

1980

News, Notes, Comments

North American Bird Bander

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Letter to the Editor

I would like to comment on Vulture Vibes, NABB 4:172.

Vultures do not "disappear." Upon their arrival at the primary roosting site in the spring, the number of birds is always the largest. It is at this time that old pair bonds are re-established and new ones are made. As the nesting period approaches, those vultures that have not pair bonded and started nesting will remain at the established home roost for only a few weeks before dispersing to a number of what might be called secondary roosting sites. These secondary roosts should not be confused with the secondary home roosting sites.

Of the dozen plus roosting sites that I have studied, there are what I refer to as primary and secondary sites; after a day's foraging the birds settle in at the secondary roost. This roost is located at some high point. Depending on the topography, this could be tops of trees on a knoll or mountain or on water towers, etc. Here, the birds do their late-day preening and absorb the last warm rays of the sun. This is another of the vulture's energy-saving devices. As the last rays of sunlight pass, the birds drift down to their primary roost which is — in most cases — some type of conifer. These trees offer some protection from the night cold and the elements, both robbers of body heat and energy.

Because the Turkey Vulture is basically a bird of the southern-most climes, I very seriously doubt that it migrates north to escape the hotter portion of the summer. If this were the case, I'm afraid we would be inundated by the thousands of Turkey Vultures from the normal southern habitat.

There is a roost exchange and continual movement of certain individual vultures. So it would not be at all uncommon to find a bird at a roost 65 km (40 mi) from where it was tagged.

The possibility of a Turkey Vulture being electrocuted is very remote. The only uninsulated power lines found here in the East would be those of a Rural Power Company. (There is only one of these companies in the state of NJ.) Rural electrification would only run 12 KV lines; in the West, where some eagles were reported to have been killed by electrocution, 69 KV lines are run. A good percentage of those eagles that were found beneath power poles and thought to have been electrocuted have now been proved to have been shot (Morlan W. Nelson, pers. comm.) To cross between two phases, the vulture would have to be placed mid-span on the cross-arm with one wing raised two feet. There is no way a bird the size of the vulture can contact the ground/neutral, which would be another means of electrocution. Any power structures of higher voltage (i.e. 34,500) have a phase spacing well beyond that of the Turkey Vulture's wing span. South African power lines are of a completely different construction (J. Ledger, pers. corresp.) A study conducted by Morlan W. Nelson (yet to be published) shows that eagle feathers have a much higher resistance to voltage than previously presumed. It is my belief that the feather construction of the Turkey Vulture may have an even greater resistance to a higher voltage.

A nearly perfect trap to catch a mouse has yet to be developed, let alone one to catch any bird. But, there are indeed a few successful techniques used in trapping any of the vulture family.

E.H. Henckel
Mt. Allamuchy Scout Reservation
Waterloo Rd., Stanhope, NJ 07874

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Letter to a bird bander

(Audubon Expeditions is an outgrowth of the Trailside School of Vermont. Junior college kids drive all over the country in a bus, getting their education in what is happening in the outside world first-hand, while having to live with one another in amity, and do their scholastic work. They have come to me for a bird seminar [that's a pretty formal word for what they get] for years. There are now two busloads, full of ignorance, full of sharp questions. I always get a good letter thanking me, but this one is really touching. I would think it would give to those who band, and use their banding as an educational tool, a big boost. It certainly has me. *Jonnie Fisk.*)

Letter written to a bird bander conducting a one-day seminar at Archibold Biological Station, Lake Placid, Florida:

"One evening I was merrily winging my way through the scrub oak in search of insects. Before I knew what was happening, I became a tangle of feathers in your net. I struggled and rested and then struggled again. When I heard you and the 20 Audubon Expedition Institute students tramping through the woods towards me, I nearly fainted. My heart pittered so fast that it nearly burst out of my chest. As I waited there in anguish for my doom, anger flooded over me. This seemed just another injustice done to me at the hands of humans. Memorys (sic) of seeing thousands of my friends and relatives die in spasms caused by pesticides, and tales of bygone days when insects swarmed the land which is now ravaged, all came back to me. How dare these humans do this to me and my kind? If I could I would have grown 20 times my size and riped (sic) up sugar fields, orange groves, housing developments and drainage ditches. But I am only a little bird who was becoming more and more frightened as your huge hands untangled the strings around me.

"Then I began to listen to the things you were saying to the students and my heart began to slow down. A sensitivity to the predicament wildlife and humans are in came out as you talked. Eventually I understood that what was happening to me was an effort to understand my kind.

"When finally you released me into the air, I wanted to stay around and hear more. I saw these students get opportunitys (sic) to meet people who were interested in my world in one way or the other. Such a concentration of knowledgeable people (at Archibold) I had never seen in my life. Even I, who have lived with the bees, bobcats and caracaras learned so many new things.

"Then the conversation you had with the kids in the bus stirred me to the depths. Perched on top of the bus I nodded in agreement with everything you said. Never in all my evesdropping into conversations of nature lovers had I heard a more moving statement for the preservation of birds. Few people realize that a habitat unfit for birds is a habitat unfit for humans. We're all made out of the same stuff and dependent upon the same stuff. . . . When I saw you communicating this to the AFI students it brought some hope into my little wings. What you communicated to them might in the long run change a small part of the world.

