

1980

## Western Regional News

North American Bird Bander

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# Western Regional News

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## Western Bird Banding Association

Founded 1925

<i>President</i>	Dr. Martha H. Balph Dept. of Wildlife Science, Utah State Univ. Logan, UT 84322
<i>First Vice President</i>	Dr. Charles H. Trost Dept. of Zoology, Idaho State Univ. Pocatello, ID 83209
<i>Second Vice President</i>	Dr. Carl D. Marti Dept. of Zoology, Weber State College Ogden, UT 84408
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<i>Treasurer</i>	Shirley Spitler 3975 N. Pontatoc Rd., Tucson, AZ 85718
<i>Editor</i>	Eleanor L. Radke P.O. Box 446, Cave Creek, AZ 85331
<i>Directors at large</i>	Dr. Ralph Moldenhauer (term expires 1981) Dr. Martin McNicholl (term expires 1982)

### Editorial Staff

<i>Recent Literature</i>	Susan Kaiser	<i>Worksheets</i>	Dr. Charles T. Collins
<i>Auxiliary Markings</i>	Jon L. Atwood	<i>Annual Report</i>	Dr. Martha H. Balph
<i>Advisory &amp; Review Board</i>			
	Keith A. Arnold		L. Richard Mewaldt
	Charles T. Collins		Willis C. Royall, Jr.

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Applications for membership in the Western Bird Banding Association should be sent to the Treasurer. All classes of membership receive *North American Bird Bander*, the joint publication of Eastern Bird Banding Association and Western Bird Banding Association. Membership classifications are: Active Member, \$8.00 per year; Associate Member, \$8.00 per year; Sustaining Member, \$16.00 per year; Student Member, \$6.00 per year; Non-Subscribing Member, \$3.00 per year; Life Member, \$200.00. Outside the U.S., add \$2.00 to each membership except Life Member.

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## From the President

As a member of an academic wildlife science department, I have become aware of some recent changes in the wildlife profession that may be of interest to banders.

Traditionally, wildlife management has been oriented toward game species and their use by the sporting public. The concerns of natural resource agencies, as well as the personal interests of wildlife professionals, have reflected this orientation. Currently, however, a quiet revolution is occurring that is broadening this traditional perspective. Most federal, state, and provincial agencies concerned with wildlife are now committed to the proper management of nongame as well as game species. At least 500 natural resource managers and scientists were present at a three-day workshop I attended a couple of weeks ago entitled, "Management of Western Forests and Grasslands for Nongame Birds." A dominant theme of this U.S. Forest Service-sponsored workshop was the importance of managing entire communities of organisms. Such a broadening of perspective also is evident in the classroom. In a wildlife management course that my husband and I teach, the topics of greatest interest to students are endangered species and animal behavior. A recent show of hands in the class indicated that a majority of our students are not hunters. I am told that 20 years ago it would not have occurred to an instructor to ask such a question of wildlife students.

This change of perspective among wildlifera presents new opportunities and challenges for banders. For example, the U.S.F.W.S., which in the past has used capture-recapture data to estimate the population parameters for game species (particularly waterfowl), is now interested in determining the applicability of estimation models to nongame species of migratory birds. The success of this effort will depend upon the availability of recapture data from volunteer banders of nongame birds — that is, from many of us.

In addition, there is a new development in the area of wildlife extension that may increase banders' opportunities to serve the public and to promote the welfare of birds. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is hoping soon to receive funds to hire extension agents in natural resources, probably including nongame wildlife and urban wildlife. I envision that such agents would conduct educational programs in schools and communities on a variety of topics, including winter feeding stations and urban habitat for birds. I believe such programs could generate considerable interest and that the extension agents might welcome assistance in their efforts. Who could be better qualified to help these agents with programs concerning birds than we who are banders in the community?

Martha Balph



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## Worksheets for Western Birds

Ageing/sexing worksheets for western birds are mailed with NABB only to members of the Western Bird Banding Association. These worksheets are, however, available to anyone interested. For each worksheet desired, send 25 cents (or \$1.00 for any five) to Mrs. Donald F. Radke, P.O. Box 446, Cave Creek, AZ 85331.

