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## Anecdotes

North American Bird Bander

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**Table 1. Bird Survival After Reforestation**

SPECIES	BAND NO.	BANDED	LAST RECAPTURE	DISTANCE (m)* BETWEEN CAPTURES
CARW	154199262	15 JUL 1999	20 APR 2003	85
CARW	157143363	7 SEP 1997	23 MAR 2003	46
EATO	86145259	26 SEP 1996	13 JUL 2003	34
EATO	163157588	14 JUN 2000	22 JUN 2003	146
ETTI	154199237	18 OCT 1998	22 JUN 2003	113
NOCA	163157306	8 JUL 1998	15 OCT 2002	183
OVEN	156104240	30 AUG 2000	24 OCT 2002	43
OVEN	312144024	6 SEP 1997	10 OCT 2002	143
OVEN	156104248	3 SEP 2000	18 SEP 2003	183
WEVI	216089514	22 JUN 2000	8 OCT 2002	70
WEVI	216089528	2 SEP 2000	15 SEP 2002	168

\* Center to center of net.

## **Anecdotes**

Anecdotes make interesting stories to tell and are not always a unique, one-of-a-kind observation. When published, these observations about bird biology and behavior enter the scientific literature and become available as a resource for others. Here are three sets of anecdotal observations, two from my own banding experiences, presented in hopes of inspiring readers to share their experiences with bird biology.

**Peter Lowther**, *IBBA Editor*

In the fall of 1980 at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, I banded 15 LeConte's Sparrows. These sparrows were actually rather easy to catch—we would slowly herd birds towards nets set low (about half height) in drainage depressions of grassy field of the university's West Campus. Between 1955 and 2002, on average only about 32 LeConte's Sparrows have been banded each year (see Bird Banding Laboratory's Web page), and it was rather ego boosting to learn that I had caught more than half of all LeConte's Sparrows caught in 1980. I have caught individuals in other years, but only singly and only a few times. Does this 1980 banding anomaly really mean anything? For all that is known about LeConte's Sparrows, this week in October provided a rather good sample size for measurements, and the captures indicated that

this species must migrate (in fall) in small, loose flocks. Also, since two individuals were recaptured—one two days later and another five days later—these migrants remained a few days at this stop-over site. Eight of these birds were identified as skull not completely ossified, three as skull completely ossified, only one was noted in molt, and the banding site provides information on habitat preference. All of these indications give hints about LeConte's Sparrow biology, and I was able to use these hints in preparing the *BNA* account for this little-studied species.

**Peter Lowther**

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### **Letter from Katherine Kelly to Thomas Bartlett, 8 Feb 2003:**

I believe I am a life member although I can't find a card to prove it. I am no longer banding birds as I am 93 years old, although I am volunteering as a "local historian" at the Baldwin City Public Library every afternoon.

I'm not up to writing a bird article for *NABB*, but I did have a funny visitation from a Tufted Titmouse this spring as I was reading the newspaper on a front porch swing. As I rocked back and forth holding the newspaper, my elbow on the arm of the swing, a

titmouse approached the house and landed in the cedar tree just giving me the dickens. I kept real still and the next thing, he landed on the sidewalk a few feet away, then on the arm of the swing, then the first thing I knew something was jabbing my elbow and then my wrist. I do believe he was trying to gather nesting material of the long hairs on my arm, but couldn't get any to come off. Then it flew to the sidewalk still cussing me for not cooperating and flew away disappointed.

A Canadian friend of mine, C. Stuart Houston, sent me the Dec 2002 *Blue Jay* in which he was co-author of an article on "Nesting Turkey Vultures in old building near Saskatoon." Even had a photo of a young Turkey Vulture and several buildings used by the vulture lately. That reminded me of the Turkey Vulture in an old rotten tree sitting on the ground beside her two white eggs. Later the two young still in the old dead tree on the ground nest. That was 58 more or less years ago here in Kansas across the road from our farm, between Vinland and Baldwin City, KS. Banded no birds since 2000. My life total is over 29,000 banded birds. I still enjoy the magazines and am passing them on to Lincoln, Neb.

**Katharine B. Kelley**  
P.O. Box 43  
Baldwin City, KS

*Editor's note:* As mentioned in Bent's *Life histories*, this titmouse behavior—getting hair from living mammals—has been observed in interactions with a squirrel (J. H. Reed 1897, *Auk* 14:325), woodchuck (W. Reed 1926, *Oologist* 43:140; 1927, *Wilson's Bull.* 39:107), and humans (E. I. Smith 1924, *Bird-Lore* 26:177; V. Kite 1925, *Bird-Lore* 27:180-181). Perhaps this behavior is more than just anecdotal.

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A one-footed chickadee is easy to identify when visiting a feeder, even without a band to give it an individual identity. Sarah Klahn, a student of mine when I was at the University of Northern Iowa— and occasional banding assistant—wrote the following in 1985 for *The Oak*, A quarterly newsletter of the *Black Hawk County [Iowa] Conservation Board*, 4(2):7: "An Old Friend."

**Peter Lowther**

The bird that is by far the most common reminder of our existence here at the [Hartman Reserve] Nature Center [in Cedar Falls, IA] is the chickadee. We tap our maple trees during the spring thaw to the tune of the Black-capped Chickadee's *fee-bee* as these birds pair off to mate. In the fall and winter they seem to be on constant watch, scolding with a *chick-a-dee-dee-dee* whenever one of us passes near a perch.

