding 61 year banding career, he banded a total of 122,597 birds. Bob had banded at his MAPS station in Prattsburg, NY, at Island Beach State Park in NJ, in the Adirondack Mountains, at the annual May Allegany Nature Pilgrimage, at his backyard station at his home in Penfield, in the 'Pear Orchard' fields off Manitou Beach Road west of Rochester, and at Braddock Bay Bird Observatory (BBBO). He regularly contributed to the Atlantic Flyway Review of North American Bird Bander (NABB) for many years. His paper "A Bander's Guide to the Identification of Empidonax Flycatchers in Northeastern North America" was published in NABB 13 #3 in 1988. Bob was a long-time member of the Eastern Bird Banding Association (EBBA) and Secretary of that organization from 1988 to 2002. Bob was a founding member of BBBO and long-time treasurer of the organization. He enjoyed attending the spring meetings of the Ontario Bird Banding Association, and the annual fall banders' gathering hosted by Sandy and Dave Junkin at their home in Bliss, NY.

Bob slowed down in recent years, but his spirit showed no signs of slowing down. On crutches, and having to undergo dialysis treatment three times a week, he still continued to band at BBBO during the fall with help from his favorite banding assistant, his wife Chita. His last banding session was on 24 September 2011 when he banded 52 birds and charmed 35 students visiting from State University of New York at Geneseo. He was particularly pleased to band a 'lifer' Worm-eating Warbler at BBBO this fall. The newly renovated banding room at BBBO is being named the Robert G. McKinney Banding Laboratory in his honour.



Bob McKinney banding at Braddock Bay Bird Observatory. Photos: Laurie Dirx.

2011 JANETTE DEAN AWARD: JON D. MCCRACKEN

The 2011 Janette Dean award was presented to long-standing OBBA member and former director, Jon McCracken, Director of National Programs for Bird Studies Canada. Jon began banding at the Long Point Bird Observatory in 1975 and continued returning to volunteer throughout university. After graduating from the University of Western Ontario, he worked for many years as a biological consultant before returning to LPBO as its Migration Program Manager. He was instrumental in the creation and success of Bird Studies Canada as the Ontario Program Manager and Director of National Programs. He also currently sits on the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada and is co-chair of the Birds Specialist Subcommittee. Jon played an instrumental role in many bird conservation projects such as both Ontario Breeding Bird Atlases, and in the establishment of many bird observatories including the formation of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network. He has directly impacted hundreds of students of ornithology and natural history from all over the world through hands-on training and sharing his experience. Indirectly, he has influenced thousands through his dedication to the Long Point Bird Observatory and undying commitment to bird conservation science. The OBBA thanks Jon for his outstanding contributions to bird banding in Ontario.



Jon McCracken receiving his award from OBBA President David Okines.

Photo: Norm North.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE JANETTE DEAN AWARD

If you would like to nominate a fellow bander to receive the Janette Dean Award, send a written nomination with a brief explanation of the candidate's contributions to bird banding in Ontario to OBBA President David Okines.

BANDING EASTERN BLUEBIRDS IN ONTARIO ORCHARDS Bill Read

I band bluebirds in my nest boxes, both adults and young. I use a special in-box trap to catch the adults which is closely monitored when set up. As soon as an adult is caught I remove it immediately for banding or recording the band number. I use a 1B band or a size 1 on some adults determined by a leg gauge. All young are banded using 1 B's. Only nests where the young have hatched do I attempt to band adults. This year I may have 3 six year old bluebirds (2-females and 1-male) returning. All nested successfully in 2010 and all in apple orchards. Two of these birds, both females, were banded by Bob Hubert in Sparta in 2005 as nestlings. They have been re-trapped in the orchards the last 3 years (one in Orchard Home and one in an apple orchard north of Hamilton) and I am very much hoping they will survive to return in 2011. All boxes in the orchards are protected from predators. The oldest bluebirds I have recaptured are 2 seven year old bluebirds- 1-female and 1-male. Both of these were also in Apple orchards nearby about 15 years ago. Both fledged young in their last year of nesting. Table 1 shows the numbers of known-age birds re-trapped in 2010.



