North American Bird Bander

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Inland Regional News

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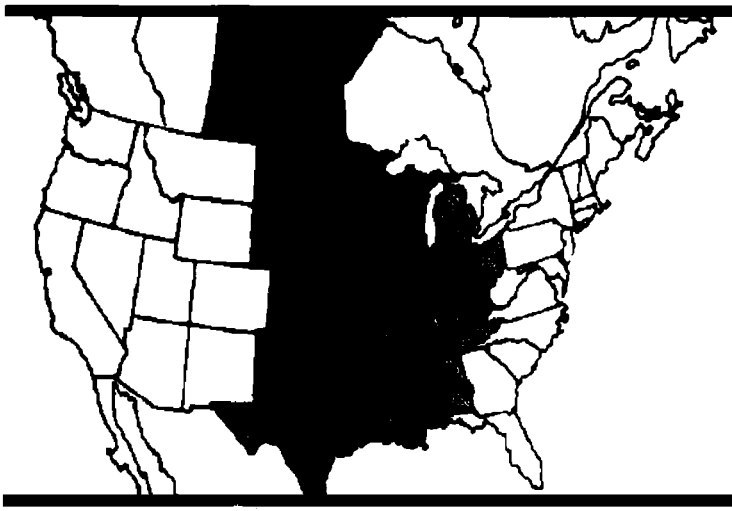

Inland Regional News

Inland Bird Banding Association Founded 1922

NATURE NOTES FROM NEBRASKA

The seventh snowiest January on record for the Omaha area has taken its toll on bird banding for the month. Not only snow but sub-freezing temperatures and wind have left few days to put up a net. Therefore, much of birding has been from the inside looking out. That can be exiting too, especially if unexpected visitors grace your feeders.

I have been enjoying a male Eastern Rufous-sided Towhee that spends almost every day scratching beneath the feeders. This may not be unusual in your part of the country but in eastern Nebraska, in the winter, it is. The Eastern Towhee is the common nesting race but virtually all of them migrate by the end of September and any towhees seen here during the winter are usually the Spotted subspecies. Hundreds of Spotted Towhees migrate through Halsey National Forest in Nebraska's Sandhills but a few seem to swing all the way to the Missouri River. I expect them, but not the Eastern race.

I have another "first" for January at my feeders and it, too, is an eastern subspecies. I have been surprised to see a bright reddish Fox Sparrow for several days, which I believe to be the *Passerella iliaca iliaca* subspecies. Almost all I see and all I have ever banded have gray heads and backs, indicative of their western heritage.

Another visitor to the area, a Varied Thrush, leaves no doubt to its origin. This is the third consecutive winter for one to be in the Omaha area. Something as far out of range as this West Coast species promotes feeder watching at its best! Varied Thrushes are regular eastern vagrants and a few reach as far as New England every winter. These eastward wanderings do not go southeast very often. Varied Thrushes are actually more frequent in Massachusetts than in Arizona. The usual corridor is north of Missouri, so that puts Nebraska right in the middle of this west-east flight pattern and accounts for its presence in Nebraska.

Ruth C. Green

BANDING STATION AT UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN

After a seven-year hiatus, the University of Michigan-Dearborn is once again running a banding station. Banding takes place in a 72-acre natural area on campus that serves as an "urban oasis" for birds migrating through the Detroit metropolitan area.

From 12 August through 6 November, banding took place approximately three days a week from dawn until noon. Typically, 12 nets located in early successional habitat and in oak-hickory forest were open each day. In 2,213 net-hours over 36 days, a total of 947 new birds of 65 species were banded.

The banding station will operate occasionally through the winter, and five days a week during spring migration 1993. Best birds were a pure-strain male Golden-winged Warbler on 2 September, an Orange-crowned Warbler on 30 September, and a Carolina Wren on 28 October. Two HY White-eyed Vireos were also notable.

