



NEWSLETTER

2002 JANETTE DEAN AWARD

Joanne Dewey accepts the Janette Dean Award from John Miles, on behalf of recipient **David Shepherd**, who was unable to attend the OBBA AGM.

HUMMINGBIRDS

Hummingbirds were banded for the first time at the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory on June 1st, 2002. Cindy Cartwright completed her training under Allen Chartier by banding 15 Ruby-throated hummingbirds. Anyone interested in learning to handle hummingbirds, either to check for bands, or to train to band them, should contact Allen and arrange to visit Holiday Beach M.O.

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PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Audrey Heagy

Once again the OBBA AGM in February was well attended. Attendees enjoyed several interesting presentations and survived another one of Dave Brewers' infamous bird quizzes.

At the July meeting of the OBBA Executive several items were discussed.

The **Bander Education Workshop** at Long Point, which is being co-sponsored by OBBA, is now full with 20 participants coming from around the province. OBBA is providing travel subsidies to three participants who requested assistance. Remember that the Friday evening session, which will include a presentation by Ken Burton on how to use plumage and moult to age and sex passerines, is **open to everyone**. Please **RSVP** with Jim Smith (benavis@sympatico.ca), preferably by July 31st, if you are planning to attend the Friday session on August 9th at 7 pm at Long Point.

As was reported in the last newsletter, we are winding down the **OBBA Store**. We currently have a stock of Spidertech mist nets (12 m, 30 mm mesh) available at \$55 each, and band-opening pliers and wing rules. This is your last chance to get them through OBBA. Thanks to Dave Lamble for all his work over the past two years trying to make this operation a go (no thanks to Canada Customs for making his job so difficult). If you are interested in purchasing any of the remaining stock, contact Audrey Heagy, aheagy@kwic.com.

As anyone who has been looking for a copy of the *North American Bird Bander* journal in a university library will know, it is often difficult to track down references to articles on bird banding, trap design, etc. The OBBA receives NABB and newsletters from various other bird banding organizations as part of our newsletter exchange program. Due to our historical ties with Long Point Bird Observatory, many of these exchange publications were housed in the LPBO library. For many years this library was not accessible due to lack of space in LPBO, now Bird Studies Canada, headquarters.

With the completion of the new Bird Studies Canada headquarters building at Port Rowan, the library has finally been unpacked and shelved and is now accessible to OBBA members. Here is the current access policy, as provided by Jon McCracken, BSC's volunteer librarian: *OBBA members are free to use the BSC library at any time during normal office hours (Mon-Fri; 9-5). Advance notice isn't required. However, we are strictly a non-lending library, so no materials can leave the premises. In fact, there is a fancy electronic security system in place.* The BSC library is quite a good ornithological library and includes many hard to find publications of interest to bird banders. I would encourage our members to check it out.

Speaking of OBBA's history, two significant years in the history of bird banding in Ontario are coming up. 2005 will mark the 100th anniversary of bird banding in Ontario and 2006 will be OBBA's 50th anniversary. Does anyone have any suggestions as to what the OBBA should do to celebrate these significant milestones? Please put some thought in to this matter and pass your ideas on to any Board member.

BAILLIE BIRDATHON, MAY 20TH 2002: CENTRAL SOUTHERN FLORIDA

Dave Okines

First, I would like to say 'thank you' for sponsoring me for the 2002 Baillie Birdathon. The money raised goes to Bird Studies Canada who administrates the Baillie Birdathon and the Baillie Fund. Through your generosity I managed to raise \$541.85. Of this \$107.71 will come back to the OBBA.

As I was in the Everglades in May, I did my Birdathon down there. The evening before the big day had me poring over the map to find a route that would provide what I thought would be the best variety of habitats and birds with the least amount of driving. The trouble with the Everglades is that it's one big marsh - once you've seen one Great-blue Heron or a Great Egret, you can't count them anymore and it's time to find another type of habitat, (this often means a 50+km drive). The route I took had, by the end of the day, notched up a total of 410 km and 111 species.

