Western Bird Banding Association
Established 1925

Western Regional News

1997 WBBA Annual Meeting
3-5 October 1997
Amargosa Valley, Nevada

On Friday morning 30 people car pooled to the west side of the Spring Mountains to explore Mojave Desert, pinyon-juniper and ponderosa pine-white fir habitats.

Saturday morning the following demonstrations were given at Ash Meadows NWR.

Portable banding station
David St. George, Wildlife Biologist, Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, NV

Putting up mist nets using the Blackshaw method
Tricia Campbell, Campbell Bio Consulting, Murrieta, CA

Putting up mist nets rapidly for a project such as MAPS benefits from using the "Blackshaw" method. Nets feed out quickly, stay in relative order with little adjusting once the nets are up. The demonstration used the typical plastic grocery bags and also cloth bags designed by Ardelle Loge for storing mist nets.

Mending mist nets using a tatting shuttle
Ruth C. Yoder and Ardelle Loge, University of California, Riverside, Motte Rimrock Reserve

Mist nets have increased in cost the last few years, creating a demand for ways to mend small holes. More importantly, properly maintained nets are safer for the birds caught. A relatively inexpensive and easy method to mend nets while in place was demonstrated using a tatting shuttle. Plastic shuttles are preferred over metal ones. While needles often disappear in the vegetation if dropped, mending shuttles do not become lost.

Russell hummingbird trap
Rita Colwell, 281 Margarita Ct., Los Altos, CA 94022 and Maryann Danielson, 933A Alice Lane, Menlo Park, CA 94025

The "Russell" trap is extremely successful in catching hummingbirds that are already coming to feeders or other nectar sources. The walk-in trap is made of one mist net (6 m, 24 mm mesh), put in a "U" fashion around 4 standard banding poles, with a second net (mesh size up to 36 mm) laid across the top and fastened with swizzle sticks to the upright net. Two feeders are placed inside the trap. Setup and capture techniques were discussed.

Trapping technique for Loggerhead Shrikes
Susan H. Craig, 1530 Robidoux Circle, Colorado Springs, CO 80915

Loggerhead Shrikes were captured in all habitats using a modified Potter trap baited with a small mouse. When a shrike was spotted near the road, the trap was put through the open window of the car and placed on the roadside. The car was then moved a short distance away to observe results. The trap and modifications were demonstrated.

Trammel strap: to keep mist net loops in order
J. James Eidel, Great Basin Bird Observatory, 440 Hill Street, Suite D, Reno, NV 89501 and Alan Gubanich, Department of Biology, Univ. of Nevada, Reno, NV 89557

A simple technique was demonstrated for keeping mist net trammels in proper sequence when the net is taken down and stored for easier mounting next time the net is used.

California Gnatcatcher band preparation and application technique

Kylie Fischer, San Diego State University and Kerry Kenwood, Varanus Biological Services, San Diego, CA

No commercially manufactured color band is appropriately sized for quick, easy application to California Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica*). Several different methods of band preparation have been developed, all of which are relatively time consuming. Though similar in overall concept, this presentation demonstrated several improvements to published methodologies by showing a more effective, less time consuming method of band preparation. An artifact of this preparation process is that bands are more easily welded shut and degradation of plastic, including loss of color is greatly reduced. Handling time for each individual gnatcatcher is likewise reduced.

After lunch the following reports were presented:

New Pyle edition overview

Mary Gustafson, USGS, Bird Banding Laboratory, 12100 Beech Forest Road, Laurel, MD

Peter Pyle's newest edition will replace the current Pyle et al. (1987). The new book has many implications for banders. Peter has included other orders of birds, some frequently caught with passerines. In addition, since he worked closely with the Bird Banding Lab (BBL), much of the ageing and sexing information will now be accepted by BBL. The overview will give some idea of what is accepted and what the BBL expects from banders.

Southward migration of Rufous (*Selasphorus rufus*) and Allen's (*S. sasin*) hummingbirds in the San Bernardino Mountains of Southern California

Barbara Carlson, Natural Reserve System and Dept. of Biology, University of California, Riverside.

Southward bound migrating Rufous (RUHU) and Allen's (ALHU) hummingbirds were mist netted and banded at two constant effort banding stations (using MAPS protocol) from 1992 through 1996 (5 years). The sites were in the San Bernardino Mountains, one of the transverse ranges of southern California. The two stations, Metcalf (elev. 2255 m, 7400 ft.) and East Bluff Lake (elev. 2316 m, 7600 ft.), were located in wet montane meadows southwest of Big Bear Lake. The meadow vegetation consists of numerous species of herbaceous forbs and grasses, with willows (*Salix* spp.) as the dominant shrub or small tree. Habitat surrounding the meadows is mixed coniferous forest and mountain chaparral. Hummingbirds were aged by bill corrugations (Ortiz-Crespo, Condor 1972) and sexed using keys developed from Stiles (Condor 1972).

