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Abstracts from Western Bird Banding Association's 2013 Annual Meeting

North American Bird Bander

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Summary of Board of Directors Meeting 12-13 Sep 2013

In attendance were board members Howard Browers, Danielle Kaschube (by phone), Patricia Leitner, Wade Leitner, Kay Loughman (by phone), C.J. Ralph, and Josée Rousseau. Pablo (Chespi) Elizondo and Chrissy Kondrat-Smith attended as guests.

Treasurer's Report: Annual meeting

Revenue: \$5106.50 (1374.00 auction and 3732.50 registration fees).

Expenses: \$2550.32 including \$600 for NABC.

Resulting in a net profit of \$2556.18

Membership Report

97 Active Members, 9 Student, 51 Life, 12 Non-subscribing, 11 Sustaining, 18 Institutional, 198 Total.

Grants Program Report

Five applicants submitted proposals for one \$1000 award. The committee, composed of Stephen Russell, Geoff Geupel and Wade Leitner, selected Allison Nelson as 2013 recipient for her proposal "Mapping the spread of infectious disease in a migratory songbird, *Catharus guttatus*."

Webmaster Report

Our website is receiving an average of 224 hits per month. Getting back volumes of NABB into SORA continues to be a challenge. SORA 2.0, launched in January 2013, includes NABB v. 26-30; but as with v. 1-25, access to content is inadequate. SORA staff has promised to work on it - as time permits. Meanwhile, reluctance or disinterest on the part of contributing groups in putting more volumes of NABB into SORA means there are now eight years of the journal for which there is no knowledge or access except by a dwindling list of subscribers to the printed journal.

Nominating Committee

Candidates for the vacancies for secretary and first vice president positions were discussed. All other members agreed to remain in current positions and were unanimously endorsed for election at the Membership Meeting. Chrissy Kondrat-Smith was nominated for Secretary.

Oct - Dec 2013

Old Business

Future meeting sites: Humboldt Bay Bird Observatory (HBBO) in Arcata, California extended an invitation for October 2014 to coincide with HBBO end-of-season activities.

General Business Meeting

President Howard Browers called the general business meeting to order on 13 Sep at 4:00 PM. The 2014 meeting site at HBBO in Arcata, CA, and the grant recipient was announced. Nominees were presented for the slate of officers with the First Vice President position open. All board members were re-elected with Chrissy Kondrat-Smith elected as Secretary.

By Wade and Pat Leitner

ABSTRACTS

(listed alphabetically by last name of lead author)

Hidden in the plumage: feather mite assemblages among passerines and near-passerines from Georgia – Carleton, Renee, Berry College, Mount Berry, Georgia

Feather mites are common inhabitants of birds but are frequently overlooked because of their small size and preferred locations on their hosts. Although relatively little is known of their life cycles and ecology, they are thought to be non-parasitic and may in fact be beneficial by feeding on feather bacteria and other feather-degrading materials. In order to document feather mite assemblages among passerine and near-passerine birds in northwest Georgia, birds were captured during banding operations at four sites or by salvage and examined for the presence of mites and the locations of mites on rectrices and remiges. Mites were collected for identification using a clear, sticky mailing label to lift them from the feathers. Four hundred and sixteen passerine and near-passerine birds encompassing 20 families and 54 species were examined over a three year period. Distribution of mites among the families and species of birds examined, as well as by season, study site, habitat, nesting ecology, age, and sex of birds will be discussed. Future directions for this study include inclusion of additional species and expansion of collections to other states or regions in

order to better understand the association and importance of these interesting ectosymbionts with their hosts.

Hummingbirds: Bridging the gap between science and education – Cartmell, Zach and Ann Adams, National Park Service, Capulin Volcano National Monument, New Mexico

Studying indicator species to detect changing climate trends can cross traditional boundaries between scientific research and public education. Using tactile and experiential learning combined with pollinator studies and hummingbird research sparks active keen interest and public awareness of climate change, contributing to development of educational opportunities, increasing service learning, and promoting scientific literacy. Our approach enables citizen scientists to play key roles in conducting research and collecting hummingbird data at Capulin Volcano National Monument, a unit of the National Park Service (NPS). The goal of this project is to strengthen the NPS as an education institution that develops citizen stewardship and fosters opportunities to collaborate with partners and educational institutions to expand NPS education programs and the use of parks as places of learning.

