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Inland Regional News

Inland Bird Banding Association

Founded 1922

FRANCES HAMERSTROM HONORED



Left to right: Fran and Fred Hamerstrom and President John Flora.

Those who know Frances Hamerstrom of Plainfield, Wisconsin are aware that she has accomplished much in her more than 50 years of wildlife studies. But a look at her early academic years would have caused scepticism concerning her future.

She was the only member of her class who failed to graduate from high school (Milton Academy). However, she passed the College Board examinations and was accepted by Smith College, only to flunk out at the end of her sophomore year. She attributes this scholastic disaster to her intense interest in the two B's -- Birds and Boys!

Known to her friends as Fran, she went on to become a part of the Hamerstrom wildlife research team. She graduated from Iowa State University where she received the prize for the woman student most likely to succeed in science. At Iowa State she studied under Paul L. Errington, who taught her the scientific method, discipline, and from whom both Hamerstoms captured the "spirit of public service".

Fran is the only woman to receive a graduate degree under Aldo Leopold, from whom she got magnificent training and inspiration. Her Master's thesis, *Dominance in Winter Flocks of Chickadees*, was unsupervised. She made her own bird bands to mark individuals. Gold links from a necklace in her jewelry box, and strips of celluloid from a nearby dump, were fashioned into bands. Leopold edited the manuscript, which was published in the *Wilson Bulletin* 54: 32-42. 1942.

In explaining her interest in banding, she said, "My banding --and color-marking-- started from curiosity: the urgent need to

learn what individuals were doing in order to understand forces at work within a population".

Fran was issued a Federal Bird Marking Master Permit on February 6, 1937, and Frederick, her best friend and partner in research and marriage was issued his Sub-permit on March 30, 1939.

For more than twenty years Fred and Fran carried on a joint field research in Wisconsin on ecology of the Greater Prairie Chicken and the Sharptailed Grouse, including winter and spring relationships with predators. This led to management plans for the preservation of the Greater Prairie Chickens in central Wisconsin. This project received international attention.

More recently Fran has turned her attention to birds of prey, including the Harris' Hawk of Texas, and the Osprey of Sonora, Mexico. Together Fran and her husband, Hammy, have published more than 150 papers and articles.

Many awards and honors have come her way, among them being a Doctor of Science degree from Carroll College in 1961, and the Josselyn Van Tyne Award of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1960. She was elected a Fellow of American Ornithologists' Union in 1982. The list is long.

Frances Hamerstrom is the author of several books, including, *Birding with a Purpose*, *Harrier*, *Hawk of the Marshes*, and *Strictly for the Chickens*.

Inland Bird Banding Association has been fortunate to have Fran as a member. She has presented many papers at annual meetings and has published many papers in the journal. At the annual meeting September 26, 1987 at Rapid City, South Dakota she was presented a certificate of appreciation for her 50 years of bird banding and research. The Association appreciates her unselfish study of wildlife.

Willettta Lueshen

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thankyou, John Flora, and Carroll Rudy, for preparing *Inland Bird Banding Newsletter*, Volume 9, Number 4, October, 1987, during my lengthy stay in the hospital.

And to all officers and members may I say thankyou for the lovely flowers and the many cards and letters. They helped to hasten my recovery.

PINE SISKINS EASILY TRAPPED

On the morning of 11 April 1987, I remember looking out our window and commenting to my wife, Ellen, "There must be at least a hundred Pine Siskins in our yard!". I had noticed several siskins at our feeders in days prior, but an influx of birds had definitely occurred that day. They were busily foraging and fighting on the four feeders containing sunflower seed hearts.

Pine Siskins are sporadic winter visitors in our area, although this was the largest group I had ever seen in our yard in Creighton, a small rural village in northeastern Nebraska. I do not get a chance to capture siskins every year, and since I had nothing really pressing to do that day, I decided to band a few. I thought, "a few", in that it was a bit windy for mist netting and I own only a couple of treadle traps.

