

REPORT OF THE 1961 WILSON MEETING  
By Albert Schnitzer

The annual meeting of the Wilson Ornithological Society was held this year at Lake of Bays, Ontario, Canada, June 9 and 10, 1961. The Lake of Bays is located close to Route 60, about half way between Huntsville and the western edge of Algonquin Park. It is one of the lovely and large lakes so often found in Ontario.

For a meeting of ornithologists, central Ontario is ideally suited. It is sufficiently far south to attract as nesters most of the birds one finds in eastern United States, but sufficiently far north to suit many of the species that we see only in migration in the east. In addition to its vast forests, it offers a great variety of habitats, but its most enduring feature is of water. One is rarely out of sight of a plash or a tarn, a pool or a lake. The frequent streams are often dammed by beavers, creating a multiplicity of ponds and swamps. Plant life is lush and flowers are beautiful. Along the quiet trails one sees small game very often; and tracks and scats of foxes, wolves, bears, deer and moose are commonplace.

To get the feel of the country, my wife and I arrived in the area of the meeting early. After a few days at Lake Solitare, deep in the wilderness about 20 miles northeast of Huntsville, we left our car and boarded the train for a night and a day ride to Moosonee on James Bay, the southern arm of Hudson Bay. There are highways as far as Cochrane, but from there travel is only by the single thin line of the train, or by canoe or plane. That train ride and the area about Moosonee make a fascinating story in themselves, but we must return to the Wilson meeting.

Each registrant received a mimeographed booklet outlining each paper to be given at the meeting, and a timetable. It was therefore possible to familiarize oneself in advance with the essentials of each paper and to prepare oneself with background information. This promoted intelligent comment and questions at the conclusion of each paper. Further, it was possible to plan which talks to attend and which could be skipped, depending on one's own special interests.

There is nothing novel about this, but the standard of brevity, combined with clarity of the abstracts, and the quality of the mimeographed booklet, were unusual. Furthermore, one could depend on the timetable. The speakers usually adhered faithfully to their agreed times, and whenever necessary the moderator enforced the schedule rigidly both for the speakers and for the discussants. This permitted calm and unhurried delivery by all the speakers, including those scheduled late in each session, and permitted full comprehension and ample discussion by the audience.

Altogether, in the two days of the sessions, 25 talks were read. Of these the following were concerned with banding:

W. P. Nickell, Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, spoke on "Net Banding; an Effective Method of Determining Distribution of Northern Migrants in their Winter Ranges." He had spent the early spring of 1960 and 1961 banding at 41 stations located mostly in the east central portion of Mexico, including western Yucatan, the most profitable spots being at Belize and Stann Creek.

For descriptive purposes he classified the habitat under seven types. Each type yielded certain varieties of birds. Best results were obtained in moist jungle, as at Chiapas, where nets were set along hedge rows. Cattle ranches, especially where crossed by streams, were also good. The poorest results were obtained in dry, hot limestone areas, as found largely in Yucatan. Open grasslands near sea level were poor on migrants but good on endemic varieties.

The most frequent catch were Catbirds, Magnolia Warblers, American Redstarts, Orchard Orioles, Baltimore Orioles, Indigo Buntings, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. There were 29 returns, mostly of Orchard Orioles and several warblers.

D. D. Berger, H. C. Mueller, and F. Hamerstrom, all of Wisconsin spoke on banding Snowy Owls. They had banded 61 Snowy Owls during the winter of 1960-1961 in Wisconsin.

By advertising for reports, they got their leads concerning the presence of owls. Few of the leads thus obtained turned out to be false since the Snowy Owl is a big and readily identifiable bird. Some 8600 miles were driven in working out these leads. Of their catch, 58 were taken close to where they had been reported, indicating that the Snowy Owl tends to remain in a given area for some time before moving on.

Their most usual trap was a Bal-Chatrri consisting of a chicken wire cage baited with a pigeon and covered with 30-40 pound test nylon string. Banded birds were marked with acrylic dyes, using two colors placed on various portions of the wings, but the dye did not last satisfactorily.

The sex of the owls was determined on the basis of weight and plumage, and it appeared that there was an approximately even distribution between males and females. They had no means for determining age, however, although they felt they had some success by examination of the fault bars in the feathers.

James Woodford of the Royal Ontario Museum spoke on Operation Recovery in the Great Lakes region. He gave a resume of what had been accomplished in extending this project from the east coast through the Great Lakes region.

James Baird of the Massachusetts Audubon Society spoke on "Summer Weights of Evening Grosbeaks." Of a total of 160 Evening Grosbeaks mist

netted in New Brunswick in June 1957, 85 had been weighed and these weights compared with a published series of winter weights obtained in Massachusetts. Baird believes the variations in the series of weights may be attributable to these finches' erratic migrations.

Bert Murray of Douglass College, Rutgers, spoke on a topic which is not directly related to banding but which banders may find particularly interesting as they work along the coast in the fall. Murray's topic was entitled "Fall Hawk Migration along the Coastal Areas of the Northeastern United States."

He believes there are certain inconsistencies between the Allen-Peterson theory of wind drift and (1) the simultaneous appearance of hawks at both New Haven and Kiptopeke following winds not from the northwest. Murray pointed out that ground observations are often not trustworthy. In this connection he mentioned radar observations and the diversionary line phenomenon. Since Peterson happened to be moderator of this session, the lively discussion that followed was given additional flavor.

Among the members of EBBA who attended the meeting were: Aaron Bagg, James Baird, T. A. Bergstrom, Dorothy Bordner and her parents, Eleanor Dater, Elise and Stanley Dickerson, Joe Jehl, Charles Lincoln, Bert Murray, Dr. Nickell, John and Mary Schmid, Evan and Albert Schnitzer, Dr. J.M. Speirs, Dr. J. Swinebroad, Dr. and Mrs. Merrill Wood.

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	Active Member	Sustaining Mbr.
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9 " "	2.50	2.00
12 " "	2.85	2.35
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12 " "	3.50	3.00

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