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## Species Snapshot: Painted Buntings (*Passerina ciris*)

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## Species Snapshot: Painted Buntings

### (*Passerina ciris*)

In this issue of *North American Bird Bander*, I begin a new (and hopefully regular) feature presenting a brief synopsis of the banding and encounter records submitted to the Bird Banding Laboratory for a particular species. Each installment will feature a new species; suggestions for species to be covered or data to be presented are welcome. Space limitations prohibit any in-depth analysis of the data and these notes are not meant to show any trends in population parameters such as population density or growth rate, geographic distribution, etc. and should not be viewed as a definitive analysis of the status of the species.

Although the banding program began in the 1920s, the currently available digital records for banding data include only those records from 1960 to the present (pre-1960 banding data are available in other formats). However, all encounters, including those of birds banded before 1960, are available in digital format. Therefore, the following section on banded birds includes only data from those birds banded during 1960 or later. The section on encounters includes all encounters regardless of whether the bird was banded before or after 1960. In addition, the Bird Banding Laboratory is continually updating and adding more banding and encounter records; therefore, the following summary includes only those records that were available as of 7 Oct 2016.

**Banded birds - Numbers and Age and Sex Categories.** – Since 1960, 51,803 Painted Buntings have been banded in North and Central America (Table 1). Of the 33,719 individuals for which sex was identified, 54% ( $n = 18,363$ ) were males and 46% were females ( $n = 15,356$ ) females. More females than males were aged as HY and AHY; more males than females were aged as SY, ASY, or L. Almost 75% ( $n = 13,336$ ) of the 18,084 for which sex was recorded as unknown were aged as HY or L. Just 3% ( $n = 1,757$ ) of all banded buntings were reported as age and sex unknown.

**Geographic distribution.** – Since 1960, Painted Buntings have been banded in 27 of the United States ( $n = 41,336$ ), 10 Central American or Caribbean countries ( $n = 3,463$ ), and one Canadian prov-

ince ( $n = 4$ ) (Fig. 1). More than half ( $n = 23,067$ ) of the Painted Buntings banded in the United States and Canada were banded in Texas; 90% of all United States and Canadian buntings were banded in just five states: Texas, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina. More than half ( $n = 1,923$ ) of the buntings banded in Central American and Caribbean countries were banded in Mexico.

**Seasonal distribution.** – Eighty percent ( $n = 33,400$ ) of the Painted Buntings banded in the United States and Canada were banded between May and Aug (approximate breeding season) compared to 6% ( $n = 2,476$ ) banded between Nov and Feb (approximate overwintering season). Conversely, just 4% ( $n = 138$ ) of all buntings banded in Central American and Caribbean countries were banded between May and Aug compared to 48% ( $n = 1,667$ ) banded between Nov and Feb.

**Encounters - Numbers and Age and Sex Categories.** – Since 1922, there have been 370 encounters representing 303 unique banded Painted Buntings recorded through 7 Oct 2016. Of the 303 unique buntings, 27 had “sex mismatch,” “species mismatch,” or “bad age/sex” errors, leaving 276 encounter records with valid sex (recorded at banding or updated at encounter) and valid age at banding data (Table 1). Sixty-seven percent ( $n = 184$ ) of the 276 encountered birds were banded as AHY, SY, or ASY compared to 17% ( $n = 48$ ) banded as HY and 16% ( $n = 44$ ) banded as U. Fifty percent ( $n = 139$ ) were recorded as males compared to 27% ( $n = 74$ ) as females and 23% ( $n = 63$ ) as sex unknown. Three Painted Buntings were at least 10 years old when encountered: a HY-M banded in Texas in July 1999 and encountered in Jun 2010 (11 years 0 months), a HY-M banded in Texas in Jul 2000 and encountered in Apr 2011 (10 years 10 months), and a SY-F banded in Florida in Jan 1966 and encountered in Dec 1975 (10 years 6 months). All three were encountered at the same location at which they were banded. Thirteen of the 15 oldest buntings encountered were males (minimum age at encounter greater than 6 years 0 months).

