North American Bird Bander

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Short Notes

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these nets for a standardized number of hours per day (we suggest six morning hours), and for a standardized number of days in each of eight to twelve consecutive ten-day periods between May 1 and August 28. Operation on just one day per ten-day period is sufficient. And finally, identify, age, and band all birds captured, including recaptures.

We urge banders from all parts of North America to become part of this exciting new project. For more information, please write The Institute for Bird Populations, P.O. Box 554, Inverness, CA 94937, or call (415) 669-1663.

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High Altitude Capture of a Northern Cardinal

A male cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) was first observed at 10 a.m., July 17, 1989, at the University of Denver High Altitude Laboratory, Echo Lake, Colorado (altitude 3264m, 10,710 ft.). The Laboratory is 22.2km (13.8 miles) southwest of Idaho Springs, 0.2km from the junction of highways 5 and 103.

An hour later, the bird was trapped and I banded, measured, and weighed it. The identification was verified by W. W. Brockner. After the bird was released, it was sighted twice during the afternoon.

At least one cardinal had been observed for about a month at a ranch about 2.4km from the Laboratory at 2896m elevation. On Oct. 25, I Observed a banded male Cardinal at Georgetown, Co. at an elevation of 2597m(8519 ft.), but was unable to trap it.The bird had been coming to a feeder for about 6 wks. Georgetown is about 10 km (6 mi.) from Echo lake. The bird was still present at the feeder in late Jan. 1990.

This observation apparently establishes a high altitude record for Northern Cardinal. The only previous records for Colorado's foothills and mountains were at Great Sand Dunes, May 5, 1977 at about 2530m.(8300 ft.) (Hugh Kingery, pers. comm.) and Bergen Park, Jul.10,1964 at about 2375m. (7790 ft.) ("Birds of Colorado"). Bergen Park is about 23 km. from echo Lake.

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During a recent telephone conversation with one of EBBA's long-time banders, I was discussing some of my long-term banding project goals and several hypotheses concerning raptors that overwinter in Florida. It was suggested that I put one of these hypotheses in NABB so other banders and, in particular raptor banders, could benefit from my thinking.

It is widely believed that the current deforestation of tropical rain forests is the cause for the ever decreasing passerine populations that migrate through Florida, particularly during the fall. I doubt that any bander has hard data to prove this thesis but, for the moment, let's assume it is true. We also know that some of the larger raptors have passerines in their food chain; that is well documented. Therefore, one could argue that as passerine migrant populations decline, so does the availability of food supply for wintering raptors. This leads to a very interesting hypothesis, namely, when migrant and subsequently wintering passerines are reduced in number consistently over a period of years, the wintering habits of raptors could change. The raptors could begin to favor areas of the south where passerines are higher in numbers during these periods than in other areas of the south where their populations have declined. This is something that should be looked into.

My personal banding consists of capturing and banding migrant raptors at a stationary site in fall between mid-September and mid-November. At that time of the year, we switch to roadside banding in several areas in south-central Florida where we primarily concentrate on wintering raptors until mid-March of the following year. Up to now we have had enough banders to cover many areas but that is also changing. In addition, it is very difficult to quantify results because some areas are favored more than others (by the banders rather than by birds) which creates a bias. Using mist nets for passerines, we can achieve a comparative index by using "birds per net hour" on an annual basis, since the nets are usually in the same place from year to year; but with raptors, such an index becomes a moot point. At the stationary site, some raptors are lured in, while others are not; some are captured with bow nets, others in mist nets. Some birds end up in the mist nets in a diversionary manner. When we are using Bal-Chatri traps on the roads and byways of our area, there is no index that can be applied to arrive at a meaningful comparison from year to year. In addition, adult raptors are less likely to be lured in to traps than are immatures or those that were HY in the previous year. I've been doing comparisons by slicing up our area in longitudinal bands 10-minutes wide, regardless of latitude, in order to lessen the bias created by spot sampling. Those comparisons have as yet not yielded meaningful results with three solid years of winter data behind us.

I invite any NABB reader to correspond with me and/or discuss possible means to arrive at a meaningful year-to-year index for the winter banding, so that a more uniform method can be found to prove the above-mentioned hypothesis.

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