



## NEWSLETTER

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### **BAILLIE BIRDATHON 2003**

#### **Christian Friis**

After an extended stay at Long Point Bird Observatory's Tip Field Station, I came in and completed the much anticipated Baillie BIRDATHON with Jody Allair in an effort to raise some money for the OBBA and BSC; not to mention also getting some good birding time in that seems to elude a bander during migration.

The night before the weather predicted a lame day; however, the next morning's forecast had sun and low winds. The day started out on a gloomy morning at 5am on 7 June at Old Cut Field Station with the hopes of a few elusive migrants and a good start to the day.

Jody Allair and I headed out at this point in order to continue the good trend. After a stop in Turkey Point to collect a scope and other essentials, we were on our way to St. William's Forest. Here we collected a few more Thrush species, a number of Warblers, Woodpeckers, a Barred Owl that took some coaxing to respond, and a Wild Turkey that got the blood flowing and heart pounding after being flushed from beside the trail. A singing Brown Creeper was a pleasant surprise, and a little less jolting. After the Owl, we were on our way, but not before getting a view of the Prairie Warbler that had been singing nearby. What a view he gave us, sitting in a tree right by the road! He was a Lifer and perhaps one of the best views one could get of a Prairie Warbler. Our spirits were high and our total was getting respectable at around 60 species.

We arrived in Backus Woods, after a stop in Port Rowan for some coffee and snacks where we got Chimney Swift and Bank Swallow, and were ready to find some good birds. A Golden Winged Warbler gave us such a nice look that we could almost read the band on his leg! Backus is a pretty cool little area, being one of the only Old-Growth Carolinian Forests left in

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Canada, not to mention that the birds there are simply awesome.

It was past mid-day and the total was closing in on 100 species. The temperature was rising and the activity was slowing down, passerine-wise. It was then Jody spotted a couple of Red-tailed Hawks circling above the tree-line, reminding me to keep my eyes peeled for Raptors.

As we pushed forward, becoming slightly weary, a Northern Harrier in a field added to the Raptor totals and ended-up being the last Raptor of the day. We stopped once more for some coke, ice-cream, and pepperoni sticks and we're on the road again. On the causeway we poked around Big Creek where Marsh Wren, Canada Goose, and Mute Swan were added. While scanning the Lake for any new species, Jody noticed two Least Bitterns sitting right out in the open! What an amazing view, and a rare one at that. We tried again for Rails, but to no avail. It was starting to get on in the day and the total was around 110 species.

We went back to Turkey Point looking for any Ducks, Gulls, Terns, and Shorebirds that were sorely lacking to this point. It was then we realized the Saturday activity would probably not help our endeavours. Next, we headed back to Old Cut and I walked the beach from the Provincial Park and West, with only Red-Breasted Merganser and Bonaparte's Gull to show for it. Back at Old Cut a Common Nighthawk boomed his display for us, while an American Woodcock twittered his after the sun had set. It was here that the BIRDATHON came to an end as a hunt for Owls and other nocturnal species such as Whip-poor-will, turned up nothing. We hit the hay after midnight, exhausted and satisfied with the total of 121 species. Considering the time of year and the lack of Duck and Shorebird species this BIRDATHON was a success. Long Point is an incredible area and there seems to be few other places in Canada where a Big Day like the one Jody and I had is easily accomplished.

I would like to thank Jody Allair for showing me all of the good spots around Long Point. If he had not been so kind as to take me out birding, my list would have been dismal. Thank you, Jody.

The day's highlights had to be Louisiana Waterthrush, Prairie and Golden-Winged Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, Least Bittern, and Grasshopper Sparrow, if not for who they are, then for the views they provided. Together with Jody's raised funds, our total amount raised for the OBBA is quite respectable. All of the money raised goes to furthering our understanding of birds, nature and the research that Bird Studies Canada and the Ontario Bird Banding Association conduct year after year. For more information on BSC and the OBBA, you can check out the web sites at <http://www.bsc-eoc.org> and <http://www.ontbanding.org>, respectively; they are both filled with invaluable information. Christian can be reached at LPBO for a complete list of species observed on his birdathon.

