



NEWSLETTER

ABA/LEICA TROPICBIRDS

Chris Kimber

Every spring the American Birding Association selects teams of young birders for their Leica/ABA Tropicbirds teams as part of an initiative to raise funds for youth birding and conservation and give young birders an excellent experience. These teams are sent to compete in some of the most illustrious birding competitions on the continent. This past spring I had the good fortune of being selected as a member of the Tropicbirds team that was sent to compete in the Great Texas Birding Classic in April 2001.

The first part of the Tropicbirds process is applying, which involves writing an essay that outlines your suitability for the Tropicbirds. If you are accepted, your next goal is to raise as much money as possible for the ABA to use to help fund many of the excellent programs they offer for young birders. You must also arrange your transportation to the starting point. Beyond this Leica is generous enough to fund all of your expenses including food, accommodation, transport and other ancillary details, including my long-

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distance calls to my parents. They also provide two very skilled leaders, Mentors and chaperones in New Jersey birders Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis.

On April 25th I arrived alongside the Rio Grande in McAllen, TX. I was ready to begin the two and a half days of scouting that were to precede the Big Day. At this point I met my teammates, all very fun and friendly people who I enjoyed birding with over the next five days. They were team captain Stephanie Dosch, 18, of Bellevue, Washington, Jessie Barry, 16, of Rochester, New York and Ben Winger, 16, of Cleveland, Ohio. Since we were to be competing in the Lower Coast region, we scouted the Rio Grande from Falcon Dam to the Gulf, allowing all team members including me to pick up many lifers which meant less stopping on the Big Day.

We began the Big Day at Santa Ana NWR, where our plan to walk in and pick up calling marsh birds at midnight was stymied by a locked gate. Nonetheless, we heard Pauraque on our arrival, and the bird was calling loudly with 30 seconds to go. Unfortunately, the bird decided to wait a further 12 minutes before saying something again. Satisfied, we piled into the van, stopping briefly for a Peregrine atop a lit sign in downtown McAllen. We headed to Bentsen State Park, treated to a perched Barn Owl in our headlights on the way. At Bentsen we had a Screech-Owl calling at the gate, and our patience was rewarded by a brief call from the resident Elf Owl. While waiting we heard many nocturnal migrants above, but we were unable to ID them. Michael could, but alas our leaders were not allowed to assist us on the Big Day. We got Lesser Nighthawk at a rest stop, and then Common Poorwill at Santa Margarita Ranch. From here on we tried to sort out the real birds from the countless Mockingbirds trying to convince us there was a flock of Groove-billed Ani inhabiting the desert scrub.

Beginning the dawn chorus was a Vermilion Flycatcher staked out at Falcon County Park. From here we rushed to the Rio Grande at Salineno for dawn. Along the way we picked up most of our desert species, and then many of the riparian specialties at the river. We were treated to a Clay-colored Robin singing, our first good view after several crummy ones. We also got Ringed Kingfisher and White Ibis, but were disappointed to not find Muscovy or Red-billed Pigeon. On our way out we failed to see Black-tailed Gnatcatcher or Scaled Quail. From there we hit Chapeno, unbelievably missing the resident Brown Jay, but hearing a much-needed Audubon's Oriole. Rushing to Falcon Dam we learned that we had missed Muscovy below the spillway. Two team members saw the bird fly, enough to count it, but sadly I missed it. We picked up some waterbirds, and headed to Falcon Lake for American White Pelican, Greater Roadrunner and Painted Bunting.

Headed back east we saw a Crested Caracara, but knew we missed Bullock's Oriole. At a last ditch attempt for the oriole we left empty-handed, but received a surprise Black-chinned Hummingbird. We reached Bentsen an hour behind schedule at noon and were disappointed when we found none of our target birds. From here it was on to Anzalduas County Park, where a nesting Gray Hawk and a surprise Hook-billed Kite perked us up. We reached Santa Ana NWR with high hopes, and were not disappointed. We got a plethora of waders and dabbling ducks, Roseate Spoonbill, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Anhinga, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Louisiana Waterthrush and copulating Groove-billed Ani among others greeted us. We were energized as we headed for the coast, making stops for Tropical Kingbird, Green Parakeet, American Golden Plover and Tamaulipas Crow. We reached South Padre Island without White-tailed Hawk, but still in good spirits. We got all of our tern species, waders such as Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit and Wilson's Plover, and several ducks.

