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## Western Regional News

North American Bird Bander

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# Western Regional News

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## Western Bird Banding Association

Founded 1925

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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

The Bird Banding Offices' North American Bird Banding Manual specifies that the use of banding should be restricted to legitimate research, educational, and management projects. There is some reason to believe that if we, as banders, are not careful to adhere to this policy, we may lose the nongame bird banding program. The purpose of this message is to address this problem.

In the early part of the twentieth century, much remained to be learned about avian natural history phenomena. Interest developed in studying birds by means of banding. It was believed that an organized banding program would help to answer ornithologists' questions, especially regarding the migration of birds. A logical course of action at the time was to enlist volunteers to band as many birds as possible. As a result of this emphasis, some information was obtained on migratory patterns, although recovery rates for most nongame species were disappointingly low. Also as a result of this emphasis, many banders came to nurture the idea that they did ornithology and the Bird Banding Offices a service simply by banding birds and banding them in great quantities. For some, banding large numbers of species or individuals became an end in itself rather than a means to an end.

As the number of banders grew and the costs of processing and maintaining banding records mounted, it became apparent that "ringing and flinging" large numbers of nongame birds was not cost-effective. The Bird Banding Offices accordingly tightened their policies. Emphasis was placed upon the use of banding as a tool to meet well-defined research, educational, or management objectives. Banding for recreational purposes, as well as large-scale banding of birds during migration, was discouraged. "Quality," rather than "quantity," banding became the order of the day.

Ingrained habits die slowly, however, and banders have not always adhered to these policies.

Recently we have entered a new era—an era of increasing austerity and "accountability." Citizens are demanding that non-essential governmental services be reduced in cost and scope and that unnecessary programs be dropped. In such an atmosphere, we as banders do no service either to the banding program or to ourselves if we disregard the Bird Banding Offices' stated policies. It would be well for all of us to adopt the attitude that banding is a privilege, to be federally supported only so long as it serves a legitimate purpose and is cost-effective.

Each time we band a bird, we perhaps should ask ourselves:

1. Does banding this bird serve a valid purpose? For example, does it contribute to an individual or cooperative research project? Does it fulfill an educational need? Can the information gained from this (and similar) bandings be used to promote the species' welfare?
2. Does banding this bird justify the cost of manufacturing the band and processing and maintaining the bird's records? Do I plan to gather as much accurate information as possible, in as useful a form as possible, from the bird at the time I band it? And is the bird from a resident population, so that I am likely to obtain further information from subsequent encounters?

If we can answer "yes" to these questions, then perhaps the nongame bird banding program will survive and we can continue to enjoy an activity that has utility.

Martha Balph

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## Dr. Sherwin F. Wood

Dr. Sherwin F. Wood, who retired as Professor of Biology at Los Angeles City College in 1973, died of a heart attack at his home in Thousand Oaks, California on 8 February 1980.

Dr. Wood was a Life Member of WBBA since 1963 and was the Associations' Vice-President from 1938 to 1944.

He was the author of more than 90 scientific papers and was an authority on *Trypanosoma cruzi*, the causative agent of Chagas' Disease, especially working on its insect vectors.

Dr. Wood was born at Lake Placid, NY on 23 June 1908. He is survived by his wife, Dr. Fae Donat Wood and two children.