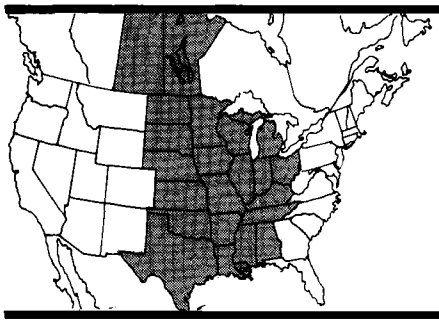

Inland Regional News

Inland Bird Banding Association

Officers

Board of Directors

Editors

Inland Regional News is published quarterly in *North American Bird Bander* by Inland Bird Banding Association. Applications for membership and notices of change of address should be sent to the Membership Secretary. The following classes of members will receive BOTH *North American Bird Bander* and *Inland Bird Banding Newsletter* (quarterly): Annual dues per calendar year: Regular Member — $15.00; Sustaining — $25.00; Patron — $100.00 per year; Life $200.00 (in full, or 5 annual payments of $40.00). Subscriptions to *North American Bird Bander* (Individual, Library, Institutional) — $15.00 North American, $20.00 foreign. Subscriptions to *Inland Bird Banding Newsletter* — $5.00 North American, $8.00 foreign.

A letter from the President

I knew when I accepted the nomination to be president that I would be faced with new and different problems. I was so right. One problem of course is getting NABB back on schedule and keeping it there.

The three organizations and Eldon Publishing are working toward that end. I personally believe the joining of the three organizations in publishing one journal has been a good move. However, it has its problems which are still in the process of being ironed out. My goal this year is to get all negotiations and operations of the publication printed and contracted and to get it on schedule for the advancement of banding across the continent.

The coordination process of a joint publication is massive, especially in view of the quality of NABB, which is a result of the efforts of all three editors as well as Eldon Publishing Co. These people, Jerry Jackson, Mickie Mutchler, Eleanor and Don Radke, should all be commended for this effort.

The challenge of any president is to take his organization from wherever it was when he took over the helm and bring it forward. Actual progress can be measured by many different parameters. One, it could be measured in increased membership. Two, it could be measured in improved finances. Three, it could be measured in a bigger and better publication.

As I sit here in front of the fire contemplating what I want to see occur with Inland this year, none of the above seems to be truly appropriate. The progress I would like to achieve goes back to my editorship of the IBB News in the early sixties—actually back to the original purpose for the formation of Inland. It is tied very closly to Ray Salt's comments in Volume VIII, No. 2 of NABB concerning the increase of agency personnel in banding totals. I would like to see an increased interest on the part of private individuals, housewives, factory workers, teachers, etc., in banding. There is so much knowledge about so many species which is lacking that it will take a tremendous united effort on the part of many people to get this information.

Backyard banding has the potential for much more information than limited graduate research or government agencies working with game species. Backyard banders have a great opportunity to constantly monitor many non-game avian populations. Just as Christmas Counts and breeding bird surveys yield some information on changing populations in certain areas, a backyard bander by banding consistently over a certain number of years will gain information on not only population changes but movements as well as survival rates of the species in his own area.

Just because the banding office does not have the manpower and finances to handle returns, only recoveries, this is not an indication of the importance of this information. At my banding station at Eagle Valley Nature Preserve, we get many returns indicating the age of a bird to be great, but this information does not enter the national records because the bird was released to live longer and thus was not entered as a recovery. Aren't your banding files filled with such information?

I urge each of you to go through your records and pull out your oldest return for each species and send this list to your editor. It would be very interesting to see this list contrasted with the oldest recovery of each species as the Banding Lab has it recorded in the master computer.

How many birds of a particular species do you have wintering in your area? Haven't you ever banded two or three times more juncos, Northern Cardinals, or Blue Jays in a season than you thought you had in the area? Have you ever compared the number of birds banded in your own backyard with your local Christmas Count in the area? Compare these results—write them up and send them to your editor. Maybe enough records and reports of this kind will start to show a pattern or trend for predicting more accurately what the actual populations really are.

Remember, you, as a backyard bander, have a great responsibility to the resource you work with, our feathered friends. Accept that responsibility and make sure your efforts result in knowledge that will help insure the future of the birds in your area. Use your information in zoning hearings, highway planning, housing developments, and pollution control projects. You are an important resource of information in your community. Speak up and be heard. Don't let Silent Spring creep up on us because we weren't listening.

Terrence N. Ingram

An editorial

The end of a dream? An essay on the history and functions of bird banding, bird banders, and bird banding journals

In the beginning. . .