It was about 9:00 am o'clock when I set two four-cell "Potter-type" traps on our front porch and baited them with sunflower seed hearts. Within minutes siskins were going into the traps, and by noon I had already banded nearly 100 birds. I was catching birds constantly, as if they were waiting in line for a silver bracelet. I was often catching two birds per cell, and at one time there were 11 siskins in a four-cell trap; five in one cell, three in another, two in the third cell, and a single bird in the fourth cell.

The activity lasted until late afternoon before slowing down. It was amazing that only 5 or 6 birds were recaptured during the day.

At the close of the day records showed that with the use of two four-cell "Potter-type" traps on my front porch, I had caught and banded 208 Pine Siskins and one American Goldfinch. Wing measurements taken on all birds proved nothing more than that all were of unknown sex.

Upon looking out our window the next morning, I saw several banded birds and counted at least 30 without bracelets. During the course of the next several days I banded over 40 more siskins and saw quite a few others without bands. I question as to how many there really were, and wonder, "Where are they this year?"

Mark A. Brogie, P. O. Box 316, Creighton, Nebraska 68729.

NEST BOXES NEED CARE

EDITOR'S NOTE: Following are the instructions prepared for volunteers in the bluebird project at the Holden Arboretum, 9500 Sperry Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060. No doubt they will be helpful to others who are studying bluebirds.

Before the end of March, check boxes, clean out any old nesting material, taking care not to remove anything that could be the start of a new bluebird nest. Repair with tape any cracks that might let in rain.

Check your boxes twice a week during nesting season. If a pair is in the process of selecting a box or building a nest, make note of it and do not disturb. If eggs are present, open and shut door quickly. Make note, if possible, of the number of eggs.

Keep track of when the last egg was

laid (usually one egg is laid daily) and calculate probable hatching date (14 days later).

Change nest on approximately the 5th and 7th days after hatching (adults will not desert their young). It is recommended that any nest material removed be securely fastened in plastic bags and disposed of in trash. Much remains to be known about *Protocalliphera*. If you find no larvae on the second change, you may leave the nest. If you do find larvae, change the nest in another two days. If it is cold and rainy, do not change the nest. Change it as soon as the weather permits. In any case, protect the young from chill and/or bright sun, by placing them in a container and covering them with a light weight material. Keep a supply of soft dry grass.

When young are more than twelve days old continue to check the house by watching from a distance to see if parents are feeding. If you see no activity, go to the box and listen. If you hear nothing, open the box a crack to see if the young are still there. If present, close box quickly.

Remove the nest a week after fledging, examine for larvae and pupae and place in a mesh bag. Young may remain in the nest up to their 21st day. If the nest is compact and neat, you can safely assume the young have fledged successfully. If, however, it looks messed up in any way, make note of the condition before removing.

If nesting is interrupted, look for evidence of the cause. If eggs are present, are they pierced (House Wren) or broken? Are there shells in the nest or on the ground? Tiny young are hard to see. If the parents remove the dead young, they remove them far from the nest site where they will not be found. Has the guard, or box, been newly scratched? Is the screw missing, or loose? If dead young are present, have they been pecked? (House Sparrows kill the young and adults in this manner.) Do the young seem well nourished? Stomachs full? Are there any larvae?

Any dead birds should be preserved if possible. They can be placed in a plastic bag and frozen. If the condition of the bird is such that it cannot be preserved, remove the band, put into an envelop with box number, location, date, etc.

All boxes should be checked twice a week. It is important to remove House Sparrows until the end of the summer.

Bluebirds sometimes lay white eggs. Do not destroy any white eggs. They produce normal young.

The bluebird nest is made of soft grasses woven neatly and compactly. It varies in height, but always has a good base to the cup. Occasionally you will find a stray feather. You will soon recognize a bluebird nest by its neatness. Bluebirds sometimes make a nest of pine needles.

The Tree Swallow nest initially resembles that of the bluebird but will be finished with a lining of many feathers (usually all white). The chickadee uses mosses.

The House Sparrow builds a loosely woven messy nest of grasses, which extend up the inside of the house. Some small feathers and scraps of paper, or string, are often mixed in. The cup is often almost bare at the base.