I started the day off by crawling out of bed in the Everglades National Park at 04:00 hrs. After two quick cups of coffee, I was on the road by 04:30. I had a one and a half hour drive ahead of me before I would be at my originally intended starting point. On stepping outside the door, I heard Barred Owl and Chuck-will's Widow so I decided to start the day then. Further up the road I had a nice Barn Owl hunting the fields at the side of the road, a hard bird to find down there in the summer. I then proceeded to drive up to Big Cypress where at 06:20 at first light I started to bird 'Birdon Road' a circular road on the southern edge of Big Cypress. I quickly ticked of a lot of the more common species along with the usual herons and egrets. At the end of the road there was a Barred Owl sitting in a tree watching a Wild Boar (feral pig) taking a drink from the ditch below it. I was up to 32 species.

My next stop was Tigertail Beach Country Park where I hoped shorebirds were plentiful. The bushes at the entrance to the beach held Hermit Thrush, White-eyed Vireo and American Redstart. Beyond the bushes was the beach area and some brackish pools. Reddish Egret and Osprey were soon seen as well as other shorebirds. Least Terns and Black Skimmers were breeding along the beach. A Sandwich Tern was seen sitting among the Royal Terns and a Roseate Spoonbill flew over.

From there I drove north to the Briggs Nature Centre, This was a more wooded area and Blue Jay, Carolina Wren, Florida Scrub-Jay, Short-tailed Hawk, and Glossy Ibis (on a flooded area) were added to the list which now stood at 74 species. At 11:15 and I headed off to Sannibel Island.

I reach Sannibel at 14:00 and had picked up a few species along the road. A look around some woods at the southern end of the island gave me Magnolia Warbler, Eastern Phoebe, Pileated Woodpecker, Red-eyed Vireo and Black-whiskered Vireo. Moving on to the Ding-Darling area, I added more shorebirds. I couldn't resist a quick visit to a small reserve called the Baillie Tract (I was doing the Baillie Birdathon after all). The total now stood at 88 species and I was running short of time.

My last scheduled stop was the Lake Okeechobee area. A look in Venus Flatwoods Preserve and the woods at Archbold Biological Station gave me Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Bachman's Sparrow, Swallow-tailed Kite, Crested Caracara, Sandhill Crane and American Kestrel. Then with the light failing I had a quick look at Lake Okeechobee and added my 111th species for the day - Mottled Duck. If you wish to see the completed list, contact me directly.

2002 NORTH AMERICAN BANDING COUNCIL MEETING

Audrey Heagy & David Okines

The 2002 meeting of the North American Banding Council (NABC) was held on March 24-25 at the Big Sur Ornithological Lab in California. David Okines and I attended the meeting as the OBBA alternate and representative, respectively. Our attendance at this meeting was possible due to financial support from the OBBA and the Bird Banding Office.

At the meeting, the Publications Committee reported that five of the training manuals are available in English, and French and Spanish translations of these documents are being prepared. A draft shorebird banding manual was under review. An outline has been prepared for the seabird manual. Little or no progress was made in 2001 on the waterfowl and waterbird/marshbird manuals. In Canada, the completed manuals are available (as hardcopy or CD) from the Canadian Bird Banding Office (for further information check out the BBO website, <http://www.cws.scf.ec.gc.ca/nwrc/bbo> or email Louise.Laurin@ec.gc.ca).

The Evaluation Committee reported that in 2001 there were four passerine and one hummingbird bander and/or trainer evaluations sessions. Approximately 40 people applied for NABC certification at these sessions (some people took the bander and trainer certification simultaneously). The overall pass rates for these evaluation sessions were as follows:

- there were 2 fails on the written test (approximately 95% pass rate);
- 24 of 31 (77%) Passerine Bander passes;
- 8 of 10 (80%) Passerine Trainer passes;
- 8 of 8 (100%) Hummingbird Bander passes;
- 2 of 3 (66%) Hummingbird Trainer passes;

The Council directed the Evaluation Committee to focus on developing a protocol so that the Bander Certification could be done on an individual basis, rather than only at group sessions. This will make it much easier for Ontario banders to become certified since they could then arrange with two local NABC-certified Trainers to undergo the evaluation process at a time and place of their own choosing, rather than having to travel to one of limited number of group sessions. A draft protocol for certification at the Trainer level was prepared and field tested in 2001. A revised protocol should be available in 2002.

