

1977

## News, Notes, Comments

North American Bird Bander

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# News, Notes, Comments

## Evening Grosbeak band sizes

Charles N. Blake

McNicholl (1977, NABB 2[2]:55) raises the question, whether size 1A is large enough for Evening Grosbeaks. The question involves three subsidiary questions. First, how frequently is scaly-leg? Second, are the legs of the Alberta population actually larger than those of the population (or populations) of northeastern America? Third, what is the actual statistical distribution of leg sizes in the Alberta population?

First, it is evident that scaly-leg varies in its incidence from one species to another and within a species from one region to another. I have handled at least a few thousand Evening Grosbeaks in eastern Massachusetts and central Vermont and have no recollection of seeing a case.

Second, taken at face value McNicholl's statement implies that the legs of Alberta birds may average slightly larger than those of birds from eastern Massachusetts, but he has made no measurements to demonstrate the point. I showed (1954, *Bird-Banding* 25:11) a design for a leg-gauge capable of reading to tenths of a millimeter. I also have a table of leg size ranges that accept all the then-current band sizes. Table I will extract the data pertinent to the Evening Grosbeak.

Table I — Evening Grosbeak Band Sizes

Size	Band internal Diameter (mm.)	Clearance (mm.)	Leg Size Range (mm.)
1B	2.75	0.2	2.2-2.55
1A	3.2	0.2	2.55-3.0
2	4.0	0.25	3.0-3.75

	Female	Male
Sample Size	62	64
Mean greater diameter	2.94	2.93
Observed range	2.5-3.2	2.5-3.3
99% range	2.6-3.2	2.6-3.3
Majority band size; %	1A;74	1A;71
Next smaller size; %	—	1B;0.25
Next larger size; %	2;26	2;29

Since the figures in the table take the clearance into account, we may ask what would be the result if we calculated the proportion that would exceed an exact fit. For females it would be 3 percent and

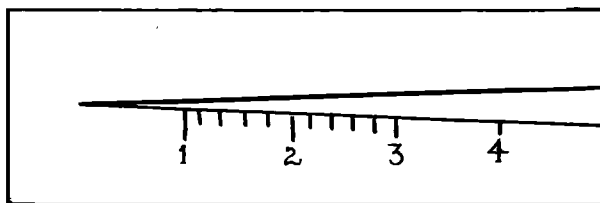
for males 5 percent. The largest leg measurement was 3.3 mm. This would be expected to be exceeded by one-half percent of females and 1 percent of males.

My third question can only be resolved by actual measurements. Variation in leg size between populations is possible. Looking for a clue I compared Ridgway's data (Bull. 50, U.S. Nat. Mus., Vol. I) on wing length and tarsus length for the three races of the Evening Grosbeak and found no indication of significant difference in size.

Finally, in my 1954 paper I stated as an opinion that the use of a 1A band on the stoutest leg measured would only involve some distortion of the posterior lamella of the tarsus.

(Excerpt from *Bird-Banding* Vol. XXV, 1954)

If one does want to study variation, then a gauge reading in actual measurements is necessary. This is most readily accomplished by a V-gauge which can be made to yield a magnification of 10 or more. With one I have measured both the greater diameter (anteroposterior) and the lesser diameter (transverse) at the region of least diameter.



Box 613, Hillsborough, NC 27278



## Alberta wintering populations of Evening Grosbeaks

Martin K. McNicholl

Charlie Blake's perceptive note provides a useful framework on which further research on wintering Evening Grosbeaks can be based. I thank Eleanor

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## News, Notes, Comments

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Radke for the opportunity to reply to his comments.

I agree that the incidence of scaly-leg in different populations deserves much further investigation. My limited experience with this species in Alberta agrees with the much more extensive data of J.C. Finlay (pers. comm.) that this disease occurs in very high incidence in this species in Alberta in at least some winters, as also found in the two studies cited in my earlier note. The regularity of this phenomenon needs to be documented. It is interesting that all these reports are from western areas.