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## **BANDING HIGHLIGHTS**

AMGO ASY F banded at Rock Point Aug. 30, 2002 was recovered Jan. 28, 2003 in Lexington, Tx. According to the Atlas of Canadian Banding for records up to 1995 (unless there has been something since) this is the first recovery of a Canadian banded AMGO in Texas.

RCKI U M banded at Selkirk on Oct. 22, 2001 was received Dec. 26, 2002 at Batesville, Ar. According to the Atlas of Canadian Bandings this recovery is in the top 3-4 for distance travelled from the banding site.

The Piping Plover seen on the OFO Rainy River Birding Tour in May was banded as a chick in mid 2001 at the Platte River area of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Seashore on Lake Michigan.

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# OBBA 2003 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FEBRUARY 22 2003.

## Eric Machell

Despite the inclement weather 42 people attended this years AGM at Bird Studies Canada in Port Rowan.

- Registration for the meeting commenced at 9:00 a.m.
- The President, Audrey Heagy, called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m.

## BUSINESS MEETING

1. Introductions by all present were made at the start of the Business Meeting.

2. **President's Report.** Audrey Heagy gave the President's Report. She said that the journal was published in September last year, and that the intent was to continue with that practice; station reports are due April 1, and other reports May 1. The next newsletter is due in September 2003, and Cindy Cartwright has requested articles. OBBA was in attendance at two NABC meetings in 2002; the next meeting will be at Delta Marsh in Manitoba in September 2003. The next bander training manuals to be published are on seabirds and shore birds. The bander certification process will be revised following the next session, which will be held in conjunction with this years EBBA meeting during the first week in April in PA. We are looking to host the EBBA meeting in 2005. Due to supply problems the OBBA store has been wound up, and OBBA is no longer supplying liability insurance due to the cost involved to OBBA. If member groups require insurance they should make their own arrangements. OBBA along with BSC and the Banding Office co-hosted a new initiative in 2002, when a bander workshop was held at Bird Studies Canada. 22 people attended this workshop, and the emphasis was on moult and use of Pyle. The OBBA library is now back in Bird Studies Canada at their HQ, and members are free to visit, and use the library during business hours. 2005 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of bird banding in Ontario, and in 2006 OBBA will have its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Audrey closed by thanking the board, and making a request for people to do the Baillie Birdathon on behalf of OBBA, and also for people to sort out OBBA's archives, to update the display board, and to join in organizing special events.

3. **Treasurer's Report.** Joanne Dewey thanked the auditors for auditing the 2002 accounts. She then presented her Report consisting of the audited Statement of Operations for the period January 1 to December 31, 2002. Moved by Joanne Dewey, seconded by David Hussell, that the Treasurer's Report be adopted. Motion carried. Moved by Joanne Dewey, seconded by Eric Machell, that Ron Fox be appointed as one of the auditors for the year 2003. No other nominations were received. Ron Fox was declared by acclamation as an auditor for 2003.

4. **Election of Officers and Directors.** John Miles presented the following slate of Officers and Directors for the year 2002.

- |                                     |                 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| President:                          | Audrey Heagy    |
| Past President:                     | John Miles      |
| First Vice-President:               | Phil Roberts    |
| Second Vice-President:              | David Brewer    |
| Recording Secretary:                | Eric Machell    |
| Treasurer and Membership Secretary: | Joanne Dewey    |
| Directors at Large:                 | Terri Groh      |
|                                     | Martin Wernaart |
|                                     | David Okines    |
|                                     | Jody Allair     |

No further nominations were made from the floor. David Hussell moved that the slate as presented be accepted. Seconded by Bill McIlveen. Motion carried.

5. No other business was presented to the meeting. Audrey Heagy moved that the Business Meeting be adjourned.

## **OBBA President's Report: 2002**

### **Audrey Heagy**

This past year has seen a number of changes in OBBA activities, as well as the continuation of many.