The Education Committee reported that a few limited resources materials and e-links for banders are currently available on the NABC website (<http://www.nabanding.net>). Priorities for 2002 include developing guidelines and materials for bander educations workshops, developing a web-based database for photographic materials, and acquiring/accessing bird skins which can be used for workshops and evaluation sessions. A draft photo-guide for ageing and sexing passerines was prepared in 2001 but it was decided not to proceed with this project at this time.

The next NABC meeting will be held in New Orleans on September 29/30, 2002. This meeting follows the Ornithological Societies of North America Congress, 24-28 September 2002, which will include a symposium on 100 Years of Bird Banding in North America. The subsequent meeting is planned for Delta Marsh Bird Observatory in fall 2003.

THE NABC BANDER CERTIFICATION TEST: an exclusive, first-hand report from a survivor

Audrey Heagy

Three of the five participants in the NABC Passerine Bander Certification session held in Niagara Falls, NY in April 2002 were from Ontario. The candidates were Audrey Heagy, David Okines and Jim Smith (and yes we all passed with flying colours).

Jon McCracken, one of three NABC trainers in Ontario, agreed to proctor the written exam so we were able to take the written component in Port Rowan, in advance of the field session. The written exam consists of about 50 multiple choice questions and some short-answer questions covering the material in the NABC Bander Study guide and Passerine Banding manual plus the first 40 pages of Pyle's guide to ageing/sexing passerines. We all achieved the 80% grade needed to pass the written test and were eligible to take the practical session.

The practical session is meant to be an evaluation of your banding skills and knowledge using both live birds and specimens in a field setting which allows for a two-way dialogue between candidate and examiner. It involves being graded on a set series of exercises by at least two NABC Trainers. The practical portion of the evaluation was sponsored by the Eastern Bird Banding Association and was held at Jerry Farrell's banding station near Lewiston, New York. The trainers were Betsy Brooks, Sara Morris, Hannah Suther and Bob Yunick.

On the first day of the field evaluation we met at the banding station at 7 am. Jerry had the nets and some Potter traps set up and we started out by each taking turns extracting, banding and processing birds. As a minimum standard, each person has to extract, band and process five birds while being observed by a Trainer. We were also asked to demonstrate various grips. By chance the weather for the practical session was unseasonably hot for mid-April and the nets were very slow. The main species caught was local Black-capped Chickadee, attracted to the bird feeders. After 3 hours we were all one bird short of the five bird requirement. Nonetheless, we headed back to the pavilion area to proceed with the rest of the exam, leaving Jerry to monitor the nets for additional birds.

Each of the other exercises was done individually, either on a one-on-one basis with a Trainer or on your own with written answers. For two of the exercises, each candidate was given a tray of specimens and a Trainer asked you to identify various anatomical features (e.g. carpal covert) or pick out examples of various plumage features (e.g. a bird with fault bars). Other one-on-one exercises dealt with bird behaviour questions (e.g. signs of stress), banding equipment (e.g. good versus bad bird bags), supervising trainees (e.g. describe how you train new helpers to extract birds from a mist net), using nets and/or traps (e.g. had to take down and re-set a mist net), and removing bird bands from frozen specimens. Another exercise involved measuring the wing chord and tail length of a group of about 10 frozen specimens.

By far the most stressful part of the exam was the species identification, age/sex section. We each had to identify, age and sex a group of 12 specimens. This was an open book section and each specimen was dated and had relevant measurements recorded (wing chord, skull condition, etc.). We were given unlimited time for this exercise. What made this so stressful was that if we

misidentified any species then we automatically failed the entire exam. We did have the option of treating one (but only one) bird as “unbanded” if we were uncertain as to its identification. The ageing and sexing was scored differently depending on whether the error was critical (i.e. calling a male a female) or non-critical (calling a known male an unknown). Some of the specimens were easy to identify (but more difficult to correctly age and/or sex), while others were tougher (e.g. juvenile Song Sparrow). The worst part was waiting all day to find out if you had made any “fatal” errors.

