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Western Regional News

Western Bird Banding Association

Founded 1925

WESTERN BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

Edmonton, Alberta - 24 - 26 August 1990

**Hosted by
BEAVERHILL BIRD OBSERVATORY**

**Chairs:
BRIAN HORNBY and ALAN GUBANICH**

FRIDAY, 24 AUGUST started with an 8 a.m. field trip to Elk Island National Park led by Dave Pick, followed in the evening by a WBBA board meeting and wine and cheese social.

SATURDAY, 25 AUGUST began with a morning field trip to Beaverhill Lake. Leader: Jim Lange. The trip included banding demonstrations by Beaverhill Bird Observatory. Tony Diamond demonstrated some of the protocols of the Neotropical Migrant Program of the Canadian Wildlife Service. In the afternoon, the following papers were presented:

Longevity of the Great Horned Owl: A Life Table Based on 380 Recoveries. C. STUART HOUSTON, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 0J8.

Passerine Bird Banding Using Mist Nets at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, 1984-1989. STEFAN JUNGKIND, Beaverhill Bird Observatory, Edmonton, Alberta. (A brief description of operations was given, including history, habitat, methods and summary of birds banded. Data were presented on (a) bird population trends and possible fluctuations; (b) birds per net hour over the six years for selected species; (c) retraps. The value and importance of consistent yearly effort and conscientious record keeping for net hours and retraps was discussed, along with the value of "amateur" bird banding operations as a stimulus for more rigorous studies.)

The Monitoring Avian Productivity (MAP) Project: An Update. DAVID F. DESANTE, The Institute for Bird Populations, P.O. Box 554, Inverness, CA 94937. (The Monitoring Avian Productivity (MAP) project is a cooperative effort among North American bird banders to establish a continent-wide network of constant effort mist-netting stations, operated during the breeding season, for the long-term monitoring of post-fledging productivity, adult survivorship and adult population levels of common land birds. Critical data on productivity and survivorship are not currently available from any other avian biomonitoring program in North America and are crucial for the rigorous testing of hypotheses regarding population trends of land birds. Sixteen stations were established and operated across the continent during the 1989 pilot study, with five in western, six in central, and five in eastern North America. Fifty-nine stations were tentatively in operation during the summer of 1990, including 13 in western, 19 in central and 27 in eastern North America. The long-term goal for this project is the establishment and operation of about 200 stations in North America, including a series of stations to be operated in cooperation with the National Park Service and, perhaps, the U.S. Forest Service. An invitation is extended to WBBA banders to join in this important cooperative endeavor.)

The Canadian Banding Office and the Direction of Non-game Banding. DR. RICHARD D. ELLIOT, Chief, Migratory Birds Surveys, Canadian Wildlife Service, Bird Banding Office, Hull, Quebec K1A 0H3. (The activities of the Canadian Bird Banding Office were discussed, and how the office links with the US Banding Lab. Emphasis was on initiatives to be taken to improve aspects of non-game bird banding in Canada, and the directions the office may be taking with regard to non-game bird banding.)

Color Change in Maturing Male Rufous Hummingbirds. ELLY JONES, Swan Lake Route, Bigfork, MT 59911 (May and June were wet, cold months in northwest Montana. We had record rainfalls. Gardens were washed out or did not grow at all. Migrating birds were late to arrive and most hummingbirds waited until 19 May, three weeks later than usual. Snow stayed late in the mountains and hummingbirds concentrated in the valleys at lower elevations. I was able to band more Rufous males and Calliopes this year, plus my first Black-chinned Hummingbird. Interestingly, Dr. Bill Calder had captured three returning male Rufous the last week in June, the earliest date ever.

With more Rufous males to observe, I could follow color change in maturing birds. Sixty-two male Rufous have now been recaptured. In the AHY group of birds banded in previous years, 14 showed less amount of green feathers on their backs and two birds showed no change. In the group of AHY birds recaptured later in the same year of banding, 8 birds showed less green feathers, 18 stayed the same, and 9 showed more green feathers on their backs. Not as many HY birds were recaptured, but of those banded in previous years, four showed less green feathers on their backs and one showed no change.

HY birds recaptured in the same year of banding showed some change also, especially those recaptured late in the season. One bird did not show any change, but six had 1 to 6 red throat feathers and had lost a few green feathers on their lower back.

Next year we hope to have enough information for a paper. I am also collecting information on female Rufous throat patterns.)

How I Maximized Recoveries from Banding. C. STUART HOUSTON, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 0J8. (Full text submitted to *NABB*.)

The evening program, "Bird Banding Around the World," was presented by TONY DIAMOND, Head, Migratory Bird Studies for Canadian Wildlife Service's Western and Northern Region. He gave a light-hearted overview of the value and range of studies that are possible only with banding.

On Sunday the meeting concluded with field trips to Elk Island National Park and to Clyde, Alberta, led by Terry Thormin.

TIME TO PAY 1991 WBBA DUES

Have you sent Harold Wasserman, WBBA Treasurer, your 1991 WBBA dues? He mailed dues notices out in late 1990 and your prompt reply will ensure your continued *NABB* subscription and save WBBA the cost of reminder notices. Thank you.