The study of birds, more than the study of any other animal group, is inextricably linked to amateurs—no doubt because birds are the most conspicuous, most colorful, most melodious of terrestrial vertebrates. They have an aesthetic appeal. Their behavior has intrigued man through all recorded history. We, as a species, use birds as symbols of our own feelings and desires—such as the doves of peace and love and the hawks of war. Each of us has grown up with such symbolism and can no doubt recall a first nest discovered and the wonderment and inspiration instilled by parental faithfulness at the nest. In a sense ornithologists—particularly field ornithologists such as myself—amateur and professional like— are people who never really grew up. Our lives are forever youthful, renewed each spring by the arrival of migrants, song, and the first nests. The wonderment of childhood is still there. For most of us, birds are not just the subjects of our experiments or the tools we use to answer basic questions about life. They are the subjects of our avocation as well as, for professionals, our vocation.

What is bird banding?. . .

Bird banding is a tool by which we can unravel some of the mysteries of our childhood. Where do the migrants come from? Where do they go? Is that the same robin that nested in the apple tree last year?

It was the amateur ornithologist who seized upon bird banding as a means of answering some of these questions. Professionals were largely those people who lined up their birds in neat rows in museum trays. For the amateur it became a hobby—not unlike amateur radio, seeking to hear a voice from a far off land. It was a romantic game, not unlike putting a note in a bottle to be cast adrift with the hope that it would be found and that the finder would respond.

Birds are conspicuous enough; bird behavior is predictable enough. They do often return. Banded birds were found and people did respond. Our knowledge of birds grew as a result. But as a result of such reinforcement and the glamour and romanticism of such publicity as given by the "Mark Trail" messages, so did the number of players in the game. And many were just playing the game—hoping against odds that someone would find their "note in the bottle."

When the potential for learning basic knowledge that could benefit wild birds and facilitate management of hunted populations was realized and the Federal government took control in order to insure the reliability of the information learned, hobby banders were licensed and the expenses of providing bands and maintaining a registry and data file were borne by the government. No longer was it desirable merely to place a band on a bird and release it. This was no longer a game.

This remains no longer a game. Because of the taxpayer expense involved and the limited resources of the Bird Banding Laboratory, but most importantly because of the need for quality data on bird movements and longevity, it must be treated as a key to conservation efforts and a key to new knowledge.

The Banding Laboratory did not stop amateur banding, but instead has tried to channel amateur efforts into productive endeavors. Each of us, as a bander, is required to band with a purpose. We are supposed to have a specific project through which we can contribute to man's knowledge of birds. And I suspect that most banders, if asked, would say: "Yes, I have a project."

But what is the project? Is it a project that can contribute to our knowledge? Or is it an effort to rediscover what we already know? Most importantly, are the results of that project being made known so that they can indeed contribute to our body of knowledge?

As editor of *Inland Bird Banding*, and later of *North American Bird Bander* for the Inland Bird Banding Association, which includes over 700 licensed banders among its members, I might conclude that the Federal government is subsidizing many banders who have little knowledge of research efforts related to their "projects" and who are unwilling or incapable of transmitting what new information they have learned to the ornithological community. I'm sure some would say "Nonsense!" But in six years as editor of a banding journal, I have never received as many as 20 manuscripts in a year. And

many that have been received have been written by the same author. Less than 2% of licensed banders who are members of the Inland Bird Banding Association contributed an article or note based on the results of their banding studies to their banding journal in the past six years!

A bander who does not publish the results of studies for which a banding license was issued contributes nothing to our knowledge of birds and is little more than a welfare recipient of the Federal government. Uncle Sam is footing the bill for his or her hobby and in many cases these individuals are also claiming an income tax deduction for their "contributions" to a scientific cause. It makes no difference if you make the discovery of the century, if you don't publish the results so the information is available to others. The personal satisfaction and the personal knowledge gained do not justify the expense.

Nor is it really sufficient to say that "I use banding to teach people about birds—look, I bring school groups here every year." That is a cop-out. Such banders could do the same thing without putting bands on the birds' legs and at no taxpayer expense. Indeed, such "educational" programs may enhance the perception that bird-banding is a fun sport or game and lead to more "ring and fling" banders.

It is not sufficient either to tout as a "project" that you want to discover if the same birds come to your feeder each year or return to your yard to nest each year. We've known for decades which species do and which do not. A meaningful project asks questions for which no answer yet exists and for which an answer will contribute to our general knowledge of birds. An alternative does exist for the bander who has difficulty in analyzing and publishing data. That is to contribute data to meaningful projects of others who will publish. Many banders do quite adequately fulfill their responsibilities in this way.

Thus it is that banding today must begin with our scientific journals and end with them. Before a project is begun, a bander should spend time at a library that has ornithological journals in order to learn what is known and to refine the questions that he or she wishes to ask so that the end result of a project will be a meaningful contribution. A bander must keep up with the literature by subscribing to and reading at least those journals whose articles deal largely with banding studies — journals such as *North American Bird Bander* and the *Journal of Field Ornithology*. The really serious bander should probably also subscribe to and read the *Wilson Bulletin*, *Condor*, and/or *Auk*.