Fig. 1

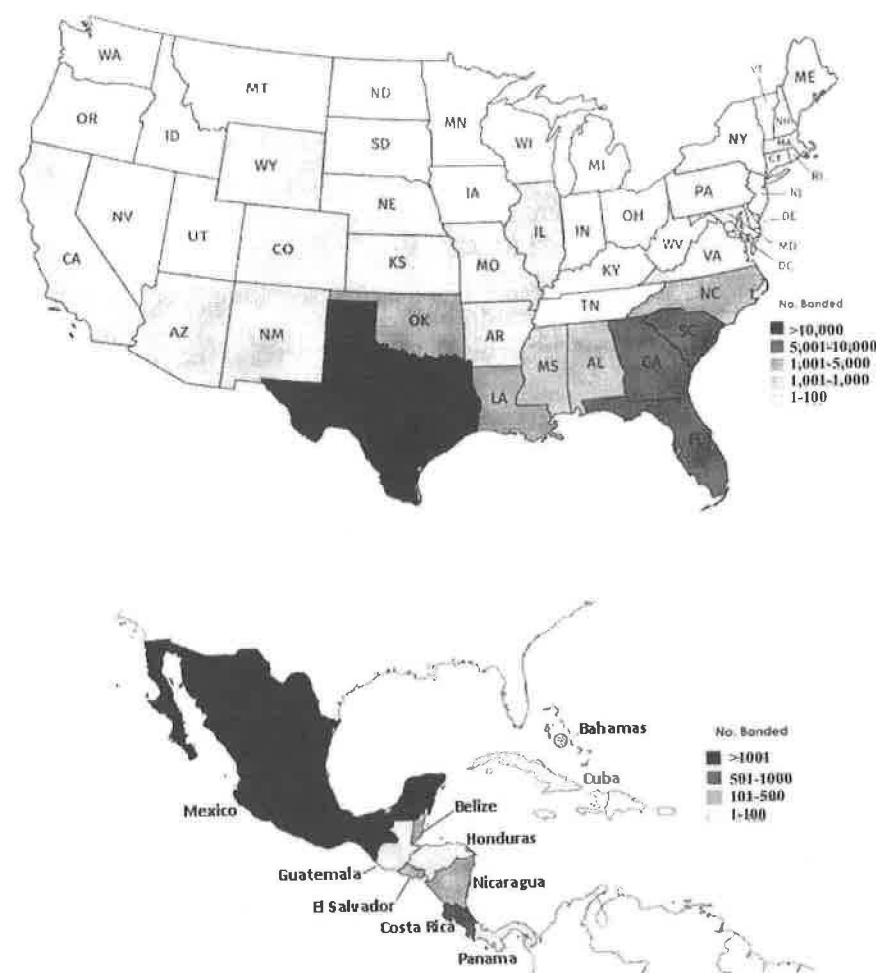


Table 1

Age code	Banded birds				Encountered birds			
	Male	Female	Unknown	Total	Male	Female	Unknown	Total
AHY	3,331	6,647	1,823	11,801	41	32	22	95
HY	912	1,592	13,127	15,631	15	10	23	48
L	2	1	209	212	0	0	0	0
SY	6,431	2,849	1,480	10,760	31	11	5	47
ASY	7,577	4,032	79	11,688	32	10	0	42
Unknown	157	249	1,383	1,789	20	11	13	44
Total	18,410	15,370	18,101	51,881	139	74	63	276

Table 2

Banding location	Number banded	Encounter location										Total
		AL	FL	GA	LA	NC	OK	SC	TX	CU	MX	
Alabama	904	1			2							3
Florida	5,886		74	2		1		4		3		84
Georgia	5,774		6	25				1		3		35
Louisiana	2,064				28							28
North Carolina	2,431		5	1		37		2				45
Oklahoma	1,291						30					30
South Carolina	6,346		3	1		1		29		2		36
Texas	23,067								8			8
Cuba	85			1								1
Mexico	1,938				1						5	6
Total	48,867	1	88	30	31	39	30	36	8	8	5	276

