



# Inland Regional News

**Inland Bird Banding Association**

**Founded 1922**

## **ED PEARTREE CELEBRATES FIFTY YEARS OF BANDING**

The banders' credo, "One bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," (Nathaniel Woods: THE CONFLICT OF CONSCIENCE IV) dates from proverbs in common use around the fourteenth century. Ed Peartree hasn't been with us quite that long but has managed to weather fifty years of banding and was feted for his accomplishment recently by the S. Paul Jones Bird Club of Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. Friends and well wishers gathered to celebrate his over thirty-five thousand bandings of some hundred and fifty-five plus species of Wisconsin birds. Peartree, the past president of the Inland Bird Banding Association (1956 through 1963) and the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology have banded birds as small as a Ruby-throated Hummingbird and as large as a Turkey Vulture. While Catbirds, Song Sparrows, and goldfinches account for most of the numbers, his experience includes the banding of several uncommon warblers and flycatchers, as well as Snowy and Barred Owls, several species of hawks, plovers, sandpipers, and nearly all of the passerines known to the State of Wisconsin.

For those with a willing ear, he has a multitude of stories, including, most recently, the flash flood that completely wiped out his banding station at Honey Creek in Wisconsin. Beginning with traps of all sorts and moving to mist nets when they were made available from Japan, Peartree has made significant contributions as an amateur to the science of ornithology. As with his fellow banders, his detailed observations and records provide grist for the mill of scientific theory and contribute greatly to our understanding of our avifauna.

Ed, with his wife, continues to band both at Honey Creek and at their home in Oconomowoc and they, along with all of us, hope for many happy returns.

Carlo A. Balistreri

## **NATURE NOTES FROM NEBRASKA**

When John James Audubon explored the Missouri River on his expedition of 1843, he was accompanied by a naturalist-taxidermist by the name of John G. Bell. Everyone knows Audubon's name, but few recognize Bell's or know of his contributions to the field of ornithology. He was associated with great ornithologists such as Baird, Cassin and LeConte, and even taught 13-year-old Theodore Roosevelt, who later became one of our great conservation presidents, the art of taxidermy. Audubon has given him a permanent place in history by naming the vireo, *Vireo belli*, for him and in the scientific name of the Sage Sparrow, *Amphispiza belli*.

The Bell's Vireo became a "target bird" for me to band this past summer. It is one of the species on the Nebraska Natural Heritage Program list to study. I have been asked to supply as much information as possible about its distribution and status in the state.

I had to look for this species outside of Fontanelle Forest, where I do most of my banding. At one time, the Bell's was a common nester there, but it has vanished as habitat changed. It has not nested there since 1972 and is rarely even seen in migration, although it still is considered a relatively common nester throughout most of the state.

Like so many other species, habitat destruction has adversely affected this most non-descript of all the vireos. Loss of habitat, lack of strong field marks and timid ways make it difficult to find and identify, unless you hear it sing. John K. Terres describes its song as "cheedle cheedle chee, cheedle cheedle chew," but it doesn't sound like that in Nebraska. Regional dialect, you know! Every good birder in this state knows its song as "digger digger dee, digger digger do."

I was hiking at Offutt Air Force Base Lake in early July when I heard this familiar song coming from a small thicket of Grey

Dogwood and Mulberry trees near the edge of the water. I determined right then that I would band at least one of these little birds.

Fortunately, I am an Air Force military dependent, so I have access to this area; but I wasn't sure how the base commander might view a banding operation on the premises. Deciding it was easier to get forgiveness than permission, I put up my nets and went about my banding. Of course, the Air Police came to see what I was doing! After explaining to them "my mission," they thought it would not interfere too much with theirs and left me to my job. One even said, "I've dealt with you Fish and Wildlife people before." Whatever that means! I didn't ask.

My first banding attempt on 25 July resulted in one Bell's Vireo. I carefully measured every part of its anatomy, skulled it, and photographed it so there would be no doubt about its identity. The only other vireo there is the Warbling, but to me there is a great difference in size and appearance. The two species even feel different in the hand.

Altogether, I banded five more times from 25 July through 23 August in this 60 X 20 yard habitat and netted a total of 12 vireos. Five of these Bell's were adults and seven were HY-U's. A cold front on the 24th apparently sent them on their way to wintering territory, and I have not found a one since. This first experience with Bell's Vireos was very exciting for me and one I hope to duplicate next year.