### **2002 Annual General Meeting**

Once again the OBBA AGM in February 2002 at Mountsberg Centre was well attended. Attendees enjoyed several interesting presentations and survived another Dave Brewer bird quiz.

### **Ontario Bird Banding Journal**

Volume 34 of the annual Ontario Bird Banding journal was produced and distributed in fall 2002. This 68 page volume was produced several months earlier than in previous years when the journal was not available until the AGM. Thank you to Terri Groh for a job well done. In order for Terri to get the journal out on time, it is essential that everyone gets the data, station reports and other articles to her in a timely fashion. The deadlines for these items are published in the back of the journal and reminders are included in the newsletter.

### **OBBA Newsletter**

The Volume 47 of the OBBA Newsletter, consisting of three newsletters, was published in a timely manner. Cindy Cartwright, our newsletter editor, did a great job at getting people to contribute articles including a special feature on the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory. Deadline for material for the next issue is 1 November 2003. Cindy would also like notes on banding equipment or tips.

### **North American Banding Council**

With support from the Banding Office and OBBA, our organization was represented at the NABC meetings held in March 2002 in California and September 2002 in Louisiana. The next NABC meeting will be held at Delta Marsh, Manitoba in September 2003. Additional training manuals will be available in 2003. Bander certification sessions are planned at Braddock Bay, NY in October 2003. Details are available on the internet at: [www.nabanding.net](http://www.nabanding.net).

### **OBBA Store**

In 2002, the Board decided to wind up the OBBA Store because we lacked the capital needed to maintain an adequate stock of nets and other banding supplies. The store inventory of nets was sold off but there are a small number of rulers and banding opening pliers available.

### **OBBA Liability Insurance**

The Board also decided not to renew the liability insurance policy because the cost had increased substantially and the number of banding stations taking advantage of the coverage had decreased sharply.

### **Bander Education Workshop**

OBBA and BSC co-sponsored a Bander Education Workshop at Long Point Bird Observatory in August 2002. 22 participants from across the province attended the workshop. OBBA provided travel subsidies to three participants and hosted a BBQ. This workshop was very successful. Due to the feedback from OBBA members at the workshop, we are trying out a two day format for the AGM, including hands-on workshop sessions.

## **OBBA Library**

With completion of the new Bird Studies Canada headquarters building, materials in the OBBA library are again accessible, after many years in storage. OBBA members and the public are welcome to use all materials in the BSC library during office hours. Materials cannot be taken out of the library.

## **Anniversary Celebrations in 2005 and 2006**

2005 will be the 100<sup>th</sup> year of bird banding in Ontario and 2006 will be OBBA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We are hoping to organize some special events to celebrate these milestones. The OBBA has offered to host the 2005 meeting of the Eastern Bird Banding Association.

EBBA's 2003 meeting was in early April in Pennsylvania. It was a great chance to check out the Powdermill Banding Station (which has a great web site) and also hear Dr. Lukas Jenni speak. Dr Jenni is a Swiss ornithologist and co-authored the excellent photo-reference book on moult and ageing in European passerines.

## **OBBA Memberships**

The OBBA Board has decided to no longer issue membership cards. The expiry date of your membership appears on the mailing label for each newsletter. Memberships are due in January each year. All memberships which have not been renewed by September of the following year will lapse.

## **Janette Dean Award Plaque**

The Janette Dean Award plaque, featuring the names of all past participants of this award, is now on display in the library at Bird Studies Canada national headquarters in Port Rowan, Ontario.

## **Thank you**

I'd like to thank all of the members of the OBBA Board for their hard work over the past year, especially the Treasurer, Joanne Dewey, and the Recording Secretary, Eric Machell, who both do great jobs of keeping track of our finances and records. I'd also like to again thank the journal editor, Terri Groh, and the newsletter editor, Cindy Cartwright, who do a great job at keeping our members informed. I'd encourage all OBBA members to take an active role in the organization if at all possible.

