



NEWSLETTER

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF BIRD BANDING IN ONTARIO

September 24th 2005 marks exactly 100 years since the first wild bird was banded in Ontario (and Canada) with a numbered band. The lucky bird was an American Robin and the bander was James Henry Fleming. The location was High Park in Toronto.

What are you going to do to celebrate this major milestone in Ontario bird banding history? Since this is the height of the fall migration and most of our members will be busy banding birds, the OBBA is not planning a special event. Rather we are encouraging all of our members to make an effort to do something special to commemorate this anniversary. Some suggestions include holding a special public banding demonstration, writing an article on bird banding for your local naturalist club, banding a 100 robins on September 24th, or introducing a young person to bird banding.

The Bruce County Museum and Archives, in Southampton, is currently being renovated. The new building will include a display featuring banding in the county from Howard Krug's time to the present. The Grand Opening is will be held on September 24th and Cindy Cartwright has arranged to provide several banding related activities at the museum to celebrate the 100th anniversary.

The OBBA will be issuing a press release to mark the occasion so if you have a public banding event (any time this fall) you want publicized and/or are doing something special to commemorate the event please let us know. Contact Audrey Heagy or Terri Groh (see contact information on the back cover of the newsletter).

The November issue of the newsletter will highlight the special events commemorating this milestone.

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FAT SCORING RECOMMENDATIONS

Erica H. Dunn - Canadian Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Research Centre, Raven Road,
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In a recent review of fat scoring systems, Dunn (2003) found a decided lack of uniformity in scoring criteria among banding stations, and made recommendations on the best approach to use. Here I summarize the main messages of that publication, and discuss the system that has been adopted by the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network.

Fat scoring is a rapid and relatively simple way to estimate the fat reserves of birds, based on observing the quantity of fat visible under the skin. The predictive power of fat scores for estimating true fat content of an individual bird is quite low (Scott et al. 1995), but group mean fat scores are good indicators of group mean fat content, and have proven valuable for a wide variety of studies (see examples in Kremetz and Pendleton 1990). The technique has been recommended as the best non-invasive means for studying body condition in small passerines as long as sample sizes are large, observer variability is low, and exact prediction of the fat content for individual birds is not required (Conway et al. 1994).

Many banders collect fat data with little or no intention of analyzing the data themselves, presumably in hopes that others may find their data of use. However, the data have very limited value if fat scores are too variable to permit pooling of data from different observers. If banders are going to collect fat data at all, they should use standard criteria that will ensure consistency of scoring among observers.

Given that there is wide individual variation in fat scoring even when a single scoring system is used, it is important to adopt a scoring system that leaves as little room as possible for interpretation. Unfortunately, most fat scoring scales define classes in qualitative terms, such as “furculum <1/3 filled.” Such a description provides considerable latitude for individual judgment. Moreover, there is only one description for each class, providing no guidance on cut-offs between classes (e.g., should “furculum <1/3 filled” be interpreted as defining the lower limit of the class, the upper limit, or the center?)

A detailed scoring system used throughout Europe is that of Kaiser (1993), which consists of 9 classes and 31 subclasses. Its great strength is that there are very detailed, non-qualitative descriptions of each class (including discussion of tissue color). Kaiser’s definitions for subclasses within each fat class provide guidance as to the low and high ends of each category. Even if scores are recorded only by class, having descriptions of subclasses for reference increases the probability that observers will be consistent in assigning class scores. Kaiser also provided illustrations of the fat patches for each class that are more realistic and less ambiguous to interpret than the cross sections of the furculum that are often used by bird observatories (see illustration in North American Banding Council 2001a). This, too, should contribute to consistency of scoring.

Disadvantages of the Kaiser system are that it appears complex (although proven in Europe to be easy to learn), and has rarely been used in North America. Dunn (2003) therefore suggested that it might be preferable to improve one of the scoring scales more commonly used in North America, by using the illustrations and descriptions provided by Kaiser to better define the fat classes. For example, if fat class 2 in the adopted system was deemed to be equivalent to Kaiser’s sub-classes 1.75 to 2.25, then Kaiser’s drawings and descriptors for those sub-classes could be adopted as the end-points of that fat class. Even with these improvements, however, it will be important to regularly check observers with one another to ensure that scorers are not developing individual styles.

