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Building a Portable Bird Banding Organizer

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The idea for this project began in a family room in Lynchburg, Virginia, after a day of backyard bird banding. The desire to band birds in locations beyond the backyard posed the question of how to easily transport necessary banding materials in an organized manner. The following article describes the authors' answer to this question.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Exterior Construction: The organizer is constructed to resemble a small suitcase or briefcase with exterior dimensions of 15-7/8" h x 24" w x 4 1/4" d (figure 1). The large side panels are made of 1/2" plywood with the top, bottom, and end pieces of 1"x4" Ponderosa Pine boards. One of the plywood side panels is held to the bottom of the organizer with a continuous brass-plated hinge. When this side is open, it forms a writing surface. Two lengths of brass safety chain from the organizer to the corners of this panel provide stability to the writing surface. The writing surface is held in the closed position by two magnetic catches. A 6 1/2" door pull is centered on the top panel for ease of transportation. The 1"x4" top, bottom and ends are held together on each corner by two (#10) 1 1/4" brass wood screws. These screws were recessed and the holes filled with wood plugs. One plywood side panel was attached to the pine frame with (#8) 1 1/4" brass wood screws.

Interior Construction: The interior of the organizer can be divided into a right and left half (figure 2). The lower left half is a storage compartment with a separate door and the upper left half has two adjustable clips for the banding pliers. The right half of the organizer has six 12" bicycle spokes with nuts mounted in an upright position. The spokes are secured at the base with a piece of pine and brass wood screws. A pine support is placed 11-7/8" up from the base to hold the spokes at a slight angle. Small notches are cut in this support to hold the spokes an equal distance apart. This arrangement allows for easy access to the six most commonly used band sizes. A wood burner was used to place the band size number at the base of each spoke for easier identification.

Finishing: Throughout assembly, pieces were sanded using a 100 grit sandpaper and a vibrating sander. When construction was completed, the entire unit was hand-sanded using 100 grit sandpaper. Two coats of McCloskey's Heirloom Clear Varnish were applied. After the second

coat of varnish had dried, the entire organizer was polished with a mixture of boiled linseed oil and pumice to remove any dust particles in the finish coat. A high quality furniture polish is used to remove the oil/pumice residue.

CONCLUSION

The design and construction of an organizer to transport bird bands plus the other banding tools needed in the field by a bird bander have been described. The materials used in the construction of the organizer were those easily found in most lumber yards and hardware stores. The bicycle spokes were purchased at a local bicycle shop. The woodworking tools used in the organizer construction are those commonly found in home workshops where general woodworking is done. The decision to use brass or brass plated hardware for the organizer is based on its added durability under a wide range of climatic conditions. The authors realize that variations on our design will be a function of each individual's needs. Upon seeing the finished product, a friend suggested it be named the bird bander's "tackle box."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Figure 1.

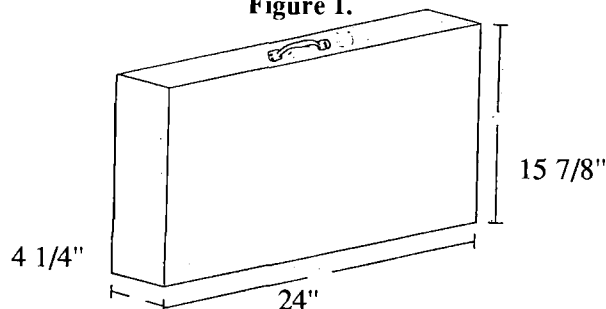
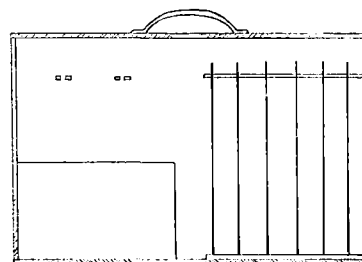


Figure 2.



¹Address correspondence concerning design.

OMISSION..... The article, "Comparative Age and Sex Ratios in Gambel's White-Crowned Sparrows in Relation to Year and Latitude," by C.D. Barrentine, M.W. Lincoln, L.R. Mewaldt, C.E. Cochran and P.M. Walters, appearing in *North American Bird Bander*, 15(2):57-60, was Contribution No. 3 of the Coyote Creek Riparian Station. The NABB Editorial staff apologizes for this oversight.

Books

Sonoran Desert Summer. John Alcock. 1990. University of Arizona Press, Tucson. 187 pp. Hardcover, \$19.95.

Summer in the desert brings to mind images of furnace heat, blistering sun, and a dead landscape inhabited only by prickly cactus and dry shrubs. No animals seem to move through the hostile environment. John Alcock knows that these images are incorrect. The desert is full of life, especially in the summer. If one has a keen eye and is active in the early morning and late evening, dozens of natural history stories unfold. Alcock relates many of these stories in 38 short essays collected in this volume.

Sonoran Desert Summer, together with Alcock's earlier volume, Sonoran Desert Spring, describes moments in the natural history of many desert birds, including Common Poorwills (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*), Phainopeplas (*Phainopepla nitens*), Elf Owls (*Micrathene whitneyi*), and Black-chinned Hummingbirds (*Archilochus alexandri*). The essays are not limited to bird-related topics, however, since desert dwellers such as Gila monsters, digger wasps, and saguaro cacti are also featured. Alcock's apparent goal in these essays is to capture the mood of life in the desert. He accomplishes this goal quite successfully. In addition, he accurately describes the process by which the stories of the desert are investigated scientifically. Taken as a whole, the essays are a painless

introduction to the scientific method, the generation and testing of predictions to support a hypothesis, and the questioning with which scientists approach their studies. Bird banding projects are not mentioned explicitly, although several studies that used banded birds are included. An example of the latter is Jim Bednarz's studies of breeding in the Harris' Hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus*).

The essays are organized into five groups--one for each of the summer months from May through September. A short reference list at the back of the book provides an additional reading list that would allow the reader to explore one of the subjects in greater detail. The text is nicely illustrated by the drawings of Marilyn Hoff Stewart. I particularly liked the portrait of an Elf Owl being mobbed by a pair of Black-tailed Gnatcatchers (*Poliophtila melanura*).

Alcock captures the subtle beauty and activity of the desert in the summer. Some potential research projects for banders are described. I suspect, however, that most banders will put this book in their banding gear, not for the research tips, but rather for pleasant reading during the quiet moments in the morning between runs to check the nets.

John B. Dunning, Jr.

Recent Literature

Banding Equipment and Techniques

Experimental design and data analysis for telemetry projects. V.J. Meretsky (Ed.). 1987. *J. Raptor Res.* 21:125-146. The following eight papers summarize the results of a workshop on telemetry, dubbed by W.W. Cochran as "super bird bands" (p. 143). Although in a raptor journal, all but two of the papers apply to birds generally, and much of the material therein applies to banding generally, and especially to color banding. Most of the papers list several references to more detailed accounts of specific aspects of each topic. Address

enquiries for purchase of the entire issue to Jim Fitzpatrick, Treasurer, Raptor Research Foundation, 12805 St. Croix Trail, Hastings, MN 55033. Abstracts of individual papers follow:

Applications and considerations for wildlife telemetry. M.R. Fuller. pp. 126-128. -U.S. Fish & Wildl. Serv., Patuxent Wildl. Res. Center, Laurel, MD 20708 -(General summary of applications of telemetry, different types of attachment, and advantages and problems with each, as well as a list of suppliers and several useful references.)