IN MEMORIAM: L. RICHARD MEWALDT

The world of ornithology lost one of its great innovators on 19 August 1990, when Dr. L. Richard "Dick" Mewaldt died in Santa Clara, California. Dick had been afflicted during the past year with progressive loss of vital lung capacity, apparently caused by immunological response to his many years of close contact with birds.

Dick will be sorely missed for his wealth of knowledge of birds, his visionary leadership in establishing centers of ornithological research, and his innate ability to infect others with his enthusiasm. He leaves behind a legacy of organizations and programs including Point Reyes Bird Observatory with its long-term land bird banding program, and Coyote Creek Riparian Station, with its comparatively young riparian bio-monitoring program. Through his long teaching career at San Jose State University, Dick launched a new generation of western ornithologists, many of whom have gone on to establish international reputations.

Dick Mewaldt was born in 1917 into an academic environment. His father was a professor of mathematics at Northern State College in Aberdeen, South Dakota, and an avid outdoorsman and amateur paleontologist who took his son on fossil digs in the Badlands of South Dakota.

As a boy, Dick worked as a gardener for a man who banded birds in Aberdeen and apparently spent more time watching and asking questions. Soon Dick acquired his own banding permit. Dick received a Bachelor's degree in 1939 from the University of Iowa. He enlisted in the Army in World War II and was discharged as a captain in 1946. He moved to Montana to obtain a Master's degree in 1948 for a study of the feeding habitats of Clark's Nutcracker. A detailed examination of the molt and reproduction of this species provided material for Dick's Ph.D. thesis at Washington State University. His major professor, Dr. Donald S. Farner, introduced him to the study of the White-crowned Sparrow, which became a life-long interest for Dick.

Dick joined the staff of the Biology Department of San Jose State in 1953 and spent the rest of his teaching career there. His continuing interest in research was unusual for a faculty member at what was then primarily a teachers' college. He quickly began attracting graduate students

and developed funding for his research projects. At the same time, he established a regular banding program at his home in the foothills of east San Jose in a yard landscaped to attract White-crowned Sparrows, adjacent to a golf course.

A substantial grant from the National Science Foundation helped Dick and several graduate students launch the Avian Biology Laboratory at San Jose State. Dick and graduate students Irene Brown, Lloyd Thompson, Martin Morton, and C. John Ralph, studied bird migration in the laboratory and moved into the field to investigate the homing ability and site faithfulness of the White-crowned Sparrow.

In several classic experiments, Dick and his students displaced White-crowned Sparrows of different ages to distant locations such as Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Laurel, Maryland. To everyone's amazement and delight, some of the birds returned to their original capture location after migrating to their breeding grounds in the northwest.

Dick was continually looking for the ideal banding location for sampling and monitoring avian migration. C. J. Ralph found an area in Point Reyes National Seashore on the coast near Bolinas. He and Dick approached the Superintendent about setting the Palomarin Ranch aside as a bird observatory. He agreed and with a grant from WBBA, Point Reyes Bird Observatory was established in 1965.

For most people, the founding of an important research organization would be accomplishment enough for one lifetime. Dick, however, was not one to rest on his laurels. He turned his attention to the little-studied birds of south San Francisco Bay and with graduate student Robert Gill, Dick began a long-term banding program focusing on colonial nesting birds. Recovery of these birds years later resulted in longevity data and a better understanding of migratory patterns in local heron, egret, and tern populations.

Dick retired from active teaching in 1975 to devote full time to his many research interests. Chief among these was a special place, Hart Mountain, in south-central Oregon. Dick had discovered this high-desert paradise while capturing Mountain White-crowned Sparrows for

his migration studies. This "isle of pines in a sea of sage" attracted Dick for summers of banding and bird study from 1972-1982. Dick was preparing the final draft of a monograph on the birds of Hart Mountain at his death.

Dick also found time to hold important offices in several regional and national societies. He served as secretary of the AOU, president of the Cooper Society, and president of WBBA (1959-1961). He received a Board of Directors Award for Outstanding Achievement from WBBA in 1985. Dick and his wife Fran were faithful attenders of WBBA meetings and many members met them there.

In 1983 Dick was instrumental in establishing the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory. This newest of bird observatories carried on many of the water bird and

shorebird programs begun by him and Bob Gill in the mid 1970's. While in search of a good land bird banding station for SFBBO, Dick found a stretch of riparian habitat near the mouth of Coyote Creek. It had a relatively dense band of trees and shrubs lining its banks and bird life abounded. Beginning as a tailgate operation in 1982, the program grew into a major field station of the new bird observatory. Philosophical differences between Dick and the directors of SFBBO caused the separation of Dick's riparian banding program from the bird observatory in 1986. Coyote Creek Riparian Station became the focus of Dick's activities until his death.

Dick did not just care about creating organizations; rather, he prided himself on being able to motivate people to reach their full capabilities.



Adapted from an obituary written by Michael Rigney for *RipariaNews*:

In memory of Dr. L. Richard Mewaldt, the Western Bird Banding Association has established the Mewaldt Endowment Fund whose income will be used to support long-term avian research projects involving banding.

Dr. Mewaldt was always a proponent of long-term projects in the study of bird populations and their value, particularly in monitoring the health of ecosystems which is widely recognized today.

Contributions to the Mewaldt Fund should be sent to the WBBA Treasurer, Harold Wasserman, 1158 Beechwood Street, Camarillo, CA 93010. Please mark your check "Mewaldt Fund."