The House Wren builds a nest of twigs.

Jean G. Eakin, 2709 Southington Road, Shaker Heights, Ohio 44120.



Dr. Stuart Houston, with wife Mary, is presented with a birthday cake at the annual IBBA meeting.

NOVEMBER DATE CHOSEN FOR MEETING

Inland Bird Banding Association will hold its annual conference at Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm near Dayton, Ohio. The meeting will be held November 5-7, 1988. Hosting the group will be the Ohio Bird Banding Association, with C. Holmes Smith as Chairman.

Situated six miles east of I-75, two miles north of I-70, and two miles west of the Dayton International Airport, the Center can be easily reached from the main thoroughfares. Numerous motels and restaurants are nearby.

Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm is a 200-acre sanctuary and educational center. The land was given to the community by Mrs. John W. Aull. Trails wind through prairie, deep woods, pasture, and sagebrush, and beside marsh, pond, and streams. Exhibits at the Center and Farm interpret natural history and Man's relationship with the land.

Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm is the National Audubon Society's regional education center for the six states of the Central Midwest Audubon Region.

Further information about the meeting will be sent to members at a later date. Questions about the meeting may be directed to C. Holmes Smith, 6305 Cumberland Road, S. W., Sherrodsville, Ohio 44675.

BANDERS INVITED TO PUBLISH

All banders are invited to send informal reports of returns, recoveries, and unusual captures to the editor for publication. Announcements, news about members, or any tidbits of interest to banders are welcome. Please send to:

WILLETTA LUESHEN, EDITOR
INLAND BIRD BANDING NEWSLETTER
ROUTE 2, Box 26
WISNER, NEBRASKA 68791

All scientific papers should be sent to:

DAN KRAMER, EDITOR
NORTH AMERICAN BIRD BANDER
3451 Co. Road 256
VICKERY, OHIO 43464

PURPLE FINCH GOES TO BRITISH COLUMBIA

Little did I realize when I started to band birds that I would be dealing in international trade. In September word came from Victoria, British Columbia, Canada that a Purple Finch, which I had banded, is now being displayed in the museum there. Credit for this specimen goes to a cat! It was 12 miles east of Telkwa, British Columbia, approximately 465 miles north of the museum, that a cat caught a bird. Usually I don't condone such behavior, but if it hadn't been for this agile Canadian cat we would never have known that the Purple Finch which we fed in Baldwin City, Kansas in 1984 probably nested in British Columbia.

Word also came of the sighting of a marked Pine Siskin at a feeder in East Grand Forks, Minnesota. Proof in the way of a colored slide was sent to the Bird Banding Laboratory. The picture clearly showed the band on the right leg and the red streak on the chest feathers, which I had placed there.

I am again color-marking the breast feathers of the Pine Siskins that I band in my backyard. My color scheme is as follows: December--orange, January--green, February--red, March--blue, April--red over blue with white space between, and if they are still coming in May, it will be green over orange.

My very first foreign retrap was a Purple Finch which was banded in Winnipeg, Manitoba. To date (October, 1987), five Purple Finches, which I have banded, have been found in Canada.

I am sorry I couldn't get to the meeting in Rapid City. I really would have liked to meet the many banders of that region, who have caught birds that I have banded.

Katharine B. Kelley, P. O. Box 43, 911 Dearborn, Baldwin City, Kansas 66006

NEWS ABOUT MEMBERS

Dorothy Flentge, bander, and member of Inland Bird Banding Association for more than fifty years, has recently moved from her home in Prospect Heights, Illinois to 2064 South Farnsworth Drive, #3, Mesa, Arizona.

Chandler S. Robbins, Laurel, Maryland, received a Distinguished Service Award from the Department of the Interior in ceremonies in September.

Dr. Norman F. Sloan remains hospitalized following a stroke in February, 1986. Correspondence from members and friends is always welcome, and may be sent to his home at Route 2, Box 115, Chassell, Michigan 49916.

Harold Wilson, Ephraim, Wisconsin, Inland Bird Banding Association member and bander for more than fifty years, passed away in May, 1987.



