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Western Regional News

Western Bird Banding Association

Founded 1925

President's Message

Recent articles in the British journal *Ringing and Migration* on the future of banding offer a number of provocative thoughts. Many of the problems and needs of "ringers" in Britain are ones we share in North America.

The English take for granted a strong central organization which plans and coordinates all the major ornithological projects including banding, the British Trust for Ornithology. With the advent of computerized data handling the BTO is beginning to take advantage of having the resulting data all in one place. Currently we have no comparable group in North America; our data is scattered across the continent. We have no central coordination for large scale ornithological research projects.

With the current US Federal deficit, the Bird Banding Lab will do well to maintain its present service, so we banders cannot expect them to expand. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology is one possibility for a central coordinating group since they have begun to accumulate other types of data besides Nest Record Cards. An existing institution with an established record has an easier time attracting funding than a new group.

When a central data base is available, the next step is a resource staff to analyze data and design cooperative projects. Since that is in the future, what ideas for projects are available now? The British mentioned three

possibilities: measuring yearly population changes by constant-effort banding studies and variations in the return of winter or summer residents; determining how far fledglings of non-migratory species disperse; and aging and sexing studies on individual species.

Banders are acquiring personal computers with the obvious potential of interacting with a central data storage base. We need now to plan to take advantage of this potential. Data entry is time consuming but many banders are more comfortable entering their own data than paying to have someone else do it.

The most exciting idea from the British banders was for a "speak-your-number" band, which would broadcast its number on radio command, eliminating the need to recapture the bird or read a series of colored bands. The proposer put it forth as a "wouldn't-it-be-neat" idea, but the technology is not far off, since telemetry for songbirds is already available. Think of the possibilities!

To further discuss some of the future opportunities for and needs of banding on this continent, WBBA plans a series of guest editorials in future issues. We will invite authors to start the series and welcome submissions from members.

Dr. Robert Tweit