The following species sheets have been issued: Harris' Hawk, Scaled Quail, California Quail, Gambel's Quail, Mountain Quail, Common Snipe,

Band-tailed Pigeon, Roadrunner, key to kingbirds, Eastern Kingbird, Tropical Kingbird, Western Kingbird, Cassin's Kingbird, *Myarchis* flycatchers, Violet-green Swallow, Tree Swallow, Yellow-billed Magpie, Clark's Nutcracker, Verdin, Bush-tit, Varied Thrush, gnatcatchers, Orange-crowned Warbler, waterthrushes, *Oporornis* warblers, Tricolored Blackbird, Western Tanager, Summer Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Cassin's Finch, American Goldfinch, Lesser Goldfinch, towhees, White-crowned Sparrow.

# Minutes of the 55th Annual Meeting of the Western Bird Banding Association

Corpus Christi, Texas

21 March 1980

The 55th annual meeting of the Western Bird Banding Association was called to order at 8:20 p.m., 21 March 1980, at the La Quinta Royale Motor Inn, Corpus Christi, Texas, by President Martha Balph. Approximately 40 people attended.

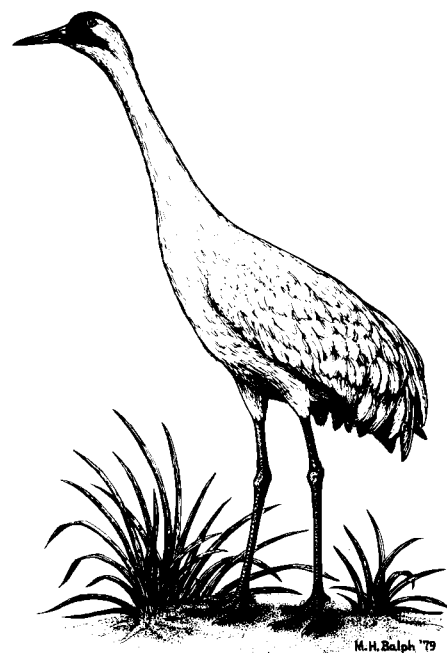
The Minutes of the 1979 meeting at Santa Barbara, California, were approved as published in NABB, Vol. 4, No. 3.

As Shirley Spitler, treasurer, was unable to be present, her report was summarized by David Balph. The current balance is \$2,834.09, an increase since 1979, after income of \$5,020.39 and expenses of \$3,913.08. Membership totals are running slightly below those of last year. An estimated budget of \$4,374 with expenses of \$4,700 was submitted. Dr. Martha Balph reported that a \$250 research grant for a student or non-professional ornithologist for research involving banding had been approved at the previous night's Board of Directors' meeting and is in this year's budget. The treasurer's report was approved.

Eleanor Radke, editor of *North American Bird Bander* for the western region, then presented her report. The fourth year of publishing *North American Bird Bander* has been completed. Its success must be in large part the result of co-editor, Nadia Mutchler's, work, patience, and understanding. Without the mutual trust and cooperation which exist between the Eastern and Western editors, NABB could not be the journal it is. To continue our efforts to improve the quality of the journal, all ms are now refereed. Also, the editor has a membership in the Society for Scholarly Publishing and subscribes to the *Editorial Eye*. Particularly needed for NABB are articles on equipment and techniques. Also, black and white photos or line sketches are need for the cover — of a shape to fit into the round band used as a frame. Costs in the publishing business, as well as everywhere else, are going up. Paper costs have increased approximately 30% in the past year, while photographic supplies (for halftones, negatives, plates) have increased from 50 to 200% because of the dramatic jump in the price of silver. All this means further increases in preparation and printing costs.

The editor's report was accepted as read. Dr. Balph then thanked Mrs. Radke and Mrs. Mutchler, the editor for the eastern region who was present, for their excellent work and noted that the latter had recently received a letter from Robert Pantle, EBBA's president, saying he also is well pleased with the joint publication.