A male Eastern Bluebird. Photo: Matt Slaymaker.

In two Orchards, Howell Road and Orchard Home, I have analyzed the bluebird movements around the orchard. There was no movement of individuals between pairs from the first to second nesting in either orchard. All 8 pairs that re-nested had the same mates. Three of these pairs moved to a different box for their second nesting. Nine pairs of bluebirds in Orchard Home produced 51 fledged young or 5.67 young per pair. The Howell orchard had 6 pairs of bluebirds fledging 30 young or 5 young per pair. All adult bluebirds were banded except one AHY male in Howell which I could not catch. Two of the 5 year old bluebirds mentioned above were re-trapped in Orchard Home in 2010. ASY female 1791-26766 first showed up in the Howell orchard in 2008. ASYM 1431-59388 has always nested in Orchard Home from 2006 on. This male has been quite productive with between 33 and 44 young over the 5 years.

Table 1. Known ages of 78 re-trapped Eastern Bluebirds in 2010.

Age in Years	Number Banded
1	32
2	24
3	16
4	2
5	4



PIRANGA—A NEW TOOL FOR BIRD-BANDERS!

OBBA members are invited to try out Piranga: A bird-bander's aid to identifying, ageing and sexing North American birds. Piranga is the newest learning tool from Environment Canada. This program allows bird-banders to easily upload, share and comment on their photographs of birds in the hand, as well as the photos of others, in the hopes of creating a comprehensive library of images for both sexes and all ages of North American species. This tool is to be used alongside existing banding references, such as Peter Pyle's Identification Guide to North American Birds, to practice and improve ageing and sexing techniques without requiring a bird in the hand, or to provide comparative material when you do have a bird in the hand.

To be effective, Piranga requires users to contribute and share their images of full bodies, wings, tails and other details - in short, any image that represents a trait that a bird-bander could use to age and sex an individual during banding operations. Users also benefit from the comment function, which allows the bander to describe how they aged and sexed the individual shown in each image or to highlight important aspects of a given image. Other banders can then respond to the initial comment should they wish to do so.

We are inviting you to participate in and contribute to the program. At present, the focus on the program is on images and associated comments, to be used in conjunction with existing references, as mentioned above. However, it was designed to allow for more detailed descriptions of age and sex, as shown by the accounts for Yellow-rumped Warbler and the American Goldfinch (thanks to Marcel Gahbauer from the Migration Research Foundation for allowing us to use the sample text on those pages).

To try out Piranga you first must register with Natureinstruct by visiting <http://www.natureinstruct.org> if you have not already done so for Dendroica (Environment Canada's online bird song identification tool). You can also invite any banders or assistants you work with.

We hope that you enjoy using Piranga, and look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions contact Marie-Anne Hudson: marie-anne.hudson@ec.gc.ca.

The screenshot shows the Piranga website interface. At the top, there are logos for Environment Canada, USGS, and CONABIO. The main heading is "PIRANGA" with the subtitle "A bird-bander's aid to identifying, ageing and sexing North American birds". Below this, there are three images: a red bird, a grey wing, and a grey tail. A text block explains the tool's purpose and includes a disclaimer. At the bottom, there is a "Choose country to begin:" section with buttons for Canada, U.S.A., and Mexico, and a logo for the North American Banded Council.



