



Western Regional News

Western Bird Banding Association

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**San Francisco State University Sierra Nevada Field Campus
near Sierra City, California
(an hour's drive west of Reno, Nevada)**

ARE YOU HIDING YOUR DATA?

The Bible exhorts Christians not to hide their light (faith) under a bushel and it is a message we banders need to hear also. Our banding records are full of interesting ornithological data that would be useful to others. Looking at the species accounts in the new Birds of North America series shows the gaps in our knowledge of even common species such as Northern Mockingbird. The account of the Mexican Chickadee illustrates the major gaps in what is known about many of our western species.

What specific kinds of data are banders in a unique position to gather? Data on migration routes is always fascinating, but even if you are like me and have never had a recapture more than a mile away, there is still a tremendous amount of valuable data to compile. Detailed molt data are hard to find, even for many resident western species and although they can be obtained by looking at museum skins, you may have the information already. Or a combination of your data with that of other banders may fill out the picture.

Some of the most useful birds you handle are those you catch again and again. They can provide a continuing stream of data and enable you to present a picture of the changes in bird plumages, and measurements. While some of these things have been "common knowledge," try saying "everyone knows" in writing a species account and watch the editor's red pencil delete it. Good bird data are documented with a large enough sample size to be statistically useful. Molt data, weight and measurements are all useful to document, especially now that a number of western species may be split out geographically.

North American Bird Bander is the ideal place to publish short or long papers of data on birds. Look at recent issues to see the variety of kinds of data discussed and then think about what data you have. If you need more data check the Annual Report to see who else in the West bands the same species. Don't let a Birds of North America monograph appear saying "No information available" for a category where you have data in your banding files.

Robert Tweet