Data for all five years were similar and consequently were pooled. 237 RUHU and 103 ALHU were banded with some recaptures during the same year as banded. No birds banded in prior years were recaptured. Ratios of AHY to HY were 1:6.4 for ALHU and 1:4.8 for RUHU. Ratios of males to females for both species and age classes were 1:1. Time periods, including peak migration times are given for both species of hummingbirds.

Basic plumage crown-types and age in Golden-crowned Sparrows

Rita R. Colwell, 281 Margarita Ct., Los Altos, CA 94022, and Maryann Danielson, 933A Alice Lane, Menlo Park, CA 94025

Crown-types of Golden-crowned Sparrows returning to banding sites in the San Francisco Bay Area were compared to their previous years' crown-types. During fall of 1995 121 Golden-crowns were banded, and their crown plumages were examined and classified according to Cogswell's crown-type descriptions. Birds were aged by skull ossification. In the fall and winter of 1996/1997, 28 birds banded earlier in the season and 24 individuals from previous years were retrapped. Some adult birds reverted to an immature crown-type and others essentially retained an advanced crown-type during their pre-basic molt.

Additionally, crown-types and ages of all Golden-crowns trapped in fall of 1995 and 1996 were pooled and examined for a correlation between plumage and age. Birds with immature crown-types (Crown 1) were found to be all HY birds, while birds with advanced crown types (Crowns 4 and 5) were found to be all AHY. We recommend ageing advanced crown-type sparrows

as AHY after the skull completion date of November 15 until January 1, and then ASY until the beginning of their local pre-alternate molt. Rectrix shape was also examined to ascertain if it would be helpful as a further indicator of age.

The breeding status of Cassin's Vireo in the Carson Range of western Nevada

J. James Eidel, Great Basin Bird Observatory, 440 Hill Street, Suite D, Reno, NV 89501, and Alan Gubanich, Department of Biology, Univ. of Nevada, Reno, NV 89557

The Forty-first Supplement to the AOU Check-list split the Solitary Vireo into Cassin's Vireo (*Vireo cassini*), Plumbeous Vireo (*V. plumbeous*), and Blue-headed Vireo (*V. solitarius*). The December 1996 issue of *Birding* magazine contained an article titled, " Field Identification of the Solitary Vireo Complex," discussing the identification of these species and including a range map for Cassin's and Plumbeous vireos. The map indicates that Plumbeous Vireo breeds on the east slope of the Sierra Nevada, and in the Great Basin including the obtuse angle on the Nevada-California state line; Cassin's Vireo is shown breeding in California and on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada. Small numbers of breeding Cassin's Vireos were banded from 1995-97 at our northern Little Valley MAPS station located in the Carson Range of the eastern Sierra east of Lake Tahoe. Eight were banded in 1995, 3 in 1996 and 4 in 1997. Breeding of Cassin's Vireos was also confirmed during the spring of 1997 on a Nevada Breeding Bird Atlas block in southern Little Valley. The authors conclude that the breeding ranges of Cassin's and Plumbeous vireos on the east slope of the Sierra need further study.

Results from banding Least Tern chicks at Camp Pendleton, California

Ingri Quon, Varanus Biological Services, San Diego, CA and Brian Foster, San Diego, CA

Chick banding results from the Least Tern colony at Camp Pendleton in 1995 and 1996 were reported. The Least Tern is a ground nesting species with precocial chicks which in this study were contained within a fenced site. This colony produced a data set which reflects developmental variations in the mobility of the young and provides indications of minimum wing length necessary for efficient fledgling flight in this species. These data are distinct from any other species which would remain in or near the nest until capable of flight or species in which highly precocial chicks, such as Snowy Plovers, leave the site entirely. Predation and other causes of chick mortality could influence the interpretation.

