
News, Notes, Comments

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Significant Recoveries of Banded Birds

According to the Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL) website, an average of 1.2 million birds have been banded annually over the last decade, with 87,000 recoveries annually consisting mostly of waterfowl. The recovery rate of passerines is <1.5%. Data on avian survival/mortality rates, longevity, site and mate fidelity, and movement directions and rates determined from banding data accumulate incrementally, one recovery at a time. I believe banders have an ethical obligation to report the findings from their banding operations. Here I present a collection of my most important or unusual band recoveries, many of which are not in the BBL database due to past policies, or have context that is not adequately captured in the BBL database. All of the recoveries below are birds I recovered or banded, or birds banded by my subpermittees. All wing and tail measurements are in mm, mass in grams, and times are reported as Standard Times for their respective time zones.

Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*) 837-81729 banded as an adult 18 Apr 1998 at Lake Osakis, MN, by D. Buitron and G. Neuchterlein of North Dakota State University, with three colored tarsal bands. Found dead 10 Jun 2008 floating on Lake Osakis, bloated. Color tarsal bands still present; federal band lost half its thickness and only two digits legible. This represents a new longevity record for this species.

Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*) 1151-94063 banded Guamacho, Venezuela, as an adult 5 Sep 1984 by R. McNeil, University of Montreal, Montreal, QC. Band found in Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) pellet in Teshekpuk Lake Special Area, arctic Alaska, Jul 1987.

Arctic Terns (*Sterna paradisaea*) 962-29509, 962-29527, and 962-295?6 observed with spotting scope at Arctic Tern nesting colony at Lake Hood, Anchorage, Alaska, multiple times 8 Jun - 13 Jul 1994. Tern 962-29509 was banded there as a nestling in 1991 and 962-29527 was banded there as a nestling in 1992. The third tern was banded there in either 1991 or 1992. Age of first breeding is typically 3 to 4 years but can occur as early as 2 years (Hatch et al. 2020), but data are primarily from few studies from Great Britain and New Brunswick. These three marked individuals returned to their natal colony at 2-3 years of age.

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) "hybrid" 737-63064 banded at Skilak Lake, Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, AK, by the USFWS 22 Jul 1983. Found recently-dead in Anchorage, AK (Ship Creek) 6 Jul 1992. Had color tarsal band (C64).

Herring Gull "hybrid" 737-63270 banded at Skilak Lake, Kenai National Wildlife Refuge as an "unidentified gull" by the USFWS 31 Jul 1984. Found nesting in midtown Anchorage, AK, 15 Jun - 24 Jul 1994; raised 2 or 3 chicks. Many, if not most or all, of the large gulls of the Upper Cook Inlet area, including Skilak Lake on the Kenai Peninsula, have been found to be Herring Gull x Glaucous-winged Gull (*L. glaucescens*) hybrids (Williamson and Peyton 1963, Nysewander and Trapp 1985, Trapp and Nysewander 1985), but by local convention are referred to as Herring Gulls (Rosenberg 1986) because Herring Gull traits seem to predominate over Glaucous-winged Gull traits (Williamson and Peyton 1963).

Black-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*) pair 1272-43797 (female) and 1272-43798 (male). Female banded 2 Jun 2015 at nest as an ASY bird (wing 128 mm, tail 98 mm, mass >84 g). Male banded 23 Jun 2015 at nest as SY bird (wing 132 mm, tail 89 mm, mass 64 g). Nest in jack pine < 2m above ground along road at Norris Camp, MN. Both birds recaptured 14 Jun 2016 at new nest in jack pine 115 m north of prior nest tree (a jack pine which blew down between seasons). Female wing 130 mm, tail 88 mm, mass 72.0 g. Male wing 130 mm, tail 93

mm, mass 69.5 g. These are only the 5th and 6th recoveries in the BBL database since 1960, and the first documentation of mate fidelity in this species.

