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Western Regional News

North American Bird Bander

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Highlights included an American Woodcock, three N. Saw-whet Owls, a Bobolink, a Rusty Blackbird, two Grasshopper Sparrows, a Dicksissel, a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (our first "official" capture of this newly split species) and a Junco x White-throated Sparrow hybrid. Only four species had above-average capture rates this year:

Blackpoll 57% above average, Brown Creeper +29%, Winter Wren +18%, and Veery +14%. Six species had capture rates that were less than half of average: Yellow-shafted Flicker (43%), Ovenbird (36%), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (35%), Eastern Phoebe (35%), Field Sparrow (29%), and Cape May Warbler (21%).



Founded in 1925

Western Regional News

Western Bird Banding Association 75th Annual Meeting 8 – 10 September 2000 Fairbanks, Alaska Sponsored by the Alaska Bird Observatory

The meeting opened on Friday with tours of Creamer's Refuge and the University of Alaska Museum followed by a barbecue, featuring wild game and salmon at the Refuge Visitor Center. After dinner Dr. Susan Sharbaugh, Institute of Arctic Biology, University of Alaska Fairbanks, gave a fascinating slide presentation entitled "Baby it's cold outside! Overwintering strategies of small songbirds".

On Saturday banding started at the Refuge banding site at 0700 with a good flow of passerines captured in the Observatory's 30 nets set among birches at the peak of their fall color.

At 0900 the following workshops were presented at the Visitors Center.

MAPSPROG 3.0. Pilar Velez (The Institute for Bird Populations, P.O. Box 1346, Point Reyes Station CA

94956-1346). MAPS contributors will work on their 2000 MAPS data using MAPSPROG 3.0, a computer program created by The Institute for Bird Populations in conjunction with the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory.

Using Molt Limits for Ageing. Kenneth Burton (PO Box 716, Inverness, CA 94937). This workshop covered what molt limits are, how to identify them, and how to use them for aging birds.

How to give a good bird banding presentation. Andrea Swingley (Alaska Bird Observatory, PO Box 80505, Fairbanks, AK 99708). Whether for the general public, special groups, or school children, bird banding presentations are a useful method for encouraging environmental awareness, appreciation, and understanding.

After lunch the following papers were presented at the Wedgewood Resort.

Time-energy trade-offs among high-latitude passerine migrants. Anna-Marie Benson (Alaska Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 80505, Fairbanks, AK, 99708) and Kevin Winker (University of Alaska Museum, 907 Yukon Drive, Fairbanks AK, 99775).

Timing of migration, fattening, and molt in trans-continental passerine migrants were examined during spring and autumn migration in Fairbanks, Alaska (64°50' N, 147°50' W). We examined data from 25,718 birds of 18 species that were captured and banded by the Alaska Bird Observatory from 1992-1998. Based on median dates of spring and autumn passage, species-level estimates of the duration of breeding range occupation ranged from 48 to 129 days. Adults departed significantly later than immatures in seven of the 18 species examined and significantly earlier than immatures in only one species, the Alder Flycatcher. Adults had significantly higher fat scores than immatures in 12 of 16 species. However, in most species the differences observed were attributable to the effects of overnight low temperature, day length, and time of day, rather than age effects. Fat scores were higher in autumn than spring in seven of 16 species, but these differences were due to daily environmental conditions rather than season in all but three species. No species arrived at this study site with high fat loads in spring, suggesting that the species examined do not carry additional fat stores to initiate breeding in this region.

We also examined whether temporal constraints at high latitudes cause some passerine migrants to complete molt during, rather than prior to, autumn migration. We evaluated energetic costs (in terms of fat loads) of overlapping these two energetically demanding events. In six of seven species examined, 10-54% of individuals were in the late stages of remex molt during final species-level migration periods. Of the seven species examined, only Wilson's Warblers (*Wilsonia pusilla*) did not overlap remex molt with autumn migration at this site. In five of the seven species, birds molting remiges had significantly lower fat levels than birds that had completed remex molt. Because fat stores are used to fuel migration, molt overlap does appear to impose a cost. While lower fat levels may compromise the initial stage of migration, the consequences of this likely cost are unknown.