Weather during the period was wetter and colder than normal, and fall migration seemed early and light. For example, our first Fox Sparrow was banded on 30 September, two weeks before the local rare bird alert reported them as "early." Our busiest day was 28 September with 56 new birds banded and 8 returns.

Top ten species were: Gray Catbird, 139; American Robin, 81; White-throated Sparrow, 79; Swainson's Thrush, 53; Hermit Thrush, 51; Cedar Waxwing, 40; American Goldfinch, 39; Song Sparrow, 34; Black-capped Chickadee, 31; and Common Grackle, 29. Top five warblers were Ovenbird, 22; Nashville, 17; Yellow-rumped, 16; Tennessee, 14; and Magnolia, 12. No foreign retraps, but we did have two notable returns: a cardinal banded in 1988 as a SY bird, and a Blue Jay banded in 1983 as a AHY.

All of our 1992 banding data are on a computer database capable of producing detailed reports. Input of data from 1978-1986 (which includes tail and culmen measurements that we no longer routinely take) is currently underway. Banders seeking information are welcome to inquire. Please mail requests to:

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c/o Dr. Orin Gelderloos
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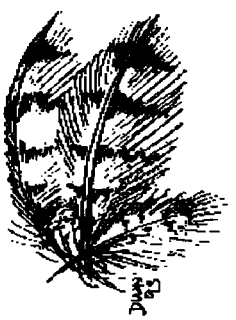
Department of Natural Sciences
Dearborn, MI 48128.



RECAPTURES AND LONGEVITY RECORDS

Katherine Kelley, Baldwin City, KS, has recaptured two American Goldfinches banded by Ruth Green, Bellevue, NB: one in February 1982 and the other in April 1992. In May 1989, one of Kelley's goldfinches was captured by Ruth Green in Bellevue; another was renetted in Elkhorn, NB, in April 1990, not far from Bellevue. It would appear that there is indeed something of a flyway operating here.
--***Katherine Kelley***, 909 Dearborn,
Baldwin City, KS 66006

Ed and Jeannette Peartree have operated a banding station at a Wisconsin For Ornithology natural area since 1959. Generally they keep the nets open from Thursday through Friday from late April to mid November. Ed reports the following capture histories:

Common Yellowthroat, 1480-81105, banded on 19 Aug 1978 as HY-U and recaptured 2 Sep 1979 (as AHY-M), 15 May 1982, 14 May 1983, 23 May 1985, 16 May 1988, and last caught 20 Aug 1988 (at least 10 years old).

Chipping Sparrow, 1610-31373, banded 1 Jul 1983 as AHY-M; recaught 26 May 1984, 27 Apr 1985, 21 Jun 1987 and last caught 1 May 1992, at least 10 years old.

Common Yellowthroat, 1710-69747, banded 4 Sep 1987 as AHY-M; recaught 16 May 1988, 4 Sep 1989, 14 May 1990, 19 May 1991, and 20 May 1992; still in the area 20 Aug 1992.

These records are not only good longevity records, but also show breeding site tenacity.
-- ***Ed Peartree***, 713 Madison Street,
Apt. 205, Sauk City,
WI 53583

Patricia Muzny maintains a banding station near Byers, OK, with a sunflower seed feeder. The property is in the cross timbers area with native tallgrass prairie mixed with stands of Blackjack and Post Oak. Some of the most frequent and persistent visitors are Tufted Titmice and Carolina Chickadees. Recaptures are common. Some of her records follow:

Great-Crested Flycatcher banded in 1988, recaptured 4 years later; Eastern Tufted Titmouse banded in 1988, recaptured in 1992; Carolina Chickadee banded in 1987, recaptured Jan 1991; Carolina Chickadee banded in 1984, recaptured Jan 1991; Eastern Tufted Titmouse banded on 24 Mar 1985, recaptured on 30 Nov 1992, at least 8 yrs old.

Patti would be glad to have the information about other longevity records of Tufted Titmice and Carolina Chickadees.

