

1985

## The Banders' Forum

North American Bird Bander

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### Recommended Citation

North American Bird Bander (1985) "The Banders' Forum," *North American Bird Bander*. Vol. 10 : Iss. 2 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/nabb/vol10/iss2/9>

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# The Banders' Forum

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**To the Editor:** For a year I have been pondering Jerome A. Jackson's editorial which stressed the need for banders to publish their results (*North American Bird Bander* 8:166-169, October-December 1983). I agree wholeheartedly with his main theme about maintaining the standards of scientific papers and the need for referees to scrutinize and help improve the papers submitted. Jerry has stated his side of the story very well.

On the other hand, each of us sees life from a slightly different perspective.\* My opinions are influenced by my experiences, which include 42 years of association with a regional journal, the *Blue Jay*, which has managed better than most to publish material of scientific value contributed by amateurs; 20 years as a University professor; 42 years as a bird-bander; 15 years as a wildlife columnist for a sportsman's magazine; 4 years as regional editor for *American Birds*; 5 years as a scientific journal editor.

I know scientists who have given up their thesis, one after several trips to the psychiatric ward, and many more who after completing a thesis have published nothing. I know amateurs who have published articles and books of merit. I know people who have had a manuscript returned for their approval of slight revisions, who have put it aside indefinitely, and others who after one rejected manuscript have never submitted another. I know scientists whose manuscripts aren't worth the paper they are written on, and amateurs who will never publish valuable studies they have done. I could go on and on.

I know from experience that one of the ingredients in banding is chance. Fate. Fickle luck. A handful of recoveries of Chimney Swifts told us of their wintering quarters and an almost equally small number of Arctic Tern recoveries allowed us to understand the extent of their migration.

Besides this, banding data are now available on computer so that others may publish from it in the future. I have, over the years, written a series of articles on Saskatchewan's early banders, sharing somewhat belatedly their interesting results. Two farmer brothers, R.H. Carter, Jr., and J.R. Carter, banded the nestling Red-tailed Hawks on their own farms, usually only in a single nest each year. Between 1923 and 1959 the Carter brothers banded only 51 Redtail nestlings, yet these provided an incredible 22 recoveries, mapping nicely the migration route and wintering grounds of these hawks from Saskatchewan.

Since it is not realistic to expect every bander to wish to write scientific articles, or to achieve the writing of same even if talking about it, an editor cannot wait for the unlikely to happen. What could be done, I respectfully suggest, is to follow the lead of some of the most eminent scientific journals and encourage a variety of offerings. A lively "Letters to the Editor" section is the most-read feature of some journals. Anyone able to write a letter can contribute. Then there could be a less formal section (even the august AUK has tried this with success) entitled Commentary. Other possible titles (there could be several) include Opinion, Forum, Point of View, Work in Progress, From the Field, or Flashback. I send this and another offering that might be considered for the informal part of the journal.

Finally, could a small committee of interested and experienced banders not find a way to help beginners prepare and revise their material for publication, offering positive encouragement rather than discouragement?

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\*As the Saskatchewan Indian chief said: "If all men thought alike, they'd all want my squaw."