Although I do not have precise measurements on leg size, there is definitely some variation in size of legs of Alberta wintering birds; among healthy individuals, some can take size 1A bands and some cannot. Thus, the recommended band size should be modified to show a range of sizes, as done with many other species. The cause of this variation bears investigation. It is possible that Evening Grosbeaks wintering in Alberta are from both eastern and western breeding populations. Winter numbers of this species appear to be increasing in both Alberta and Saskatchewan (Houston 1976; McNicholl 1976), and most band returns indicate an east-west movement across the prairies (Houston 1976; McNicholl and Finlay *in press*). However, Finlay recovered one bird in Edmonton, Alberta, that was previously banded in Idaho. This may indicate that some north-south movement takes place.

A second potential cause of leg size variation is age of the birds. Leg size is known to increase with age in at least some bird species (Van Soest and Van Utrecht 1971). This appears to cause a banding problem in at least one species. On Vancouver Island, British Columbia, extremely old male Blue Grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*) occasionally become lame, with the silver band appearing to be too tight (pers. obs.; F.C. Zwickel pers. comm.). Thus, leg growth warrants investigation.

### Literature Cited

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- McNicholl, M.K. 1976. Evening Grosbeaks on Alberta Christmas bird counts. *Alberta Naturalist* 6: 253-264.
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- Van Soest, R.W.M., and W.L. Van Utrecht. 1971. The layered structure of bones of birds as a possible indication of age. *Bijdr. Dierkd.* 41: 61-66.
- Department of Biological Sciences, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario L2S 3A1.

### Environmental courses

Courses or seminars to assist the layman and the professional in environmental matters are being presented in several cities of the U.S.

**Land Use Control** is a concentrated two-day course in the legal and practical aspects of effective land use control, sponsored by the Pepperdine University School of Law. The final session will be held 12-13 December in Atlanta, Georgia.

For further information on course curriculum, director, and registration, contact Miss J.K. Van Wycks, Seminar Division, Federal Publications, Inc., 1725 K Street NW, Washington, DC 20006. Ph: (202) 337-7000.

**Environmental Decision Analysis** is a three-day seminar that introduces practical approaches for evaluating alternatives in environmental impact analysis. Sponsored by New York University's School of Continuing Education, sessions will be held 5-7 December in San Francisco and 27 February - 1 March 1978 in Chicago.

For additional information on the seminar content and leader, as well as registration, call Toll Free 800-223-7450 (New York State, please call collect 212-953-7266).

**Environmental Regulation and Legislation** is a two-day intensive seminar for non-lawyers. Also sponsored by New York University's School of Continuing Education, sessions will be held 19-20 December in Los Angeles and 6-7 February 1978 in Chicago.

For information on the seminar content and leader, and for registration details, call Toll Free 800-223-7450 (New York State, please call collect 212-953-7266).

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## Open letter to friends of Cave Creek Canyon

**What is this?** It's an appeal to you to write a very necessary letter to the Coronado National Forest in Arizona, asking them to protect a place you know and love — Cave Creek Canyon, in the Chiricahua Mountains.

**Facts:** — Cave Creek Canyon is the most diverse biotic unit in the entire National Forest system.

— Cave Creek Canyon is the most heavily birded place in the National Forest system, and probably the most heavily studied by research biologists.

— The Forest Service will soon be deciding the course of future management for this canyon. Wildlife *should* be the highest priority, but we need to let them know how we feel about it. It won't happen otherwise.

**What should we do?** The Coronado National Forest (which administers the Chiricahuas and other mountains in southern Arizona) is going through what is called Land Use Planning for the entire forest. This means that they look at all the resources in the area, weigh their relative importance, and decide which will be emphasized in the future, and which are of secondary importance.

The types of resources involved are mining, lumber, grazing, watershed protection, wildlife, and recreation. This year we will see the future of Cave Creek Canyon directed toward one or more of these uses. It could be any of them.

**Which resources will they emphasize?** Right now, the main local pressures on Cave Creek are for continued grazing, hunting, and trapping, a paved and improved campground system, a paved trans-mountain highway, and perhaps even a fishing lake. If there is no other than local input from the public, this will probably be the future of the canyon — at the expense of its enormous biological resources.

The Forest Service will hold hearings on these decisions in local communities around the Chiricahuas, in small towns like Douglas and Willcox. However, the majority of the Canyon's fans come from much farther away! They are the thousands of birders and scientists who travel literally hundreds of thousands of miles altogether

each year to visit Cave Creek, and who comprise the majority of the Canyon's visitors.

