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Summer Banding in Sunny Texas

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recoveries, and small numbers of four other species (3 Eastern Screech-Owls, 1 Barred Owl, 2 Long-eared Owls, and 4 Boreal Owls). Bob Barnhurst was the main bander for this program, with assistance from Simon Duval.

As always, other research activities and education programs were integrated with the banding program. We provided ongoing training to more than 70 volunteers this fall, and collected a few hundred more photos to augment the evergrowing

MBO Photo ID Library:

www.migrationresearch.org/mbo/idlibrary.html. We also launched a color-banding project of American Goldfinches and House Finches; although, to date, most reports have been from nearby. We encourage all banders to keep an eye out for any birds with white alphanumeric codes on black bands, and to report these to us through our form at: [http:// www.migrationresearch.org/mbo/feederbirds.html](http://www.migrationresearch.org/mbo/feederbirds.html)



Inland Regional News

Inland Bird Banding Association

Founded 1922

President's Message

By the time you are reading this note, the 2013 Annual Meeting in Tennessee will be over. I am sure we all had a great time, as this was a joint meeting with Eastern Bird Banding Association. This was also the first time we sent out meeting notices via the internet. I hope this worked well but we will only know if you, as a member, let us know. It saved the organization over \$100 by sending out meeting announcements via email. If you did not receive notification, then the email address we have for you may not be active and needs to be updated. Please contact me with your current email address, so that we can do this. Of the 190 emails we sent out, only 12 bounced as not up-to-date email addresses. If you received your meeting announcement by regular mail, then we do not have an email address for you. Please consider sharing it with the organization. We do not share email addresses with other organizations or businesses. This will save us money in the future. We are working on setting up a method where you could do this on our web page.

Speaking of our web page, make sure you check it out. Board member, Erika Dittmar, has taken over webmaster duties and made some major changes. She has done an outstanding job and is open to doing more. If you have an idea, feel free to run it by

her. The web page address is <http://ibbainfo.org/>. One of the ideas is to put up a page with the yearly banding totals by our members. Brent Ortego has been doing this for the annual banding report in *NABB* but is now stepping down from this duty. If you would like to help with this project, contact me. The more individual members volunteering, the better the organization can serve the membership.

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Summer Banding in Sunny Texas

Where I live in central Texas, the summers are hot and dry. It is not necessary to consult a forecast to know that tomorrow the sky will be blue, the wind will be from the southwest, the temperature will be in the 90s (or worse), and the chance of rain will be near zero. The grass and herbaceous plants typically start to turn brown in May. By June, they are dry and crunch underfoot. Many of the woody plants start to lose their leaves before the first official day of summer and cicadas constantly sing the anthem

of the season. Often, I hear someone wonder aloud how people could live here before air conditioning and I got a small taste of this last year when mine broke down for a week in July. There is a lot not to like about summer. So, it continues to surprise me that summer has become my favorite time to band. Mist-netting ends early in the day during this season. If the nets are shaded, sometimes I can keep them open as late as 11:00 AM, but usually, it is over before 10:00. I start each session by setting up the nets and end by taking them down, sweaty work. I only set up two or three nets, but if I have help, each person can add one or two additional nets. I increase captures in these relatively few nets by broadcasting recordings of screech-owls or the scolding calls of various songbirds by each net. I use a small mp3 player attached to a compact speaker for this and set them near the center of the net but to one side and 1–3 m away. Every time I check the net, I switch to a different recording and, every few net checks I move the broadcast equipment to the other side of the net. I switch the recording off when I am removing birds from a net because it seems useless to attract birds when I am standing right there. Net checks are relatively frequent. Depending on temperature and whether the sun is starting to shine on a net, I may check as often as every 15 minutes. No matter what I do, most birds get caught before 8:00 AM.

The first thing that I found fascinating about banding in the summer is that most birds are then molting. For most species, their molt has never been documented carefully and so I decided to collect molt data on a few of my common species. Shortly after I started doing this, numerous questions started to arise. For example, why did some juvenile White-eyed Vireos (one of my most commonly captured species) replace a greater number of primaries and secondaries than others? Why did some adults start to molt in June, whereas others did not start until a month later? Did birds stick around for a while after completing their molt or did they initiate migration right away?

Another thing that interested me about banding in the summer was that it was relatively easy to separate the hatching-year birds from the adults because the young ones were still in their distinctive juvenile plumage. Because most of the birds I catch during the summer breed locally, there is a very good chance that I will recapture some of

them the next year when they are a year older. These recaptures present golden opportunities for learning to separate second-year and after-second-year adults. For example, if I banded a juvenile last summer and then recapture it the following spring or summer, I have a known second year in my hand. Similarly, if the same sequence occurs with a bird that I originally banded as an adult, then upon its recapture, I know I have an after second year in my hand. Examination of such known-age birds is a great way to learn to age adults. Better yet, you can photograph them for later close comparison to other known-age individuals. This is a great way to determine the usefulness of known-age characters or discover new ones.

Another aspect of summer banding that got me thinking was finding out where the birds were at that time of year. When I started mist-netting along streams, I noticed that I caught a lot of juveniles of some species. For example, on 7 Jul 2009, I netted in an upland site and caught 15 adult and five juvenile White-eyed Vireos. Two weeks later, I netted in a bottomland site and caught five adults and 32 juveniles. This has remained the typical pattern for this and other species: predominately adults in upland sites and predominantly juveniles near water. It seemed likely that there would be greater insect and fruit abundance in the bottomland areas. After all, this is typically the only habitat that still has green herbaceous plants in the summer. So, this could be a good place for young, inexperienced birds to survive. But, even if that is responsible for the disparity in abundance of the age groups between the two habitats, that would still leave a lot of unanswered questions. For example, if the bottomlands are such great places for these birds to find food, then why do the adults not go there, too? Put another way, why would it be advantageous for adults to remain in the habitat where they nested and perhaps even remain on their territory after nesting is done?

For most of my banding career, I rarely banded in the summer; it was my “time off” season. However, since I got started, summertime banding has raised a lot of interesting questions for me concerning the birds in my area. In fact, I would now say that summer is my main banding season.

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