Following publication of Dunn (2003), the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN) decided to adopt the fat scoring system used by the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survival (MAPS) program (Appendix 1). The intention was to prepare drawings of the “end points” of each class based on Kaiser’s (1993) drawings, although this has not yet been done. Some stations have adopted the new system, although it isn’t known whether all have; and where it has been adopted, there have already been instances of banders tweaking the scoring system without any outside consultation or network agreement. Because of this independent streak in banders, there is need for regularly checking observers with one another (within and among stations) to ensure that scorers are not developing individual styles.

If banders are reluctant to use the recommended fat scoring system, consideration should be given to weighing birds but not scoring fat. For studies that pool data from many banders, bird weights alone provide a wealth of information on body condition, whether or not weights are adjusted for body size (e.g. Dunn 2002). Measurement of weight is far less subjective than is fat scoring, and usually can be done more quickly and with less handling of the bird. Nonetheless, weight cannot substitute for fat score for all research purposes, and under some field conditions it may be easier to score fat than to take weights. In either case, the bander should record the time of day at which the bird was caught, as daily variation in weight and/or fat is often one of the variables of interest in studies of energetics.

LITERATURE CITED

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APPENDIX 1: MAPS fat scoring system (excerpted from: DeSante et al. 2004).

Subcutaneous fat is a yellow or orange substance that is stored just under the skin and is used as fuel for migratory flights and for maintenance during the colder winter months. Fat generally is stored in three discrete areas that usually begin filling in the following order: (1) the hollow in the furculum (wishbone) just below the throat at the top of the breast muscles; (2) the hollow directly under the wing, essentially in the

“wingpit”; and (3) the lower abdomen just anterior to the vent area. The stored fat can be seen clearly through the nearly- transparent skin and contrasts with the dull, dark-reddish color of the breast muscles. It is seen most easily by holding the bird on its back while placing the index and middle fingers on the front and back of the bird’s neck, stretching the head slightly forward along a line parallel to the body, and gently blowing the feathers away from the upper breast to expose the furculum. Then check under the wing and on the abdomen, again by blowing the feathers gently out of the way. The assessment of fat content is optional. The use of the numeric codes is strongly recommended.

0 - (none): **No fat** in the furculum or anywhere on the body.

1 - (T = trace): A very small amount of fat in the furcular hollow (**less than 5% filled**) but not enough to cover the bottom of the furculum. No or just a trace of fat under the wing, on the abdomen, or anywhere else on the body.

2 - (L = light): The **bottom of the furculum is completely covered but the furcular hollow is less than 1/3 filled**. A small amount of fat may be present under the wing, on the abdomen, or both.

3 - (H = half): The furcular hollow is about half full (actually anywhere from **1/3 to 2/3**). A covering pad of fat is definitely present under the wingpit and, usually, on the abdomen.

4 - (F = filled): The furcular hollow is full (actually anywhere from **2/3 full to level with the clavicles**). A thick layer of fat also occurs under the wing and on the abdomen.

5 - (B = bulging): The furcular hollow is more than full; that is, the fat is **bulging slightly above the furculum**. The fat under the wing as well as that on the abdomen is also well mounded.

6 - (G = greatly bulging): Fat is **bulging greatly above the furculum**. Large mounds of fat occur under the wings and on the abdomen.

7 - (V = very excessive): **The fat pads of the furculum, "wingpit," and abdomen are bulging to such an extent that they join**. Nearly the entire ventral surface of the body is thus covered with fat, and fat even extends onto the neck and head. Such birds are nicknamed “butterballs.”

NOTE: The upper fat classes (5-7) are seen most often just prior to and during migration.

JOURNAL SUBMISSIONS

The next issue of the OBBA Journal is still accepting 2004 Banding totals and Station Reports. Articles are also welcome. Send any of the above to naturesadvantage@amtelcom.net or to Terri Groh, RR#1 St. Williams, NOE 1P0

BANDING HIGHLIGHTS

CHSP banded on May 22, 2004 was recaptured on May 21, 2005 at Pinery Provincial Park, Grand Bend.

NSWO banded at Long Point on October 25, 2004 was recaptured at Oliphant, Ontario on March 27, 2005.

OBBA 2004 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FEBRUARY 26/27, 2005

Eric Machell

Approximately 55 people attended this year's 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
3. Treasurer's Report. Joanne Dewey thanked the auditors for auditing the 2003 accounts. She then presented her Report consisting of the audited Statement of Operations for the period January 1 to December 31, 2004.
Moved by Bob Hall-Brooks, seconded by Eric Machell that the Treasurer's Report be adopted. Motion carried.
Moved by Joanne Dewey, seconded by David Hussell, that Ron Fox be appointed as one of the auditors for the year 2005. Motion carried.

