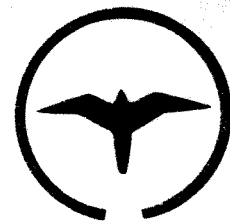


ONTARIO BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION



JANUARY - FEBRUARY 1981 NEWSLETTER

1981 ANNUAL MEETING - 1956 - 1981 25TH ANNIVERSARY

The 1981 Annual General Meeting will be held in the Lecture Room of the McLaughlin Planetarium, University Avenue, Toronto, Ontario. As this is the Silver Anniversary of O.B.B.A., we are expecting an exceptional turn out. Let's make this a meeting to remember. We have also reserved Locke House (The beautiful headquarters of the F.O.N.) for our evening get-together.

AGENDA

- 9:15 Registration
- 9:45 Intoduction of members and visitors
- 9:55 Presidents Report
- 10:00 Treasurers Report
- 10:05 Editors Report
- 10:10 Election of Officers and Executive Committee
- 10:20 C.W.S. Address - Steve Wendt

Station Reports

- 10:30 Guelph Banding Group - Neil Bredin
- 10:45 Hawk Cliff Raptor Banding Station - Don Fowler
- 11:00 Long Point Bird Observatory - David Hussell
- 11:15 Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory - Mike Evans
- 11:30 Toronto Bird Observatory - David Broughton
- 11:45 Other Business
- 12:00 Adjourn for Lunch
- 1:30 Reminiscenses of the past 25 years - David Hussell, Bill Wasserfall, Jim Woodford.
- 3:00 Coffee Break
- 3:30 Saw-whet Owl migration at the Toronto Bird Observatory - David Broughton
- 3:50 Ageing and Sexing of Bald Eagles - Gary Bortolotti
- 4:10 Caspian Tern Breeding Biology - Peter Fetterolf
- 4:30 Ross' Gull Breeding in Canada - Fred Cooke
- 4:50 Meeting Adjourns
- 5:30 Reception and Displays at Locke House - Refreshments will be available

RETURNS FROM THE ATIKOKAN BIRD "NUT" CLUB

Atikokan is about 200 km. west of Thunder Bay (on Lake Superior). As in most small towns, there exists a small dedicated band of birders, who must, by all reason, be nuts. Who else but birders would start a Christmas Bird Count at the dump to count Ravens in the -30°C weather found at sunrise? Who else but birders would subject themselves to the beaks of evening Grosbeaks or the talons of a Merlin hanging belly-up in the mist net set for White-throats?

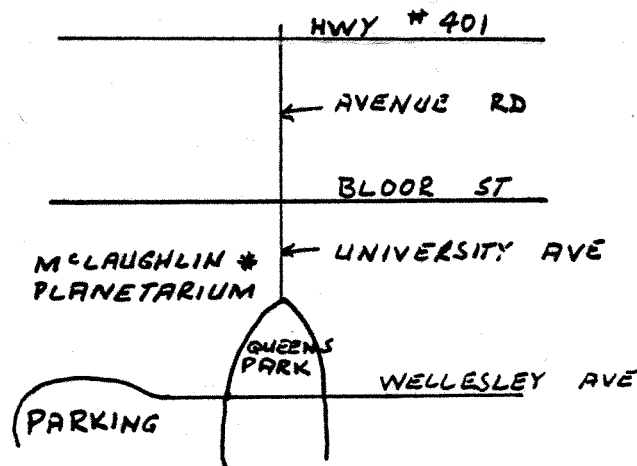
At any rate, we have been banding here for four years now. We've seen a lot of interesting birds, including some new ones for the district - two Gray-cheeked Thrushes this fall. Our banding activities have also introduced us to some good people through correspondence about foreign retraps and recoveries.

One such person is Mrs. G. M. Brown of Lake Spring, Missouri. On January 4, 1976, she put band 870-00817 on a brown Purple Finch, and called it AHY-U. On November 15, 1978, she retrapped it as an adult male (so it was hatched in 1975). We caught the bird in Atikokan May 5, 1978, and she caught it for her third time back at Lake Spring December 22, 1980. If it shows up here in Atikokan again this year, I may send my Christmas Card to her with the bird.

The other retrap I thought you might find interesting is a Pine Grosbeak banded here by a fellow birder, Dave Elder, on January 6, 1979, as an adult male (ASY). This fellow showed up again this fall and finally wandered into Dave's nets January 4, 1981.

PARKING FEBRUARY 28 - ANNUAL MEETING

You might avoid very high parking fees on February 28, by parking in the University Campus which is within reasonable walking distance from our meeting. Follow Wellesley west, or go south on University from Bloor and very close to the Parliament Buildings take the left branch which leads to Wellesley. Turn right on Wellesley, dip under the bridge and enter the parking area.



