

2004

Eastern Regional News

North American Bird Bander

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Recommended Citation

North American Bird Bander (2004) "Eastern Regional News," *North American Bird Bander*. Vol. 29 : Iss. 2 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/nabb/vol29/iss2/8>

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**Highlights of
EBBA's 81st Annual Meeting
Held 16-18 April 2004
at the Holiday Inn, New London, CT**

At the 2004 meeting of the Eastern Bird Banding Association banders from Florida to New Hampshire heard a full program of presentations and participated in several workshops. In addition, they enjoyed several field trips to well-known natural areas with knowledgeable leaders and the first of the spring weather.

ANNUAL MEETING

Officer's Reports:

President Brad Silfies: There are about 97 copies of the monograph published under the auspices of EBBA available at the meeting. There has been a change in coverage for EBBA to include the New England states. As a result, the EBBA logo will be changed. Ideas should be submitted to the logo committee (Tom LeBlanc, chair). There is a need for someone to assist in marketing the mist nets.

First Vice President Ginger Bladen: Ginger mentioned the field trips for Saturday and also thanked all who assisted in setting up the conference.

Second Vice President Betsy Brooks: Betsy reported that the 2005 meeting will be held 15-17 April at the Airport Holiday Inn in Rochester, NY. It is near Braddock Bay and the meeting will be held at the height of the raptor migration and also the beginning of the passerine migration.

Third Vice President Tom Greg: Tom reported that he will try to have the 2006 meeting in north-central New Jersey.

Treasurer Don Mease: Income was \$8900 from dues; expenses for NABB were \$9100, which means our dues do not cover the printing of our journal, which is our biggest expense. The bucket raffle and the nets are a great help in keeping us above board. Interest received on our memorial funds goes to the memorial grants. There is a realized gain of approx. \$12,000 on investments. EBBA is in good financial shape at this time.

Editor Bob Pantle: Bob put out a call for manuscripts. News and Notes items are encouraged. There are three editors available to

assist authors. Cost of color photos with manuscripts must be covered by the author.

Committee Reports:

Publication - Elaine Mease: Membership is approximately 447 with 20 memberships still unpaid for the year. The list of new members was approved unanimously.

Memorial Grant - Betsy Brooks: Two grants were approved by council: *Post breeding movements and habitat use of Bicknell's Thrush (Catharus bicknelli) in the southern Green Mountains of Vermont*, submitted by Brendan Collins of Antioch New England Graduate School; and *Wintering ecology of the Piping Plover (Charadrius melodus) in coastal Georgia*, submitted by Brandon L. Noel of Georgia Southern University.

Net Committee - Gale Smith: EBBA is phasing out the nylon nets in favor of the polyester nets. He has many older nets which are available and will be priced to sell.

NABC Delegate Report - Mary Doscher: There was no official report from the committee. Mary attended a meeting at the University of Manitoba, in Winnipeg. The next meeting held 23-25 Apr in Ithaca, NY.

Bander Certification - Betsy Brooks and Bob Yunick: There will be no session following this meeting due to lack of candidates. There will be a certification session 1-3 Oct at Braddock Bay, which will also be used to train trainers in certification. Of the five sessions held to date, 20 banders have been certified.

Nominating Committee - Brad Silfies (for John Forness): The following list of candidates was approved unanimously as submitted:

President.	Ginger Bladen
First Vice President	Betsy Brooks
Second Vice President.	Thomas Greg
Third Vice President	Susan Finnegan
Secretary.	Gerald Lahr
Treasurer.	Don Mease
Councilor - 2005	Mary Forness (replacing Barbara Ross)
Councilors - 2007	John Forness David Hauber Don Watts John Tautin

EBBA Editor. Robert Pantle
Net Committee Chair. Gale Smith
NABC Delegate. Mary Doshier with
Betsy Brooks, alternate

PRESENTERS AND PRESENTATIONS

A highlight of the Friday evening program was the presentation of an award to **Hannah Suthers** in recognition of her 50 years of banding achievements. The award was made by the Featherbed Lane Banding Station and EBBA together. Hannah's contributions to ornithological research, to bander training, and to EBBA have been enormous and are appreciated greatly by members of both organizations. It was a pleasure to honor her.

Friday Evening Speaker

Robert A. Askins (Professor of Biology at Connecticut College) - *Restoring North America's Birds: Lessons from Landscape Ecology*. As a Professor of Biology at Connecticut College, Dr. Askins teaches courses in ecology, animal behavior, and ornithology. His research focuses on the ecology and conservation of migratory birds in both their northern breeding areas and tropical wintering areas. He has analyzed the habitat requirements of forest birds that nest in deciduous forests in New England and Japan, and of songbirds that spend the winter in the U.S. Virgin Islands. He also has studied species that are restricted to early successional habitats. Journals in which he has published include *Science*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *Wetlands*, *Ecology*, *Current Ornithology*, *Studies in Avian Biology*, *Wilson Bulletin*, and *Conservation Biology*. In 2000, he published "Restoring North America's Birds: Lessons from Landscape Ecology," a book on the ecology and conservation of North American birds. A second edition was published in 2002.