Without the insight provided by the foundation of knowledge we already have, we repeat ourselves and make no progress. One IBBA member complained that he no longer bothers to open the envelopes his journals come in because the journals are "too professional" and have nothing in them that interests him. He is a man whose interest and knowledge of birds and banding remain frozen in time, and fifty years of progress have passed him by. The questions he asks were answered decades ago—but he doesn't bother to read the answers. Unfortunately he is not alone. He could contribute—and so could you. But banding neither begins nor ends with placement of a band on a bird's leg.

So we get down to the crux of the matter. To borrow an aphorism from academia, the watchwords for banders should be "publish or perish." Unless a bander is contributing useful knowledge, he or she should not be banding. I have often been beleaguered at banding meetings and the victim of letters decrying a "difference" between amateurs and professionals. First of all, very, very few of us—and certainly not me—are professional bird banders—we don't get paid to band. I get paid as a teacher of biology and at that I am a professional, just as a doctor or a lawyer is a professional in his or her field. Nevertheless, I treat banding in a professional manner, with the care and seriousness it demands—and so should all banders. We should all band with a professional attitude.

Banding is no longer a game. It is a scientific endeavor to which professional housewives and professional farmers as well as professional biologists can contribute, have contributed, and will continue to contribute. Because it is a scientific endeavor, it must be done with scientific methods, attitudes, and goals in mind. And the results of banding should be reported in a scientific manner. In accepting a banding license, every bander, regardless of academic training, is accepting a scientific responsibility. Those who band only for the fun of it, those who have not published results of their studies in spite of having had a banding permit for years, those who attend banding organization meetings only for the social aspects, have failed in their responsibilities as banders.

The responsibilities of author, editor, and referee. . .

Since I have dwelt on the importance of publishing, and since the publication process seems to be foreign to many bird banders, perhaps an unveiling of the process is in order. Scientific publication involves a review process wherein every manuscript received is sent out to one or more "referees" for evaluation. Referees function to evaluate the suitability and quality of manuscripts for the journal to which they have been sub-

mitted. They make recommendations for revision, suggest other references, and provide an assessment as to the desirability of publishing the manuscript in a scientific journal. Copies of referees' comments are sent to the author.

In the final analysis, it is the journal editor that is responsible for the content and quality of any scientific journal. The editor receives manuscripts, sends them out to referees, evaluates referee comments and the manuscript, and makes the final decision as to the manuscript's acceptability and revisions that might be needed. An editor's responsibilities are far more complex than many would believe, and not everyone can manage the kind of job that is required to maintain a quality publication. In order to maintain quality, an editor must be able to select referees who have a knowledge of the specific subject matter of the manuscript. He or she must be able to evaluate the pros and cons of referee arguments and must be willing to reject manuscripts that are inadequate or inappropriate. Two other jobs are equally important: (1) the editor must keep the journal readable, and (2) he must keep the journal on a fiscally sound footing. If more manuscripts are coming in than the society can afford to publish, higher standards must be set and more manuscripts rejected, or dues must be increased. In the final assessment, an editor is a servant of authors, the society, and the scientific community. Editors of journals such as ours are not paid—they are volunteers. As such, the scope of their services must be limited. Editors do not have a responsibility to rewrite authors' manuscripts for them, to analyze data, to prepare figures, or to perform literature reviews. These are among the responsibilities of the author.

Responsibilities of the author include the following — enumerated here for easy reference in the hope that some editor will benefit from an author having read them:

An author has the responsibility to:

(1) Review the literature to insure that he is not publishing something that has already been published by someone else and to incorporate references to that literature into the manuscript as appropriate.

(2) Not plagiarize. (Over 50% of a manuscript recently submitted to me had been copied directly from a paper that had been published by another author. It is not ethical to copy any portion of another author's work unless such copied portions are placed in quotes and credited to the author. And if the material was copyrighted, permission—in writing—must be received, or a lawsuit could result.)

(3) Follow the proper style for the journal to which the manuscript is submitted. (Instructions to authors can be found in most journals but, when all else fails, an author can follow the style of recent articles in the journal. All manuscripts should be typed and double spaced.)

(4) Not submit the same or a similar manuscript to any other journal. (Duplicate publication is not ethical.)

(5) Present all relevant data in appropriately analyzed form.

(6) Be precise—don't use weasel words like "some," "few," "many," etc.

(7) Be concise—every word printed costs the society money—say what needs to be said in as few words as possible (e.g., avoid introductory phrases such as "It is well known that. . . ").

(8) Not include extraneous material. (One author recently wrote that he made his observations while recovering from surgery. Perhaps his friends would like to know, but his surgery was not important to the subject of his observations and journal space is simply too costly to indulge in irrelevant asides.)

