

MICHIGAN BIRD BANDERS ASSOCIATION BAND-OUT

By Edwin C. Wieland

This past May 24th the Michigan Bird Banding Association again held a banding get-together, or band-out. The period covered was from Friday the 24th at 4:30 to Sunday the 26th until noon. This was the second band-out for Michigan and was a very successful one.

The band-out was held in the same location as last year's -- in St. Clair County at the Port Huron State Game area, which is about 15 miles west of Port Huron where the Black River crosses M113. This is a well diversified area with perhaps every type of cover except dense conifer forest. The habitat included open fields, brushy area, woodland edge, deciduous woods, and some swampy area.

The band-out was well attended with ten active banders having about 65 nets in operation. Several prospective netters were in attendance gathering tips and seeing how nets were handled. Also a steady and very welcome stream of visitors came to the area over the weekend. Many of these were photographers getting an excellent chance at close-ups of the birds, as all or at least the unusual birds were brought by gathering cage to the central camping area. Many people not only got to see new or unusual species such as the Golden-winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, yellow-breasted Chat, and Saw-whet Owl, but got to see them in the hand!

Just about every type of netting method was represented -- no two netters handling their nets the same. Some stretched their nets quite tautly while others preferred the more loosely, baggy, setting. Some cleared wide netting lanes while others plowed through the brush. Generally thin wall electrical conduit was used for poles with the exception of the Erickson-Wolcott team who had some half inch aluminum poles. At first glance these seemed quite flimsy, but after seeing them set up with the net stretched tautly between them one quickly changes one's mind. This may be worth looking into for those who do not have the brawn to pack much weight as a group of these aluminum poles are much lighter than the steel conduit.

Different methods of erecting the poles were also in evidence. Some of these were: some had metal points on the end which were either pushed in the ground or driven in with a post driver; some used short pieces of rod which had an offset which was stamped into the ground and the poles then placed on the rods; many used nothing at all on the pole ends.

Three methods of connecting the pole halves together were used.

1) Regular conduit connectors. 2) Short pieces of rod fastened in one end of the pole which slipped into the other pole half. 3) a spool affair

which was a piece of three-eighths pipe with a washer welded in the middle to separate the halves -- the washer also served to hold the loops when the net was strung out.

A band-out like this gives an excellent chance to see how other banders handle their gear and their banding technique. It was interesting to see the casual way in which Dr. Novy pushes his net through the brush and then clips any twigs that may be caught in the net. (He believes in keeping the netting lane as natural as possible.) And it was interesting to note the neat, compact way in which the Erickson-Wolcott team bundle up their gear (even a quiver to carry their pole driver.) Interesting, too, was the authoritative, precise way in which the Kelleys can measure up a flycatcher and tell which Empidonax it is.

But aside from the mechanical advantages to the bander, the band-out affords the pleasant opportunity to meet many nice people -- not only other banders but members of local Audubon groups as well -- even at least one person from across the border in nearby Canada.

I highly recommend that other banding organizations try a band-out if they do not do so now. The time spent at any distance traveling to one of these band-outs will be well worth your while.

For the weekend there were 226 birds banded of 43 species. In addition there were 25 returns, 4 from 1961 and 21 from 1962, and one possible foreign recovery.

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Sanderlings. Drawing by Jean Stull.