## **Help Wanted**

OBBA is looking for individuals to help with:

- doing a Birdathon on behalf of OBBA;
  - writing articles and notes for the newsletter or journal
  - updating the OBBA display board;
  - sorting out the OBBA archives; and
  - special activities related to the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Bird Banding in Ontario in 2005 and OBBA's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2006.
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## **EDITOR'S NOTES**

Welcome to new members Bob Hall-Brooks, Roswitha Matuschek, Bruce Murphy (LIFE), Merrilea Shields, Peter Browne and Daniel Webb. 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. Please do not number pages. Photos (.jpg) and drawings would be appreciated. Items from other sources and publications are acceptable, provided that permission for use in the OBBA newsletter is included with the submission.

## **REPORT FROM THE BIRD BANDING OFFICE to the Ontario Bird Banding Association Annual General Meeting, 2003**

### **Bev McBride**

#### 1. Change of contact information

The Bird Banding Office, along with the National Wildlife Research Centre of the Canadian Wildlife Service, has moved from Hull to the Carleton University campus in Ottawa. We are in a new building physically joined to the biology building here. This move was in part meant to develop more partnerships with the academic community and already we have quite a lot of new interaction with both faculty and students. The new building also provides much-needed modern laboratory space. Be sure to drop by if you are in town!

Staff email addresses remain the same. We have the following new phone and fax numbers:

Fax: (613) 998-0458

Louise Laurin phone: (613) 998-0524

Bev McBride phone: (613) 998-0492

Mailing address:

National Wildlife Research Centre

Canadian Wildlife Service

Carleton University

1125 Colonel By Dr. (Raven Road)

Ottawa, ON K1A 0H3 (post) K1S 5B6 (courier)

#### 2. Band Manager

As many of you know, we have recently contracted Bird Studies Canada to upgrade Band Manager. This update should ensure that the program will work with Windows versions up to XP. It should also incorporate improved Help features. The BSC contract also includes user support services. Please contact Louise Laurin if you require assistance with Band Manager. She, in turn, will go to BSC for support if she needs it.

#### 3. Band Supply - We anticipate another season of just-in-time band supply.

We still have problems keeping a consistent and readily available inventory of most small band sizes. The United States Bird Banding Laboratory continues to search for ways to make this easier for us all. Along with limited funds and the long process of negotiating contracts and purchase orders through the US federal bureaucracy, we have the added problem that there are very few suitable manufacturers to choose from – in fact I think they're down to one. Could this be a business opportunity for an entrepreneurial bander?

#### 3. Banding Office capacity

The Bird Banding Office continues to operate with just a bit over one third of its normal capacity. The “one third” is Louise who since July has been doing both her former job along with what Ann Demers used to do. The “just a bit” is me. This time of year the office is very busy processing banding schedules and permit renewals. We are taking much longer than usual to deal with such things as recovery reports and data requests. The Bird Banding Biologist position remains vacant. We did hear from many excellent applicants when we posted the job opening last December. It is only a matter of time – geological time, that is.

4. I realize that you do not need me to tell you this, but please take every precaution to protect yourself from West Nile Virus and your other customary villains. It is now known that a bird infected with WNV will have the virus in its feces. (I still vividly recall the time I got a mouthful of starling sh\_t while extracting a bird at Old Cut. Yuk!)

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## 2003 OBBA AGM AND WORKSHOP SESSION

### Audrey Heagy

Despite treacherous driving conditions all weekend, more than 40 people ignored the freezing rain and ventured forth to attend the OBBA Annual General Meeting at Long Point in late February 2003. This year's meeting included some new features in addition to the traditional program.

Station reports were presented by the Guelph Banding Group (continuing with various projects), the Toronto Banding Group (setting up a new banding station on the Leslie Street spit). The Timiskaming Banding Group tried to give their report on their work (closely tied to the local high school) but encountered insurmountable technical difficulties. The bird quiz was structured as a mock-up of a North American Banding Council bander evaluation session with some specimens to identify, age and sex and some multiple choice and short answer questions.