Certainly more could be said about the responsibilities of all concerned with the process of publishing scientific articles, but the above should suffice to identify the complexity of scientific publishing and the fact that everyone concerned has responsibilities. A potential author should not, however, be intimidated by the complexities and the responsibilities. Editors are human. They accepted their job because they wanted to serve the society involved. They will help when asked for help. The complexities and responsibilities are there by design—to assure a quality journal and to assure that an author's carefully carried out study is presented to the scientific community in the clearest, most efficient manner.

Finally, rejection of a manuscript shouldn't be taken as a personal affront—nor should having a manuscript sent back for revision. About one out of three manuscripts submitted to *North American Bird Bander* is rejected and almost all that are accepted are sent back for revision. Rejection and revision are integral parts of the process. All authors have manuscripts rejected — certainly I do. Rejection should be a signal that we haven't done our job well enough. The editor's and referees' comments should provide the insight that will allow an author to improve his approach to research and writing. Rejection should be a learning experience — a beginning, not an end.

What of the future?. . .

Ornithology as a science grew with the 20th century — the Wilson Club became the Wilson Ornithological Society, the Nuttall Club became the American Ornithologists' Union, and these and the Cooper Society grew from regional to national to international in stature.

Of course the banding associations are children of the 20th century—in large part fruits of these other organizations. But have the seeds grown in the more than half century of their existence? In quality and bearing they have grown only recently as a result of the GJJ—the Great Journal Joining. The GJJ was alive and well in the minds of western bird banders when I became a bander more than 15 years ago. The idea grew; banders with missionary zeal and visions of progress championed the GJJ and their message was clear: by merging small regional journals that had not improved in quality in 50 years, banders could be given a medium for greater exchange of ideas and the growth of bird banding in its scientific role.

Any bander conscientious enough to write the results of his or her studies in the appropriate scientific manner knew also that publication should be in a journal with a wide circulation and with quality controls. Most of the real fruits of bird banding were going to national refereed journals to be lost to the eyes of the banders who most needed that information, but the spirit of the GJJ offered banders a chance to really contribute to science through banding. In 1976 the Eastern and Western Bird Banding Associations merged their journals to publish *North American Bird Bander* and the GJJ became a reality.

North American Bird Bander grew. Useful articles on bird banding became the rule. Quality control resulted in the attraction of good manuscripts. The fertile exchanges among banders seemed to assure national status and security for the fledgling journal. Finally, in 1981 the GJJ'ers within Inland prevailed and the three banding organizations were at last united in a common effort. *North American Bird Bander* grew in stature and quality though, unlike other journals that grow because of the support of association officers, *North American Bird Bander* at times seemed to grow in spite of some members. The seeds of discontent were still there in those whose interest was in "social" banding and ringing and flinging. Unfortunately, these perennials seem on the verge of destroying the advances of the past few years, calling for a return to the "old way."

Banding is not a right. It is a privilege that carries with it obligations. Those who cannot or will not fulfill those obligations should not be banders and, above all, should not be leaders of banding organizations. We need leaders who can show us by example the role of banding as a means to further our knowledge of birds. It is time to forget regional boundaries, to forget the petty problems and politics of regionalism, and to unite to save the dream of the GJJ. So that we can all contribute more to our knowledge of birds through banding, perhaps now is the time for a North American Bird Banding Association—with regional chapters—to assure a future for North American Bird Banding into the 21st century.

Don't be complacent. Band with a purpose. Learn. Share your knowledge through participation in meetings and through publication. Be willing to serve your society, but don't dominate it. We each have limitations and can help the society progress only so far. Once you've done what you can, don't impede the society—make way for progress. Hand the wand of leadership to the next runner. Finally, banding is fun—enjoy it, but make it worthwhile.

Jerome A. Jackson, Editor

IBBA announces Annual Meetings

Terrence N. Ingram, President of IBBA, has announced the dates and locations of the organization's 1984 and 1985 annual meetings.

The 1984 annual meeting will be held at the Sequoyah State Park Lodge, between Hulbert and Wagoner, Oklahoma during 26-28 October. The park is located on Lake Fort Gibson, about 20 miles west of Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The meeting will be held jointly with the Oklahoma Ornithological Society (OOS). The youth lodge is rented, so bunks will cost $4-$5 per night and camping is available in the park.

The lodge itself is a motel complete with restaurant, meeting rooms, tennis courts, and a golf course. Included in the complex is a nature center and many hiking trails.

The 1985 annual meeting will be held at the Eastern Michigan University Hoyt Conference Center near I94 in Ypsilanti, Michigan on 25-27 October. There is plenty of parking, sleeping rooms for 200 with meals and meeting rooms in the adjacent building. About 7 miles away is the University of Michigan Museum, housing the Wilson Library and the bird skin collection.