Northern Shrike (*Lanius borealis*) 962-29576 banded as AHY male 26 Nov 1998 near Pillager, Cass Co., MN. Recaptured same location 17 Jan 2000 (lapse 417 days). At first capture: wing 120 mm, tail 113 mm, mass 65.4 g at 1140. At second capture: wing 122 mm, tail 115 mm, mass 66.1 g at 1240. This is a significant recovery because there are only 35 recoveries of banded Northern Shrikes since 1960 in the BBL database (not including this one).

Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*) 1311-85393 banded 26 Aug 2000 as an AHY bird of unknown sex during fall migration. Recaptured same location 6 Sep 2008 as an after-9th-year bird of unknown sex. Besides this being a very old bird, an interesting aspect of this encounter involves the band itself. The band was a 1C, now obsolete, manufactured by a different band supplier during a band shortage; upon recapture it was as lustrous as a new band and without any wear despite being in the elements 8 years.

Purple Martin (*Progne subis*) 2501-34284 banded July 2013 as an ASY female in Willmar, MN, and fitted with a geolocator. Recovered in Vilhena, Rondonia, Brazil, in Jan 2014 by R. Santos and reported through the National Center for Research and Bird Conservation; hit by car on Brazil Hwy 364 near a known roost (in roadside trees). Suspect geolocator affected flight ability, but geolocator not recovered with bird, and many other birds were being hit on the road as well. This recovery is significant because very few Purple Martins have been recovered on their winter grounds. This area near the Bolivia border is undergoing intense deforestation (J. Tautin, PMCA, pers. commun.).

Purple Martin 2501-69418 (color band Z418) banded as a nestling in Crookston, MN, 2015 by C. Henry. Observed 9 times from 27 May - 22 Jul 2016 by C. Henry at natal colony in Crookston as SY male. Recaptured nesting at a colony in Winnipeg, MB, 17 Jul 2019 by C. LaVallee as a 5th-year male. This record is significant because

there are few records of birds dispersing so far after returning to a natal location.

Purple Martin 2501-17387 banded as a nestling in Okabena, MN, near the Iowa border 2011 by D. Doll. Found injured at a colony in Winnipeg, MB, 19 Jul 2019 by M. Boszko as a 9th-year male, about 1100 km north of its natal colony. Coupled with the previous record, this record is interesting because it shows a northward dispersion of birds from western Minnesota north along the Red River valley into Canada. This is also the farthest distance any of our several hundred recovered martins have dispersed between breeding colonies.

Purple Martins 1342-68641 and 1342-68642 (color bands T641, T 642) were siblings banded as nestlings in Garrison, MN, in Jul 2015. T641 was found dead in Fosston, MN, 31 Aug 2015 by D. Brinkman after apparently hitting a radio tower, 203 km almost due northwest of the natal colony. T642 was observed 12 times at a breeding colony in Bemidji, MN, from 1 Jun - 1 Aug 2016 by C. Henry and again at the same colony 16 May 2017. Bemidji is 68 km east of Fosston, which suggests the possibility that 1342-68642 discovered the Bemidji colony during its natal fall dispersal, assuming the family group dispersed together.

Purple Martins 2501-53978 and 2501-53979 (color band T978, T979) may represent another example of where siblings may have found a new colony during fall dispersal, though it is not known if these birds were from the same nest despite their sequential numbers. Both birds were banded at Cedar Lake near Annandale, MN, as nestlings in 2015. T979 (female) was found dead 17 May 2017 by L. Leonard at his colony in Brainerd, MN. T978 (male) was found alive 18 Jul 2019 by L. Leonard at his colony. Brainerd is 120 km north of Cedar Lake.

Purple Martins 2501-02844 through 2501-02848 (color bands B844-B848) were a brood of 5 siblings banded in Willmar, MN, in 2010. All 5 siblings were subsequently found in following years in multiple locations by D. Doll, the colony landlord. B844 (male) was observed at its natal colony 31 May and 5 Jul 2011, at a well-known

