

# BIRD-BANDING

A JOURNAL OF ORNITHOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

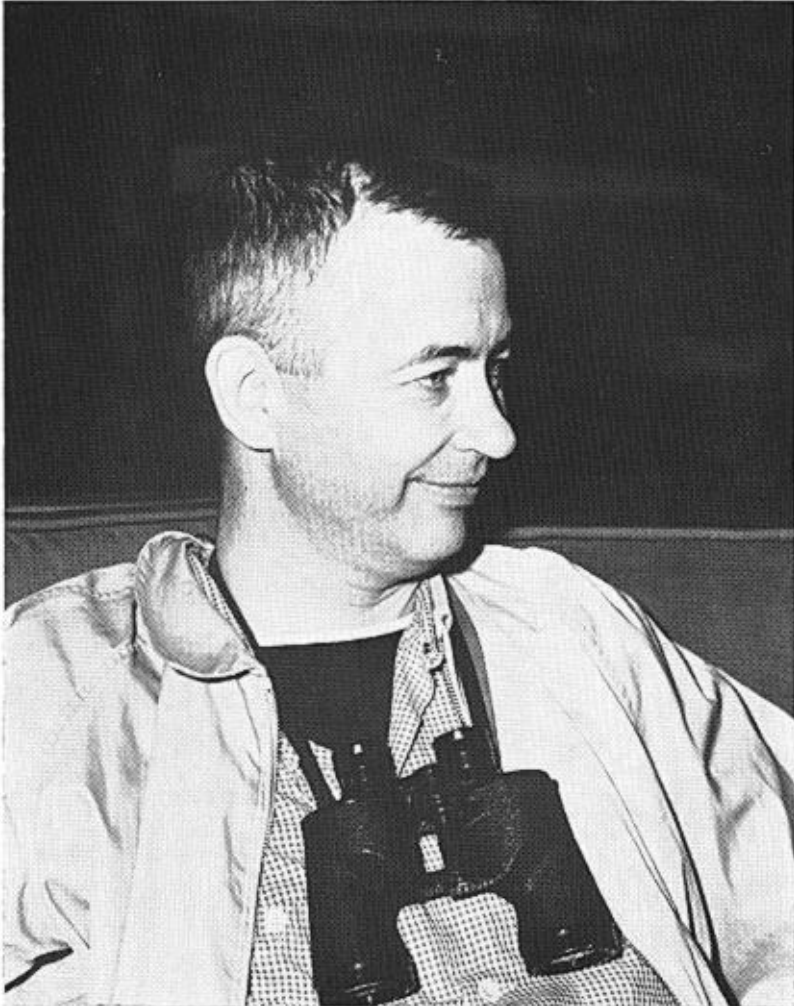
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Courtesy Carnegie Museum

M. Graham Netting Photo

**EDWARD ALEXANDER BERGSTROM**

(1919 - 1973)

## TRIBUTES TO E. A. BERGSTROM

In the early spring of 1941 a young man just past his 22nd birthday joined the Nuttall Ornithological Club. He was Edward Alexander Bergstrom, born in Boston 11 March 1919, son of Peter Magnus and Elizabeth Venable Bergstrom. In those days we called him "Sandy," a nickname that many of his friends continued to use. He already had his B.A. (1939) and his M.A. in history (1940) from Harvard. About two years later he moved to Hartford, Connecticut. Alex was already a bird-bander and probably this turned his attention toward NEBBA. In any event the move to Connecticut was clearly NEBBA's gain. Those of us who were then concerned with the management of NEBBA and of *Bird-Banding* soon realized that Alex was well organized and had sound judgment. He was both a practicing bander and an active business man (underwriter at Aetna Life and Casualty). In 1950 a new editor for *Bird-Banding* was needed. With the concurrence of certain persons (especially James L. Peters) whose judgment I trusted, I appointed Alex as Editor. The 84 numbers (Jan. 1951-Oct. 1971) bear witness to his ability to find good articles and to overcome the production and cost problems that sometimes plagued *Bird-Banding* in recent years.

About 1956 Oliver Austin, Jr. turned over to Alex what was almost a private business of supplying Japanese mist nets to licensed banders. Alex converted the operation into one clearly and expressly for the benefit of NEBBA publications. To keep the financial aspect in proper form Alex was appointed Assistant Treasurer of NEBBA. On his retirement as Editor Alex was elected Vice-President of NEBBA. Alex banded about 35,000 birds. All this should have kept any one more than busy. I hope that another writer will tell of his work as a conservationist, not alone in the Hartford area, but statewide.

We mourn Alex's death at the early age of 54 as that of a firm friend and a highly competent, public-spirited citizen whose loss we can ill afford at any age.—Charles H. Blake.

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Edward Alexander Bergstrom, former editor of *Bird-Banding* and assistant treasurer of the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association, died on 23 March 1973 after a brief illness. Few men in the business world have given so unstintingly of themselves to the fields of conservation and ornithology as Alex did.

During the 21 years Alex edited *Bird-Banding*, he not only continued its editorial excellence but also exceeded it. As treasurer, I know that during those 21 years, *Bird-Banding* substantially increased its circulation particularly among universities and museums at home and abroad.

For almost 19 years I served on the Council of NEBBA with Alex and found him an invaluable member. As old members on the Council were replaced by new members, it was Alex who, with a

knowledge of past history, policies and goals, kept the association on its traditional course. When I was elected treasurer, it was to Alex I turned for help. He always knew the answers and gave them generously and willingly. For all those many years we worked very closely together. Never a week went by without correspondence back and forth. Never a year went by without Alex conferring with me at my home in Vermont.