**Why is Cave Creek Canyon so valuable a place?** Because of its enormous biological diversity.

Those who know the area love it. The Cave Creek basin is the area drained by Cave Creek and its tributaries, and it covers 5 life zones, from Hudsonian at Chiricahua Peak with its Englemann Spruce and breeding Golden-crowned Kinglets, down through Canadian, Transition, Upper and Lower Sonoran desert with Roadrunners and Cactus Wrens. There are over 12 miles of tree-lined streambeds, with pine and oak woodlands on the surrounding slopes, and tall red rhyolite cliffs over all.

The diversity of life there is due to the mixing of northern forms with a number of Mexican species which are at the extreme northern limit of their ranges. Birders come here to look for the Mexican Chickadee, Painted Redstart, Zone-tailed Hawk, and a dozen species of hummingbird. The most stunning of the Mexican "exotics" is the Coppery-tailed Trogon — crimson breast, iridescent green body, long bronzed tail laced up beneath with white and black, and a big yellow bill. It personifies all the dazzle of the tropics.

**Why Cave Creek and not other canyons?** Several other canyons in the Coronado share many of the features that make Cave Creek so important a place; they are Ramsey, Madera, Rucker, Pinery, and West Turkey canyons. They all have some water year-round, good riparian vegetation, and they all cover a variety of vegetational zones and habitats. Why is Cave Creek Canyon the subject of this appeal?

1) Cave Creek has the best-developed and most diverse riparian vegetation. Riparian habitat is scarce in the southwest, and it is of enormous importance to wildlife. The main canyon in Cave Creek is sycamore-dominated, with a few scattered cottonwoods, black walnut and willow, and its South Fork has a beautiful gallery of bigtooth maples and Arizona cypress, the best such association anywhere. An east branch of Cave Creek is filled with a stand of ancient madrone trees, relicts of a cooler geological period. Most of these trees occur in the other canyons, but in lesser numbers.

2) Cave Creek is large. It has nearly twice as many miles of riparian area as any of the others.

3) Cave Creek has more of the Mexican "exotics". It shares species with the other canyons, but there are more of each kind here because of Cave Creek's larger size and its less-developed state. There are about 25 pairs of Trogons nesting in the U.S.; 12, almost half, live in Cave Creek, mostly in South Fork.

4) Cave Creek has South Fork. This 3-mile-long ecological masterpiece is a deep, watered, shaded gorge through sharp rhyolite pinnacles on both sides. Its bottom is covered with a true forest of deciduous trees, wall to wall and **never** lumbered, homesteaded, overgrazed, or mined, and without significant developments. There is nothing else like it anywhere in the U.S. It is where most of the Trogons live and where most of the birders see their Trogons.

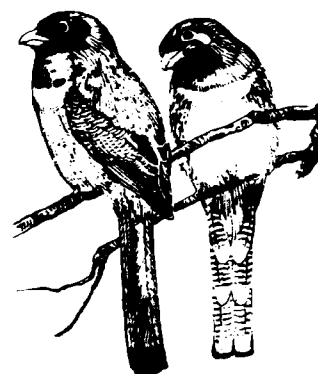
5) Cave Creek's present uses are compatible with wildlife management. The other canyons in the Chiricahuas are used much more heavily by non-wildlife-oriented recreationists; Madera has 50 summer homes, a lodge, paved roads throughout and heavy tourist traffic. Ramsey is mostly in private ownership and is inaccessible to recreationists; its values are already well protected.

Cave Creek is heavily used by birders. About 25,000 people a year visit it to see the Trogon alone.

6) Cave Creek Canyon is probably one of the most intensively studied land areas in the world. For many years, scientists have been studying the animals and plants in the canyon and the surrounding desert, and this knowledge is available and is valuable for management. The area is worth preserving just to protect the many long-term studies in progress there.

**What should be done?** The Cave Creek basin should be declared a Wildlife Habitat Management Area. This would mean that the Forest Service would agree to manage primarily for wildlife in the canyon, under a formal Management Plan that spells out in detail just what will be done and what will not be done.

The South Fork should be declared a National Zoological Area. This designation, more powerful and restrictive than the above one for the basin, will serve to emphasize the uniqueness and national significance of South Fork, and it will permit the Forest Service to do anything necessary to preserve its biological values.