4. Election of Officers and Directors. John Miles presented the following slate of Officers and Directors for the year 2005:

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

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

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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FEEDBACK

Christian Friis

Another OBBA AGM has come and gone. This year's successful meeting could not have been accomplished without the hard work of OBBA's Board and the participation of members and speakers. Highlights include: the three station reports from Innis Point, Tamiskaming and Toronto Bird Observatories; Norm Noth's talk on Spring Black Duck banding; Charles Francis' talk on DNA bar-coding of North American birds; Phil Roberts' talk on the Bald Eagles of Windsor; and the interactive Sunday events focussing on banding techniques of hummingbirds, ground trapping techniques, and the ever popular Northern Saw-whet Owl banding cooperative project.

The overall feedback from participants of this year's meeting was very positive; however, there is always room for improvement. In soliciting feedback from attending members a couple of points raised include: a shorter bird quiz that included results of the specimen portion; have space for display boards for those not presenting or who many wish to show a little something about their operation; mix-up the two days with interactive (e.g. NSW) talks and presentations (e.g. station reports).

A written questionnaire (Table 1) was also sent out to the board and certain members for whom contact information was available. The overwhelming response was also positive. A summary of points raised follows (Table 2). What remains is to now receive feedback from all members as to the general operation and product of the OBBA, not just the AGM. At a time when the OBBA is reaching its 50th anniversary, it is important to look at what the OBBA is doing now, what it will do in the near future, and what it plans to do in the long run. Although the OBBA is entirely volunteer run, those volunteers are very committed to furthering the organisation's impact in Ontario. But we cannot do it without the help of members like you.

TABLE 1-FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

What more should, or can, the OBBA do:

- Field trips
- Banding workshops
 - Focal species...
- Banding Demos for the public
- Improve Publications
 - How?
 - Are they good enough
 - Each board member responsible for an article
 - Book/equipment reviews
- Education
 - Along the lines of a workshop
 - Banding equipment use
 - Banding techniques (species specific)
 - Banding projects
 - Others...
- Other meetings (non-AGM)
 - Guest speakers arranged well in advance
 - New locations-move away from BSC perhaps?
 - Put out a call for "abstracts"-this might create a buzz

Ask not what the OBBA can do for you, but you can do for the OBBA-Membership roles:

- Member lead field trips
- Member hosted workshops
- Article writing
- Others...

So it's partially up to you, the members at large, to help the organisation improve. I welcome all feedback via email or snail-mail. Please send to cafrs@animail.net or via post: Christian Friis 36 Essex St., Apt. B, Guelph ON, N1H 3K8. I will compile feedback from respondents for an up-coming Newsletter article in November. Therefore, I will ask that submissions be received before 25 October 2005.

TABLE 2-SUMMARY OF RESPONCES TO FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

AGM BIRD QUIZ

- Put a time-limit on the quiz

- More in-depth look at why certain species were aged/sexed
- Make it a learning experience as opposed to a competition
- Put a cap on the number of slides and specimens examined
- Hold the slide portion later in the day
- Review answers for both quizzes together

AGM DISPLAY BOARDS

- Useful for those not presenting
- Potentially not interesting
- Need fair warning for preparation
- Limit on number of displays
- Have a “poster session” during Saturday for those with displays
- Need for a contact person for arrangement

OTHER MEETINGS (NON-AGM)

- Line-up speakers **well** in advance
- “Speaker TBA” potentially discourages attendees; not professional
- Follow-up talks from speakers (e.g. Charles Francis and DNA bar-coding)
- Interest in other locations for meetings-problems with logistics, booking, etc.