Patricia L. Muzny,
104 SW 68th Street,
Oklahoma City, OK 73139

1993 KIRTLAND'S WARBLER TOURS

Kirtland's Warbler nesting areas in northern Michigan will be closed and posted against public entry during the 1993 nesting season. Warbler watchers may see the bird and view nesting areas only by participating in guided tours conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (East Lansing Field Office, Room 301 Manly Miles Building, 1405 South Harrison Road, East Lansing, MI 48823; phone (517) 337-6650), and the U.S. Forest Service (District Ranger, Huron National Forest, Mio, Michigan 48647; phone (517) 826-3252).

NOOSE DOME TRAP FOR OSPREYS

The noose dome is quite easy to construct, and versions of this trap have been used in population studies to trap raptors at nests or nest perches. Provided you wait until incubation is well under way, there appear to be few adverse effects of the trapping and banding procedure. Ospreys are remarkably tolerant birds and at each of the twenty nests where we trapped at least one bird the eggs were being incubated within five minutes of our leaving. Of course, some nests failed but actually a smaller portion than the overall for Ospreys. Usually one only catches the incubating bird (and this is usually female) but twice we caught both members of the pair at the same time--quite a handful! We would recommend, however, that you try to catch only one parent in any given year since this is probably less disruptive overall.

The monofilament nooses are made of 15 kg test line, about 5 cm diameter, and these are tied with special knots to a chicken wire dome about 1 m in diameter. This dome (reinforced with two stout wires) is then placed over the nest cup and eggs and secured with tie cords around the base of the nest. The incubating bird usually returns within two minutes and its toes become entangled quickly as it walks on the dome. Provided you have tied the trap on tightly, the bird simply jumps up and down a little as you retrieve it from the trap while the eggs are protected by the dome itself. For nests on poles taller than two meters, we used a ladder (up to 13 meters!) and then lowered the bird down in a large birdbag to a fellow bander below. Banding and processing the bird, and taking the ladder down usually took up to twenty minutes so we avoided trapping when the weather was cold, wet or windy.

Since Ospreys are highly dimorphic in body size, it was easy to separate the sexes, and females were banded with number 8 lock-ons, males with number 7Ds. However, one of the three males we caught had tarsi so thick that a size 7D band was too tight so we give it a number 8. This finding emphasizes the need for extreme caution when banding Osprey chicks for although one can often predict the sex of large chicks (based on size after 30-35 days old as well as the presence on a strong breast band in females), it is clear that some males can develop tarsi too thick to take a size 7D band comfortably. Best to be cautious and band all chicks with size 8 lock-on.

(Extracted from "Banding Adult Ospreys during the Breeding Season," *Ontario Bird Banding Association*, Vol. 37, Dec 1992.

-- ***Peter J. Ewins and Michael J. R. Miller***
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WOODCHUCK KILLS SPARROWS IN TRAP

At 11:35 on 30 July 1991, I observed a 3/4-grown woodchuck *(Marmota monax)* enter a 30" x 24" x 11.5" maze trap with a 4" x 4" entrance and kill a House Sparrow *(Passer domesticus)* that was in the trap. The woodchuck left the trap without consuming any of the bird feed inside, and entered another trap with a 3" x 3" entrance and 18" x 24" x 11.5" dimensions. This trap contained four House Sparrows which the woodchuck killed, then exited, again without consuming any of the bird feed inside. To kill each sparrow, the woodchuck grabbed the bird with its front paws, then held the sparrow while standing on its rear haunches, as a squirrel would hold a nut. The woodchuck then proceed to bite and chew the bird until it died, then dropped it, and grabbed another sparrow and repeated this process. It seemed the woodchuck did not kill the sparrows for food.

I have maintained maze traps in my yard in Wayne, MI, to attract and capture birds throughout the year for the last 15 years. I have previously observed woodchucks consuming bird feed on the ground beneath feeders that birds had kicked off the feeders. I have observed Fox *(Sciurus niger)* and Red Squirrels *(Tamiascuurus hudsonicus)* kill birds inside traps, but this is the first time I have observed a woodchuck kill birds.

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