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Eastern Regional News

North American Bird Bander

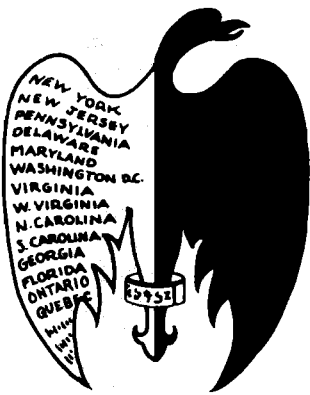
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Eastern Regional News

Eastern Bird Banding Association

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Eastern Regional News is published quarterly in North American Bird Bander by the Eastern Bird Banding Association. Applications for membership and changes of address should be sent to the Treasurer. The dues: Active Members — \$8.00 per year; Sustaining Members — \$16.00 per year; Student Members — \$6.00 per year; Life Membership — \$200.00; Non-subscribing Members — \$3.00 per year. Canadian and foreign memberships add \$2.00. Contributions to the Eastern Bird Banding Association are tax deductible.

EBBA Annual Meeting Speaker

EBBA Annual Meeting speaker, John W. Terborgh of Princeton University, had a message on the Ecology and Conservation of Migratory Birds Wintering in the Tropics of such vital importance that it calls for summarizing here — and action on our part as banders.

New data on where in the Neotropics some 150 species of migratory birds go and what they do there were brought together in a Symposium held in 1977 at the Conservation and Research Center, National Zoological Park, Smithsonian Institution.

These data show that some two-thirds of the North American breeding bird species of forests and woodlands migrate to the Bahamas, Cuba, Hispaniola, Mexico, Central America, and northern South America. This means that these birds, including warblers, vireos, flycatchers, thrushes, and orioles are, for seven months of the year, compressed into a wintering area of half the size — or less — of the North American breeding area. Some species winter in limited areas, e.g. Kirtland's Warbler in the Bahamas, Chestnut-sided Warbler in the Caribbean side of Central America, and Philadelphia Vireo mainly on the Pacific side of southern Central America. Because of this tendency for species to concentrate on the wintering ground, the effect of habitat destruction in the tropics is amplified many times. The clearing of 1 hectare (2.47 acres) of forest in Mexico becomes equivalent to loss of perhaps 5 hectares of habitat in the northeastern U.S.

Consider that over half the natural vegetation of Central America and the Greater Antilles has already been cleared for cropland and pasture. If the present rate of deforestation continues (several percent of the remaining habitat per year), very little wintering habitat will remain by the end of the century. Loss of habitat of land birds is occurring more rapidly and systematically than that of water birds except in the Argentine pampas where many shorebirds winter. There, the potholes are being drained and the virgin prairie plowed, in a pattern similar to what we have witnessed in our own Great Plains. In the forested portions of the tropics, cleared land is used for agriculture for only a few years, then it is converted to pasture for grazing; the depleted soil cannot support the regeneration of a forest of original diversity and quality. The loss of primary forest habitat is more important for many migrant species than previously thought, and will result in major reductions of species populations.

What can we as banders do? During the questions and discussions after the talk, we came up with the following:

1. Go on the organized bird tours in the Neotropics. These tours are noticed by the respective governments, and such tourism may become sufficiently important that the countries will perceive the economic benefits and be motivated to create and enforce nature reserves.
2. Take breeding-bird censuses (e.g., the State Breeding Bird Atlas) so that we will have the long-term population records necessary for detecting dangerous trends.
3. Band warblers, vireos, flycatchers, etc. on their breeding grounds before fall migration, so we can learn more about their dispersal.
4. Read! A book is available from this international symposium: A. Keast and E.S. Morton, Editors. *Migrant Birds in the Neotropics: Ecology, Behavior, Distribution, and Conservation*. The Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C. 1980. In hard cover (\$27.50) and paperback (\$15.00).
5. Many of the countries involved do not even have field guides in their language available to university students and researchers! Bird and conservation organizations could help by sponsoring translations.

Hannah B. Suthers

Back issues of EBBA News, Index, and NABB

(east of the Mississippi)

EBBA News: Vol. 1-17, \$1.50 per copy; Vol. 18-27, \$.75 per copy; Vol. 28-33, \$1.00 per copy; Vol. 34-39: \$1.75 per copy (except Vol. 38:2 which is \$2.50).

Index: Vol. 31-39, \$2.25.

Back issues of NABB, Vol. 1-4, \$2.00.

Prices include postage. Make checks payable to Eastern Bird Banding Association and order from: Mrs. Donald Mease, RD 1, Box 436A, Hellertown, PA 18055. Please note: Canadian orders should be drawn to American dollars.

Ray Purvis Margerum

1911-1981

Ray was a bird bander for many years, first serving as a sub-permittee with his sister, Mabel Warburton, and in 1963 receiving his own master permit. He banded at his own home in Trenton, NJ, also at Stoney Brook in Princeton, and at Island Beach State Park.

Ray made beautiful wooden collecting cases for banders from Maine to Florida, and will be long remembered for this service to banders.