In the northeastern United States, conservationists often focus on saving forests. Less attention has been directed at open habitats such as grassland and shrubland, but these habitats have a disproportionate number of declining and endangered species. In New England, many of the

bird species that have shown persistent, long-term decreases in abundance are associated with open habitats. These include Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat. These species primarily nest in farmland and old fields, so they have declined as most of the farmland has been abandoned and replaced with forest. Is this a conservation problem or a "return to normal" in an historically forested landscape? Where did these species live before people cleared the forest for farming? How can we sustain their populations as open space habitats continue to disappear? All of these issues were addressed in this presentation

Paper Presentations

Milan Bull (Sr. Director of Science and Conservation for Connecticut Audubon Society)- *Cooperative Research on Connecticut's Shore Birds*. (Mr. Bull was unable to attend.)

William D. Hobbs (High School Biology Teacher in PA) - *The Use of Color Banding to Study Temporal Change in Hunting Behavior in the American Kestrel*. In an ongoing study of the American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), adult birds and nestlings have been color banded in order to study long-term temporal change in predatory behavior. From the onset of spring to fledgling dispersal in August, marked birds were observed for feeding bouts of 10 to 25 minutes, during which time every change in behavior was recorded including strikes and social interactions. After data have been reviewed from the seasons of 2002 and 2003, patterns have begun to emerge showing greater hunting effort in adult birds; and among fledglings, a slow increase in hunting effort from fledging to dispersal, with an accompanying reduction in social interaction. No significant differences are yet apparent in strike rates or capture efficiencies due to age. During this study, kestrel density was increased using nest boxes. Kestrels occupied 67% of boxes placed, of which 42.5% successfully fledged young. Of the adults and nestlings banded during the 2002 season, only 6% returned to breed in the same area for the 2003 season. This low site fidelity will limit the ability to track temporal change in hunting tactics beyond one season. More seasons of data and longer

range banding returns will be required to examine long-term change and determine how far these birds are dispersing.

Jonas Lai (Research Assistant at the Yale School of Medicine and Graduate Student at Southern Connecticut State University) - *From the Nets to the Lab: Collection and Genetic Analysis of Avian Tissue*. Increasingly, banders are being asked to procure avian tissue for DNA analysis. Techniques employed in the study of genetics will be reviewed, and the current advances in the study of avian molecular biology will be discussed.

Jenny Dickson (Wildlife Diversity Biologist with the Connecticut DEP and Director of much of DEP research, including the Migratory Bird Stopover Habitat Survey) - *Migratory Bird Stopover Habitat Survey*. Little information exists on critical stopover habitats used by migrating birds. Loss of the critical habitats can result in greater distances between "refueling" stops for migrating birds, which can increase their mortality significantly. Identification of such areas throughout the country has been identified as an important priority by Partners In Flight. This project will parallel the previous Silvio O. Conte Stopover Habitat Surveys that were performed along the upper Connecticut River but will highlight additional areas along the Housatonic, Naugatuck, Thames, and mid-to-lower Connecticut rivers. These surveys will help to identify Connecticut's priority sites and help guide conservation efforts at state and local levels.

Larry Fischer - *The King and the Wanderer: A Comparison of the Natural History of the Great Horned Owl and the Saw-whet Owl: the Largest and Smallest Owls in the East*. Mr. Fischer has done long-term, broad based research and has given programs for a number of organizations. Recent research has focused on the status of the saw-whet owl in western Connecticut. This winter he has been assisting in wintering saw-whet owl research on New York's barrier beaches (Gateway Recreational Area) and at Pelham Bay Park, Bronx, NY. Today's presentation is one that he gave for the Linnaean Society at the American Museum of Natural History.

Karen Jones (Supervisor for the Editing Section of the Bird Banding Lab) - *Report from the Bird Banding Laboratory*. (No abstract of her report was submitted.)

