North American Bird Bander

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Whither for North American Bird Bander

C. John Ralph

Suspension limits for birds that undergo incomplete eccentric preformative molts are uncommon but have been documented in some tyrant flycatchers (Pyle 1997a) and possibly in the Lesser Goldfinch, *Pinus psaltria* (Howell 2010). To our knowledge, this is the first documented case of HY Indigo Buntings suspending wing feather replacement during migration.

A plausible driver for the small percent of the population molting prior to reaching the wintering grounds is variation in hatch date. We hypothesize that these few birds with unusual molts are the earliest nestlings to fledge. Birds that fledge early have more time to initiate and complete the preformative molt prior to migration than individuals hatched later.

Banders should be alert for other passerines that undergo eccentric preformative molts where birds may replace flight feathers away from traditional sites reported in the literature and for birds that may replace additional feathers during this molt.

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Daniel M. Small [1, 3]
Maren E. Gimpel [2]
James G. Gruber [2]

[1] Chester River Field Research Station, Washington College,101 South Water Street Chestertown, MD 21620

[2] Foreman's BranchBird Observatory, Washington College, 101South Water Street, Chestertown, MD 21620

[3]Corresponding author: dsmall2@washcoll.edu

Whither for *North American Bird Bander?*

Introduction

As a bander for more than 60 (gasp!) years, I have always been an avid reader of the *North American Bird Bander (NABB)* and its predecessors, although I have never been involved editorially. Now, after decades of patronage, perhaps it is an appropriate time to examine the objectives and future direction of *NABB*.

As I see it, *NABB*'s objectives have always been to provide a quality journal focused on keeping banders informed of developments in their field and news of the three associations, while stimulating a healthy membership base for each banding associations. As a note, all three associations, over the last decade or two, have had a slight but perceptible and steadily declining membership – a trend that I hope can be reversed by increasing the capacity of each association to provide meaningful products and representation to their respective communities.

Background

Prior to *NABB*, we had newsletters from the three Associations. Over time, the need for a common source of news, updates, and pertinent research led

to the creation of *NABB*. After 39 volumes to date and counting, when I look from side-to-side at fellow ornithological publications, I notice the dramatic change in the publishing landscape. The merging of AOU and the COS organizations, and the division between the two of the quality manuscripts, has related to a marked change resulting in increasing "impact factors"*. At the same time, the impact factor of *Wilson Bulletin* and *Journal of Field Ornithology* has doubled in the past 10 years. I strongly feel that there is a vacancy for an ornithological journal which supports good natural history notes and quality entry-level science from undergraduates and graduate students, and many others. I suspect that *NABB* can easily fill this niche! However, to get this going, to be an actual ornithological journal in the full sense of the words, it must be made available to other scientists – that is just how modern science works. The more it is quoted and the more articles that are read by peers, especially those from students building their careers, I feel the greater the likelihood would be that membership and readership will increase.

The state of *NABB* today, and what do we want to see in its future? As you can see from looking at a few issues, we have articles about bird research, banding, station reports, book reviews, current literature, and information about sources of banding and other equipment. All very good. The editors have made it an excellent "go to" journal for banding-related science and methods. Unfortunately, *NABB* is not available to the vast majority of researchers because current issues of *NABB* are not recognized by scientific citation indexing services, such as BioOne or Web of Science. Thus, if you are a young (or even older) ornithologist who wants to get their research in the hands of other researchers, land managers or agency personnel, *NABB* is just not a competitive choice.

Now, the big question is, can we increase its attractiveness to potential authors, and thus increase its impact factor, while being able to maintain and increase membership amongst the associations? I am convinced that it is possible, and I think we should try some steps over a trial period, say two years.

Make *NABB* available online or through a scientific citation indexing service. Central to accomplishing this is its availability on- line. Several models of this exist, including delays of putting it online so that people wanting to see it in a timely manner are forced to subscribe. That is the current model, and membership still declines slowly and surely. Other models, such as BioOne or Web of Science, represent the current paradigm for virtually all other ornithological journals. Take BioOne and, for example, universities and government agencies pay a membership to BioOne and receive access to participating journals, thereby providing a huge audience of interested peers for *NABB* authors. Importantly, unless you are a researcher at a university or government agency, or purchase an article through BioOne (which are expensive), you have to remain a member of an association to continue to receive your hard copy issue of a journal like *NABB*. As *NABB* makes its way to more and more readers through a scientific citation indexing service like BioOne, *NABB*'s impact factor will increase, journal submissions will likewise increase, and more and more researchers will become encouraged and compelled to join an association and participate in meetings.
I suggest we try an experiment over the next year.

* Make several articles per issue available online until we become affiliated with a scientific citation indexing service, like BioOne.
* Publicize articles regionally in list serves.
* Possibly bring in other organizations such as Ontario Bird Banding Association, networks and programs such as NABC, MAPS, LaMNA.

We look forward to your thoughts on this.

C. John Ralph
Arcata, California (c.ralph@humboldt.edu)
and Klamath Bird Observatory, Ashland, Oregon

* For those not used to "impact factors", it is a rough measure of importance of the journal. In any given year, the impact factor of a journal is the average number of citations received per paper published in that journal during the two preceding years. So a factor of x that the *Condor* and *Auk* enjoy means that, per year, an average article gets cited x times. *JFO* is about "y", and *Wilson Bulletin* is about "z". *NABB* is not yet indexed but it probably has an impact factor of 0.2.