IBBA officers present at the annual meeting at Rapid City, South Dakota. Front row, left to right: Director Jane Olyphant, Secretary Carroll Rudy, and Treasurer C. Holmes Smith. Back row: 2nd Vice President Donald Beimborn, 1st Vice President Peter Petersen, Membership Secretary and Director Al Valentine, and President John Flora.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- President:** John J. Flora, 3636 Williams, Dearborn, MI 48124
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- (1989) Nathaniel R. Whitney, MD., 633 South Berry Pines Rd., Rapid City, SD 57702
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- (1990) Allen E. Valentine, 17403 Oakington Ct., Dallas, TX 75252
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Telephone: 402/529-6679 (home)

DIRTY HAIRY RETURNS

In the January 1985 *Inland Bird Banding Newsletter*, Volume 7, Number 1, I reported on an unusually dark-colored Hairy Woodpecker that I had banded. My article was in answer to a previous article by Mary Louise Myers, in the July 1983 issue, wherein which she had speculated that a Downy Woodpecker colored like my Hairy Woodpecker was a melanistic bird. I had examined the feathers of the bird I caught with a microscope and spot tested the plumage with solvents, and had found the dark pewter-gray color of the woodpecker's normally white parts to be some kind of grease-based soil. I further speculated that the grease might come from feeding on suit, but that the dark pigment came from another source that very few woodpeckers seem to contact.

In April of 1987, I captured a female Downy Woodpecker with the same kind of plumage--normal in all respects except color. All the parts that should have been white were lustrous dark gray, with the darkest gray on the head; the color gradually lightening to the under tail coverts, which were a light gray. This time, however, the bird was a previously banded bird, which I first captured in August of 1985, the year it was hatched. At the time of banding, and at two previous recapture dates in 1986, the bird's plumage was normal. I performed the same tests on a feather from the Downy Woodpecker, with the same results--the color was due to a grease or oil-based soil.

Of even greater interest, however, was the return on November 22, 1987 of the female Hairy Woodpecker that I had described in my previous article. After an absence of three years, she had come back with clean, bright, perfectly normal plumage.

Carroll Rudy, W3866 Hwy. H, Chilton, Wisconsin 53014



Carroll Rudy, Chilton, Wisconsin, and Karl Bartel, Blue Island, Illinois, enjoy a visit at the annual banquet at Rapid City, South Dakota.

THE WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

will hold its Centennial Meeting at Rosemont College, in suburban Philadelphia, PA, 9-12 June 1988. For information contact Dr. Frank B. Gill, Chairman on Arrangements Committee, Academy of Natural Science, 19th St. & the Parkway, Philadelphia, PA 19103; telephone 215-299-1181. Members and guests are urged to attend this historic meeting.

BLUE GROSBEAK BANDED IN DECEMBER

Since April of 1985 I have been banding birds at my parents' farm near Laurel, Nebraska, which is in the northeast part of the State. During 1987 I banded 501 birds representing 40 species. Thirteen birds that I had banded prior to January 1, 1987 were recaptured, and there were 142 repeats. I banded birds on 85 days during the year. This ranged from setting three to four Potter type traps for a couple of hours, to having seven mist nets up for an entire day.

The most numerous species banded was American Tree Sparrow with 153 individuals. Five species were banded for the first time in 1987. These were the American Crow, Long-eared Owl, Palm Warbler, Blue Grosbeak, and Vesper Sparrow.

The Blue Grosbeak was of special significance because it was captured and banded on December 11, and recaptured on December 18 and 25. A preliminary check of the literature indicated that the latest date previously recorded for this species in Nebraska was October 13.

Long-eared Owls successfully nested and fledged at least one young this year. I also confirmed nesting of 32 additional species, including Say's Phoebe for the third consecutive year.

Hopefully, 1988 will be as productive and enjoyable as 1987.

David Stage, P. O. Box 354, Laurel, Nebraska 68745.

PROJECT BLUEBIRD EXCELLENT IN 1987

Since 1965 volunteers have been making an effort to increase the populations of the Eastern Bluebird at the Holden Arboretum in Lake County, Ohio. Following are the statistics for 1987, a year to celebrate.