Speakers in the afternoon included Dr. Sandy Middleton presenting some results from his long-term studies of American Goldfinch and Chipping Sparrows, and Dr. Dave Brewer presenting results of long-term Northern Gannet banding studies on Ailsa Craig (Scotland not Ontario). Dr. Sandy Middleton was very pleased to be awarded the Janette Dean Award for his outstanding contribution to bird banding in Ontario.

The Sunday session was a new endeavour for OBBA. The day started with some passerine ground trapping at the LPBO Old Cut field station. We did catch a few birds (juncos, cardinals and American Tree Sparrows) and had a chance to compare notes on trap design and banding station set-ups. This was followed by a "show and tell" session at Bird Studies Canada's headquarters with several people giving short presentations on diverse topics ranging from using ultra-violet "blacklight" to see fresh feathers on owls, to ageing Lapland Longspurs by tail shape, to net furling technique demonstrations, to some tough bird identification slides from Thunder Cape, and pictures from endangered species banding work at Fort Hood, Texas. The afternoon session was split between a demonstration of various mist net repair techniques led by David Okines and Joanne Dewey, and the preparation of study skins led by Dave Brewer. Some 25 people participated in the Sunday session.

Another new feature of the meeting was the venue: the Events Rooms at Bird Studies Canada's new headquarters building overlooking Long Point Bay at Port Rowan. For many OBBA members this was their first visit to the new BSC building. Several long-term members commented on how things had changed from the early days of the Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO was started as a weekend banding project of the OBBA in 1960 and grew into the national organization now known as Bird Studies Canada). Thank you to Bird Studies Canada for the use of their excellent new facilities for the 2003 OBBA meeting.

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### **DATES TO REMEMBER**

Deadline for submissions for November 2003 issue

November 1

#### **Journal Schedule for 2003**

ITEM	DEADLINE	Format
Banding Totals	23 February 2003	Band Manager electronic file
Station Reports	1 April 2003	See back of Journal
Articles and Notes	1 May 2003	See back of Journal
Publication Target	September 2003	

## A SIMPLIFIED APPROACH TO AGING WOODPECKERS

**Daniel C. Webb**

Note: pcov is used throughout this article as an abbreviation for 'primary covert'

I believe there are several reasons why banders have difficulty aging woodpeckers. First is the data presented on pages 163-166 of the Pyle guide. The pictures at the bottom give the impression that these are absolute conditions, when in actuality there is much variation within these situations. Second is the multi-year molt pattern of woodpeckers. The fact that their prebasic molts may be partial for several years' results in covert patterns that are more complex than what is typically found in other birds, such as Warblers. On the other hand, this multi-year molt cycle allows us to age woodpeckers possibly as high as TY/4Y. This article will discuss general criteria for aging, which can be used in the vast majority of cases.

The information presented here is largely a distillation of the Pyle guide, but these molt patterns and age classes have been supported by banding/recapture data taken at Springville Marsh (northwestern Ohio) and work done by Andy Zuwerink at Ohio State University. Please remember that this information is not absolute – there are certainly going to be variations. This information has proven to be reliable for us up to the writing of this paper.

In general, woodpecker molt appears to follow the following pattern for the pcovs. During the first prebasic molt, no pcovs are replaced (HY/SY). During the second prebasic molt, a few of the outer pcovs are replaced (SY/TY). During the third prebasic molt, all of the pcovs are replaced (ASY/ATY). The secondaries follow a similar molting pattern but there can be much variation as to the extent of the molt. Please refer to Pyle for more information concerning the molting of the secondaries.

Pyle refers to two possible alternate third prebasic molts for the pcovs. Alternate #1 is that almost all of the pcovs are replaced but 1-2 random juvenile feathers are retained (TY/4Y). Alternate #2 is that some juvenile feathers and some of the adult feathers from the second prebasic molt are retained, resulting in three age classes being present in the pcovs (TY/4Y). These two alternate situations appear to be very rare.