Fortunately a few more birds turned up in the nets so we were all able to reach the quota of extracting 5 birds and didn’t have to come back the next day just to extract one bird!

Because we had completed all of the exercises by 4 pm, we waited to hear how we did. Since each and every part of each exercise is being graded, it was not a simple process of having the Trainers confer for a few minutes and then tell each of us whether or not we passed. Instead the Trainers spent a full three hours filling in the report forms with the points earned for each question, adding up points for each section, then adding up the different sections and converting it all to a percent figure. Unfortunately no one had a calculator! Fortunately, the bar was open and the candidates could all treat themselves to a well-earned beer while we waited anxiously. What made all the waiting around really frustrating was that despite the labourious calculations, in the end the evaluation all comes down to a pass/fail situation with 80% being the passing grade. Overall, four of the five candidates passed.

And what do we get for our troubles? Other than the satisfaction of having other skilled banders confirm that you have the necessary skills to be a bander, we also get a certificate putting that in writing. For new banders going for their first banding permit, the Banding Office will take completion of the NABC bander certification as stand-alone proof that you have the necessary qualifications (i.e. you don’t have to provide two references).

Although we all passed and each learned something new over the course of the day due to our interaction with a group of experienced banders, none of us felt at all happy about the overall experience (especially the stress but also the time and cost involved) and we were unanimous in saying that we wouldn’t recommend it to anyone else at this time. This is very unfortunate because there is considerable merit to the NABC’s objectives and everyone involved in this session did their best to try and make it a comfortable and learning experience.

On behalf of the OBBA I will be sending a letter to the Council expressing our concern as an organization about how the bander and training certification is structured and implemented. Anyone wishing a copy of this letter can contact me at ahagy@kwic.com.

For anyone still interested in gaining their NABC Certification, check the Upcoming Sessions section of the NABC webpage (<http://www.nabanding.net>). Of interest to Ontario banders is an upcoming session on *September 13 - 15, 2002 at Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, New York*. This session is open to any US or Canadian bander who already possesses a bird banding permit or subpermit. For more information, please contact Elizabeth W. Brooks (ebrooks@bbbo.org).

CHOKPAK JOURNAL 2001

Mary Gustafson, USGS Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL), Laurel Maryland.

I had the unparalleled opportunity to visit the Chokpak Ornithological Station as part of my official duties as a Biologist in the Bird Banding Laboratory. I'd been planning a trip to Moscow to visit colleagues at the Bird Ringing Centre for some time. In April 2001, Dave Brewer learned of my trip to Moscow and said those unforgettable words "but Mary, you can't go to Moscow and not go to Chokpak - after all, it's on the way. It's a good 1700 miles from Chokpak to Moscow, so it's no more on the way than most of the rest of Europe and large parts of Asia. But the seed was planted, and "all" I had to do was contact Edward Gavrilov in Kazakhstan, get a Visa, add a country to my travel request for official international travel, and get there! If only it was that easy. In each step there were difficulties, the worst being the Visa, which I received hours before my scheduled departure. Once I arrived in Kazakhstan the difficulties ended, due entirely to the staff of the Animal Marking Centre and Chokpak Ornithological Station, and I would like to thank them again for their hospitality.

In 1994, the BBL had hosted Edward Gavrilov, at the time the Director of Chokpak, and I heard tales of Chokpak ringing from him (as well as from Dave Brewer). Edward had retired from the Animal Marking Centre within the past year, but his son, Andrei, is now the Director of the Ornithological Station as well as the head of the ringing scheme. What follows below are excerpts from my journal.

Sept. 1--An uneventful 40-minute flight from Baltimore to JFK, and the obligate two-hour sit for the next flight. Ten hours (and several time zones) to Istanbul, Turkey.