Mist net monitoring results for three Rogue Valley riparian stations located in southwest Oregon

Dennis P. Vroman, 269 Shetland Drive, Grants Pass, Oregon 97526

Riparian vegetation along Bear Creek and the Applegate River was altered by flooding during the winter of 1996-1997. Three breeding season mist net monitoring stations (MAPS protocol) were established at previously flooded locations to determine species presence and estimates of abundance. The capture data showed differences in both species makeup and estimates of abundance between the stations. Thirty-three species were captured at the Applegate River (APRI) station, 25 at the Bear Creek (BRCR) station and 24 at the North Mountain (NOMO) station (upper Bear Creek). Seventeen Neotropical migrant bird species were captured at APRI, 7 at BRCR , and 10 at NOMO. Capture rates per 100 net hours of operation (based on all birds captured) were: 79.4 for APRI, 53.7 for BRCR and 34.4 for NOMO. Recapture rates per 100 net hours of operation were: 10.1 for APRI, 9.1 for BRCR and 7.3 for NOMO. Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) was the species most captured at all the stations. The 8 most numerous species captured varied for each station. However, the BRCR and NOMO stations captured 6 of the top 8 species in common. The APRI station shared 3 of the top 8 species with both the other stations. The percentage of Neotropical migrant birds captured was (excluding recaptures): 54 for APRI, 25 for BRCR and 27 for NOMO. Future mist net monitoring is planned for these stations.

Results of a two year banding study of Loggerhead Shrikes in Florida and Texas

Susan H. Craig, 1530 Robidoux Circle, Colorado Springs, CO 80915

In this study of wintering Loggerhead Shrike populations, shrikes in east central Florida (n = 312) and west Texas (n = 103) were captured and banded in three sessions. Birds were aged accord-

ing to progression of molt (presence or absence of retained juvenal feathers, Pyle et al, 1987). Mensural data includes: two tail measures, wing chord, amount of white in wing, hind toe, and three bill measurements. Notes were taken on color of lores, gape, base of mandible, and amount of white on rump and underparts. A single tail feather was collected for isotopic analysis. Topics discussed included census by age (the study's objective), and observations of significant anomalies and behaviors.

Population dynamics of an isolated population of Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*)

William E. Haas, Varanus Biological Services, San Diego, CA

I discuss results of studies of Willow Flycatcher conducted along the San Luis Rey River, San Diego County, California, during the 1997 breeding season including population dynamics, differences in arrival and departure times between male and female Willow Flycatcher, and movements of banded individuals within the population. Results from 1997 are compared with data from 1995-1996. Mist netting strategies which enhance data collection for this endangered species are discussed.

Results of an evaluation of the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program

David F. DeSante, Daniel K. Rosenberg and Kenneth M. Burton, The Institute for Bird Populations, P.O. Box 1346, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956

In a recent evaluation of MAPS, we found productivity to be strongly affected by nest location, with shrub nesters consistently lowest and cavity nesters highest. Migration strategy had a weaker effect on productivity, but resident species did show the highest productivity and Neotropical migrants the lowest. However, migration strategy had the opposite effect on survival; thus, high productivity appears to offset low survival.

At large geographic scales, productivity explained population trends better than did survival. At the scale of a single location, productivity seemed to be the best predictor of population trends at only 40% of locations; survival was the best predictor at 40%, and both contributed equally at 20%. Thus, the factors having the greatest effect on population trends appear to vary from one location to another, perhaps depending on landscape characteristics.

We found that the best survival models tended to represent smaller spatial scales, and the best model held recapture probability and proportion of transients constant spatially while allowing survival probability to vary at the scale of physiographic province.

The USGS review panel's report was highly favorable and recommended that MAPS become an official component of an integrated North American bird monitoring program including point count, nest monitoring, and other programs.

At the WBBA Business Meeting the following officers were elected: President - Dennis P. Vroman. 1st Vice-president - Stephanie Jones, 2nd Vice-president - Bob Altman, Secretary - Jim Steele, Treasurer - Kenneth M. Burton, Directors-at-large, Ken Voget and Tricia A. Campbell.

At the banquet, the winners of the raffle and silent auction were announced. The guest speaker was Dr.Don Baepler, Director of the Barrick Museum of Natural History, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

On Sunday morning another field trip visited the China Ranch near Tecopa Hot Springs, California.

Western Bird Banding Association and the 54 registrants thank Ken Voget for making all the meeting arrangements, Barbara Carlson for arranging the program and Stephanie Jones for arranging the raffle which raised $250. As a result of the meeting and raffle, WBBA will be able to award two student grants next year. We thank AVINET, Inc., California Waterfowl Association, Bob Altman, Ken Burton, Barbara Carlson, Stephen Dowlan, Stephanie Jones, Mario Mamone and Dennis Vroman for donating prizes.

The 1998 Annual Meeting will be held 25-27 September at the Macroni Conference Center in Marshall, California. Contact Ken Burton, WBBA Treasurer, for further details or if you wish to present a paper or demonstration.