Using this molt sequence as a guide, the following simplified key is presented. Please notice the two notes at the end of this article – one about the TY/4Y age class and one about the age classes in general.

As with aging other birds, the primary focus is the pcovs. There are generally three situations which could arrive when looking at the pcovs: 1) all pcovs are the same age, 2) there are two age classes of feathers present within the pcovs, and 3) there are three age classes of feathers present within the pcovs. These three situations will be discussed in turn.

**All Pcovs show ONE age class:** There are two situations which could be present here. First, all of the pcovs are juvenile feathers (probably brown, abraded, pointed, and contrasting with the black greater coverts). This age class would be designated HY/SY. The second situation would be that all of the pcovs are adult feathers (probably black, truncate, and not contrasting with the greater coverts). This age class would be designated as ASY/ATY. Warning: be careful during fall and winter (i.e. after first prebasic molt) as the juvenile feathers may not look much different from adult feathers since they have not been present long enough to develop the wear commonly seen in the spring. Other aging criteria (i.e. eye color, secondaries, p10 length/shape, overall plumage, etc) should also be used at this time so that an HY/SY is not accidentally aged as an ASY/ATY or vice versa.

**Pcovs show TWO age classes:** There are basically two situations which could be present here. First, the outer few pcovs are adult feathers, while the inner pcovs are juvenile (see Pyle, page 165, figure 122C). This age class

would be designated SY/TY. The important thing to note about this situation is that the juvenile and adult feathers in the pcovs are in two distinct groups, the juvenile pcov feathers are more than 1-2, and there is a symmetrical quality to the adult and juvenile pcov feathers. Also note that occasionally only the outermost pcov is replaced. Since the outer pcov is reduced in size, it is sometimes missed. Pyle notes that some intermediates can be difficult to separate reliably from ASY/ATY, so if in doubt, the bird should be aged AHY/ASY; or checking the other wing may help (see discussion later in this article).

The second situation (which is taken from the Pyle guide and appears to be rare) is when the pcovs are almost all adult, but there are 1-2 randomly located juvenile feathers (see Pyle, page 165, figure 122E). This age class would be designated TY/4Y. The important thing to note about this situation is that there are only 1-2 juvenile feather(s) and they are randomly located throughout the adult pcov feathers, not in a distinct group as in SY/TY. Warning: we have noticed that occasionally some inner pcovs are also replaced during the second prebasic molt – this may give the impression of a possible TY/4Y when the actual age is SY/TY. The SY/TY age class appears to typically contain three (extreme case) or more juvenile pcovs, while the possible TY/4Y age class would have only 1-2 juvenile pcovs. Please refer to the note below about the TY/4Y age class and the note above about intermediates.

**Pcovs show THREE age classes:** This pcov pattern description is taken from the Pyle guide (see Pyle, page 165, figure 122F). This situation could be difficult to see since you are dealing with two different generations of adult feathers plus some juvenile feathers. There are many possible variations on this situation. The most probable situation likely to be encountered is that the outer few pcov feathers are old adult feathers (from second prebasic molt), the inner few pcovs are juvenile feathers, and the middle few pcov feathers are new adult feathers (from third prebasic molt). This age class would be designated TY/4Y. Please note that any situation that shows three age classes in the pcovs, with at least one of the pcov feathers being juvenile, has the potential to be TY/4Y, but the pattern described above will probably be the one most likely encountered. Please refer to the note below about the TY/4Y age class.