Sept. 2-Arrive Istanbul after circling the Caspian Sea, very little native vegetation and many mosques and minarets visible out the window as we arrive. Not enough time to get anywhere on my layover so I eat lunch for 12 million in the local currency and browse in the shops where everything is priced in German marks. A bottle of water was 73 cents US with some coins and a ¼ million bill in local currency in change. Birds from the airport windows included Carrion/Hooded Crows and Jackdaws.

As the time for departure neared the crowd at the gate thickened, half the people lined up for the gate and the other half sat calmly. When the flight was called, everyone tried to board at once in a free-for-all. One passenger in my row tried to fit a 17" computer monitor under her seat without success, and then tried the overhead bin with the same result.

Sept. 3-Arrive Almaty, Kazakhstan at 3AM having spent two very short nights in airplanes and part of the intervening day in the airport in Istanbul. It was great to walk out of the airport and see Sergei Skylarenko looking for me, which was fortunate because all the cab drivers had me pegged for a foreigner. Sergei took me to the Hotel Almaty and arranged for my Passport to be registered (a requirement in Kazakhstan, which means sitting in the former capital for a day). After sunrise I walked through the city, eventually correlating the street signs showing new names with the map that had old names. The city has several parks, and I was able to find Great and Azure Tits, Common Mynahs, and some migrant raptors. Sparrows were remarkably absent. I spent the afternoon in the Central Museum-only the newer galleries included English text, but some helpful gallery guides made it worthwhile. There was very little on natural history, but lots of information on the history of Kazakhstan.

Sept. 4-Sergei met me at the hotel, and we took a taxi to the bus station. There we met several members of the Academy of Science who were going to a meeting in Tashkent and passing by Chokpak on the way (note to Dave: within one mile is on the way). We headed off in a chartered van that threw unneeded heat into the passenger compartment and had windows that mostly refused to open and once opened refused to close. Lunch was a picnic with an amazing potluck of fruit and meat with vodka and Chinese wine for desert. I did

see Rose-colored Starlings, shrikes, rollers, and raptors out of the van window. Nearly ten hours after leaving we arrived at a rough dirt road heading off across a railroad and into the woods, and ending at the Ornithological Station. Our hosts at the station had arranged an afternoon tea for us that looked like a feast, and we ate and drank with relish. It was good to be out of the sweltering van.

The monstrous Heligoland traps dominated the view as soon as we arrived, but there were few birds moving and none being caught. After the van left to continue on to Tashkent I helped to set up a mist net (about the only bit of 'work' I can recall being allowed to do) which was lucky as we flushed a Quail from our feet as we were clearing the net lane.

Sept. 5-East winds. Three Eurasian Magpies found their way into the trap in the morning. The migrants were plentiful but quickly gained altitude and rode the tail wind over the top of the traps. I was invited to walk up the hill with the Heligolands to watch hawks, and was treated to a spectacular hawk flight as well as a stunning view of the Tien Shen mountain range off to the south. Hundreds of raptors went by in a few hours, mostly Steppe Buzzards but also Steppe, Booted and Short-toed Eagle, Pallid Harriers, Black Kites, Honey-Buzzards, and others.

After lunch Andrei Kovalenko (a.k.a. Andrei "the younger") took me on a birding expedition to some local ponds and wetlands. Shorebirds were on a small pond surrounded by horses and horse tracks. Other highlights included Golden Oriole, Great Reed Warbler, Turkestan Tit, and Garganey. Not content with driving his Russian built car on the dirt tracks around the camp, he drove cross-country over the steppe, in the creeks, and beyond.

Dave had warned me that I needed to learn scientific names for the birds, so I studied the birds I was guessing from the old Flint Birds of the USSR would be present in the area. What Dave failed to warn me about was that the birds would usually be referred to in shorthand, with only the species name, and that the Kazakh pronunciation would usually be different than what I had studied. An easy one was "monarchos" for a Black or Monk Vulture. One of the few species that always got the 'full name' treatment was *Anthropoides virgo* (Demoiselle Crane), I was pleased to learn.

