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## News, Notes, Comments

North American Bird Bander

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## News, Notes, Comments

### Live Recovery of a Venerable Raptor A Longevity Record for the Red-tailed Hawk

On 12 November 1994, a banded Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), USFWS #877-17127, was captured at the Kittatinny Mountains Raptor Banding Station, Sussex County, New Jersey, by Chris Lanna. This bird had been banded by Chet Robertson as an AHY, near Kempton, Pennsylvania, on 21 October 1972. Using the Bird Banding Laboratory's (BBL) assumed hatching date of 1 June (Clapp, R.B.; M.K. Klimkiewicz; and J.H. Kennard. 1982. Longevity records of North American Birds: Gaviidae through Alcidae. *J. Field Ornithol.* 53:81-124), this bird had lived a minimum of 23 years, 5 months--a longevity record for the species. Lanna reported the bird was in good condition, was alert and strong, and appeared to be healthy in every way.

I think it's noteworthy that the USFWS lock-on band, which also had endured for over 22 years, was still in good condition. Although the lock-on flange was slightly loose and needed tightening, the band was legible and showed only minimal wear. The bird was photographed and released.

BBL records indicate that as of 31 August 1994, there have been 101,548 Red-tailed Hawks banded, and 5,194 (5.1%) have been recovered. The recovery data clearly shows that although these raptors are capable of living long lives, very few actually do. Of the 5,194 recovered birds, only 31 survived 17 years or more, and just 11 survived 20 years or more. The longevity record for the Red-tailed Hawk (2 individuals) was 22 years, 7 months (Klimkiewicz, M.K. and A.G. Fitcher. 1989. Longevity records of North American birds: supplement 1. *J. Field Ornithol.* 60:469-494.). The bird described here surpasses that record by nearly one full year.

Clapp, et al. (1982) and Klimkiewicz and Fitcher (1989) provided a list of longevity records of North American birds. Of the 24 species of diurnal rap-

tors included in the list, only the following four were shown to have survived 20 years or longer in the wild:

Black Vulture ( <i>Coragyps atratus</i> ) . . . . .	25 years, 6 months
Osprey ( <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> ) . . . . .	23 years, 0 months
Red-tailed Hawk ( <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i> ) . . . . .	22 years, 7 months
Bald Eagle ( <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> ) . . . . .	21 years, 11 months

Thus, the 23 year, 5 month old bird described here is the oldest Red-tailed Hawk and the second oldest diurnal North American raptor known--a venerable bird, indeed.

I thank Kathy Klimkiewicz of the BBL for providing me with banding recovery data and for reviewing this paper.

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## BANDING PROGRAMS ANNOUNCED

The National Biological Service announces an ftp server with two banding programs as well as other information and data. The URLs are:

ftp server:

<ftp://ftp.im.nbs.gov/pub/software/banding>

web home page:

<http://www.im.nbs.gov/nbsim.htm>

The programs are also available on diskette.

The Banding Operations Database (BAND-OPS.EXE 425KB self-extracting zip file) supports banding operations by automating many record keeping requirements. The program was written by B. H. Powell to maintain band inventories, enter and check banding data, print banding schedules, report accomplishments and manage encounter data. Data from banding operations at several sites can be merged. Information on previously banded birds is easily available. Banding files from nearby sites can be included to provide information on recaptures. Although it is not a product of the Bird Banding Laboratory, they will accept the schedules printed by the program. Powell developed the program to help him with his banding operation and has shared it with others. Many banders have used it in the field for 3 seasons and have found this menu driven program to be very useful and easy to use. A 29-page users manual is available.

The Band Analysis System (BNDANL14.EXE 1.5MB self-extracting zip file) is a tool for those who analyze banding data. The program is menu driven and allows users to select options with a mouse. It selects banding and recovery records based on the species, age, sex, banding and recovery dates and locations and permit numbers as well as codes for condition, status, how obtained and who and why reported. The data may be summarized and customized reports may be produced with the number of birds banded and recovered by any combination of species, age, sex, banding and recovery state or area and month or period. Direct recovery rates and proportional distribution of birds to recovery areas are provided. Survival and recovery rates can be estimated through an interface to the MULT program, which includes ESTIMATE and BROWNIE estimates. Maps of

banding and recovery locations as well as maps of the numbers of birds banded and recovered by state can be produced with third party mapping packages and the data files output by this program. The program was written by Paul Geissler and is at the alpha development stage, with emphasis on developing useful features.

We also have a CD-ROM available with the complete North American waterfowl banding and recovery data. If there is enough interest, we may develop another CD-ROM with nongame bird banding data for metaanalyses.

For more information, please contact:

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## An Incredible Recovery

This January, I received a *Report to Bander* from the Bird Banding Laboratory dated 19 December 1994. I could hardly believe what the form stated: A Common Grackle that I had banded on 1 October 1972 as an AHY-M at my home station by Lake Jane, near North St. Paul, had been recovered (band only) on 7 July 1994 by the St. Croix River in Bayport, about 8 mi E of my home base. I blinked in near disbelief that a "song bird" had survived for such a long time: **over 22 years!**

The circumstances under which the band was found are extraordinary. It was located among some pigeon bands 400 ft above ground on the Alan King Northern States Power Plant smokestack in a box used by peregrines as a nest site. Catwalks on the smokestack at 200, 400, 600 and 800 ft have been used by the falcons for hunting and resting perches during the year. One peregrine was seen on the platform on 26 December 1994 by Harrison B. Tordoff during his participation in a Christmas Bird Count. Tordoff identified the color banded falcon as "Marie" who had nested several years at the site and may likely be the bird that ate the grackle.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service band was found and reported by Bob Anderson of Hugo, Minnesota. He is a peregrine breeder who has participated in a Peregrine Reintroduction Program. Bob had checked this platform in June 1994 and found no bands at that time. The gravel is changed each winter and the band certainly was not in the box earlier than 1994. Most likely, the grackle band appeared there some time in the fall of 1994.