**Note about the TY/4Y age class:** Page 165 of the Pyle guide says that this age class is a possible designation for the pcov patterns found, and that more study is recommended. It is recommended that if a pcov pattern is found that indicates a possible TY/4Y age designation then the age should be recorded as ASY/ATY and a note be made that it is a possible TY/4Y. A brief description of the pcov pattern should also be recorded. This, along with recapture data should present a clearer picture as to the possible accuracy and frequency of the TY/4Y age class. Andy Zuwerink has banded approximately 100 woodpeckers each year for the past several years (mostly Downy and Hairy) and has not seen any pcov pattern that may indicate a possible TY/4Y age class. We agree that the TY/4Y age class may be possible, but may be more likely to be seen in the larger woodpeckers such as Pileated and Northern Flicker. If it does occur in the smaller woodpeckers, it appears to be exceptionally rare (at least in Downy's and Hairy's). As of the writing of this paper, a pcov pattern indicating a possible TY/4Y has not been seen by anyone mentioned in this article (except Pyle). The TY/4Y age class was included in this article because it could potentially be seen and you should know what to look for.

**Important note about age classes:** It has been pointed out that some banders are unfamiliar with what the age classes (HY/SY, SY/TY, ASY/ATY, etc) actually refer too. It **does not** mean that the bird can be aged either/or based on the description given for a particular age class. The slash indicates a switch with the New Year (all birds have a birthday on January 1). Using SY/TY for an example: a bird that fits this description would be aged SY in the Fall (through December 31) and TY in the Spring (starting January 1) – it would be wrong to age a bird SY in the Spring if the SY/TY age class description was used to age the bird (although it could be aged SY in the Spring if it fit the HY/SY age class description). Please read page 33 of the Pyle guide for further explanation of the age class

designations. With the exception of the Acorn Woodpecker, all of the age classes run from October to September for all of the woodpeckers. Also see the age charts for each species for the reliability of a given age class.

As a final note, you might want to consider checking both wings. Occasionally, we have encountered a bird in which the pcov molt pattern is different on each wing. If you encounter a bird with different pcov molt patterns on each wing and each wing indicates a different age, I suggest you do the following: use the wing in which the pcovs contain the most age classes among the feathers, then if this doesn't work, use the oldest age that one of the wings indicates. When trying to decide on an age when both wings show a different age, using the pcov pattern that gives the most precise age is probably more accurate (i.e. if possible use HY, SY, TY vs. AHY, ASY, ATY). If you follow this pattern you should be able to accurately age most of the birds encountered with different aged wings. Checking both wings might be especially helpful if you encounter an extreme version of the SY/TY pcov pattern.

I hope that this simplified presentation to woodpecker aging will help to clear up some of the confusion that is being encountered. Using only the pcov patterns, I feel confident that the following age classes can be accurately aged in the majority of cases: HY/SY, SY/TY, ASY/ATY. As to the possibility of the TY/4Y age class, keep an eye out for these patterns. I'd ask that you fully document any possible TY/4Y age classes. If enough data can be collected, perhaps the TY/4Y age class will be allowed by the BBL in the future. At Springville Marsh, we have recaptured several woodpeckers that were aged TY this spring (2003). This TY age class has been supported by the banding/recapture data. Hopefully these birds will survive another year to be recaptured this fall or next spring (even better due to increased feather wear) when one of the TY/4Y pcov patterns could possibly be present.

We'd also like to put together a web site or pamphlet 'help guide' for woodpecker aging. It would be appreciated if any good examples of the pcov patterns noted here could be photographed and submitted to the author of this article. Currently, we only have a few photographs, so any would be appreciated. Also, thanks to Tom Bartlett, Dr. Ken Baker, and especially Andy Zuwerink for last minute suggestions and support of this article.

The author welcomes any comments, suggestions, and pictures, and can be reached by e-mail at [micro\\_biology@yahoo.com](mailto:micro_biology@yahoo.com)

References: Pyle, Peter. 1997. Identification Guide to North American Birds: Part I. Slate Creek Press, California.

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## **BANDING HIGHLIGHTS FROM TIMISKIMING BANDING GROUP**

These birds were banded at the Mountain Chutes Station by Barry Kinch and found at the locations shown (along with time and distance):

- A Purple Finch has returned three years in a row
- Evening Grosbeak in Arntfield, QU, 1 month and 100 km
- Evening Grosbeak in Red Deer, AB, 9 month & 2520 km
- Evening Grosbeak in Two Harbors, MN, 16 mth & 900 km
- Purple Finch in Knoxville, TN, 19 mth & 1350 km
- Common Redpoll in Kimberley, BC, 13 mth & 2625 km

The next 2 birds were foreign recoveries by Bruce Murphy at Hilliardton Marsh.