Using MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) data to identify management strategies for reversing population declines in landbirds. David F. DeSante, M. Philip Nott, and Danielle R. O'Grady (The Institute for Bird Populations, P.O. Box 1346, Point Reyes Station CA 94956-1346).

A successful integrated avian monitoring strategy should be able to: (1) identify proximate demographic cause(s) of population change; (2) aid identification of management actions to reverse population declines; and (3) evaluate the effectiveness of those actions in an adaptive management framework. Monitoring vital rates (productivity and survivorship) is a critically important component of integrated avian monitoring, because environmental stressors and management actions affect vital rates directly and without substantial time lags. Moreover, data on vital rates provide crucial information about the health of populations and the stage of the life cycle at which population change is effected, and can yield a clear index of habitat quality. We identify the proximate demographic cause(s) of population change by modeling spatial variation in productivity and survivorship as a function of spatial variation in population trends. We provide examples at two spatial scales using data from MAPS and the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). At the larger scale, we show that low survival of adults was the proximate demographic cause of the 1992-1998 population decline for Gray Catbird in the BBS physiographic strata where they are declining, thereby indicating that management strategies to reverse declines in catbirds by attempting to increase their productivity will be unsuccessful. At the smaller scale, we show that low productivity was the cause of the 1994-1999 population declines of Carolina Chickadee, Ovenbird, and Field Sparrow on DoD installations in either the eastern or western Midwest, while both low productivity and low adult survival were causes for declines in Gray Catbird and Yellow-breasted Chat on those installations. Finally, we show how appropriately scaled, landscape-level habitat data could be included in GIS-based models of productivity to describe relationships between habitat characteristics and productivity for species for which low productivity is driving the population decline. This approach will allow formulation of

management actions designed to reverse declines by altering habitat characteristics from those associated with low productivity to those associated with high productivity. The importance of this approach is that integrated monitoring and adaptive management can lead to the successful reversal of population declines even before the ultimate mechanism of the decline (e.g., forest fragmentation causing increased nest predation) is completely understood.

Nest site and mate fidelity in a subarctic population of Yellow Warblers. Kristine M. Sowl (Yukon Flats NWR, 101 12th Ave, Room 264, Fairbanks, AK 99701-6293).

Systematic mist netting and banding has been conducted at Canvasback Lake on the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge from 1995-2000. In addition, Yellow Warbler nests were located and monitored from 1997-2000 as part of a nesting ecology study. Two hundred and fifty-five adult Yellow Warblers, 112 females and 143 males, were color-banded between 1996 and 2000. One quarter (21%) of the color-banded individuals were observed or recaptured in at least one other year than the year in which they were banded, and 22 individuals (11 males and 11 females) were observed at the study site three or more years. About 46% of the color-banded individuals were observed at nests, and 27 (12 females and 15 males) were observed at nests in multiple years. Several of these individuals, both males and females, had nests that were within 50 m of nests from a previous year. None of the color-marked pairs retained the same mate between years, even though their previous mate may have returned to the study plot. Polygyny was documented on several occasions, including at least one case of polyterritorial polygyny. Three females that were banded during their hatching year returned to breed in the area.

Occurrence of incomplete first prebasic molt in the Wrentit. Maureen E. Flannery, and Thomas Gardali (Point Reyes Bird Observatory, 4990 Shoreline Highway, Stinson Beach, CA 94970).

During their first year, most passerines do not replace any flight feathers (i.e. partial molt) while others replace some (i.e. incomplete molt) or all (i.e. complete molt) remiges. In a few species the first prebasic molt is an eccentric pattern which follows

the typical replacement sequence but begins at a different point on the wing. Between November 1999 and March 2000 we documented eccentric replacement patterns of flight feather molt in 56% of first-year Wrentits (*Chamaea fasciata*) captured in mist-nets at various sites in coastal California. These were the first recorded observations of incomplete molt in this species, which was previously considered to have a complete first prebasic molt. Subsequently, we examined 101 unknown age study skins, of which 11% exhibited eccentric patterns of incomplete molt, suggesting that the data collected in 1999/2000 were not anomalous. The presence of molt limits in the Wrentit makes it possible to age some first-year birds after skull pneumatization is complete. We suggest that feather quality, hatching date, and environmental conditions may influence the extent of flight feather replacement during the first prebasic molt. These findings demonstrate that mist-nets continue to provide exciting new information even for a well-studied species such as the Wrentit.