#### Here is what is needed:

Write a letter to the Forest Supervisor in Tucson, and send a copy to the Douglas District Ranger in Douglas. Some important points to make, in your own words:

1) Point out the *national* significance of Cave Creek Canyon as a biological area, both for birding and research. If you come a long distance to visit it, mention this.

2) Ask that they designate the Cave Creek basin as a Wildlife Habitat Management Area.

3) Ask that the South Fork be designated a National Zoological Area.

4) Ask that the Management Plan (which must be drawn up) emphasize the importance of managing for diversity of wildlife and especially the rarer forms such as the Trogon, the Zone-tailed Hawk, the Coatimundi, and the Banded Rock Rattlesnake. Also mention the importance of maintaining the values and conditions that attract birders and scientists to the canyon.

5) Ask how they are complying with the Endangered Species Act, which requires Federal agencies to review their holdings for the presence of endangered and threatened wildlife and its habitat.

6) Request that they inform you of any action or proposed action regarding Cave Creek Canyon's future.

Write to: Ken Weissenborn, Supervisor, Coronado National Forest, 301 West Congress Street, Tucson, Arizona 85701 and Benjamin Brunner, Douglas District Ranger, 1925 A. Avenue, Douglas, Arizona 85607.

Please write, now!

*Citizens Concerned about the Conservation of Cave Creek Canyon, c/o Spofford, Aguila Rancho, Portal, Arizona 85632*

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## In case of an oil spill, "HELP!" is available for stricken birds from the NY Zoological Society

New York, N.Y. — For people whose spirits soar at the sight of a wild bird flying against the sky, there is no more heart-rending scene than this same feathered creature trapped in a coating of thick, black oil. Oil spills have become an environmental fact of life, and everyone wants to help the innocent victims, but most people don't know how. To meet the ever-growing need for up-to-date, accurate information about how to save oil-spill victims, the New York Zoological Society has published a new handbook, "Help! A Step-by-Step Manual for the Care and Treatment of Oil-Damaged Birds."

Prepared for the amateur as well as the professional conservationist, "Help!" already has been applauded by zoologists around the world. Marlin Perkins, star of the popular television series "Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom," calls it "the most complete handbook for caring for oil-coated birds I have ever seen," and recommends it "for all nature lovers, conservationists, zoos, scouts, humane organizations, bird watchers, and state and Federal conservation and wildlife officials."

Dr. Victor B. Scheffer, Consultant for the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission, adds, "The manual will appeal especially to those who recognize the unity of nature or, if you wish, the kindness between people and birds." The publication has also been praised by such leading conservationists as Sir Peter Scott, Honorary Chairman of the Wildfowl Trust in Great Britain; Dr. Anne LaBastille, author, ecologist, and winner of the World Wildlife Fund's gold medal in 1974; Victor Gottschalk, the Executive Vice President of International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; and Dr. Paul A. Johnsgard, a Director of the International World Waterfowl Association and author of "The Snow Goose."

The "Help" handbook is a reprint from the August/September issue of *Animal Kingdom*, a magazine devoted to wildlife and conservation, which is published for 12 North American zoological associations by the New York Zoological Society. Originally printed as a special "pull-out" supplement to the magazine, "Help!" can easily be tucked into a pocket for handy reference in the

field. Although no major oil spills or leaks had occurred at the time of the manual's publication, the editors of *Animal Kingdom*, aware of what has happened in the past, want the proper information to reach people *before* tragedy occurs so that they will be prepared. Although a serious spill can occur at any time, fall, winter, and early spring are probably the most crucial periods because of the added demand for fuel oil deliveries and the hazards of bad weather for tankers, barges, and offshore drilling.

The massive oil spill has become a major environmental problem, with birds as its main victims. Moreover, it is not limited to seacoasts. Petroleum pollution has destroyed wildlife along navigable rivers and lakes. Even areas far from either oceans or inland waterways are vulnerable: In 1973, a pipeline break in Casper, Wyoming, killed more than 10,000 waterfowl.