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South Padre Island's migrant traps yielded several good birds, including Summer Tanager, Canada Warbler and several thrushes. From here we headed to our last stop at the SPI Convention Center for Kentucky Warbler and Acadian Flycatcher. The marsh yielded Black-crowned Night-Heron, Clapper Rail and Purple Gallinule. Before darkness fell we added Savannah Sparrow and Semipalmated Plover to our lists. Making our way back to the finish line near McAllen, we had to write up a couple of our birds. Stepping out of the van at the end, we were greeted by a calling Upland Sandpiper, our 192nd and final species.

Our total put us first and only in our age group, and good enough to tie for third overall for the Lower Coast. Numbers aside, I had an absolutely fabulous time, and saw some of the birds I dreamt of as a young boy. I returned home with 87

lifers, and it would be hard to pick a favourite from them. I would without hesitation recommend the Tropicbirds experience to any young birder. I would like to thank Leica and the ABA for making this possible, and all my sponsors, especially the Wild Birds Unlimited in Etobicoke. This will go down as one of the best long weekends of my life.

You can sponsor the ABA/Leica Tropicbirds by going to www.americanbirding.org

Chris Kimber, 16, lives in Toronto, ON. He regularly bands at the HBO Selkirk station. He is planning to apply again for the Tropicbirds Texas Classic team, and still desperately wants to see Muscovy. That doesn't include the domestic one that tried to bite him in Brownsville!

Benjamin Wernaart started his bander training this fall as promised. The last time I saw him, he was busily pulling strings in one of the hawk blinds at Holiday Beach Migration Observatory.

BANDING HIGHLIGHTS

Rosemary Vanderlee of the US Army Corps of Engineers reports that the Piping Plover seen at Presqu'ile on June 2nd was banded along with three others at Lake Diefenbaker, Saskatchewan during June 2000. A sore right leg was used to determine that the bird appeared briefly at Long Point a couple of days before it was observed at Prequ'ile.

Chip Weseloh and Jamie Reid located 5 colour-banded Common Terns on Salmon Island, just south and west of Kingston in September. The terns had single colour-bands on the left leg; colour included red, light blue, yellow and black. One tern had blue over white on the right leg. Does anyone know the origin of these banded terns?

Rock Point Banding Station banded 902 Yellow Warblers between July 16 and the end of August. Only 285 were banded in Fall 2000. By mid September Rock Point was within 800 of the total birds banded in Fall 2000 and has continued to have a good Fall season.

Selkirk also had an excellent Fall with record catch numbers of YWAR, AMGO, BAWW, CAWA, OROR and CARW for starters. A NSWO (HY) banded July 17 may be the first breeding record for Haldimand County. Of note a female Cooper's Hawk (SY?) female was retrapped Aug. 18, band no. 705-35149, origin still unknown as no word has been received from the banding office.

Several birds banded at the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory were relocated as follows: COYE, banded May 16/00, found dead in Key West Florida on May 3/01
SSHA banded May 6/00, retrapped at Fort Gratiot (near Port Huron) Michigan, Apr.24/01
GRCA banded May 25/00, found dead in Barrie on May 18/01

REPORT ON THE NORTH AMERICAN BANDING COUNCIL MEETING

Audrey Heagy OBBA Representative to North American Banding Council (NABC)

David Okines and I attended the 2001 meeting of the NABC on behalf of the OBBA in March in Patuxent, Maryland. The meeting was very well attended with representatives or alternates from most of the participating organizations, along with a few trainers and guests.

NABC was established as an incorporated organization in 1998 and consists of 18 to 20 voting representatives including **one representative appointed by OBBA**. The mission of NABC is to **promote sound and ethical bird banding principles and techniques in North America**. Up to this point, the main focus of the NABC has been on preparing study guides and establishing bander certification standards and procedures. Other NABC committees have been working on government policy affecting banding (a current issue in the US), outreach (to inform banders, etc about NABC) and education (compiling resource materials for banders).

Considerable progress has been made on establishing standards and procedures for certifying passerine banders. A few experimental NABC bander certification sessions have been held in the United States. Each bander certification session consists of a written and a practical exam. The written test can be done in advance of the field session. The practical exam may involve specimens (identification, ageing and sexing, standard measurements) as well as live birds (banding skills, proper use of banding equipment, etc.). Bander certification is NOT required to receive or maintain a Banding Permit, however, it does provide proof of your competence. At present all bander certification is being carried out by the initial pool of bander trainers who were identified by NABC in 1998 and 1999. The process for certifying new NABC trainers was discussed at the meeting but has not been field tested yet.