Margaret Fritz (Sixteen-year bander; works at Chimney Rock Hawkwatch in the fall; is a

member of the Princeton Skinners in the winter) - *Sixteen Years of Catbird Data: Analysis and Applications*. Our constant-effort banding site in Mercer County, NJ, is made up of old fields in various stages of successional regrowth. Based on the data collected from 1988 through 2003, we studied various aspects of the population and present the results of the analyses here. Using 2967 Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) encounters, 255 of which were birds returning from previous years and 432 repeats during the same year, we analyzed age-specific survivorship, return rates, and the effects of productivity. A discriminant functions analysis (DFA) was formulated using a combination of sixteen characteristics known to discriminate between sexes and age groups. Higher-than-average return rates were achieved by AHY and older birds. Age structure is discussed as a measure of stability of habitat. Post-fledgling dispersal and site fidelity are discussed as measured by return rates in each age class. A constant rate of decline in probability of return was measured in returning birds. The theory of density dependence is supported, in terms of productivity and return rates. Results of the analysis were consistent with previous DFA's performed on the Gray Catbird by Hannah Suthers. The stepwise DFA reduces the number of variables needed to be measured in the field in order to accurately age and sex birds. (Hannah Suthers will present a poster to illustrate this presentation.)

Chris Elphick (Assistant Professor in Residence at the University of Connecticut) - *The Collection and Use of Molt Data for Ecological Studies*. Dr. Elphick will focus on the collection and potential uses of molt data for ecological studies. He will describe the methods used to collect moult data, the ways in which variation in moult influences birds and some of the projects he is doing/or hoping to do in the near future. He will use current and recent research on the Saltmarsh Sparrow as an example.

Workshops

Ken Hesselton - Using Band Manager Features
Sue Finnegan and John Merrill - A Helping Look at MAPSPROG and So You'd Like to Operate a MAPS Station

Robert Yunick - Age Determination Using Selected Plumage Criteria

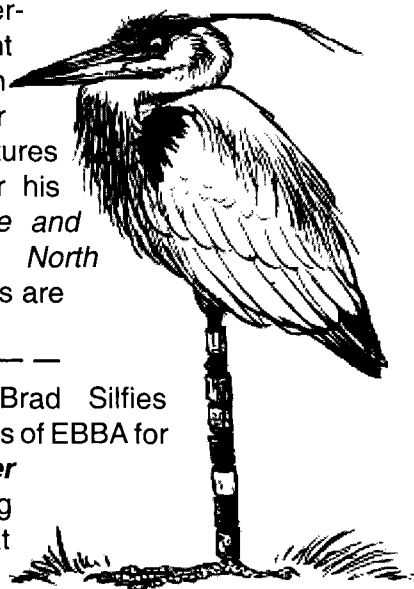
Stacy Hanks - Birds from Connecticut Audubon Society and Bird Quiz

Saturday Night Speaker

William Burt (Author and Photographer) - *Rare and Elusive Birds of North America*. Mr. Burt has had articles and photographs in *Audubon*, *Natural History*, and *Smithsonian*, as well as photographic exhibits in venues ranging from Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology to the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. The author of *Shadowbirds* and *Rare and Elusive Birds of North America*, Bill lectures extensively on birds and photography. In this presentation, Bill will tell of his 16 years spent in pursuit of the toughest subjects: 20 of the least known, almost mythically

elusive North American birds. Bill spent weeks at a time in the field, year after year, to get the pictures that he wanted for his newest book, *Rare and Elusive Birds of North America*. The results are extraordinary.

THANK YOU - Brad Silfies expresses the thanks of EBBA for the efforts of **Ginger Bladen** in putting together a great conference.



THE MEMORIAL GRANT FUND

Over 40 years ago, EBBA established a Memorial Grant Fund to recognize departed members and friends. Income from that endowment has been used annually to make student awards for ornithological research projects which use bird banding as part of the study. (See below for current awards.) Income has grown so that up to \$500 has been designated by council for distribution by the Memorial Grant Committee.

If you want to remember a departed bander or birder friend, or simply contribute to the support of student research in ornithology, send your tax-deductible check to EBBA's Treasurer, Donald Mease. Added income from the Fund will be used in the future to increase the number or amount of these competitive awards.

APPLYING FOR RESEARCH AWARDS

The Eastern Bird Banding Association seeks applicants for its annual \$500 research awards in aid of research using banding techniques or bird banding data. Applicants should submit a resume of their banding and ornithological background, the project plan including the significance of the study site, and a budget. No formal application forms are necessary; however, two copies of each application are required. Grant requests must be received by 15 Mar each year with award announcements 30 Apr.

Preference is given but not limited to research in eastern United States, or with species that spend part of their life there. Projects that are planned for other portions of the United States, North America, or the Western Hemisphere also may be considered. Research studies with conservation or management implications are particularly encouraged.

Grantees are encouraged to present at least part of their study results at an annual EBBA meeting. Travel grants for this purpose are available, in addition to the Memorial Grant for the research. Also, grantees are encouraged to become members of EBBA.

Send applications/inquiries to:

EBBA Memorial Grants Chairperson
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