Each time such a disaster arises, volunteers mobilize from the community and attempt to save the lives of as many birds as possible. All too often they fail, because they use techniques that are outdated, laborious, excessively time-consuming, and sometimes, not very helpful to the birds. What began as a spirited, sincere conservation effort turns into an exercise in frustration for the volunteers. Yet effective methods do exist, and more birds can survive if volunteers can be better informed. The New York Zoological Society — with 78 years of experience in captive management of wild animals and a wildlife conservation program that extends around the world — had the resources to fulfill this urgent need.

"Help!" was written by Emil P. Dolensek, D.V.M., and Joseph Bell, both of the New York Zoological Society. As the Society's Veterinarian, Dr. Dolensek is responsible for the health care of some 6,000 animals of 800 different species at the Bronx Zoo and the New York Aquarium. He also serves as Honorary Veterinarian for the New York City Police Department, and is the co-author of the book, "A Practical Guide to Impractical Pets." Joseph Bell is Deputy Director of Zoology and Chairman and Curator of Ornithology at the Bronx Zoo. A Director of the International Wild Waterfowl Association, he has been associated

with the Zoo's bird department for more than 30 years, serving in every capacity from assistant keeper to curator.

The authors have combined their experience to produce a manual that, according to British Naturalist Sir Peter Scott, "... sets out, with admirable clarity, the best methods for tackling the next disaster." Sir Peter, recognized as one of the world's foremost authorities on waterfowl, observed that "Every contingency is covered, emphasis being rightly laid on careful preparation and systematic treatment." Dr. Dolensek and Mr. Bell have stressed especially the need to calm the birds and to provide them with proper nourishment and medical treatment before attempting the de-oiling process.

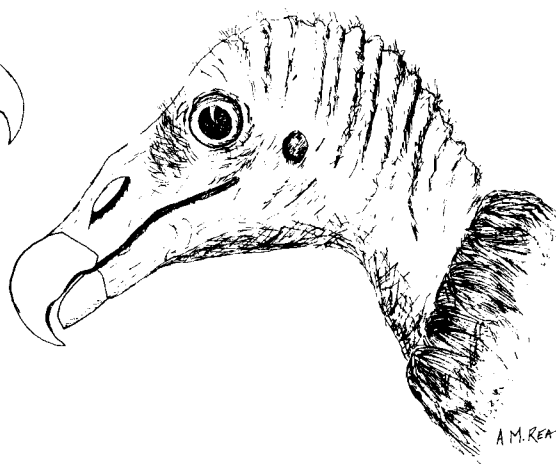
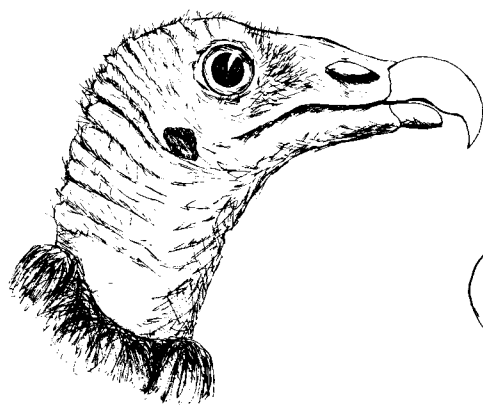
In every respect, the handbook provides thorough details for setting up a complete emergency bird-care hospital, including instructions for advance planning of the entire rescue effort — how to capture the birds, administer first aid, transport the injured to the treatment center, diagnose the extent of the damage, remove the oil, treat the birds medically, and care for the birds during recuperation. It contains an identification section that explains the different techniques required for handling and caring for the wide variety of bird species likely to be affected.

"Help!" also includes notes on birds that might post special problems, such as herons, whose beaks can inflict serious damage to the uninitiated

handler. Extensive use is made of photographs and drawings to illustrate the correct methods and materials. The manual is representative of the expertise that can be found almost nowhere but in a modern zoo or aquarium where the management and care of an extensive variety of exotic wildlife are essential. "Help!" has received the support of the Executive Director of the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums and of the Chairman of the AAZPA's Animal Health committee.

Many zoological organizations in the United States and Canada will offer "Help!" to their visitors and members. Anyone interested in obtaining copies should first check with his or her local zoo or aquarium. If the handbook is not available from these sources, people may write directly to the publisher. Orders should be addressed to "Help!," New York Zoological Society, Bronx, New York 10460. The reprint is being made available to the public at modest prices that merely cover the costs of printing and mailing so that the information will reach as many people as possible. Prices (including shipping) are based on the quantity ordered; payment should accompany all orders.