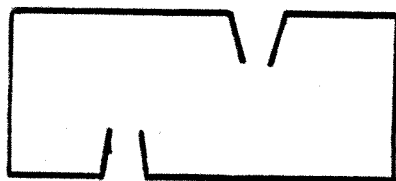
MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership dues are payable January 1st. If you haven't paid yet you can do so at the Annual General Meeting. If you can't make it to the meeting, please mail your dues to Mr. R. Hubert, 10 Paulson Crt., St. Thomas, ON.

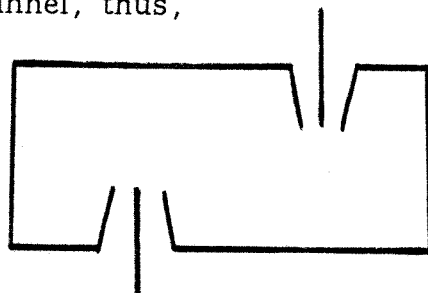
A MODIFIED FUNNEL TRAP FOR SNOW BUNTINGS - DAVID BREWER

In between January 1st, and 12th, about six hundred Snow Buntings were banded by Martin Wernaart at Mountsberg. Martin has discovered that a very trivial modification to standard funnel traps makes them much more effective.

A normal funnel trap has a floor plan, thus,



or some variant thereof. Snow Buntings are, however, very mobile birds; they tried to run almost like a sandpiper, at considerable speed when feeding, and frequently sprint past the entrances. To combat this, Martin put in a central partition into each funnel, thus,



Buntings which are running around the trap encounter the walls, and then pause long enough to work out that the way to get to the food is to turn inwards; without this enforced pause they usually dash past the entrance too fast to notice the way to the food.

A trap with central partitions was operated beside a conventional one, and consistently caught four or five times the number of Buntings. All of our traps are now modified.

We have found that Potter traps are of little use for Snow Buntings; apart from the fact that the falling door spooks the flock, the trap itself is too massive and the birds are very unwilling to enter. The best material for traps is 1" square mesh; this does allow Goldfinches and the like to escape, but the wide mesh apparently does not inhibit the Buntings from entering in the way a more solid - appearing structure would.

Despite the recent severe weather, with temperatures falling on one occasion to -30°C , the Buntings seemed to be in excellent health and are very fat. Birds trapped late in the day are consistently heavier, by several grams, than birds caught just after dawn, which is hardly surprising considering the amount of bait (cracked corn) which they get through.

We have also caught a few Longspurs and Horned Larks. An interesting point about all these species is that they all have jet-black feet. Black, of course, both radiates and absorbs heat better than any other colour: though many birds have dark legs, absolutely jet-black ones are a rarity, and it is doubtless not a coincidence that these three which do are the ones that live in the most severe conditions.

BANDING SNOW BUNTINGS NEAR ST. THOMAS, ONT. - MARSHALL FIELD

In early February 1980, I initiated a Snow Bunting banding project on Bob Wilson's dairy farm which is located three miles south-east of St. Thomas. The winter had been relatively mild, which is not considered particularly good for Snow Bunting trapping, but by the last day of operating on March 16, I had managed to band 353 Snow Buntings, 13 Horned Larks and 6 Lapland Longspurs. I had a chance to try different models of traps, had a retrap of a Snow Bunting of a few weeks, caught and removed a kestrel from my trapping area and really enjoyed working with these tundra visitors.

This winter (1981) Bob Hubert of St. Thomas, has joined me in the Bunting project. Large flocks of up to 2,000 Snow Buntings were sighted in our trapping area during December as winter descended upon us much earlier than last year. Late in December we baited two areas, 150 feet apart and started trapping on January 2, 1981. At the time of writing, January 12, we have banded 334 Snow Buntings, 44 Horned Larks and 139 Lapland Longspurs. The volume of Longspurs this year has been a real surprise as no one seemed to be aware of these numbers. Some sixty observers on the Christmas bird count in this area, on December 26, were only able to list a total of eight.

On Saturday, January 10, Peter Lockhart and Don Pope made a trip down from Oshawa, armed with some pink marking dye. A light application of dye was painted on the white secondary wing feathers of the Snow Buntings and after a suitable drying time, the birds were released. Everyone seemed quite satisfied that the colour stood out well as the birds were flying away.

The banding and marking operation was carried out inside the barn alongside Mr. Wilson's herd of Jersey cows. The cows were not too interested in what we were doing, but the dozen or so barn cats watched the proceedings with great interest hoping that one of the birds might escape. We were most appreciative of the heat generated by the cattle as it was bitter cold outside, but that good old-fashioned barnyard odour tainted everything including the banding notebook.

Peter Lockhart has been doing the ground work with the Federal Bird Banding Office, Ottawa, to acquire the necessary permission to use the colour coding. He has also researched previous Snow Bunting banding records for Ontario and Michigan. Don Pope has investigated the types of non-toxic dyes available and has worked out a system of application. If any of our January marked birds are retrapped in late February or March, it should give us an indication of its lasting qualities. To date 80 snow buntings have been colour marked.