As if editing a journal was not sufficient extracurricular activity for a business man, in 1956 Alex proposed and operated a mist net business for the benefit of NEBBA and its members and institutional subscribers. We all must know that this net business required extraordinary long hours of work and attention to detail. Over the years the mist net business grew to such an extent that it is now a very valuable asset of the NEBBA.

Alex's death is a loss beyond measure to the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association. And it is a loss beyond measure to me because I have been so fortunate to have been his friend and colleague for so many years.—Elizabeth Holt Downs.

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I met Alex Bergstrom when I was living in Hartford and was a member of the Hartford Bird Study Club. I was impressed by many things about him, not the least by his innate modesty. His attainments in ornithology were already great but he was as accessible to a tyro like me as to persons whose knowledge was commensurate with his own. He gave no hint of impatience or condescension toward those who were beginners in a science that he had mastered, and because of this he was a memorable teacher who encouraged while he instructed and inspired while he informed, although I am sure that he never thought of himself as anything more than a fellow bird-watcher sharing observations in mutual give-and-take.

One could not know Alex without instantly recognizing his exactitude. He made no claim that was not painstakingly researched. His patience was inexhaustible, he was careful to an infinite degree, and his expertise derived from an accuracy of observation that left nothing to chance. His respect for scientific precision was absolute.

However, I think that what impressed me most of all in Alex was his love for the subject of his studies. It was such a joy to visit his home and see his bird-banding and watch the birds flocking to his feeding stations, and then to listen to this exceedingly informed man describe his researches and explain what they told him about the habits and flights of birds. He had a consuming reverence for his subject and, beyond that, for the created world of which it was a part. It was this that left the deepest impression on one who would learn from him. His loss to us is doubly keen because a voice like his is our best hope to quell the destructiveness that pervades society today and threatens all the values that he cherished and that he embodied in the fabric of his life.—The Rt. Rev. Robert M. Hatch, D.D., Randolph, New Hampshire.

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## TRIBUTE TO A FRIEND

I have lost a real friend—whom I never knew.

It was entirely typical of Alex Bergstrom's personality that my first inkling of any deterioration in his customary good health came as a shock while I was scanning the news in the local morning daily, and discovered his obituary. The date was late in March, 1973. My first response was that there must be some mistake. Alex was a fixture, a dependable part of the permanent foundation.

Our common interest in bird-banding as a means of ornithological study had first brought our paths together. Alex's modest nature made him very easy to approach. We became well acquainted, but he was like deep water—very deep water. Actually, I never learned what his vocation was, though its demands upon his time and energy were always apparent. Throughout our long acquaintance I called at his home, and briefly, on only two occasions. Those two opportunities left with me the lasting impression that his home life was, apparently, a smoothly organized complexity.

To attend a meeting of the membership of any of the regional banding associations without finding Alex in attendance was an incomplete experience. Although he was seldom a participant on the scheduled program, his quiet unassuming individuality could be felt as he mingled with the greats and the unknowns among the members and the guests. Time- and energy-consuming travel distances to these widespread occasions seem to have been no deterrent to this dedicated man.

In an attempt to assess the enormity of the burden of voluntary services Alex saw fit to assume, mere mention, only, shall be made here of the many posts of responsibility he held on local and state conservation committees and bird study groups. There were, also, his duties as officer, editor and supplier of mist nets, for which NEBBA owes him so very much. Few of our readers know about the additional load which was added when lingering illnesses struck both of his aged parents, whose care had become another of his responsibilities, during an especially busy period.

It was while the historic flights of Evening Grosbeaks were occurring down and up the Connecticut River Valley during the late 1940s and early 1950s, and while the Purple Finches were so abundant during the springs of 1954 and 1959, that I came closest to really knowing Alex. Since our banding stations were separated by a mere  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles an interchange of large numbers of banded birds was commonplace and almost daily telephoned check-ups of data became necessary. During these exchanges his responses were so prompt, so accurate, so detailed; his record sheets must have been models of planned completeness.

During the more than two decades that Alex carried the editorship of *Bird-Banding* in addition to his already abnormal load, his exceptional ability to organize preserved the high quality of his increased daily product. Even when the extremely complex chore of NEBBA's mist net supply and its financial account were added to his responsibilities, his multitudinous accomplishments revealed no diminution in their degree of perfection; nor did he reveal to those

of us whose infrequent contacts with him were of a casual nature that he was feeling the weight of his extraordinary load.

Alex's deportment was characterized so consistently by unruffled poise and self reliance. He accepted responsibility without hesitation. He knew not how to ask for assistance or relief. He attracted so little attention to himself that there came a time when he seems to have been taken for granted. Service needed? Service accomplished! NEBBA has been extremely fortunate to have had this man's name on its membership roll for so many years.

These lines have been written by one who can claim only an intimate acquaintance with him, and by one who feels the loss of his friendship very keenly. I cannot say truthfully that I ever really *knew* Edward Alexander Bergstrom. Can you?—G. Hapgood Parks.

NEBBA is grateful to Mrs. E. A. Bergstrom, her family, and the Carnegie Museum for permission to print the photograph appearing on page 153. This picture of Alex was taken by Dr. M. Graham Netting on 10 May 1964 at Calverley Lodge, Powdermill Nature Reserve, the Carnegie Museum's field station in the Ligonier Valley, Westmoreland Co., Pa.