1-9	50 cents each
10-49	45 cents each
50-99	40 cents each
100-499	35 cents each
500-999	30 cents each
1000	25 cents each



## Reminder: Vulture banders

Item 9 from the Bird Banding Laboratory's latest MTAB:

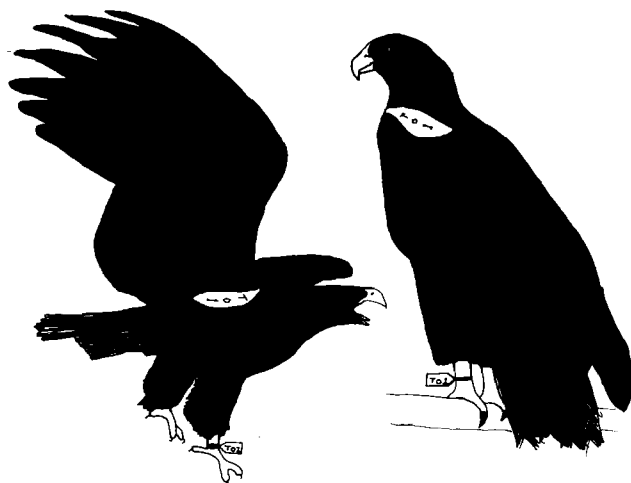
"We have been advised that excrement can become trapped and hardened in Turkey Vulture bands and damage the foot. We request that

banders stop using Fish and Wildlife Service aluminum bands on Turkey and Black Vultures. We prefer no vulture marking except for special studies and then marking with wing tags or streamers only."

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## Information exchange

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### **WANTED Information on Color-marked Bald Eagles**

Research personnel at Arizona State University and the U.S. Forest Service (Rocky Mountain Station) have marked six nestling Bald Eagles produced in Arizona in 1977 with red vinyl markers in the Verde River Drainage. Eaglets were marked to determine movements and wintering areas of Arizona hatchlings.

Wing markers can be seen below or from the side and have a white letter (T) and two numbers (01 to 06) A U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service band is affixed to a leg and has a three-inch red vinyl streamer with the corresponding letter and number of the wing tags.

Your cooperation in reporting the following information will be greatly appreciated and help in gathering information to insure the preservation of this species in Arizona:

1. Geographical location of bird.
2. Date of sighting.
3. Activity of bird (with other eagles, feeding, nesting, etc.).
4. Name, address and phone number of observer.

Please send information to the Bird Banding Laboratory with a copy to Robert D. Ohmart, Department of Zoology, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85281. (Tel: 602-965-2932 or 965-4632).

### **Color-marked Bald Eagles**

The research personnel at the University of Washington and Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo have released Bald Eagles wearing colored vinyl markers in the Skagit River Bald Eagle Natural Area. These eagles have been marked in order to determine the movements of the Bald Eagle population that winters in the Skagit Valley. The colored markers are visible from the rear and sides of a perching bird, and from above and below a flying bird. Marker colors are orange, pink, yellow, or pumpkin orange.

Information needed: Location of bird; date of sighting; activity of bird; and name and address of observer. Please send information to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bird Banding Laboratory, Washington, D.C. 20240, with a copy to Walter English, Woodland Park Zoo, 5500 Phinney Ave., N, Seattle, WA 98103.

### **Color-marked Sandhill Cranes**

During summers of 1975 through 1977, researchers at Clarence Rhode National Wildlife Range on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Alaska, banded and color-marked Lesser Sandhill Cranes. In July and August of each year, chicks were marked with black-numbered yellow collars and leg bands as well as standard Fish and Wildlife Service standard bands.

To date, ten resightings have been reported, yielding valuable information on migration routes and wintering areas. More information is needed on timing and pathways of migration, however. Observers are asked to report the date and location of sightings, size of the flocks with which marked birds were seen, whether color bands were on birds' right or left legs and, if possible, the numbers on the collars and leg bands.

Report sightings to the Bird Banding Laboratory and to Cheryl Boise, Wildlife Research Unit, Irving Building, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, AK 99701.