Kathy Klimkiewicz, biologist at the BBL, provided confirmation of this recovery as the new longevity record for Common Grackles, beating out a 20 year old bird. Considering the nearness of banding and recovery locations, perhaps the grackle had been residing in this area for much of his life.

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## Update on Banding Guide Revision

Progress on the revision to "Identification Guide to North American Passerines" (see *NABB* 18:107) has been slowed a bit by the need to document some new findings regarding molts and ageing in the "near-passerines" (doves-woodpeckers; e.g., see p. 15). It is proceeding, however. As of March, draft accounts had been prepared for doves through wrens. I anticipate finishing by early 1996 and having it published by the end of that year.

As such, there is still time for banders to contribute new or unpublished information. The following subjects are especially in need of attention, both generally and on a species-specific basis:

Retention of unpneumatized areas in the skull. Skulling of near-passerines has not generally been performed due to the notion that adults of these families never attain completely pneumatized skulls; thus, the presence of windows or unpneumatized areas does not indicate HY/SY. However, near-passerines do go through the pneumatization process, and it is likely that the size of unpneumatized areas could be used to age birds in these groups. Such is indicated by D.W. Johnston for Chimney Swifts (1958. Sex and age characters and salivary glands of the Chimney Swift. *Condor* 60:73-84) and by R.F. Johnston for Common Ground-Doves (1962. Precocious sexual competence in the Ground Dove. *Auk* 79:269-270). Alternatively, hummingbirds do not show the normal pattern of pneumatization, just an overall thickening of the skull; and ageing by cranial examination is next to impossible without much experience (Stiles 1972. Age and sex determination in Rufous and Allen's hummingbirds. *Condor* 74:25-32, pers. obs.). Is there any other unpublished information among banders on pneumatization, extent of its completion, or ease of skulling in near-passerines? Also, more information is needed on "persistent" windows in SYs and ASYs, as is known but not well-documented in flycatchers, swallows, nuthatches and perhaps other passerines. L. Jenni and R. Winkler (1994. Age and moult in European passerines, Academic Press, New York) indicate that several species (notably among swallows) can retain large unpneumatized areas as AHY/ASYs.

We need similar information for North American passerines.

Cloacal protuberance in near-passerines. The literature generally indicates that males of most of these families do not develop CPs. PRBO data and personal observation suggest that a few near-passerine males (in at least hummingbirds and woodpeckers) can develop reduced CPs in the spring. Is there any further information from banders on this? Partial CPs might be especially useful for sexing cuckoos, owls, and swifts.

Roof of mouth color by age. The roof of the mouth shows age-specific color changes in several passerine groups, including parids, thrushes, vireos and, especially, corvids. In the latter group, the roof of the mouth is typically pink in juveniles, gradually turning black by the first spring or later. It has been suggested that birds with certain proportions of pink or black can be aged SY or even TY. But the best published data on this feature, collected from captive Common Ravens (B. Heinrich and J. Marzluff 1992. Age and mouth color in Common Ravens. *Condor* 94:549-550), indicate substantial individual variation. Dominant HY/SYs developed black roofs by January while certain subordinate individuals retained pink or mostly pink roofs for three or more years. Thus, roof of mouth color is practically useless for ageing a captured individual, given that HY/SYs can be easily aged by plumage. Is this the case in wild individuals of all jays and crows? Banders are in an excellent position to study mouth color change in corvids and other species, some of which may otherwise lack diagnostic plumage characters separating HY/SYs from AHY/ASYs.

Extent of wing covert molt in passerines. As is well-illustrated by Jenni & Winkler (op. cit.), European passerines can molt a variable number of lesser, median, and greater coverts during the first prebasic molt. Many HY/SYs have only a partial molt in this area, older retained juvenal coverts (often the more distal feathers) contrasting with fresher adult coverts replaced during the first summer. This contrast provides a reliable means of ageing HY/SYs, and AHY/ASYs. Except in a few species, the extent of covert molt in North American passerines is very poorly documented. Al-

though completeness of wing-covert molt also varies individually and geographically (southern species or populations molting more coverts on average than northern birds), I suspect that ageing of our birds, in winter and spring (after skull pneumatization completes), can be greatly improved by examining the wing coverts for the presence or absence of contrasting feather generations. For the revision, I will review wing covert molt and its use in ageing passerines by examining museum specimens; however, I will be unable to document ranges of variation in all populations (especially those of eastern North American species) and would welcome any information that banders might have on this topic.

Of course, all information will be acknowledged. I thank the many who have already contributed. It should be noted that our knowledge of molt, ageing and sexing, especially regarding the above topics, will still be far from complete when the revision of the guide is published. I encourage banders to start examining these aspects in the birds that they regularly capture, and to publish new information, even if brief or inconclusive, in the present journal.

Finally, the revision will represent the standard for acceptance of age/sex codes by the Bird Banding Laboratory. Towards this end, I will be working with the BBL and CWS to ensure compatibility, and will be including "usually acceptable age-sex codes by month" charts, as are found in the Bird Banding Manual. Kathy Klimkiewicz and Mary Gustafson have loaned me the BBL files with age/sex information, out of which I have gleaned quite a bit of useful information from letters and responses from banders. All who have contributed to the BBL files will be acknowledged in the revision. If anyone would rather not have their contributed information published in this way, they should let me know.

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