"Weakness is overcoming me because I have spent so much time writing to you, and not enough time eating. (Let me just emphasize one last point. I think you gave so much to those AFI students with your knowledge of the birds and the natural world.) Maybe if I'm not careful we will meet again at the net."

Sincerely,

Freddie Flycatcher

Research Grants

The Eastern Bird Banding Association and the Western Bird Banding Association are each offering a research grant of \$250 in aid of research using bird banding techniques or bird banding data.

Applicants should submit a resumé of his or her ornithological or banding background, the project plan, and a budget to the joint selection committee chairman: Robert C. Leberman, Powdermill Nature Reserve, Star Route South, Rector, PA 15677. No formal application forms are available. The amount requested should not exceed \$250. The deadline for receipt of application is 15 March 1981.

The Ring:

25 years of contribution to banders worldwide

Frederick S. Schaeffer

In October 1979, *The Ring* celebrated its 25th Anniversary with the publication of Issue #100. *The Ring* started in 1954 in England (in Croydon, Surrey, to be exact) and was founded by a man with unlimited energy — Dr. W. Rydzewski. Later, Dr. Rydzewski moved to Wroclaw, Poland, where he joined the Museum of Natural History staff. *The Ring* is remarkable, not only because it has survived for 25 years, but because it did so through untold political crises. There is a remarkable comradery among ornithologists regardless of their race, religion, or ideology, and it is probably that factor which sustained *The Ring* for so long — along with Dr. Rydzewski's unswerving dedication. *The Ring* is truly international in scope, and it is the only banding journal received in all countries where banding is being done. The 100th Issue is a testimonial to that; there are dozens of articles and notes from all over the globe, congratulating Dr. Rydzewski on his 25th Anniversary with *The Ring*.

I joined the "staff" of *The Ring* 15 years ago as a co-editor (now called Honorary Correspondent) and have tried to coordinate input from the U.S. and attempted to improve circulation. This has not been easy for two reasons: (a) there are many good or excellent banding publications in the U.S. already and, with bird species being so different in Europe, U.S. banders generally find the local literature adequate; (b) delivery of *The Ring* to the U.S. is slow because stocks are transferred from Poland by ship.

It is most pleasing to find so many 25th Anniversary testimonials from people in the U.S., viz. H. Elliott McClure; Oliver L. Austin, Jr.; Lawrence H. Walkinshaw; and I understand there will be more in Issue #101. Issue #100 brings news from England, India, Estonian SSR, East and West Germany, USSR, Australia, Poland, Portugal, France, Hungary, and many other places.

If you wish to subscribe to *The Ring*, you may do

so by mailing a check for U.S. \$6.00 (or equivalent local currency) to: Polonia Bookstore Co., 2921 Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60618 (for U.S. residents); or Dawson Subscription Service, 6 Thorncliffe Park Drive, Toronto 17, Ontario (for Canadians). If you live anywhere else, check with your national Natural History Museum (where a recent issue of *The Ring* will contain information on how to join), or address the order to: Foreign Trade Enterprise Ars Polona-Ruch, Krakowskie Przedmiescie 7, 00-068 Warsaw, P.O. Box 1001, Poland. If you use the last given address (NOT for U.S./Canada), please send payment to the account of Ars Polona-Ruch in Bank Handlowy S.A. 7 Traugutt Street, 00-067 Warsaw, Poland. We mention this information because *North American Bird Bander* is also read worldwide.

If you are interested in recent literature or bird longevity on a worldwide basis, you should have *The Ring* in your library.

84-55 Daniels St, #4f, Jamaica, NY 11435

Save an eagle:

Save your stamps!

Any stamps (especially commemorative and foreign) can help save the Bald Eagle. The Florida Audubon Society saves stamps for resale to collectors to help fund the Society's raptor research and rehabilitation program. These stamps are collected through Audubon's Bald Eagle and birds of prey program which is directed by Doris Mager, the nation's best-known Bald Eagle advocate.

As part of a national monitoring team, Doris surveys Bald Eagle nests in 17 Florida counties every year, spending over 100 hours in the cockpit of a single-engine airplane. The Florida survey team has produced evidence that Florida has the largest Bald Eagle breeding population in the eastern United States.

Readers who want to save their foreign and U.S. stamps to help save the Southern Bald Eagle should write to Florida Audubon Society Stamp Program, P.O. Drawer 7, Maitland, FL 32751 for an informative brochure about the project.

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Cooperative banding project

Beginning with the Fall 1980 migration, a cooperative banding project will be initiated to study the phenomenon known as differential fall migration. Comparisons will be made on a nationwide basis of the variation in timing and location of migration patterns of AHY and HY birds. The following eight species have been selected for study:

Least Flycatcher
Swainson's Thrush
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler
Wilson's Warbler
Dark-eyed Junco
White-throated Sparrow

It is important to have participation from banders in all four flyways. The only requirements are for the participating banders to be skilled in aging by degree of skull pneumatization, and that they band at least one of the selected species in relatively large numbers.