Ruth Green



## ONTARIO BIRD BANDERS ASSOCIATION

**A Big (Large) Day at Hawk Cliff.** . . from the station summary sheets of 30 October 1990. Marshall Field.

Wow! This was the Golden Eagle day I have been waiting thirty-two years to arrive. At about 11:50, I spotted a large bird coming up off the woods to the east. It looked much too large for a red-tail, so I put my glasses on it and found it to be a Golden Eagle. I started to work the pigeon immediately, but the eagle was now drifting to the north of me and paying no attention to the pigeon. Something caught my eye to the south and, to my surprise, another eagle over the cornfield had the pigeon in its sights and was in a nice stoop from a height of about 100 feet. The right reflexes came into play and I worked the pigeon toward the bow net, giving a few teasing flicks on the way. The eagle and the pigeon arrived at the right spot in the bow net at the same time and my foot, already poised over the trip device, pressed down immediately. I had my first Golden Eagle bouncing like a ballet dancer under the bow net, lifting the tubing up off the ground.

I was out the door like a flash and quickly hovered over my prey. It wasn't until I had it secured under the net with my knee that a bit of Golden Eagle fever set in, and I found myself shaking a bit. With some valued help from my visitors, Harold Jewell and Donald Lanning, we were able to get the eagle out from under the bow net and into a burlap bag with the two legs tied together. Now the with eagle secured, I had to go to the tool storage shed to pick up the appropriate pop-rivet band and riveting tool for proper band securing. The pigeon came out of the frightening encounter unscathed. The bird I banded was a hatching-year male with a 620 mm wing chord and an overall wingspan of six feet. I released the bird at 12:45 and it spent 15 minutes in a tree at the edge of the woods.

**12 November 1990** ... Robert Hubert.

I arrived at Hawk Cliff at the usual time of 07:45 that Monday morning. There were light snow flurries at 08:45 along with heavy cloud cover moving in from the north at 09:15. At 10:00, the sky had heavy dark clouds. At 10:50, I could see large wings beyond the trees in front of the station. I was working the pigeon but thinking of the Great Blue Heron that has startled us in the past when it appeared from that direction. As it broke into the clearing to the north, I could see it was a Golden Eagle. It flew rapidly toward the pigeon and raked the bird, knocking it out of the harness. The pigeon ran for shelter under the station as I watched the eagle disappear. I didn't think the pigeon's heart could be beating any faster than mine as I put on a new bird. My thoughts were that I had had my chance and blown it. Although few birds were moving, I continued to work the lure bird.

At 12:50, I caught sight of a huge bird with deliberate wing beats flying from the south on a direct path to the pigeon. The Golden Eagle struck the pigeon, carrying it to the left side of the bow net. I maneuvered the pigeon and eagle to the middle of the bow net. This was when I realized how small the bow net looked and how large the eagle was. As I released the bow net, I was still thinking of what could go wrong. I was at the bow net immediately, making certain that the eagle would not lift the bow net and get out. After locating both feet, I carefully put my hand under the net to change hands. I removed the bird and looked over to Station #6 and saw Russ Chandler on his way over. This was a pleasant sight. Russ drove to get the band and his wife helped me measure the wing--645 mm. Later, band #629-07178 was put on the eagle's leg and riveted.

Paraphrased OBBA Editor's note: Well! Great banding stories from Hawk Cliff. Remember, if any of you have a banding story that you would like to share with IBBA members, send it to me. True enough, these heavy-duty raptor banding stories are hard to top, but let's see what we can come up with. I caught a cardinal that bit me really hard once. . . .

## OHIO BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION

### Hooded Warblers of the Barnebey Center Randy Dettmers - OSU

Randy Dettmers is studying factors which influence successful territory establishment and reproduction in the Hooded Warblers at the Barnebey Center in Fairfield County, Ohio. Factors such as size, plumage, feeding rates, song, size of territory and vegetation were examined. Plumage, in particular the amount of yellow on the head of the male, was most closely related to successful reproduction and establishment and defense of the best territories. Randy also studied territory size, arrival dates, cowbird parasitism and other factors influencing successful breeding while observing nine pairs of Hooded Warblers that fledged 50 young during 1990 at Barnebey.

### Other Activities

OBBA held a spring meeting early in April at Camp Sabroski in Oak Harbor, a band-out at Barnebey Center on 27 and 28 April, and their fall meeting at Bellfontaine. Over 45 people gathered for the band-out. An updated Ohio Birds Longevity List has been prepared and additional copies are available from Mark Shieldcastle through the OBBA Editor, Steven Lee, 685 Robindale Drive, Waynesville, OH 45068.

Tom Kasmer had an interesting return on a House Finch. He banded it on 23 July 1990, in Sandusky County, Ohio. It was found "07" code in Union Grove, Alabama, on 13 January 1991. Is this a distance record for a House Finch?

### State Longevity Records

Longevity records seem to be a current interest. Ohio BBA recently updated theirs, Michigan has one compiled by Lucian Parshall and now Ontario is collecting data for a province longevity list. Contributions requested by:

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Information needed is: species, age and sex when banded, band number, and date banded, last date encountered by someone else or recaptured by yourself.

Does anyone else have such a list? Roger Clapp and Kathy Klimkiewicz at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service maintain a continental longevity list, according to George.

