



Inland Regional News

Inland Bird Banding Association

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NATURE NOTES FROM ...

The temperature is below freezing as you stand knee-deep in snow trying to coerce your sluggish fingers to extract yet another chickadee from the net, the whole time a sharp little beak hammers away at your cuticles. It's difficult to muster a smile for the folks watching you through a window of the warm, comfortable nature center and you dare not wipe your nose on your sleeve. Ahh, the joys of winter bird feeder banding for the sake of environmental education. Why do I do this?

For several winters now, I have been a guest naturalist and banded at the feeder behind Hartman Reserve Nature Center in Cedar Falls, Iowa, and I always keep coming back for more. Winter banding, especially at a feeder, is certainly not the same as netting a variety of exotic, colorful, neotropical migrants on a relatively warm spring morning, but it can be quite rewarding. Black-capped Chickadees make up most of the captures and recaptures with a couple of White-breasted Nuthatches, American Goldfinches, juncos, Downy Woodpeckers and an occasional Hairy and Red-bellied. But the real reward occurs when people who have never been up close and personal with a live bird, get to stand nose to beak with some of their backyard residents. No painting, photo, film, or book could evoke the glee and appreciation that I see people exhibit when treated to the up-close details of a live bird. After a few bandings, people

notice how different the feet and beaks are between species and then how different individuals are within a species. They start to notice the subtleties of fine featherwork. They cannot believe they have never even thought about a bird's ear. Finally, they follow the released birds and recognize them like old friends when they show up back at the feeder. They are amazed that a recaptured goldfinch is 10% heavier than when we weighed him just a few hours earlier. They cheer when we capture a one-legged chickadee banded 3 years ago and seriously ponder the fact that most of those banded last year are no longer with us. They are hooked!

I am always trying to hook new people on birds and alert them to the perils our little brethren face nowadays. Field trips always seemed like a natural place to start but, if you have ever taken inexperienced people on a bird watching field trip, you must be familiar with frustration turning quickly to boredom, even if they manage to look through the correct end of the binoculars. But treat those same people to a successful morning of banding first and you will see a lot more enthusiasm on subsequent forays. If they have watched you part the head feathers of a male Ruby-crowned Kinglet, they will not only find the tiny kinglets easier with binoculars, but they will see that brilliant ruby patch every

time, whether it is visible or not. Even more important, they are more inclined to learn more about birds and the impact we have on each other's lives—one tends to care more about the familiar.

So, the next time you set up your nets, invite a few novice neighbors or maybe even a legislator along.

We can never have too many bird fans.

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(Editor's note. Guest editor Mark Müller is a free lance illustration/naturalist living near Iowa City. He has been banding since 1982.)



Rouge River Bird Observatory - Fall 1994

The Rouge River Bird Observatory (RRBO) at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, banded 1082 birds (and handled 229 returns) of 73 species during fall 1994. Banding took place on 61 days totaling nearly 2400 net-hours between 15 August and 28 October. Capture rate this fall was 57.3 birds/100 net-hours, RRBO's best fall season.

Compared to other years, high numbers of several warbler species were banded: 49 American Redstarts, 18 Blackpolls and 41 Magnolia Warblers. *Catharus* thrushes totaled 115, a healthy number. Thirteen White-crowned Sparrows was as good number for us. Other interesting birds included Indigo Buntings and Blue-winged Warblers, both hard to find in the fall; 2 Connecticut Warblers; 2 Winter Wrens; 3 Sharp-shinned Hawks; and an American Woodcock, one of several that spent the early fall in our banding area.

Fall weather was very mild right through October. Only three days were lost to bad weather, but for several days the nets had to be closed early due to predators in the area. Dogs and white-tailed deer were particularly troublesome this season. Most abundant birds were 176 Gray Catbirds, 102 American Goldfinch (before we stopped banding them late in October), 81 American Robin (before we stopped banding them late in October), 69 White-throated Sparrows, 57 Cedar Waxwings, and 55 Swainson's Thrush.

Fall 1994 also represented RRBO's second fall of audio-luring for Northern Saw-whet Owls. Nets were opened on nine nights between 14 October and 11 November. Two Saw-whets were captured, one of which returned. These three captures represented 3.1 owls/100 net-hours.

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PLAN FOR IBBA's 1995 ANNUAL MEETING

Inland Bird Banding Association's Annual Conference will be held at the Howard Johnson Lodge, 3909 Eleventh Street, Rockford, IL 61109, from **Friday, 13 October, to Sunday, 15 October** 1995. Paper sessions, demonstrations by trap builders, and visits to both the Sand Bluff Banding Station and the Burpee Museum of Natural History (which has a large bird collection) are planned. Registration will be \$50 and includes Saturday's breakfast, lunch and dinner plus cold cuts and snacks for Friday night.

Rockford is about 90 min from Chicago on Interstate 90. Other major routes that serve the city are US 20, Illinois 2, US 251 and US 51/Interstate-39. The Greater Rockford Airport has commuter bus and flight service from Chicago's O'Hare Airport and direct flights from some other Midwest locations. Major car rental companies service the airport, but counters are sparsely staffed making it important that you reserve a rental car in advance.

Group accommodations have been arranged for the Howard Johnson Lodge. Rates are as follows:

Two night stay: \$39/night for single room; \$49/night for double room. One night stay: \$55/night for single room; \$60/night for double room. Price includes 1 queen bed for 1 or 2 people. Additional people at \$5/night; taxes extra.

Reservations must be made with Howard Johnson Lodge, phone: (815) 395-9000, and you must state that you are with the IBBA to receive these rates. Howard Johnson Lodge is at the intersection of Bypass 20 (US 20) and US 251 (previously US 51) on the south side of Rockford. Several other motels are nearby. We will attempt to find private-home lodging for you as a money saver if you ask. Let us know.

We will plan to pick up conferees who arrive at the Greater Rockford Airport (about 4 mi from the motel) or who take the Rockford regional bus (Van Galder bus lines) from O'Hare. Regional buses leave about every 90 min from the lower level in the luggage pickup area. Ask to get off at The Sweden House near Alpine and East State (Business 20). We can arrange to pick you up somewhere else if you so need.

Be sure to let us know what you plan and what you need. A letter with conference registration materials will go out this summer. If you have questions in the meantime, contact

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