A total of 212 young bluebirds fledged, far exceeding the 1982 record of 168. Even more significant, is a record number of 28 pairs. They averaged two broods each, and almost 10 eggs each, which is also a record.

The percentage of eggs hatched was good, but not unusual. The percentage of young fledged (91) exceeded the previous record of 90 percent. The ten-year average is 75.5 percent. Excellent weather was an important factor.

Replacement of nests has reduced losses due to larvae to a minimum. Three Tree Swallow nests were sent to Dr. Werren, who is doing a study of *Protocalliphora* at the University of Rochester. A preliminary response states that they contained wasps and blowflies. The young in one of these nests died. Those in the other nests survived.

There is evidence that relocation of boxes in pairs permitting bluebirds and Tree Swallows to nest side-by-side is partly responsible for the increased population. The two species nested successfully in 18 pairs of boxes. The increase in bluebird pairs and young fledged occurred in spite of a similar increase in the Tree Swallow population. There were 55 pairs of Tree Swallows (43 in 1986) and 204 young fledged (171 in 1986). Hard work in relocating boxes was well worth the effort.

Jean G. Eakin, 2709 Southington Road, Shaker Heights, Ohio 44120

PUBLICATIONS PERUSALS

Arkansas Birds: Their Distribution and Abundance. Douglas A. James and Joseph C. Neal. 1986. The University of Arkansas Press, Fayette. 402pp. \$34.00.

This book is directed to a wide group of people, ranging from the casual observer to the serious student of ornithology. It provides a appraisal of the distribution and abundance of 366 species of Arkansas birds, their seasonal occurrences, habitats, nesting seasons, and migrational movements. Maps show movements based on banding records. There are many fine photos in full color. Pen and ink drawings by David Plank are good.

Looking for the Wild. Lyn Hancock. 1986. Doubleday, NY. 221pp. \$19.95.

Thirty years after Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher journeyed 30,000 miles around the North American Continent, Australian-born Lyn Hancock and a group of naturalists traveled the same path. Beginning in Newfoundland, the group traveled down the eastern seaboard, across southern United States and north up the west coast to Alaska. Wildlife refuges and bird sanctuaries were visited. Highlights of bird observations are reported in a delightful manner, which make the reader wish to make the same trip.

Diving Birds of North America. Paul A. Johnsgard. 1987. The University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln. 292pp. \$45.00.

This is a comprehensive review of the diving birds of North America, told in a language for both scientists and laymen. Loons, auks, and grebes are skilled swimmers and divers. The author compares the anatomy, ecology, and behavior of the three groups. The drawings of anatomy and behavior are superb. Accounts of more than 30 species are accompanied by drawings, photographs, paintings, and distribution maps. Appendix includes keys to identification, a list of American auk colonies, a list of National Wildlife Refuges, and grebes found at each.

A Bird Watcher's Handbook: Field Ornithology for Backyard Naturalists. Laura O'Biso Socha 1987. Dodd Mead, NY. 182pp. \$16.95 hard cover \$7.95, paperback.

This handbook presents a wide range of information, including tips on identification, banding, research projects and how to contact organizations. Beginning bird watchers will find a wealth of information in this Teale Book Original, of the new Teale Books Series.

Redwings. Robert W. Nero. 1984. Smithsonian Institution Press, Wash., D.C. 160pp.

As a graduate student at University of Wisconsin, Robert Nero studied the Redwinged Blackbird and its behavior. Many years after writing his thesis and publishing numerous papers, he wrote again, about his findings on the subject. Social habits and modes of display associated with courtship are related. Much information was obtained through banding.

Life Histories of North American Wild Fowl. Arthur Cleveland Bent. Two Volumes bound as one. 1987. Dover Publications, NY. First pub. by U. S. Government Printing Office. 685pp. \$12.95 paperback.

Life histories of 73 species of ducks, geese, and swans are discussed. It covers nesting, habits, plumage, voice, courtship, migration, food, and more.

Willetta Lueshen