Willmar roost site 4 miles [6.4 km] south of its colony twice in Aug 2011, and at its natal colony 4 times from 20 Apr - 11 Jul 2012. B845 (male) returned to its natal colony once 2 Jul 2011, was observed at the Willmar roost 4 or 5 times from 31 Jul - 25 Aug 2011, 3 times at the Willmar roost 29 Jul - 12 Aug 2012, once again at its natal colony 26 Apr 2013, and 7 times at the Willmar roost from 4 - 23 Aug 2013. B846 (female) was observed once at the Willmar roost 14 Aug 2011. B847 (female) was observed 4 times at the Willmar roost 7 - 29 Aug 2013. B848 (male) was observed at its natal colony 5 times from 31 May - 21 Jul 2011, at the Willmar roost 20 and 23 Aug 2011, at its natal colony 4 times from 15 Jun - 22 Jul 2012, at the Willmar roost 5 and 26 Aug 2012, at its natal colony 14 and 23 Jul 2013, at the Willmar roost 14 Aug 2013, and at the Willmar roost 4 and 12 Aug 2014. The male parent of this brood (2231-45224, not color banded) hatched at this colony in 2007 and returned to breed there 2008 - 2012. Based on her plumage and partial color band reading, I know that the female parent hatched at this colony in 2008. Neither parent was ever observed at the Willmar roost.

Black-capped Chickadees (*Poecile atricapillus*) 2390-44724 and 2390-44736 exhibited a long-term pair bond throughout multiple non-breeding seasons. Both birds were initially captured in Nov 1998 near Pillager in Cass Co., MN, as AHY birds; the former as unknown sex, the later as a male. Their complete capture histories are shown in Table 1. These individuals were rarely encountered after Nov 1998, but when encountered they were virtually always together, even 2 years later. Note: absence of a capture does not indicate the second bird was not present. These records are of interest because long-term associations between individual birds outside of the breeding season are rarely documented; notable exceptions have been documented in Barrow's Goldeneyes (*Bucephala islandica*; Savard 1985) and Long-tailed Ducks (*Clangula hyemalis*; Alison 1975).

White-breasted Nuthatches (*Sitta carolinensis*) 2241-09073 (female) and 2241-09079 (male) may also represent a long-term pair

bond in which the individuals were absent from my banding station for a prolonged period. These two were among a cohort of 9 White-breasted Nuthatches banded 2 Oct 2018 within a 20-minute span (or a cohort of 12 banded through 9 Oct 2018) that were recaptured periodically through 30 Nov 2018 and not thereafter, except for these two which were only seen once again, both on 22 Feb 2020 (Table 2). It is extremely rare for any White-breasted Nuthatches to be absent for such a prolonged period as between 30 Nov 2018 and 22 Feb 2020, which reinforces the prospect these two maintained a long-term association.

Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) 1881-44742 was banded 15 Nov 2014 as a HY male near Pillager, MN. Recaptured 3 of 6 subsequent spring migrations at same stopover location; never overwintered. This recovery is significant because few passerine birds are recaptured multiple years during migration. See Table 3 for history of recaptures and conditions, showing wing and tail length, mass, abdominal fat (none, light, moderate, heavy), time of day of capture/weighing, and lapse between captures (days). The layover in 2020 coincided with a late season cold snap that delayed migration and kept other recently-marked junco migrants in place for several days.

Harris' Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*) 8011-92577 banded as an AHY female 22 Aug 2000 at Big Deep Lake, Cass Co., MN. Originally observed 29 - 30 July (first summer record for MN) where it was observed to be undergoing facial and secondary covert molt. When captured in Aug it was undergoing synchronous remige molt, with primaries 7-9 and secondaries 1-3 growing; and primaries 1-6 already replaced. It had a wing of 80 mm, a tail of 76 mm, a mass of 32.0 g at 0820, and heavy body contour feather molt. Also observed 5, 8, and 19 Aug and 3 Sep. This record is significant because data on molt in Harris Sparrows are primarily from captive birds (Norment et al. 2020).