In the absence of Otis Swisher, chairman of the nominat-



ing committee, the outgoing secretary, Fern Tainter, presented the following slate of officers for 1980-1981:

President—Dr. Martha H. Balph  
1st Vice President—Dr. Charles H. Trost  
2nd Vice President—Dr. Carl D. Marti  
Secretary—Jane P. Church  
Treasurer—Shirley S. Spitler  
Directors-at-large—Dr. Ralph R. Moldenhauer  
(1-year term)  
Dr. Martin K. McNicholl  
(2-year term)

There were no nominations from the floor and the slate was adopted unanimously. Dr. Balph then extended her thanks to Mrs. Tainter for her excellent contributions as secretary during the last two years.

Next year's annual meeting is to be held 17-19 April 1981 at the El Coronado Ranch, Turkey Creek, Chiricahua Mountains, Arizona. This is a conference facility for the University of Arizona. Dr. Stephen Russell and Shirley Spitler have been working on arrangements.

The Board of Directors last night discussed a request for the sale of the WBBA mailing list as a method for raising money. Members present expressed their approval by a showing of hands. The business portion of the meeting was then adjourned.

Dr. Charles Collins asked that anyone so able contribute information to him for future WBBA keys to species ageing and sexing as well as identification. He also requested that more papers be submitted for publication in NABB. He noted that more information is needed on color markings: for example, what fades? May leg tags be used on certain species? What auxiliary marking works well? What marking fails? When? Why?

Dr. Balph then introduced George Jonkel, the chief of the

Bird Banding Laboratory in Laurel, MD. He urged any bander visiting in the Washington, D.C. area to come to the laboratory (he would provide local transportation if necessary). A facilities tour results in a more tolerant bander! About 2,000 master banders with 2,000 sub-permittees banded 1,300,000 birds last year, up from the previous year's 1,000,000. There were 60,000 recoveries processed, many from the 400,000 game birds banded. Despite having lost personnel at the height of the hunting season and the fact that they had to write for information on 30,000 of these recoveries, they are only about a month behind in processing. They will be using a new computer in downtown Washington in the future, however, and will no longer have priority — he hopes this change will work out successfully.

There was an increase to 200 in the number of requests for data this past year. Most of these requests, which are handled by Kathleen Klimkiewicz, require programming. There was also an increase in requests for auxiliary markings (as well as unauthorized markings). Requests are coordinated with the Canadian banding service.

Because reports come in using broad general names such as "seagull," colors must necessarily be limited. He mentioned that patagial markings no longer are being used on eagles as such markers interfered with the pair bond. When later asked if other species had suffered because of this type of marker, he said that the Least Tern had also been affected.

He requested banders to send in their schedules as soon as a string of bands is used in order to preclude their having to write so often for information (25 percent of reports require a letter to the bander). Although little work has been done on Volume 2 of the manual, 35 aging/sexing sheets are completed.

Dr. Collins noted that some species suffer trauma as a result of banding. Mr. Jonkel asked to be advised of any such problems.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jane P. Church, Secretary

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## Up, up, and away— An annual meeting field trip

Take ninety field trippers, get them up at 0330, assemble them coffeless and foodless under flourescent lights which turn them bright yellow, load them onto two buses, drive them for close to an hour in the general direction of Tivoli, Texas, pull them up beside a narrow road at 0445 in the pitch dark, and THEN tell them they'd been gotten up and out half an hour too early — what happens? Mainly deep breathing (a euphemism for "snore"), an occasional grunt when coffee from a thermos spilled, then a gradual descent, when it became light enough to know where to step, to the edge of an enormous plowed field. At its far end, when dawn at last arrived, were the objects of this exercise — many displaying Greater Prairie Chickens. They were **said** to be booming — but even the young man with a parabolic reflector five feet in diameter wasn't really picking up much sound (and where had he stowed this on the bus?). Scopes were put to good use, everyone had a distant but good look, and the members of the Wilson and Cooper Ornithological Societies and the Western Bird Banding Association piled back onto their buses to go see an active Bald Eagle's nest.