Sept. 6-The wind was puffing from the west at dawn. The breeze picked up and settled in the new direction, and the birds started arriving at the banding station in boxes of dozens rather than bags of ones. Huge flocks of raptors, doves, and passerine birds went passing by, over, and through the station. We were busy ringing, and I was thrilled that we caught an ASY Steppe Buzzard. I was very surprised to see the Kazakhs using the same ageing system that is used in the BBL-HY, AHY, SY, and ASY.

Normally, these folks would talk among themselves in Russian, and then one person would fill me in English. All spoke understandable English, leaving me highly embarrassed at my limited vocabulary in Russian (Da, nyet and peeva* only get you so far). One time, there was a lengthy discussion in Russian at breakfast with some animated hand waving and differences of opinion. Andrei G. filled me in tersely with "we discuss lunch". Hm. That left me puzzled, but not nosy enough to question him, but clarification arrived with the Oriental Turtle-Doves that were served at lunch, casualties from the trap. They were delicious.

Sept. 7--The wind was stronger from the east and the raptors were flooding by quite low. Andrei G brought four Steppe Buzzards down on his first check of the traps at dawn, and only got to one trap before returning for reinforcements. Andrei K went back up almost immediately, and returned with no less than 12 raptors in his hands-including two Crested Honey-Buzzards! We banded 36 Steppe Buzzards, two Hobby, a Eurasian Kestrel, two Lesser Kestrel, some Sparrowhawks, the two Eastern or Crested Honey-Buzzards AND two Honey-Buzzards before the flight slacked off! Another highlight was the capture of a Pied Wheatear of the *vittata* subspecies, only the third record for the area. Late afternoon brought another huge push of passerines, with nearly 150 birds-almost all Yellow Wagtails--flying into the traps at dusk. It was a busy and great day.

Sept. 8-- The last full day had some surprises. A pair of elusive White-winged Woodpeckers appeared in camp and gave excellent looks but managed to avoid the mist net. Edward Gavrilov turned up with some UK ringers in a bus. I was surprised to see Edward, as I'd been told he would not be present - another time they got me! We caught a Steppe Eagle, which was stunning, and lots of birds all day again including several new species in the hand.

Sept. 9-Andrei K drove me back to Almaty. He was able to show me flocks of Ruddy Shelduck, Little Bustard (new birds!) and many raptors. We were stopped three times at checkpoints and had to show a ream of paperwork on the car as well as identification. Interestingly enough, we were not stopped at all in the van. We arrived in the city by 6 PM, an otherwise uneventful trip.

Sept. 10-The adventure continued; Andrei K picked me up at the hotel, delivered me to the airport, and I was off to Moscow for three weeks. They lost power at the airport when I was within three people of the counter. The agents did not seem to know what to do with my laser jet printed ticket without the computers, so after ten minutes delay I again ended up in First Class next to the only English speaking person on the plane, as near as I could tell.

I had a fantastic time at Chokpak and in Kazakhstan, and can't wait to return. The vastness of the Steppe with the towering mountain ranges at Chokpak and Almaty, the friendly people and fantastic birds, and the spectacle of migration are the stuff of my day dreams. We banded 1011 birds in the four full days I was present with 7 the first day and 286-363 each of the following three days of about 37 species.

Here are a few more memorable moments from my trip-

--Listing "most wanted birds" one after the other only to have them appear in the banding lab the first and second mornings.

--having Dorca, a coursing hound of a local breed, leave the car unnoticed while we were birding on the expedition. After a couple minutes at 50 km/hr we noticed the dog missing, stopped the car, and Andrei K opened the door, whistled, and the dog jumped in the back seat, barely winded.

--Andrei G's question at dinner each evening-"so Mary, how about a little drink?"

--releasing a Nightjar by allowing it to sit on my hand-only to have it stand and become animated as it adjusted to the dark-and another that roosted on one of the towers that support the traps after release.

--releasing the Steppe Eagle, wow!

--the pride among all the banders in using Kazakh rings for most small birds in place of the Russian rings that had been used for all birds previously.