IMPROVE PUBLICATIONS

- Hard to get authors to submit to the Newsletter and Journal
- More members to offer articles-not just board submissions
- Reprint articles from NABB
- Forego Newsletter in favour of a section in the NABB dedicated to OBBA news
- Worry of other banders “stealing” ideas before they get published in a “respected” or peer-reviewed journal

EDUCATION

- Set-up display at all member stations, as well as those who request one
- Advocacy- get a better public (birder) image of banding
- Press releases to improve image
- Raptor demo/hummingbird handling demo very well received-more like this
- Everyone busy at the same time, problems with logistics
- OBBA sponsored banding workshops-bring in a high-profile bander to lead
- Encourage more young banders (like Timiskaming’s program and LPBO’s Young Ornithologist Workshop)

CELEBRATING THE OBBA’S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Audrey Heagy

March 26, 2006 will mark the 50th Anniversary of the first OBBA meeting. To commemorate this event the OBBA Board is proposing to hold our 2006 Annual Meeting on the weekend of April 1-2 2006. The meeting will again be held at the BSC headquarters in Port Rowan but we are also proposing to hold a special lunch event on Sunday April 2nd to celebrate our anniversary. As always, we would like to hear from our membership as to whether this date is acceptable and whether a luncheon is what they would like to see happen. We are also looking for help in planning for our anniversary. Contact Audrey Heagy (see back cover).

ONTARIO HUMMINGBIRDS

Cindy Cartwright

Very little is known about hummingbirds in Canada and there are very few banders with a hummingbird endorsement on their banding permit. Currently there are two active hummingbird banders in Ontario and four or five in British Columbia.

Carl Pascoe and Cindy Cartwright provided a hummingbird handling demonstration at the OBBA AGM in February. The demonstration had 3 goals:

- to encourage banders who incidentally capture hummingbirds in their nets to check for bands,
- to encourage banders to attempt to age and sex the hummingbirds they capture,
- and to interest other banders in hummingbird banding.

Generally, hummingbirds do not become overly tangled in passerine nets due to their small size. They tend to pass partway through the netting and hang in that location. Removing them is relatively easy because their wings are capable of rotating in all directions. Gently grasping the hummingbird and pulling slowly backward away from the net usually releases them.

Hummingbirds should be held in a modified pencil grip with the middle finger on their back, the thumb and index finger on one side securing the wing to their side, and the ring and pinkie fingers on the opposite side securing the other wing. As with passerines, pressure should never be exerted on the sternum or abdomen. Hummingbirds should never be held by the feet in a photographer's grip, or by the bill.



photo by C. Cartwright



Gently wrapping a hummingbird in a soft bird bag and covering their head will help to keep them calm while looking for bands. A small stick or pencil tip can be used to lift the hummingbird's feet, or the feathers can be blown away to see the band. Both legs should be checked. Hummingbird bands are easier to read than passerine bands because the numbers are etched in black. Each band number consists of a letter followed by 5 numbers.

photo by C. Cartwright

Anyone interested in learning to handle hummingbirds is welcome to visit Holiday Beach Migration Observatory, near Windsor, where hummingbirds are banded as part of the migration monitoring conducted at the passerine banding station. Contact Carl Pascoe at lmohawk@aol.com or Bob Hall-Brooks at bhall-brooks@cogeco.ca to make arrangements.

Adult male hummingbirds are obvious with their iridescent gorget so separating males and females in the spring can be done quickly. But the young males in the fall look very much like the females and a little more time is needed to determine the sex and age of the hummingbird.

Both HY and AHY females have a white throat that can have faint black streaking.



photos by B. Hilton



Young males are smaller than females and usually have a “five o’clock shadow”. Some hatch year males will have a couple of gorget feathers but banders need to be aware that on rare occasions, older adult females can have one or two black feathers or a single gorget feather as well. Links and additional photos will soon be available on the OBBA website www.ontbanding.org for reference.

THE ONTARIO HUMMINGBIRD PROJECT

The Ontario Hummingbird Project was started by Cindy Cartwright in the spring of 2005. This project will track arrival and departure dates of hummingbirds across Ontario, numbers of hummingbirds captured incidentally at migration monitoring sites across the province, hummingbirds banded, and document unusual hummingbird species observed in Ontario. When hummingbird hosts are willing, arrangements will be made to band unusual and wintering hummingbirds. It is hoped that eventually other banders will be interested in banding hummingbirds to create a broader network across the province. Several stations have already contributed data from the spring 2005 season. All banding groups and observatories are invited to contribute Contact Cindy at hummingbirds@bmts.com for more information.