Using mist nets and radio telemetry to study bird behavior: lessons from the Amazon and Colorado Rivers – Darrah, Abigail J. and Charles van Riper, School of Natural Resources and the Environment and USGS, University of Arizona, Tucson,

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Mist netting birds is essential for capturing birds for radio telemetry studies. Radio telemetry is now a widely used technique for studying movement patterns in birds, is particularly useful for secretive and/or active species, and can greatly facilitate the collection of behavioral data from such species. In this presentation we will describe several projects to exemplify the range of studies for which radio telemetry is useful and to discuss the utility of different capture and transmitter attachment methods. During the winters of 2011 and 2012, AJD used radio telemetry to follow Wedge-billed Woodcreepers (*Glyphorynchus spirurus*) in order to measure the amount of time each individual

spent with mixed-species flocks. Woodcreepers were captured passively using mist-nets, and had a 0.45g Holohil BD-2N transmitter attached using a thigh harness of cotton or elastic thread. Although some harnesses broke before the end of the transmitter battery life, most remained intact and appeared not to hinder the birds' movements. During the summer of 2013, we used cattle auction-cement to attach 0.42g LB-2N transmitters with trimmed antennas to four Cordilleran Flycatcher (*Empidonax occidentalis*) nestlings in order to follow the brood after fledgling, primarily to collect post-fledgling parental feeding rates. We found the LB-2N model to be superior in retaining battery life during storage (all BD-2Ns had failed over several months of storage) and in range of signal detection. Furthermore, the cattle auction-cement reduced the handling time compared to using a thigh harness and is, therefore, a desirable attachment method particularly for nestlings and studies that do not require the transmitter to be retained long-term.

Wind energy and American Golden-Plovers: implications for a species of special concern in west-central Indiana – Dunning, John B., Wes Homoya and Jon Moore. Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, Purdue University.

Wind energy development in Benton and White counties, IN, may impact the spring migration of the American Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*), a species of regional conservation interest. This highly migratory species spends up to four weeks in Midwestern agricultural fields during the spring. The State of Indiana has classified the American Golden-Plover as a 'Species of Special Concern' because of its dependence on suitable stopover habitat which is large agricultural fields. In recent years, the area with the highest golden-plover concentrations has been the location of extensive wind-energy development. In spring 2011 and 2012, we conducted field research to determine if golden-plovers avoid areas with wind turbines. We recorded flock locations within Benton County relative to wind turbines to determine if plovers avoided fields close to turbines. Concurrently, we conducted stable-isotope analysis to understand the importance of Indiana farmlands in the annual cycle of the species. In spring 2010 we caught 97 plovers and collected feathers from various feather tracts of each bird. We are now analyzing isotope makeup of

these feathers, which should identify the general geographic area in which the feathers were grown. Preliminary results are that golden-plovers did not strongly avoid wind turbines at the smallest scale examined (< 200 m). At larger scales, flocks were observed at further distances from turbines than expected in one year but not the second year. Analysis of hydrogen isotopes suggests that about 27% of the birds sampled molted their alternate plumage breast feathers in the Indiana-Illinois area, while most other birds had feathers molted further south. These results, however, are subject to correction as analysis progresses.

Costa Rica Bird Observatories expands monitoring in 2012 – Elizondo, Pablo. Costa Rica Bird Observatories, INBioparque, Santo Domingo de Heredia, Costa Rica.