The next certification session that may be convenient for Ontario banders will be held in Ohio in August 2002. If there is sufficient interest, we could organize a certification session in Ontario. If you might be interested in getting NABC certification please contact me at: <aheagy@kwic.com>.

As of March 2001, five study guides have been completed and are ready for distribution, including:

- The North American Banders' Study Guide
- Banders' Manual for Passerines
- Banders' Manual for Hummingbirds
- Banders' Manual for Raptor Techniques
- Instructor's Guide to Training Passerine Banders

These manuals will be distributed primarily on the Internet but CDs and hardcopy versions will also be available on request. Waterfowl, shorebird and seabird banding manuals are in preparation.

To obtain copies of any of the study guides (they are FREE!) contact the Canadian Bird Banding Office at: email: BBO_CWS@ec.gc.ca, Tel: 819-997-1121, Fax: 819-953-6612. Remember to specify which guides you want and whether you want the CD version of paper copies.

For more information on the North American Banding Council check out their website at: <www.nabanding.net/nabanding/>. All upcoming bander (and trainer) certification sessions are posted on the website.

A VISIT TO CALIFORNIA

James A. Smith

This past April I went to San Francisco to take the course on Advanced Landbird Identification offered by Peter Pyle and Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO). This was a course which dealt with molt limits, feather tracks and how to age birds using what you see in relation to molt in land birds. Live birds, slides, and bird skins were used to try to perfect our skill in this area. Peter Pyle was interesting and very informative. The value of greater primary coverts in aging birds came through loud and clear and I used what I learned in aging the birds caught at Rock Point this past Spring.

I met many interesting banders who came from such places as Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Alberta, Massachusetts, Colorado, Utah, and California. Canada was well represented by four out of the twelve participants. It was a congenial group with off time being spent in finding some of the western birds such as Acorn Woodpecker, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Allen's Hummingbird, Anna's Hummingbird, Glaucous-winged Gull, and so on.

Accommodations were as you could find them around Bolinas and other small towns of the area. Bolinas, the small town where I stayed was a "Northern Exposure West Coast" with some very interesting characters to be found in the permanent vans, cars and so on around the town where people were staying. It is best known for the locals tearing down the highway signs that indicate where the turn off is for Bolinas. One of our group was referred to on the street as a "damned twitcher". So much for adding to the economy of Bolinas.

The PRBO Banding Station is well situated with a distant view of the Pacific Ocean. It has two main buildings - one housing offices, banding area, and the conference room. The other building has kitchen and dormitory rooms for the many interns that are used for the ongoing studies done at the station. Mist nets are located around the hills with many of them being suspended double nets. Doing net rounds for this station would make you fit or kill you in no time. Breeding bird studies were also keeping a number of interns busy as they documented the activity of the breeding birds in a mapped out location. Birds caught in the nets are walked back to the area where they were caught rather than being released and then disrupting other breeding areas as they make their way back to their home turf.

We spent an afternoon at Cal. Tech. in San Francisco. It was sad to think of so many dead birds but when the tags were examined I saw that many of the skins date from the 1800s. I guess in those days people did bird watching so there was no doubt about what they had seen since they could show the actual bird. At least the skins were being used for scientific studies. Trying to look at greater coverts becomes an additional challenge when the skins have the wings in a resting position and can not be opened. A very interesting afternoon which enabled us to more clearly look for the differences necessary to age a bird.

I really enjoyed the course and although it was very expensive, I would suggest that it is a valuable addition to any bander's bag of things to know.

CHOKPAK RINGING STATION, SPRING SEASON OF 2001

Edward Gavrilov and Andrey Gavrilov

e-mail: InstZoo@nursat.kz

This spring have some peculiarities. The March was warm and snow was melt on plains in Southern Kazakhstan. Some species (larks, Starling, Rock Pipit and some other) migrated at this time at high numbers, but the Station was closed. In April there was some cold spells, when temperature dropped up to –6 degree C and some rains with strong western wing took place. Out of this late migrants (Spanish Sparrow, Red-headed Bunting, Common Quail and others) appeared on some days later (up to a week) of its long term average dates.

The station was opened in beginning of April. Two big stationary traps were built (width of 40 m, height of 12 m, length of 70 m) and 4 mist nets in nearby forest belt were operated too. Above this some ringing sessions were on pounds and lakes with mist netting. From 11th of April till 25th of May 15532 birds of 71 species and five hybrids were ringed (see list below).