It was there, also a long way from the highway (probably the reason for its success) and an adult posed not far away just before we took off for the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge where we split into small walking groups. Despite persistent fog, most found birds, alligators, and armadillos (a lifer

for me) to enjoy. Luncheon, boxed, was to have been delivered to a magnificent picnic area at 1030 — about 1130 a pickup raced down the road and its driver informed the, by now, ravenous ninety that there had been a seven-car pile-up on the one bridge out of Corpus Christi and he'd been delayed for two hours. Never was a pickup emptied so rapidly — mainly because we had to leave almost at once to drive to the Sea Gun Resort Hotel where our boat, the "Whooping Crane," was docked. We arrived just in time to board and have a fine four-hour ride through open water as well as the close-in reserve (the few other tourists on board had never seen so many pairs of binoculars!). We saw twenty-one Whoopers — the last time I'd been there that would have represented almost the entire population — a gratifying and genuinely heart-warming sight (they'd said it couldn't be done!).

On our way back to Corpus, we stopped at what is usually a very productive pond. However, one ornithologist commented to his wife that he'd never realized how great an interest there was in Coots! We had a good day as it rained only while we were en route — I can say that, despite returning home to discover that the Greater Prairie Chicken was **not** a life bird. And so it goes.

Jane P. Church

# White-crowned Sparrow returns

Fern R. Tainter

One of the most exciting elements of banding is the study of longevity records provided by birds that return to the original banding site after an absence of several years. For example, the following White-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) were five or more years of age when they revisited my station southeast of San Luis Obispo, California (co-ordinates 351-1203) in 1977-78.

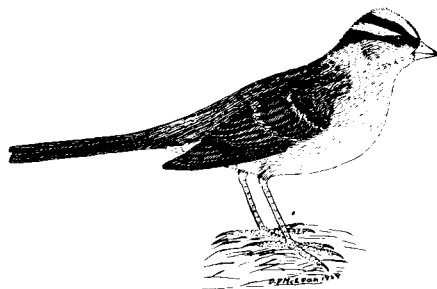
On 15 March 1973, I banded a Puget Sound (*pugetensis*) White-crowned Sparrow No. 108-164183 and caught it again on 27 March 1977. It was, of course, an AHY bird in 1973 and was therefore at least five years old in 1977.

On 30 October 1973, I banded another Puget Sound bird, No. 108-164202. It was then AHY. It came back from its breeding grounds hundreds of miles to the north on 20 October 1977, and was also five years old.

An HY Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow (*gambelii*) No. 102-137257, banded on 18 November 1972, was recaptured on 1 December 1977 and again on 1 November 1978, by which time it was six years of age.

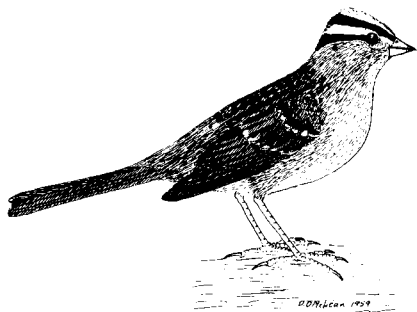
Another Gambel's, No. 108-164246, originally banded on 9 December 1973 as an HY bird, revisited my station on 4 April 1978 at the age of five. It had also made two previous returns.

One Puget Sound bird, No. 108-164119, banded as an SY bird with a brown crown on 1 February 1973, returned in poor shape on 4 April 1978. It had lost its left eye and the tip half of its lower mandible.



The upper mandible was split and splintered. The tongue was dry and wrinkled. It had been involved in one, perhaps two, accidents. Its ability to pick up food must have been severely limited; yet the bird appeared to be healthy. A cloacal protuberance proved it to be a male. It sported fresh decks measuring 62 mm and it weighed 25.4 g. With some misgivings, I sent the bird on its way and did not see it again.

The facts sound dull and unimpressive until one realizes that a bird hatched in 1972 and recaptured in 1978 has made no less than seven trips south and six trips north during its life span. Puget Sound White-crowned Sparrows must travel hundreds of miles each year, while Gambel's, which go as far north as Alaska every spring, survive the hazard of several thousand miles along their migration route. And the mystery of how they find their way back to the same wintering spot staggers the imagination of a mere earth-bound human like me! ♦



The members of W.B.B.A. extend their deepest sympathy to Fern Tainter on the recent death of her husband.