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The Costa Rica Bird Observatories (CRBO) is a nationwide conservation initiative that promotes bird conservation and education in Costa Rica through scientific monitoring of bird populations. Since 1994 CRBO has developed bird banding and census activities in the coastal village of Tortuguero in the northwest of the country, and since 2008 has included stations in the Central Valley and the highlands of the Cerro de la Muerte. In 2012 over 4,000 birds were banded at different stations, and over 60,000 have been banded since 1994. Here we present a summary of captures per station and composition of migrants vs residents as well as progress on the implementation of protocols that increase the number of birds captured in mist-nets. CRBO has also developed an important outreach and education program that compliments the science and monitoring efforts.

Aging birds by eye color – Garrod, Holly. Humboldt Bay Bird Observatory, Arcata, California

Bird banding is a technique that has been used by many ornithologists to monitor bird populations over many years as it provides useful demographic information to help figure out survival rates and lifestyle differences between adults and juveniles. This demographic information stems from being able to age the bird in the hand. While there are

currently many reliable techniques, eye color is a very reliable criterion that is not often considered. I am using mist netting to capture and band birds then look at their eye color using the Munsell soil chart and taking photographs which are being analyzed with Adobe Photoshop. The results will be checked for correlation with known ages of the birds using modern techniques (molt limit, skulling, etc.) using a t-test.

Comparison of southwestern Willow Flycatcher densities: MAPS banding and FWS protocol surveys – Laush¹, Diane and Wade Leitner².

¹U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, ²Sky Islands Bird Observatory, Sierra Vista, Arizona

Surveys of territorial Southwestern Willow Flycatchers (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) (SWFL) have produced 21 years of data tracking fluctuations and habitat use at Cook's Lake, AZ. In 2008, a MAPS station was established at Cook's Lake to monitor a wider range of species using the area and to obtain more detailed information about the structure of the SWFL population. Overall, trends observed from surveys and mist-netting track one-another. As expected, numbers of birds surveyed and number of territories track each other very well. Surveys are ~ twice as effective as mist-netting in tracking territorial birds. Regressions comparing the two methods indicate that mist-netting may detect non-territorial birds. Finally, a substantial portion of captured birds were second-year individuals.

Vagrant birds are SY birds (mostly) – Leitner, Wade. Sky Islands Bird Observatory, Sierra Vista, Arizona

The use of molt-limit criteria frequently allows the discrimination of second-year from after-second-year birds. We divided data from banded birds into resident migratory breeding birds (resident migrants), migrants that pass through to distant breeding grounds (passage migrants) and birds well outside of their normal migration routes (vagrants) and compared age ratios. Comparing birds trapped since 2003, vagrants are nearly 10 times more likely to be second-year birds than are passage or resident migrants. Further, the majority of vagrants are trapped during their first spring/summer implying over-winter survival and error in route choice for the return trip.

Important bird areas in Arizona – Macfarland, Jennie. Tucson Audubon Society, Arizona

The Arizona Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program is an exciting, active, field-oriented, community-engaged, science-based and conservation-focused program to benefit Arizona's bird populations of greatest conservation concern, and other native biodiversity, and their most critical habitats and sites. There is a strong citizen-science component to the Arizona IBA Program with much of the data used to create new IBAs and monitor existing IBAs coming from surveys conducted by trained volunteer surveyors. The program does utilize other sources of data such as eBird, Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Survey data as well as data collected by agencies such as Arizona Game and Fish, the Forest Service, and the National Park Service.

Banding hundreds of birds a day at bird observatories in Europe – Ralph, C. John.

U.S. Forest Service, Redwood Sciences Laboratory and Humboldt Bay Bird Observatory, Arcata, California.

This past fall I visited seven bird observatories in Denmark, England, Switzerland, and Germany. We observed a wide variety of operations from very highly organized with 15 banders, down to one bander with bands in his shirt pockets. While mist nets are common, the use of Helgoland traps was widespread and effective. The use of double or triple nets is common, as are audio lures that enable the capture of hundreds of migrants on favorable nights. These methods of capture often result in captures of several hundred birds on any given day in the fall. At busy stations there is extreme specialization with designated people extracting birds, while others process with division of labor as to types of data taken, so that one person applies a band, another perhaps records some variables and a final person does wing and weight. Also, most busy observatories have separate processing stations for the commonest species on a day, where one person familiar with the molt limits and other ageing and sexing characteristics can concentrate on that species. So, a relatively inexperienced person can quickly learn the salient characters of a species.