One bird in particular was, until this season, a regular in the chatter of chickadees around the Nature Center. This special bird was captured in October 1981 by Peter Lowther, PhD, an ornithologist engaged in avian ecology research. Mr. Lowther has a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which allows him to trap and capture birds such as our chickadee. As a licensed bird bander, Mr. Lowther has been issued small, numbered, aluminum bands which can be carefully clamped on a bird's leg and used to identify specific birds. Our special friend was identified with band number 1500-56827.

On first acquaintance the only thing out of the ordinary about 56827 was its weight. Our little friend weighed in at a hefty 13.5 g or about 14 paper clips. This made 56827 a burly, black-capped ball of gray and white feathers in the world of chickadees. After suffering the indignity of being caught in a trap, weighed, measured, banded, and handled by a curious group of humans, 56827 was released in a flutter and sputter of feathers to return to a perch in the Hartman woods. Many of the birds banded at the Nature Center just seem to disappear and are never seen again. This unusual bird was not to follow that path. 56827 has been recaptured 15 times, a record for banded birds at the Nature Center! The first six or seven times 56827 was recaptured, there was no overt sign that the life of this bird was any different from those of the other chickadees, spending the fall and winter weaving patterns of wings from feeder to feeder in the neighborhood and spring and summer raising a family.

Mr. Lowther's banding records tell us that something happened between 15 Jan and 22 Jan 1983 that made 56827 different. When recaptured on that second day in January, 56827 had lost its left leg! The cause of the loss is anyone's guess, but

the results were obvious. For another 18 months, which is a year and a half longer than most chickadees live, 56827 thrived. Twice when recaptured it weighed 14 g, the highest of any chickadee captured. Losing a leg had not hindered or even slowed down its ability to live.

We have seen no sign of our one-legged friend since March 1984. As with the lost leg, we can only

speculate about the fate of 56827. This bird could have as easily died of old age or sickness as a Sharp-shinned Hawk or a cat. The loss is not to be mourned. The brothers and sisters of 56827 remind us of this every day. And just last weekend, a chickadee with a withered right leg was captured and banded that weighed in at 13.5 g. Maybe we have found a new friend to watch!

## Recent Literature

### BANDING HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHIES

**In memory -Elson Olorenshaw.** G. Holroyd. 2002. *Alta. Nat.* 22:130-131. Can. Wildl. Serv., Room 200, 4999-98 Ave., Edmonton, AB T6B 2X3 (Brief biography of one of most active members of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, who also banded numerous Tree Swallows and Mountain Bluebirds in over 400 nearby nest boxes.) MKM

**Rural banders in the Yorkton area.** C. S. Houston. 2003. *Blue Jay* 61:94-95. 863 University Dr., Saskatoon, SK S7N 0J8 (Briefly summarizes banding efforts of Judge J. A. M. Patrick and Lindsay Wotherspoon, chronicled in more detail in previous publications, and banding by Fred Bard, J. A. Biggs, and R. Lorne Scott, banders whose main efforts were in other parts of Saskatchewan. More details are provided on 1929 banding near Tadmore, SK, and 1931-1932 banding at Morden, MB, by Robert Maurice Blakely and on 1933-1939 banding near Stenen, SK, by Emma Wickencamp.) MKM

**Little piece of ringing history.** P. A. Whittington. *Safring News* 27:43. Avian Demography Unit, Dept. Stat. Sci., Univ. of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa (An adult and four chick Leach's Storm-Petrels banded on a South African island helped document the first known Southern Hemisphere nesting of this species.) MKM

**Obituary [:] George Underhill.** L. Underhill. 1997. *Wader Study Group Bull.* 82:6. Avian Demography Unit, Univ. of Cape Town, Rondebosch, South Africa 7701, South Africa (Brief biography of prominent South African bander.) MKM

### BANDING EQUIPMENT AND TECHNIQUES

**Effects of backpack radio tags on female Northern Pintails wintering in California.** J. P. Fleskes. 2003. *Wildl. Soc. Bull.* 31:212-219. U.S.G.S., West. Ecol. Res. Center, 6924 Tremont Rd., Dixon, CA 95620 (Compares behavior and survival of HY and AHY female Northern Pintails fitted with two types of radio tag attachments [spear-suture and harness] with those of unmarked females. No differences were detected among the three groups of hens except that body mass at harvest was lowest for birds fitted with harnesses. Both types of attachment are considered suitable for studying winter ecology of pintails; however, spear-suture attachment may not be adequate for studies of more than one month because of low retention rates.) SG

**The use of a power snare to capture breeding Golden Eagles.** M. J. McGrady and J. R. Grant. 1996. *J. Raptor Res.* 30:28-31. Roy. Soc. for the Protection of Birds, Scottish Headquarters, 17 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BN, U.K. (Eight of ten attempts to capture adult eagles on nests were successful with no apparent difference in nest success compared with nests at which no attempts were made to capture adults. All captured adults returned to the same territories in the year following capture, but all shifted nest sites.) MKM

**A mechanical owl as a trapping lure for owls.** E. A. Jacobs. 1996. *J. Raptor Res.* 30:31-32. Linwood Springs Res. Cent., 1601 Brown Deer Lane, Stevens Point, WI 54481 (A model owl with a mechanical movement system succeeded in eliciting a stoop from 75 of 95 nesting hawks on which it was tested between 1989 and 1995 and