DATES TO REMEMBER

100th Anniversary of banding in Canada	September 24
Inland Bird Banders meeting at Kellogg Biological Station, Battle Creek, MI	Sept. 30 – Oct. 2
Deadline for submissions for November 2005 issue	November 1
50th Anniversary of Ontario Bird Banding Association	March 26, 2006

JANETTE DEAN AWARD RECIPIENT 2005 - Michael S. W. Bradstreet

This year's recipient of the Janette Dean Award got his start, as many do, at Long Point Bird Observatory. As a teenaged volunteer through the late 1960s and early 1970s Michael honed his skills as a bander and became one of LPBO's first wardens in 1972. During his early work on Long Point he was involved in a number of projects including the Tree Swallow Project, Migration Monitoring, the Long Point Gull Banding Project and received an award from the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (now known as Ontario Nature) to study shorebird migration, which he used to develop and lead Long Point's Shorebird Banding Project. As warden he influenced many developing banders and helped create the high standard for operations at LPBO's field stations. His involvement in the Tree Swallow Project led to the creation of the Tip Swallow grid as well as publications on consecutive nesting female Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) and ageing and sexing techniques of Tree Swallows. The shorebird project led to a publication on trapping techniques of Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) as well as analysis of the seasonal occurrence, habitat preference and variation in abundance of shorebirds on Long Point. After a stint away from the organisation, he returned in 1989 as Executive Director of LPBO and was the driving force behind the computerisation of all of LPBO's banding data. His involvement with LPBO developed what is now Canada's leading bird conservation organisation, Bird Studies Canada, which funds LPBO's many programs and provides a base for many banding operations across Canada. His influence began as a bander in the 60s and has spread to the many facets banding strives to understand and conserve today.



EDITOR'S NOTES

This summer has been very hard on our family. My younger sister was killed in a car accident in June and then my aunt died unexpectedly a week later. Thank you everyone for your patience while waiting for this issue of the newsletter to be published.

The November newsletter will highlight activities celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Banding in Canada. Articles should be submitted **unformatted** by email. Photos should be sent in jpeg files.

Here's a group that may be of interest to OBBA members. It is specifically for asking questions about Bandmanager. It is not intended to take the place of calling the official sources for assistance.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BANDMGR/>

Group Email Addresses

Post message: BANDMGR@yahoogroups.com

Subscribe: BANDMGR-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Unsubscribe: BANDMGR-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com

List owner: BANDMGR-owner@yahoogroups.com

NABC MEETING FEBRUARY 11/12 2005 - Archbold Station, Lake Placid, Florida

David Okines

19 people attended the meeting including 7 people from Canada, below are some of the highlights from the meeting, the full minutes will be posted on the NABC web site in due course.

Manuals

There are now six manuals, available from the BBL and BBO as hard copy or cd (see NABC web site for details). Others are welcome to make them available through their own distribution systems. Other possible manuals: Colonial waterbirds is one group that has been suggested.

The present status of unfinished manuals:

Spanish translations. Council needs to consult with Ellen Paul of the OC about the possibility of getting funding for the translation of the shorebird manual.

French translations. Lesley-Anne Howes will see that the three manuals are formatted within the next couple of months. No plans have been made for further translations.

Waterfowl. The draft manual by North and Hicks has been submitted to the Editorial Committee

Recertification

Recertification is proceeding. Renewals were sent out in August to 71 Trainers; 36 have responded. The renewal committee, after reviewing the returned forms, recommended that all those who have responded to date be recertified.

MOTION: Certified Trainers and Banders who do not submit renewal application within expiration of certificate will be placed on inactive status with an option to reapply for certification renewal at any time based on activities and involvement with banding and training during the five years preceding renewal application date. **PASSED.**

Following discussion regarding new regulations affecting banders with regards to Endangered or Threatened species, it was agreed to express NABC concern in a letter to the Canadian government.

Latin American and Caribbean Committee.

Alexander, Bartlett, Howes, Ralph, and Tomosy met to consider reestablishing this committee, with a mission to build capacity for sustained bird monitoring and banding efforts that promote science and conservation in the new world tropics.

Migration monitoring network

Using a mechanism similar to eBird at Cornell, a grant proposal will shortly be submitted by Ralph to NSF to establish a site to gather data on migration, particularly banding data.

CHECK OUR WEBSITE – www.ontbanding.org

Newsletters and other interesting information is posted in the members-only section. Read Christian Friis' "Jamaica Report" on the Caribbean Bander Training Workshop under BSC's Latin American Training Program. The 2004 Treasurer's Report (from the AGM) is also available.

Bananaquit and Orangquit Photos by C. Friis

