

2003

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North American Bird Bander

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John Alexander and I are continuing to serve as WBBA's North American Banding Council (NABC) representatives this year. John is Chairman of the Evaluation Committee and I am Chairman of the Education Committee. Both of us attended the NABC meeting in Canada in September, which will be reported on separately. We are looking for a new Alternate Representative to start next year; candidates should be both WBBA members and NABC trainers. Please get in touch with me if you are interested.

The slate of WBBA officers approved by the membership at the meeting is the same as last year's except that John Alexander has replaced Ken Voget as 2nd Vice-President and Diana Humple of Point Reyes Bird Observatory is our new Secretary. We welcome Diana to the Board. We are planning to increase the size of the Board this year as well.

We have made a few changes to our dues structure. We raised the Non-Subscribing Membership rate to \$10/year and added two new categories of membership: Institutional (\$35/year) and Student/Volunteer/Intern (\$15/year for the first two years of membership). We also are considering lowering our Life Membership cost substantially.

Finally, next year's meeting will be hosted by Klamath Bird Observatory in Ashland, Oregon, probably in September and possibly in conjunction with Western Field Ornithologists and/or NABC. We are looking for a venue for the 2005 meeting; contact us soon if you have an idea.

As you can see, we've been busy and look forward to an even busier year ahead. We need your help! Recruit new members, contribute a manuscript, serve on the Board, host a meeting... There are many ways to get involved. It is YOUR organization and your participation is not only welcome, it is essential!

Best wishes for a prosperous year,

Ken Burton,
President

MONTANA MEETING 2003

Just as Stephanie predicted, we loved Montana!

Peter Pyle's Molt Limits Workshop was filled to capacity. Participants agreed they learned a lot and came away with increased confidence in their ability to recognize molt limits. Special thanks to Stephanie Jones and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for making this workshop possible.

Supervised by Deb Goslin at Lee Metcalf NWR, WBBA members practiced their banding skills on Gray Catbird, Black-headed Grosbeak, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, among many others. According to Patricia Taber, "The highlight for the Lee Metcalf people was when we had four grosbeaks in hand and Peter [Pyle] asked to see one of them and each person was checking the underwing color. When Peter opened the underwing of his bird it was red! The "OOHs and WOWs" were flowing, as he had a Rose-breasted Grosbeak." – a likely first for the refuge.

Guest presentations included: *Biology and Behavioral Ecology of Long-eared Owls*, by Jeff Marks; *A Bird's Eye View of the Fires of 2000*, by Dick Hutto; and *Raptors of the Rockies*, a discussion and demonstration using live birds, by Kate Davis. Your editor was suitably impressed with the Golden Eagle perched only ten feet away!

B&B-style accommodations and excellent meals were provided at Teller Wildlife Refuge. For those not involved in scheduled activities, Teller also proved to be comfortable for socializers and rewarding for birders.

An updated listing of officers, reports on the field trips, and abstracts of papers begin on the next page.

Kay Loughman,
WBBA Editor

Fabulous Field Trips!

Carol Ralph went on both Friday field trips and sent this description "In the morning two local Auduboners led us on a short hike through open ponderosa pine-Douglas fir forest to an overlook into Blodgett Canyon in the Bitterroot Mountains just east of the valley. We saw a good example of a forest kept open by fire and a sad example of spotted knapweed spreading everywhere. A flock of Red-breasted Nuthatches called our attention to a Pygmy Owl, and a flock of Red Crossbills entertained us at a waterhole.

"In the afternoon at Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge in the flat, open Bitterroot Valley, we were treated to a VIP tour of a few of the myriad constructed and managed wetlands with a local bird expert. We saw lots of distant, brown, headless ducks, a few Pectoral Sandpipers on exposed mud, and Red-necked Phalaropes spinning on the water. A Bald Eagle posed on a distant snag, and an Osprey carried in a fish to its large, chirping youngsters in a nest on a platform."

Dennis Jongsomjit reports "Sunday's trip to the National Bison Range went great. We toured the refuge stopping at several spots to look for birds or to read about the interesting history of the area as an enormous glacial lake (Glacial Lake Missoula). We saw several charismatic megafauna including black bears (4 of them!), bison, pronghorn, mule and white-tailed deer, and a coyote. Bird highlights included Merlin, Gray Partridge, Blue Grouse, Vesper Sparrow, and Chipping Sparrow, to name a few."

WBBA Officers - effective 9/01/03

President:	Ken Burton
Secretary:	Diana Humple
Treasurer:	Tricia Campbell
1st Vice Pres.:	Gary Blevins
2nd Vice Pres.:	John Alexander
Editor:	Kay Loughman
NABC Rep.:	Ken Burton
NABC Alt.:	John Alexander
Membership:	Ken Burton

ABSTRACTS

Banding grassland birds: first you have to catch them! *Stephanie L. Jones*, Fish and Wildlife Service, Denver, CO.

Color banding has been an important component of the grassland bird demography project at Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge. The objective is to determine the degree of annual site fidelity (return rates) over time for Sprague's Pipits, Savannah, Grasshopper, and Baird's sparrows, and Chestnut-collared Longspurs, five of the principal breeding grassland bird species within the study area. Beginning in June 1998, all known territorial male Baird's Sparrows were targeted and captured using 30- or 36-mm mesh mist nets drawn in by tape playback recordings of conspecific song. Since grassland birds are notoriously hard to capture, I have refined the techniques through the years of this study. Annual return rates for adult Baird's Sparrow was 4.08% (n = 98) and 0% for nestlings (n = 85), and 0% for adult (n = 34) and nestlings (n = 132) for Sprague's Pipit. Other species had low sample sizes, and return rates varied. Baird's Sparrow populations can show large yearly fluctuations near the boundaries of their breeding ranges and this could be an indication of nomadism. This is consistent with the other banding study of Baird's Sparrows in North Dakota and is consistent with the lack of geographic variation in Baird's Sparrow songs, which are widely dispersed across the breeding range.

Eagles in Montana: where do they come from, where do they go? - *Al Harmata*, Fish & Wildlife Program, Ecology Dept., Montana State Univ., Bozeman, MT 59717

Bald Eagles (BAEA, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and Golden Eagles (GOEA, *Aquila chrysaetos*) occur year-round in Montana. Number of breeding pairs of BAEAs in Montana grew from 23 in 1980 to 309 in 2003. Approximately 5000 GOEA breeding pairs was estimated for Montana but accurate estimates are unavailable. Since 1972, a variety of auxiliary marking studies of eagles conducted throughout the Rocky Mountains and California addressed various management conflicts and aspects natural history. Nearly 700 BAEAs and