

Commentary on the 1981 Annual Report

Stephen Ervin

Again, as in 1980, banding activities have shown a general decline. The total number of birds banded (153,585) was a 3% decrease from 1980 and nearly exactly the 10-year average. The average number of birds per bander also declined from 560 in 1980 to 489 in 1981. This represents a 13% decline from 1980 and a 26% decline from the 10-year average. Other categories — species banded and average species/bander — also showed declines despite an increase in the number of reports (11% above 1980 and 25% above the 10-year average). There were 452 responding banders in 1981 with 314 active. Of the 314, 146 or 46% banded fewer than 100 birds.

Banding activities by regions are a mixed bag of increases and decreases. Despite a small increase in birds banded, Alaska continues its decline from its 10-year average (-10%). Similarly, Idaho — Montana, California, and Wyoming — Colorado have continued to slip. Bright spots include Yukon — B.C. — Alberta with a 66% increase over their 10-year average, Nevada — Utah with a 21% increase, and Arizona — New Mexico with a 62% increase.

In 1981 there were 29 species with over 1,000 birds banded, an increase of 3 species over 1980. Only 55 species were reported with 3 or less banded, a decrease from the 61 of 1980. Waterfowl showed a drop from

1980 with 53,853 birds banded or 35% of the total. Mallards comprised 56% of these (30,314) with Canada Geese 12% (6,202), Blue-winged Teal 9% (4,800), and Pintail 9% (4,651) trailing. Charadriiformes also declined to 12,338, or 8% of the total. Western Gulls led the totals with 2,497 or 20% of the Charadriiformes banded. Western Sandpipers trailed the Western Gulls and Glaucous-winged Gulls (1,325) with 1,209 banded in 1981. Last year Western Sandpipers were first. Falconiform birds continued to total 3% again this year. As usual, the American Kestrel was the most commonly captured raptor with 714 individuals. An encouraging total was that of the Peregrine Falcons with 458, up from 302 of last year. Passerine banding was up this year, at least partially making up for the decline in non-passerines. There were 203 species banded, not including hybrids or all-representatives of super-species. The total number of passerines banded was 53,959, slightly higher than waterfowl but tied with 35% of the total. Fringillids totaled 28,421 or 19% of all birds banded. The White-crowned Sparrow complex led with 5,976, followed by House Finch with 4,607, and the Dark-eyed Junco complex with 3,474.

Point Reyes Bird Observatory continues its 5-year trend of most species with 135 species banded, the largest total but a decline from the 155 of 1980. The individual

Table 1. Ten-year summary, 1972 through 1981

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	%1980	10-year average	10-year average
Including all sources													
Number of reports—active	187	164	189	236	242	223	311	361	282	314	+11	+25	251
Reports of less than 100 birds	77	73	67	116	98	104	157	156	119	146	+23	+31	111
Species banded ¹	366	377	393	412	410	444	416	448	407	403 ¹	-1	-1	408
Birds banded	167,358	137,408	139,103	119,547	149,964	149,335	164,224	194,756	157,787	153,585	-3	0	153,307
Average species/bander	14.9	15.2	18.3	13.6	14.3	12.1	12.3	11.9	11.7	11.2	-4	-18	13.6
Average birds/bander	890	723	658	514	961	564	624	581	560	489	-13	-26	656
Birds banded by area													
Alaska	1,774	6,216	2,164	4,185	9,451	19,621	21,594	15,311	7,580	8,781	+16	-10	9,667
Yukon, B.C., Alberta	7,718	7,307	4,069	9,086	22,334	17,409	16,641	28,401	34,557	29,384	-15	+66	17,691
Washington, Oregon	18,472	14,963	12,598	10,597	19,156	13,013	15,366	17,796	17,366	18,441	+6	+17	15,777
Idaho, Montana	14,652	10,019	11,403	5,999	13,244	16,235	16,113	16,049	13,330	11,642	-13	-10	12,869
California	62,108	46,428	41,110	43,243	39,363	35,162	40,741	57,708	38,216	32,782	-14	-25	43,686
Nevada, Utah	8,541	6,112	7,392	6,485	4,380	5,579	5,031	5,927	4,444	7,426	+67	+21	6,132
Wyoming, Colorado	40,399	35,973	36,643	32,232	33,630	29,815	32,781	34,906	25,278	19,242	-24	-40	32,090
Arizona, New Mexico	10,672	10,051	11,421	7,614	8,406	8,569	6,951	9,604	16,910	17,548	+3	+62	10,775
Mexico	2,312	43	239	106	—	737	561	329	106	223	+110	-57	517 ²
Hawaii, Pacific Islands	710	296	180	208	648	1,596	8,441	9,725	6,083	8,116	+33	+125	3,600

¹ To maintain consistency with previous reports, the species summary is for continental birds only.

² 9-year average

with the highest species total was Edgar Jones with 99 species reported. Kathryn Burk followed with 93. Both banders increased their totals and reversed their positions from last year.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife had the largest total number of birds banded with 9,800. The individual high total was K.D. Norman with 7,899 birds of 15 species.

As noted in Dan Taylor's summary last year, there are a number of possible reasons for a decline in banding activities. Certainly directed studies, increased costs, declines in funding for governmental agencies, and declines in the budgets of educational institutions are all continuing to have their impact. At California State University, Fresno, we have also experienced a decline in graduate student enrollment as a result of the perception that there is a lack of jobs for field biologists. Graduate student, and thus sub-permittee, activity has declined here. We would hope that the trends experienced in the past few years will reverse.

In the future some changes will have to be made in our annual summaries. A particular problem area is the "species banded" data in the summary table. Hawaii-

Pacific Area birds have not been included in this line in order to preserve a comparison with previous years when all Hawaii-Pacific Area bandings were listed separately. We should probably forego this comparison in the future and treat Hawaii-Pacific birds as we do Alaskan species. A further problem with the "species banded" information has resulted from the taxonomic changes in the past few years. Each line in the annual report has been counted as a species in the summary table above (except for birds listed with a question mark). If we count presently recognized species and not every line, our species banded total would be reduced by an additional 5%. I would like to suggest that in the future our annual report sheets be modified to be consistent with whatever AOU revisions are recognized at the time. We would lose some comparative information with past years in terms of number of species banded, but clarity would result.

Phil Walters deserves a great deal of credit for the arduous task of compiling the information submitted. 📧

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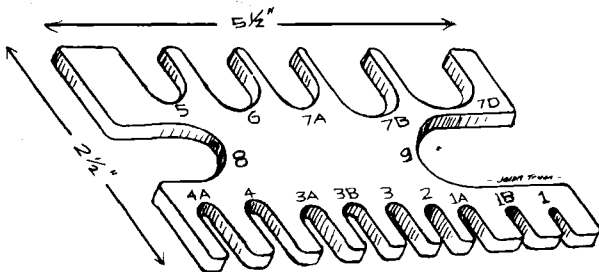
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Mesh	Length					
	5 Meters		9 Meters		12 Meters	
	Sust	Act	Non Mem	Sust	Act	Non Mem
Regulation Nylon Nets						
1¼	5.80	6.05	6.55			10.50 11.30 12.25
1½	4.15	4.30	4.65			7.45 7.80 8.50
2½						8.50 8.85 9.65

Nylon Tethered-Top Nets						
Mesh	Sust	Act	Non Mem	Sust	Act	Non Mem
1¼				8.85	9.25	10.10
1½				6.85	7.15	7.75
1¼ x 2.6 cm						11.75 12.30 13.40

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Mesh	Sust	Act	Non Mem	Sust	Act	Non Mem
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						12.60 13.15 14.30

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