NORTH AMERICAN BANDING COUNCIL DUCK BANDING WORKSHOP

Norm North

On 28-29 July 2011 a North American Banding Council (NABC) waterfowl certification session and workshop was held at *Bark Lake Leadership Centre* in Irondale, Ontario. Approximately 30 people attended; 7 wrote the certification test – 5 failed; 2 passed at Bander level, and both have enough hours for certification. The event and venue were well received, and currently we plan to have a similar session in 2012. For more information contact Norm North—north@execulink.com

THE USE AND APPLICATION OF HARD METAL BANDS Lesley-Anne Howes

The bird banding program now recommends hard metal bands for use on birds that are capable of removing standard federal aluminum bands, long lived species and species that live in aqueous environments that promote the erosion of aluminum bands. Hard metal bands may also be used as an alternative to lock-on or rivet bands for some species. The banding program recently added more sizes of hard metal bands to the banding program inventory and increased their availability. Application of hard metal bands differs from that of aluminum bands and the technique must be learned in order ensure correct and safe application. The inappropriate application of hard metal bands can cause injury to birds. Hard metal bands are extremely difficult to remove and therefore banders should be familiar with both the application and the removal techniques before using these bands.

The Bird Banding Office has produced a short video that demonstrates the safe and appropriate application and removal techniques of hard metal bands. The video was made in consultation and collaboration with the North American Banding Council, the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory, Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory, Long Point Bird Observatory, and the Ontario Bird Banding Association.

<http://www.youtube.com/environmentcan#p/u/6/55QtqMZ-J-Q>

Bird Banding Office
Canadian Wildlife Service
Environment Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
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ADVERTISEMENTS

BIRDERS AND BANDERS WANTED

Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN) stations across the country, many of which are in Ontario, are looking for birders and banders who are interested in gaining the experience of a lifetime volunteering or working for the birds. Visit the CMMN web-site – www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cmmn/ for more information about stations near you and opportunities offered. Population trends, seasonal abundance graphs, and other summary statistics from the CMMN are available from Nature Counts at www.naturecounts.ca.

Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO) Internship Position Available:

LPBO is offering an Internship position for more experienced individuals. For more information about volunteer or internship opportunities at LPBO visit Bird Studies Canada's job opportunities page - www.birdscanada.org/about/jobs or contact LPBO at lpbo@birdscanada.org .

YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS' WANTED

ATTENTION PARENTS AND KEEN TEEN BIRDERS!

The Long Point Bird Observatory is looking for keen teen birders to apply for the 2011 Doug Tarry Natural History Fund - Young Ornithologist Workshop to be held from Friday 27 July to Sunday 5 August. Participants will receive hands-on training in field ornithology including bird banding, censusing, field identification, birding trips, preparing museum specimens, guest lectures, and more! Six of Canada's most promising ornithologists between the ages of 13-17 will be selected to attend, and will receive the Doug Tarry Bird Study Award to cover all on-site expenses. For those traveling long distances, special grants may also be available to help offset air travel costs. Applications are due 15 April, 2011. For more information and an application form, contact LPBO at lpbo@birdscanada.org , or visit www.birdscanada.org/longpoint.

BOARD MEMBERS WANTED

Are you an enthusiastic bird bander in Ontario? The OBBA board of directors is interested in attracting new individuals who may be interested in contributing to furthering communication and knowledge among bird banders in Canada. If you're interested in contributing more to the OBBA contact David Okines: davidokines@aol.com .



PHOTO GALLERY: THE 2011 OBBA AGM !



The OBBA is grateful to the five speakers that made the 2011 OBBA AGM very informative and entertaining. Christine Madliger (University of Windsor (UW)), Christie MacDonald (UW), Bethany Thurber (University of Western Ontario), Mike Vandentillaart (Lotek Wireless), and Maggie MacPherson (York University). Photo: Stu Mackenzie



The Hilliardton Marsh crew from Temiskaming feeling right at home in Port Rowan.
Photo: Bruce Murphy

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The views and opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of each contributing author and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of the OBBA or its management.

The Ontario Bird Banding Association is a non-profit, membership-driven and inclusive organization representing the interests of all amateur and 'professional' bird banders across Ontario.

If you band birds in Ontario, for any reason, you should be a member!