American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*) 2340-64996 banded in Baton Rouge, LA, 20 April 2007 by M. Yates as an AHY female, recaptured near Pillager, MN, 16 June 2007 as an ASY female (wing 70 mm, tail 47 mm, mass 12.6 g), a movement of about 1760 km. The BBL notified

me that this bird was found dead in Baton Rouge only 2 days later, 18 June 2007 and asked for confirmation as these “two reports taken together are quite odd” (BBL email, 24 Oct 2010). This is indeed an unusual record, but recent studies of Golden-winged Warblers (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) tracked with geolocators discovered that 5 marked birds performed a >1500 km 5-day facultative migration away from their breeding grounds 1 day in front of a major outbreak of tornados (Streby et al. 2015). I obtained online archived weather summaries from FEMA’s National Situation Update for that time period to see if there were unusual weather patterns. The period leading up to the birds appearance in Minnesota was marked by unsettled weather. Of note on 14 June “A stationary front from southwest Kansas to southeast North Dakota has caused significant flooding and flash flooding to parts of northeast Colorado, southwest Nebraska and central South Dakota. From 8.5 to 10 inches [21.6 - 25.4 cm] of rain have been reported at several locations in Phillips and Sedgwick counties Colorado.” And on Friday, 15 June, for the South, “Expect accumulations of two to four inches [5 - 10 cm]. A few thunderstorms may be severe with large hail and damaging winds. Upper-level disturbances moving southward from the Appalachians to the Southeast will trigger scattered strong to severe

thunderstorms.” It appears this may be a second example of birds taking an extreme migration to avoid severe weather. It is unusual that a bird is simply found dead without any context (pers. comm. with M. Yates’ agency) unless perhaps it died of exhaustion.

American Goldfinch 2391-40973 banded in Raisin, TX, 15 Feb 2010 by R. Dawkins as a SY female. Recaptured in Pillager, MN, 23 May 2010 as a SY female (wing 70 mm, tail 48 mm, mass 13.5 g), a movement of about 1950 km. Archived weather maps at www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/dailywxmap did not seem to indicate any unusual weather during the previous week.

Pine Siskin (*Spinus pinus*) 2321-15560 was banded 22 Aug 2012 at Machete Island, Revelstoke, BC, as a female HY bird by J. Brandley of Cooper Beauchesne and Associates (wing 72 mm, tail 47 mm, mass 13.0 g). It was recovered near Pillager, MN, 18 May 2013 as a SY bird of unknown sex (wing 72 mm, mass 16.7 g) during an apparent spring irruption/migration, a movement of about 1820 km.

Pine Siskin 1880-85203 was banded 8 Feb 1992 in Anchorage, AK, as an ASY bird of unknown sex and recovered 27 Apr 1993 after hitting a window (and surviving) in Ninilchik, AK, by J. Hess, a movement of about 150 km.

Table 1. Capture dates and times showing a long-term pair-bond between two Black-capped Chickadees.

Capture date	Days from previous capture date	Times of capture for each individual	
		2390-44724	2390-44736
15-Nov-1998		08:50	
22-Nov-1998	7	11:40	
28-Nov-1998	6		09:20
6-Feb-1999	70	11:50	11:50
15-Jan-2000	343	12:50	12:50
6-Jan-2001	357	10:40	10:40
14-Jan-2001	8		12:20

Table 2. Potential long-term association between two White-breasted Nuthatches.

Capture Date	Days from previous capture date	Times of capture for each individual	
		2241-09073	2241-09079
2 Oct 2018		15:20	15:40
5 Oct 2018	3	15:30	
29-Oct-2018	27	12:40	16:30
5-Nov-2018	34	14:20	16:00
8-Nov-2018	37		16:00
30-Nov-2018	59	14:50	
22 Feb 2020	508	17:00	17:50

Table 3. Capture history of Dark-eyed Junco 1881-44742 in Pillager, MN.

Date	Age	Wing (mm)	Tail (mm)	Mass (g)	Time	Abdomen Fat	Molt	Days from previous capture date
15-Nov-2014	HY	76	68	18.9	14:40	medium	none	
28-Nov-2014	HY			20.1	14:00			13
11-Apr-2015	SY	77		20.0	15:00	medium	rectrices	147
17-Mar-2018	5Y	80	69	18.1	08:40	medium	none	1218
10-Apr-2020	7Y	80	69	22.4	12:10	heavy	none	1973
16-Apr-2020	7Y			22.5	12:30	heavy	none	1979

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