- Myrtle Warbler from Cape May, NJ, 7 mth & 1050 km
- American Redstart from Pittsburgh, PA, time unknown as yet & 850 km

Bruce Murphy also had a RWBL and AMRE that were banded five years previously

## **Franklin H. Folemsbee (March 20, 1930 – January 30, 2003)**

Last week, my father, Franklin H. Folemsbee died in his 73rd year. He was a longtime birder/bander with the Ontario Bird Banding Association from the mid 1960s to the mid 1980s and participated in several projects at Long Point and Point Pelee. In particular, he and his wife, Mavis, spent many years banding fall migration raptors at Point Pelee. He established and operated the Niagara District Banding Station in the Niagara Peninsula for many years. One of his more significant projects was an overview of wintering raptor populations of the Niagara Peninsula, using balchattris and bow traps to band wintering hawks and owls. He was a past president of the Niagara Falls Nature Club. His avid appreciation of the environment is left behind with his wife, Mavis and children, Meryl, Corinne and Michael. Soar with the "Sharpies", Dad!

Meryl McGrath

## **Chris Mead (1940-2003); an appreciation.**

Chris Mead was not an easy man to overlook; quite apart from the fact that he stood six foot three, weighed 300 pounds and had bright red hair (and a bright red beard, which latterly turned a messianic white), he moved through the world with all the grace and delicacy of a bull rhinoceros in the rutting season. When Chris arrived on the scene, people noticed (italics). Yet underneath this extroverted, effervescent, kenspeckle exterior there lay a warm and immensely likeable personality, a first-class ornithologist, a good friend and a fine man. Chris was born in Hove, on the south coast of England, and went up to Cambridge to read Mathematics in 1959. Here he devoted much of his time to his hobbies of Jazz and bird-ringing. Rather too much, in fact; the examiners of the Mathematics Tripos, a notably unimaginative and unsympathetic bunch, deemed his performance in the Part I exams unsatisfactory, and Chris left Cambridge rather abruptly after only two years. However, academia's loss was ornithology's gain; he joined the British Trust for Ornithology as a staff member and for more than thirty years remained a mainstay of the Trust's operations, working mainly in the Ringing Office. After the retirement of Bob Spencer he became the head and director of the British ringing scheme. Under his leadership ringing in Britain became a highly developed and professional (albeit carried out by amateurs) activity, with standards second to none in the world. Chris himself remained a fanatical ringer, personally handling more than 400,000 birds of 350 species in eighteen countries. His activities were not, however, narrowly restricted to ringing; he conducted studies on a wide variety of species and was regarded as an authority on such diverse groups as swifts and flycatchers. He published widely, writing in an informative, popular but ever-accurate style; his books included *Bird Ringing* (1974), *Bird Migration* (1983), *Robins* (1984) and *Owls* (1987). Chris was generous with his time, knowledge and advice; his office door was always open to anybody who wanted to talk about birds. He had a robust sense of humour, and never minded himself being the butt of jokes. I recollect

that, on one of the cannon-netting expeditions on the Wash on the eastern coast of England, purely as a matter of scientific curiosity of course, we discovered that we could fit two of the female members of the team into a pair of Chris' trousers (one down each leg); Chris insisted that this remarkable achievement be recorded for posterity on film! In 1994 Chris suffered a serious stroke which put a crimp on his banding activities, but he remained very active in public relations, frequently appearing as a panellist on British Radio 4's programme "The Living World". He was awarded the Union Medal of the British Ornithologists' Union in 1996, the Bernard Tucker Medal for services to the BTO and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Medal for services to conservation in 1999. He was, in all senses, larger than life; all of us who knew him mourn his untimely and premature departure from it.

David Brewer

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