If you would like to participate in this project, contact me at the address below. Forms for recording data will be sent as soon as I hear from you.

Jerome J. Barry
Science Department
McKelvie School
Liberty Hill Road
Bedford, NH 03102

International Shorebird Surveys 1980-81

The International Shorebird Survey scheme is organised by the Canadian Wildlife Service and Manomet Bird Observatory to obtain information on shorebird migration and distribution for conservation and research purposes. The scheme was started in 1974 and is providing a continental picture of shorebird distribution through surveys carried out by volunteers in eastern Canada and the U.S.A., the Caribbean Islands and Central and South America.

In 1980, we plan to continue and extend the

scheme in as many areas as possible. Any observer who may be able to participate in regular survey counts of shorebirds during spring, autumn, and winter periods is asked to contact one of the undersigned. Occasional counts from observers visiting shorebird areas on an irregular basis would also be most welcome.

For areas in Canada: Dr. R.I.G. Morrison, Canadian Wildlife Service, 1725 Woodward Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1G 3Z7.

For areas in the U.S.A., Caribbean Islands, Central and South America: Brian A. Harrington, Manomet Bird Observatory, Manomet, MA 02345, U.S.A.

Request for information

C.W.S. shorebird colour-marking

In 1980, the Canadian Wildlife Service will be continuing a large-scale shorebird banding and colour-marking project in James Bay. Since 1974, over 45,700 shorebirds of 27 species have been captured and much information on migration and dispersal routes is being obtained.

Observers are asked to look out for and report any colour-dyed **or** colour-banded shorebirds that they may see. Reports should include details of species, age (if possible), place, date, time, colour-marks, and a note of the number of that species present.

For colour-dyed birds please record the colour and area of the bird that was dyed. For colour-bands and standard metal leg bands, please record which leg the bands were on, whether they were above or below the 'knee,' the colours involved, and the relative position of the bands if more than one was on a leg (e.g. lower right leg, blue over metal, etc.).

All reports will be acknowledged and should be sent to Bird Banding Laboratory, Laurel, MD 20811 with a copy to Dr. R.I. G. Morrison, Canadian Wildlife Service, 1725 Woodward Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1G 3Z7.

Hawk Mountain Research Award

The Board of Directors of the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association announces its third annual award for raptor research. Jane E. Anderson, Graduate Research Assistant, Arizona Wildlife Research Unit, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona is this year's recipient. Miss Anderson's study, "Influence of range conditions on hunting areas of Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels," is a much needed investigation demonstrating the relationship between grazing intensity and raptor ecology. This basic research will be important in the future management practices on grazing lands and particularly on BLM land use by private cattle interests.

To apply for the \$500.00 annual award, students should submit a description of their research program, a curriculum vitae, and two letters of recommendation by 31 October 1980 to: Mr. Alexander C. Nagy, Curator, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association, Route 2, Kempton, PA 19529.

The final decision by the Board of Directors will be made in February 1981.

Only students enrolled in degree-granting institutions are eligible. Both undergraduate and graduate students are invited to apply. Projects will be picked solely on the basis of their potential contribution to improve understanding of raptor biology and of their relevance to conservation of North American hawk populations.



Osprey recovery

Henry T. Armistead, Philadelphia, PA reports the finding of a dead Osprey at Bellevue, MD ferry slip on 11 May 1979. It was banded by D.E. Davis on 17 June 1957 as a nestling, near Parson's Island, Queen Anne's County, MD. 22 years old.

(Printed with D.E. Davis' permission.)

Bird-banding at Powdermill, 1978 with Ligonier Valley Field Notes. Robert C. Leberman and Mary Heimerdinger Clench. Powdermill Nature Reserve Research Report No. 39, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, PA. 1979. 29 pp. No price stated.

The banding activities of the eighteenth consecutive year of the Powdermill Nature Reserve are emphasized in this report, with 9558 new birds of 116 species banded and 3146 returns, repeats, and recoveries processed. New birds banded included one hybrid (a "Brewster's" Warbler) and two subspecies of the Palm Warbler. The educational value of the station is indicated by the fact that nearly 1000 visitors watched banding activities there in 1978.

The report is divided into a brief introduction and 5 chapters. The first chapter consists of a table of birds banded, the second a table and discussion of returns (including minimum known age), the third a table and discussion of age records, and the fourth a discussion of recoveries. The chapter on age records includes details on two old female warblers which (in old age) showed characters of male plumage not shown earlier. One of these had lost these features when handled subsequently. The recoveries consisted of 14 Powdermill-banded birds discovered elsewhere, and 11 foreign-banded birds at Powdermill. The final and longest chapter consists of seasonal notes for 5 seasons (2 winters) in *American Birds* style. These include comparisons of banding totals with those of other years, but relatively little comparison with seasonal trends elsewhere. A list of publications cited concludes the report.

This booklet serves as an excellent example of the value of long-term programs at established stations. I wished for more detail re the ongoing projects mentioned in the introduction, but perhaps this will appear in a 20-year summary report. At any rate, I recommend this report to all banders, especially those interested in permanent field stations. I did not notice any typing errors or other technical faults.

Martin K. McNicholl