On January 10, we were rewarded with our first Snow Bunting return -- a female, banded in February 1980.

Snow Bunting banding has many associated problems such as raptor harassment, House Sparrow and Pigeon free loaders, and then there is the weather! with drifting snow covering the bait and blizzard conditions at -20 degrees celsius. But I enjoy it all.

POSITIONS OPEN AT LONG POINT BIRD OBSERVATORY: 1981

The following positions are expected to be open in 1981. Applications stating qualifications, experience, and time available, and giving names of one or two people who can be referred to for recommendations, should be made in writing to: David J. T. Hussell, LPBO, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ont. NOE 1MO.

LPBO Warden

The warden will be responsible for operation of the Observatory's field stations on Long Point for part or all of the period April 1 - October 31, 1981. The warden will be expected to work with volunteers on migration observation, banding and other projects, and will be responsible for maintaining station facilities, for communications, and for transportation of supplies and personnel to and from the mainland. Essential qualifications include experience and interest in bird identification, banding and other fieldwork; ability to carry out maintenance work on buildings, boats, and related equipment, to operate boats, and to work with volunteers in isolated conditions. Car ownership and possession of a driving licence will be assets. Applications are due by February 28, 1981.

Observatory Assistants

Two or more assistants will be required in 1981 to assist in various aspects of the Observatory's program including any or all of the following: migration observation and banding, breeding bird census, research projects on migrant or breeding birds, maintenance and operation of physical facilities including buildings, boats, traps, etc., clerical work and typing, and educational programs for schools. These are essentially volunteer positions, but living expenses and accommodation are provided at the Observatory. Successful applicants can expect to benefit from extensive training and experience in various aspects of the Observatory's program. Positions are open throughout the year and to persons of any age of experience who are available for at least a month. Applications will be considered at any time, but should be submitted by March 1, for the university and high school summer vacation periods.

Volunteers

Many aspects of the LPBO program depend on the help of short-term volunteers. Anyone wishing to take part in the Observatory activities outlined above is encouraged to do so. A small fee is charged for accommodation and boat travel, and reservations must be booked well in advance. Write to David Hussell for further details (see address above).

OBBA will be sponsoring one of these volunteer positions. If you wish to be considered for a week at the Long Point Bird Observatory, please write to Peter Lockhart, 86-520 Rossland Rd. East, Oshawa, ON, L1G 2X5. Your letter should state your reasons for wanting to assist at Long Point. These positions are not restricted to students.

MORE ON GANNETS - DAVID BREWER

A little while ago, in a note on a recovery in Libya of a Gannet I had banded in Scotland, I commented on the longevity of this species and other sea-birds. Coincidentally I have just received three more recoveries of Gannets I banded in the mid-sixties.

None show any spectacular movements; the furthest was in the Isle of Man, 130 km away, and another was in Northern Ireland, 117 km distant from the nesting colony. The third was found at the fishing village of Ballantrae, (familiar to devotees of Robert Louis Stevenson), which is actually within sight of Ailsa Craig, at least on a clear day. The definition of a clear day in the West of Scotland is one on which it is about to rain; on unclear days, it is actually raining.

The birds were banded in 1964, 1965 and 1966, giving ages of sixteen, fifteen and fourteen years. All were banded as nestlings. As I recollect, I only banded 86 Gannets in 1964, and this is the fifth recovery I have had from that small number; two of the other recoveries were fairly local and two were in Portugal. Consequently, the Gannet is living up to its reputation of being a very good species to band. Another reason, of course, is that the bird gives good longevity records lies in the fact that the band is made of a much tougher metal than aluminum, and doesn't fall off after a few years.

LONG POINT ACCOMMODATION

Many birders visit Long Point several times each year. They will be disappointed to learn that Jim Alexander has sold the old home for a residence and hence his Erievue Lodge is no longer operating. However, there is a good replacement. Frank and Clara Long have opened Port Royal Flyway Lodge in their lovely old red brick farmhouse which is located a short distance west of Brown's Farm Goose Sanctuary on the north side of the road. The address is R.R. #3, Port Rowan, ON, and the telephone number is 519-586-2678.

BANDING SUPPLIES

Mist Nets and other supplies can be obtained from Bleitz Wildlife Foundation, 5334 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, California, U.S.A. 90027.

Mist Nets are also available from Kathleen Wilson Conservation Enterprises, 58 Edgar Ave., Thornhill, ON, (Phone 416-221-2304).

Banding Pliers are available from R.N. MacDonald, 850 Main Street, Lynfield, Mass., U.S.A. 01940.

TORONTO BIRD OBSERVATORY - ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the T.B.O. will be held on February 17, 1981, at 7:30 p.m. Location is the University of Toronto Campus, in Room 432 of the Ramsey Wright Biology Building, on the corner of St. George and Harbord Streets. There will be a short business meeting followed by slide presentations.