**Geographic distribution** - (birds banded in Central America and the Caribbean). – Seven of the 276 encounters with valid sex and age data were of Painted Buntings banded in Mexico (n = 6) or Cuba (n = 1) (Table 2). One of the six Mexican buntings was banded as a SYF in March 2011 and encountered in Louisiana in May 2011, a distance of 817 miles; the other five were encountered in Mexico (three within two miles of their banding location, and one each at 71 and 434 miles from their banding locations). One bunting banded in Cuba as an AHYM in Dec 1995 was encountered in Georgia in May 1997, a distance of 680 miles.

**Geographic distribution** - (birds banded in the United States). – Most (n = 269) of the 276 encounters with valid sex and age data were of Painted Buntings banded in the United States (Table 2). Of these, 51% were males (AHY, SY, and ASY: n = 103; HY: n = 15; U: n = 19), 26% were females (AHY, SY, and ASY: n = 50; HY: n = 10; U: n = 11) and 23% were unknown sex (AHY, SY, and ASY: n = 27; HY: n = 23; U: n = 13). Most (n = 230, 83%) of the encounters of banded Painted Buntings banded in the United States were within 30 miles of their banding location. Of the 46 buntings encountered more than 30 miles from their banding locations, half (n = 23) were aged as HY when banded compared to 41% (n = 19) aged as AHY, SY, or ASY and 9% (n = 4) aged as U. Thirty-two percent (n = 15) of the 46 were banded as males, 30% (n = 14) as females, and 37% (n = 17) as unknown sex. The greatest distance between banding and encounter locations for Painted Buntings was that of a HY-U banded in South Carolina in Aug 2000 and encountered in Cuba in Feb 2001, a distance of 835 miles. The greatest distance between banding and encounter locations for a female was 818 miles for an SY-F banded in Mexico in Mar 2011 and encountered in Louisiana in Sep 2011. For a male, the greatest distance was 709 miles for a HY-M banded in Florida in Jul 2003 and encountered in Cuba in Mar 2004. More Painted Buntings banded in Florida (n = 84) were encountered than were buntings banded in any other state; buntings banded in Florida were encountered in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Cuba (Table 2). More birds were encountered in Florida (n = 88) than were encountered in any other state; these

birds encountered in Florida had been banded in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina (Table 2). Buntings banded in Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas were encountered only in the states in which they were banded. Birds banded in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina were encountered in Cuba (n = 3, 3, and 2, respectively).

**Interesting encounters** – Several banded Painted Buntings have been encountered multiple times over several years. Two buntings banded at a single location near Palm Beach, FL (one AHY-M and one AHY-U) on 19 Jan 1956 were recaptured at the same location in each of the four following winters (Jan or Mar, 1957-1960). A HY-M banded in Sep 2012 in South Carolina was later identified by color-band at a feeder 325 miles away in North Carolina in Jan 2013 and then again at the same feeder in Oct 2013, 2014, and 2015. A AHY-F banded in South Carolina in Mar 2014 was recaptured 140 miles away in North Carolina in Mar 2015. This bird was then resighted (band read through a telescope while the bird was still free) at its banding location in Jan 2016. The record for longest duration between banding and encounter is 11 years for two buntings banded as HY-U (both updated to M upon encounter) at a single location near Christoval, TX, and later recaptured at that same location. One was banded in Jul 1999 and recaptured in Jul 2000; the other was banded in Jul 2000 and recaptured in Jul 2011. The record for longest duration between banding and encounter for a bird not encountered at its banding location is almost six years for a AHY-M banded near Homestead, FL, in Sep 1973 and reportedly killed by a cat in May 1976 in South Carolina, 484 miles from its banding location.

#### Acknowledgements

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