--changing grips while examining the first Shikra and having it snag my tee shirt with a talon, and bringing the house down by saying "No American blood on Kazakh soil!".

The field station is comfortable, evidently improved since Dave's last visit with a generator and stove. The station is well run, the food is good, the people are friendly, and I'd recommend a trip to Kazakhstan to any bander who can get there!

*yes, no, and beer.

Editor's note – I apologize to anyone who has difficulty with this small font. Mary's journal was too interesting to edit, so a smaller font was chosen to make it fit the space allocated.

2002 EASTERN BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION MEETING

Audrey Heagy

In April, I attended the Eastern Bird Banding Association (EBBA) 79th Annual Meeting, held in Niagara Falls, New York. This meeting followed the EBBA-sponsored bander certification session which I attended (see article elsewhere in this newsletter).

This annual meeting apparently followed the standard format for EBBA meeting: starting with dinner and a speaker on Friday evening, followed by a full day of talks and a banquet on Saturday, and local field trips on Sunday. I would estimate that just over 100 people were in attendance, of which just a few hailed from Ontario.

Although the Friday evening speaker failed to show, there was a full roster of speakers on Saturday. Topics ranged from the practical (a demonstration of a “Bander’s Bag of Tricks” and a speaker on changing to digital photography) to the results of banding projects (on hummingbirds and Bald Eagles) to scientific studies (on cowbirds, and the effect of large-scale climate phenomena on reproductive success) to the history of banding (100 years of banding in North America, and David Hussell’s talk on Heligoland and 100 years of banding in Europe). David Brewer tortured the audience with one of his infamous bird quizzes in the morning and a local falconer (and bander) entertained the audience with a live birds of prey presentation in the afternoon. The presentation after the banquet was on Technology and Birds of Prey by Dr. David Bird, Director of the Avian Science and Conservation Centre at McGill University. Throughout the day, participants could hone their skills on an extensive exhibit of bird skins or peruse the many, many items donated for the silent auction and bucket raffle.

This was the first EBBA meeting I have attended and I learned a lot about the organization. Until this meeting, the only things I knew about EBBA were that:

- Ontario was included in EBBA’s geographic scope (rather than the Inland or Western BBAs),
- EBBA members receive the quarterly *North American Bird Bander* journal, and
- the EBBA annual meeting is usually held in April (which conflicts with my spring banding work).

Now I know that EBBA:

- has a long history (this was the 79th annual meeting!),
- currently has some 454 members,
- has an annual operating budget of US\$12,000 (and a \$3000 deficit),
- operates a Net Committee which sells Japanese-made mist nets,
- sponsors student research awards; and
- puts on an excellent annual meeting.

Although the talks were all interesting, I found the skins display and opportunity to interact with so many other banders to be the most valuable parts of the meeting. Also, there were many items in the silent auction and bucket raffle, especially some of the traps and old books, which I really wanted (but didn’t get).

I am sure many OBBA members are also EBBA members in order to receive the *NABB* journal. If you’re not, you should be (or find someone who is so that you can borrow the journal). Furthermore, I would urge you all to attend an EBBA meeting. The next EBBA meeting will be held at Hidden Valley Resort near Powdermill, Pennsylvania on the weekend of 4-6 April, 2003.

JANETTE DEAN AWARD

We are seeking nominations for the 2003 Janette Dean Award. This award is given annually to someone who, like Janette Dean, has made an outstanding contribution to bird banding in Ontario. Again, pass your nominations on to any Board member.

NEXT OBBA MEETING

The next OBBA Board meeting will be held on September 15th at 2 pm, at or near the Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory in eastern Ontario. Let Audrey Heagy or Eric Machell know if you have any items for the agenda. Let Audrey or Dave Brewer know if you have suggestions regarding possible speakers for the 2003 AGM.

HELP WANTED

Are you interested in getting more involved in the OBBA? We have several jobs with which we need help. If you are interested in taking on or helping out with any of these tasks please contact Audrey Heagy, aheagy@kwic.com.