In search of a better fit – Rogers, Lee A. and Susan M. Wethington. Hummingbird Monitoring Network, Patagonia, Arizona

Hummingbird band size selection has been based upon species and sex as recommended by the NABC manual for banding hummingbirds. However, questions about appropriate band sizes arose when leg injuries caused by bands in female Anna's were observed in some northern California populations but not in southern California or Arizona populations. Could it be that different populations of hummingbird species require different band sizes? To address this need to evaluate the "correct" band size for hummingbirds, the Hummingbird Tarsus Gauge was developed to measure the long axis of the oval tarsus exactly. It has slot increments equivalent to 0.2 mm band length changes. Measurements made with the gauge indicate that tarsus sizes varied across two to four band size increments and that female tarsus sizes varied more than male. The variation in female tarsus varied greatest during the breeding season. Optimizing band size choice based upon individual measurements with the Hummingbird Tarsus Gauge provides consistent space between band and leg, reducing the possibility of leg injury or band loss. As a result, we recommend different band sizes for hummingbird species covered in the NABC. In this paper, we present results of these tarsus measurements that have led to these new band size recommendations.

Identification of common Arizona trees – Rose, Frank. Tucson, Arizona.

Identification of tree species is key to describing and identifying habitats used by birds. Most Arizona trees may be identified readily using a small set of clues. This talk provides a brief introduction to common Arizona tree species and shows how to identify them easily.

Five years of the Landbird Monitoring Network of the Americas: LaMNA passes three million records – Ralph, C. John, Josée Rousseau, and Linda Long. U.S. Forest Service, Redwood Sciences Laboratory and Klamath Bird Observatory, Arcata, California.

LaMNA has steadily increased the number of records archived from various sources in the

Americas over the five years, since its inception. More than three million banding records have been taken in and archived overall; and including census observations, brings that total to just about twice that number. Banding stations in Arizona have contributed to the total and are typical of other states. Of the 25 Arizona stations we have documented, about three have submitted their data for permanent repository. We are actively seeking

sources of banding data and encourage members of the WBBA to sleuth out hidden or incomplete records. This is important since, of the other data repositories, only IBP archives and processes the full data set including such fields as measurements and effort (e.g., trap or net hours). Neither the US Bird Banding Lab, the Canadian Bird Banding Office, nor the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network has done so.

WBBA TO MEET IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA ON HUMBOLDT BAY



The Western Bird Banding Association will meet at the peak of landbird migration for its 2014 annual meeting at the Humboldt Bay Bird Observatory, **18 to 21 Sep 2014**. HBBO is affiliated closely with the Klamath Bird Observatory and is situated beside an estuary within a National Wildlife Refuge. Near Arcata, home of Humboldt State University, it is in the mild, coastal climate of northwestern California. Nearby rivers, wetlands, and old-growth redwoods offer plenty of possibilities for birding trips and recreation. The meeting is not to be missed, and will have exciting demonstrations and workshops on a diverse array of bird research, banding, data management, and analysis of banding data. Located at a long-running banding site that has operated nets and traps for more than 30 years, two stations a half km apart will be operating in a riparian corridor amongst a coastal dune forest and pastures. The station will offer camping with outdoor cooking facilities with several motels only 15 minutes away. Paper and poster presentations can reflect original research, summarize existing information, or address the use of banding as a tool in avian research and monitoring. NABC certifications for banders and trainers are also planned. Please submit abstracts for papers or workshops electronically **by 15 Aug** to C. J. Ralph (cjr2@humboldt.edu), specifying workshop, paper, or poster. For additional information on abstract submission and about WBBA's 2014 meeting, please visit the WBBA website:

(URL: <http://www.westernbirdbanding.org/next-meetings.html>), or contact C.J. at 707 499-9707.