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Barred Owl Rapid Molt

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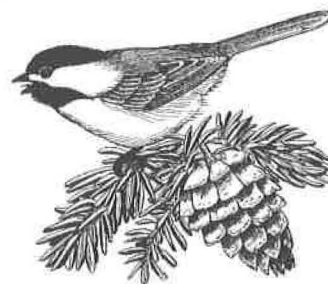
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Black-capped Chickadee
by George West

News, Notes, Comments

Retirement of Flo Soehnlein

Dear Bander,

After more than 39 years of service to the Federal government, Flo Soehnlein retired from the Bird Banding Laboratory on 1 June 2012.

Flo was hired as the Permit Officer for the BBL in 1982, moving to the lab from the Law Enforcement program the US Fish and Wildlife Service where she issued migratory bird permits. During her 30-year tenure as BBL Permit Officer, banding permits evolved from pieces of paper prepared on typewriters to the electronic system in use today. The workload has expanded greatly and the BBL permit office is currently responsible for conducting more than 7,000 permit actions annually, requiring a high level of organization and detailed electronic tracking to provide permits to the banding community in a timely manner. The successful transition to the electronic age was a result of Flo's hard work, willingness to adopt new technologies to meet the increased work load, and dedication to the BBL. Despite this unrelenting work load, Flo remained a helpful, cheerful voice on the phone as she answered questions and provided assistance to the banding community. She was also a very valuable source of information on the BBL permitting process for the various BBL chiefs during her tenure. Her knowledge and expertise will be greatly missed.

The BBL thanks Flo for her dedicated service over the years and wishes her a long, healthy and prosperous retirement. No doubt she will remain active as she enters the retirement phase of her life. Carrol LePore has been assisting Flo in the BBL permit office for the past 4+ years and will assume the responsibilities of that office.

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BARRED OWL RAPID MOLT

The rapid molt of Barred Owl (*Strix varia*) rectrices was discussed previously by Acker and Garcia (2010). They determined that the number of days a Barred Owl takes to molts its' rectrices was unquantified but estimated to take over a month. Recently, Acker has quantified the time and growth of the rectrices from a pair of failed nesting Barred Owls that were observed nearly daily at his home on Bainbridge Island, WA, and captured six times over the molting period. The female was first observed, caught, and banded on 18 Jun 2011 with no tail. Her

previously banded mate had been seen on 16 Jun with a full tail, but was entirely tailless on 19 Jun, indicating the rapid molt as previously described (Acker and Garcia 2010, Forsman 1981). Fig. 1 is a photo of the tailless pair taken on 24 Jun. The female was captured on 18 Jul, a month after the initial observation, and her rectrices measured 160 mm. On this same date, the male had the start of a new tail but was noticeably behind in growth (Fig. 2). On 30 Jul, the female's rectrices were 205 mm, and, with the exception of blood in the quills indicative of a growing feather, appeared to be nearly complete. On 8 Aug, 51 days after initial observation, her tail was 215 mm with no blood in the quills.

The male was also captured on 8 Aug 2011. His tail was 208 mm with a visible sheath, indicating the rectrices were still growing in length. He was recaptured nine days later on 17 Aug, at which time his rectrices measured 224 mm. He had no visible blood in the quills, indicating no further growth. The period between initial observation when the male was observed tailless and the final rectrices measurement on 17 Aug, was 59 days.

For this pair, the period of time from loss of tail to a complete hardened set of rectrices was approximately 60 days. The average rectrices growth rate for the male, starting at the estimated date of loss, was 3.7 mm/day for the 60 day period.



Fig. 1. Photo of tailless pair taken 24 Jun 2011; female on left.
Photo by Rachel Acker.



Fig. 2. Photo of pair taken 18 Jul 2011, prior to capture; female on left. Note more advanced molt of female.

Photo by Rachel Acker.

Literature Cited

- Acker, J and D. Garcia. 2010. Notes on rectrix molt in Barred Owls (*Strix varia*). *North American Bird Bander* 35:61-68.
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A New Technique Hints at Yellow-billed Cuckoo's Wanderings

The new technologies of transmitters and data loggers give us the ability to track individual birds throughout the year, setting aside previously well-known "facts". Indeed, such a device placed on a single netted Yellow-billed Cuckoo (Sechrist et al. 2012) provided a shocking insight into a migration strategy that others had only barely suggested at (e.g., Hughes 1999). With admirable modesty, the authors said their work "hinted at a flexible migration strategy". While the female bred within a few kilometers in each of two years, in its first summer she traveled from her New Mexico breeding site, and moved over a thousand kilometers through Chihuahua and Sonora, then returned to the Rio Grande valley before migrating. Then in the winter, after migrating some 8,000 kilometers, far from imprinting on its wintering grounds, it traveled another thousand kilometers over several months in Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina. This is a