1. Little Bittern	1	28. Bank Swallow (Sand	51. Common Whitethroat	1
2. Common Buzzard	1	Martin) 15	52. (Siberian) Lesser	
3. Eurasian Sparrowhawk	19	29. Central Asian Martin	Whitethroat	6
4. Shikra	1	30. Golden Oriole	53. Spotted Flycatcher	6
5. Hen Harrier	1	31. Rook	54. Asian Paradise Flycatcher	
6. Montagu's Harrier	2	32. Magpie	2	
7. Hobby	5	33. Bearded Tit	55. Tawny Pipit	2
8. Eurasian Kestrel	1	34. Black-throated Thrush	56. Tree Pipit	14
9. Lesser Kestrel	1	35. Common Nightingale	57. White Wagtail	10
10. Grey Partridge	3	36. Thrush Nightingale	58. Masked Wagtail	1
11. Collared Dove	3	37. Bluethroat	59. Grey Wagtail	42
12. OrientalTurtle Dove	158	38. Common Redstart	60. Citrine Wagtail	2
13. Eurasian Turtle Dove	6	39. Great Reed Warbler	61. Black-headed Wagtail	5
14. Laughing Dove	1	40. Clamorous Weed Warbler	62. Yellow Wagtail	129
15. Rock Dove	5	118	63. Indian Mynah	20
16. Wood Pigeon	1	41. Great X Clamorous	64. Eurasian Starling	6
17. Scops Owl	4	Warbler	65. Rose-coloured Starling	
18. Eurasian Cuckoo	4	4	196	
19. Roller	32	42. Blyth's Reed Warbler	66. Scarlet Rosefinch	6
20. European Nightjar	7	43. Paddyfield Warbler	67. Black-billed Desert-finch	
21. Hoopoe	5	44. Reed Warbler	6	
22. European Kingfisher	1	45. Cetti's Warbler	68. Red-headed Bunting	41
23. Common Bee-eater	137	46. Moustached Warbler	69. Corn Bunting	79
24. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	2	47. (Siberian) Chiffchaff	70. Grey-necked Bunting	1
25. Barn Swallow	2503	48. (Eastern) Greenish	71. Spanish Sparrow	9674
26. Red-rumped Swallow	14	Warbler	72. Indian Sparrow	1584
27. House Martin	1	49. Yellow-browed Warbler	73. Indian-spanish Hybrid	1
		11	At all	15352
		50. Hume's Whitethroat		
		1		

The most impressive were two Paradise Flycatcher, male and female, caught in forest belt at 18 and 20th of May (singles before was caught 19.05.83, 4.05.86 and 4.05.87) and the first Clamorous Reed Warbler, caught in forest belt at 15.05. Out of two Citrine Wagtails one

was *calcarata* subspecies inhabiting highland marshes and one Yellow Wagtail was *leucocephala* subspecies which breeds in China.

Out of ringing sessions out of Chokpak very effective were on Stone Lake, which were due to Bengt Hansson and Anna Karin Olsson from Sweden, whod came to Station for study of *Acrocephalus*. Four hybrids of Great Reed Warbler and Clamorous Reed Warbler were caught here at first. These birds have intermediate morphological signs and Bengt tell us that he hear one male which began to sing as *arundinaceus* and finished as *stentoreus*! Above various warblers Little Bittern and Kingfisher were ringed here too.

No birds with foreign rings were in this spring.

EDITOR'S NOTES

Thank you to everyone who submitted material for my first issue of your newsletter. Several longer articles have been held for a future issue. Articles for publication, with a preferred maximum length of two pages in font 12, should be submitted in a Word document as an email attachment or on a diskette.

Mary Gustafson of the BBL will be travelling up to our next AGM to do the bird quiz and has said she would be willing to hold the written test on the Friday evening (Feb.22/02) for members who want to try for NABC Certification. The cost of certification is \$25U.S. but she isn't sure whether it is payable at the time of the written exam or when the field portion of the test is taken. Once

candidates pass the written exam they have 5 years in which to take the field test. If you are interested, contact Dave Brewer as soon as possible for further details.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE JANETTE DEAN AWARD

The Janette Dean Award is presented annually at the Association's annual member's meeting to a recipient who is considered to have made a significant contribution to bird banding in Ontario and is still active in his/her field. The Janette Dean Fund was created in memory of a leading Ontario bander. Contact one of the OBBA directors if you would like to make a nomination for the 2003 award.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Renew your membership
(membership renewal form enclosed)

January 1, 2002

Deadline for submissions for January 2002 issue

January 16, 2002

OBBA Annual Meeting at Mountsberg Centre

February 23, 2002