1. *OBBA Travelling Display*. We would like to replace the current OBBA display board with one that is more portable and easier to store. At the same time we will be updating the contents of the display. We need help with this job. Also, we need to find someone who is willing to coordinate getting our members to take this display to banding demonstrations and birding meetings so that we get we can recruit new banders and members.

2. *OBBA Archives*. For many years the OBBA "archives" were stored in a filing cabinet in the basement of the old LPBO Headquarters. More recently they have languished in Eric Machell's basement. At this point the archives have not been updated or sorted out for more than a decade. In connection with the upcoming 50th anniversary of the OBBA (see above), we want to get our "archives" in order. This is an ideal opportunity for someone to learn about OBBA's early days (or reminisce about the good old days).

OBBA is providing a barbecue supper for participants of the Bander Education Workshop on **Saturday August 10th** at Eric and Lorna Machell's. Please contact Eric directly if you can assist with the barbecue – setting up, cooking or tidying up afterward. Many hands make light work!

OBITUARY - H. E. Axell, MBE, 1915 - November 2001.

To most bird-banders in Canada, the name of Bert Axell will mean little or nothing. But to a small proportion of us -- namely middle-aged Brits -- the name conjures up memories of a dynamic personality, at one and the same time gruff, intimidating, mordant and immensely charming; a man who by personal example had a profound influence on many adolescent would-be bird-ringers, with effects that persist to this day. No fewer than three current active members of OBBA --David Hussell, David Shepherd and the writer -- received their initial ringing training at the hands of Axell in the nineteen fifties at Dungeness. Bert was an exacting and demanding teacher who brooked no sloppiness in his trainees; he could be savage in his treatment of those who did not put the welfare of the bird above all other considerations, and was not above taking an exasperated swipe with his walking-stick at sloppy trainees who fell short of his standards. Consequently we had very few casualties -- at least, among the birds!

Ontario Bird Banding Association
2002– 2003

Officers and Directors

President	Audrey Heagy, 1037 Brough Street London ON N6A 3N5	519-439-7694 aheady@kwic.com
Immediate Past President	John Miles, Box 449 Jarvis ON N0A 1J0	519-587-5223 miles@kwic.com
1 st . Vice President	Phil Roberts, R.R.#2 1089 City Road 15, Essex ON N8M 2X6	519-776-8315 philroberts@windsorairport.net
2 nd . Vice President	David Brewer, R.R.#1 Puslinch ON N0B 2J0	519-763-0997 mbrewer@albedo.net
Recording Secretary	Eric Machell, Box 2 Delhi ON N4B 2W8	519-582-4738 Fax: 519-582-8631 elmachell@iname.com
Treasurer/ Membership Secretary	Joanne Dewey, R.R.#8 642 Elmbrook Road, Picton ON K0K 2T0	613-476-7546 dewey@reach.net
Directors at Large	David Okines, 1037 Brough Street London ON N6A 3N5	519-439-7694 davidokines@aol.com
	David Lamble, 745 Guelph Street Fergus ON N1M 2X5	519-843-1205 dlamble@hotmail.com
	Jody Allair, 17 Bee Street St. Williams ON N0E 1P0	519-586-3531 lpbo@bsc-eoc.org
	Martin Wernaart, 84 Campbellville Road R.R. #2, Campbellville ON L0P 1B0	905-659-2717 Fax: 905-659-1063 nature@globalserve.net
Ex Officio Members		
Journal Editor	Terri Groh, 84 Campbellville Road R.R.#2, Campbellville ON L0P 1B0	905-659-2717 Fax: 905-659-1063 nature@globalserve.net
Newsletter Editor	Cindy Cartwright, 4379 Bruce Road 3 Port Elgin ON N0H 2C7	519-389-2585 pom@bmts.com
OBBA Rep. to LPBO	John Miles, Box 449 Jarvis ON N0A 1J0	519-587-5223 miles@kwic.com
Banding Office Rep. to OBBA	Bev McBride, Bird Banding Office, CWS 100 Gamelin Boulevard, Hull QC K1A 0H3	819-994-6176 Fax: 819-953-6612 bbo_cws@ec.gc.ca