Managing Band Manager. Mary Gustafson (Bird Banding Laboratory, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD 20708).

Band Manager is a windows-based program available free of charge from the Bird Banding Laboratory. This program can be used as either a banding database or a data editor for banding schedules. Learn how to set up and start using Band Manager and bring questions. A new version of Band Manager is in preparation for interaction with the banding lab's new Oracle system. The best way for banders to help the BBL is to use Band Manager to send in all their data.

Ladies first? Timing of departure between sexes in five migrant species at a high-latitude banding station. David W. Shaw, and Anna-Marie Benson (Alaska Bird Observatory, PO Box 80505, Fairbanks, Alaska 99708).

The unpredictable resources late in autumn on the breeding grounds provide a strong selection force for early departure to the wintering grounds after breeding activities are completed. Northern latitudes, with their close proximity to breeding grounds, make an ideal location to study differential timing of migration among sex classes. The arrival of males before females during spring migration has been well documented; however little has been

published regarding differences between sexes in autumn. We hypothesized that there would be differences in departure dates between adult males and females. We anticipated no such differences in hatch-year birds. These hypotheses were tested with data collected at a standardized mist-netting station at Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in Fairbanks, Alaska from 1992-1999. We analyzed departure dates within age and sex classes for five common species of migrants: Myrtle's Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*), Slate-colored Junco (*Junco hyemalis*), Wilson's Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*), and Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*). Species were sexed in fall by wing chord measurements and plumage characteristics. We found no difference in departure dates between sexes in adults. Differences in juvenile departure dates between sexes were not significant for three species; however, among Myrtle's Warblers and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, hatch-year males and females had significantly different departure times, with females departing before males. From these results, it appears that autumn departure among sex and age classes does not follow any generalized pattern, presenting new complexities to the phenomenon of migration.

Twenty years of Peregrine b Falcon banding on the North Slope of Alaska. Ted Swem (USFWS, 101 12th Ave, Room 110, Fairbanks, AK 99701).

Membership meeting.

The following slate of officers was elected:

President – Jim Steele

First Vice-president – Ken Burton

Second Vice-president – Rhonda Millikin

Secretary – Stephanie Jones

Treasurer – Tricia Campbell

Director (2001) – Ken Voget

Director (2002) – Anne-Marie Benson

Regional Director (Intermountain West) – Gary Blevins

Retiring President Bob Altman announced that the Board had appointed Kay Loughman as Editor for WBBA.

After the membership meeting, Mary Gustafson reported on the Bird Banding Lab. She strongly urged all banders to submit schedules via

BANDMANAGER; data entry from paper schedules is two years behind. Band supplies are still very tight due to problems with suppliers. She urged banders not to hoard and to return excess bands. Updates for BANDMANAGER are available at the BBL Web site and on disc.

After dinner at the Wedgewood Resort, outgoing President Bob Altman thanked Alaska Bird Observatory on behalf of the 50 attendees for hosting a great annual meeting and presented a painting to retiring editor Robert Tweit in recognition of his 19 years of service to WBBA.

The keynote presentation **"Ecology of Golden Eagles in Denali National Park"** was given by **Carol McIntyre** of the National Park Service, Denali National Park.

Sunday the meeting ended with an all-day trip to Denali National Park, led by Carol McIntyre. Aspens and willows were a gorgeous yellow, while many small shrubs were a dusky red. Mt. McKinley was hidden in clouds but new snow decorated the lower peaks. Grizzlies and Dall sheep were the most visible mammals along with a few caribou. While most migratory birds had departed, Boreal Chickadees and Gray Jays were in the spruce; raptors included Golden Eagles, Gyrfalcon and Merlin.

Again many thanks to Nancy DeWitt and the staff and volunteers of Alaska Bird Observatory for an outstanding meeting.

**2001 WBBA Annual Meeting
Spokane Washington,
August or September
Watch for more details.**

Send manuscripts and other material from western North America for publication in **NABB** to

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