

NORTH AMERICAN BIRD PHENOLOGY PROGRAM



E-Newsletter
March 2011

With the help of volunteers worldwide, the North American Bird Phenology Program is working to understand the scale of global climate change and how it is affecting bird populations across North America

Current Progress



Current Migration Card Count:

2,096

Online Volunteers

429,784

Cards Transcribed Online

10

Office Volunteers

581,318

Cards Scanned in BPP Office

232,417

Cards Scanned by CDMP

Quick Links

[Register to become an
online transcriber](#)

[Become an office volunteer](#)

[BPP News](#)

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USA-NPN

Announcements

- 40,000 BPP records are now publicly accessible for download at [Download Data!](#) This is an initial dataset of successfully transcribed records. We will continue to add data to this page as it becomes available.
- The BPP was featured in NOAA's Climate Data Modernization Program's Annual Report and video for 2010. You can view the report booklet and watch the video at [CDMP Annual Report](#).
- Phil Davis, Secretary of Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee has been a frequent visitor to the BPP office. The committee is working on publishing a comprehensive book of rare bird records that have been accepted for MD and DC and looking into the BPP records for useful information. More information about this project can be found in the featured article in this newsletter and the [Research](#) webpage.
- Thank you to everyone who participated in creating a design for the BPP t-shirt. We received many stellar designs but despite our efforts we are unable to produce a shirt. However, if you are interested in producing a t-shirt independently we would gladly pass along your information so other volunteers could contact you about ordering a shirt.
- Scanning BPP cards at SourceCorp is currently on hold but hope to soon resume the scanning process with them in the near future. Until that time we have resumed scanning records in the BPP office.
- We've begun scanning nest, egg, double-sided and large records that were initially passed over in the scanning process but these records will be of value in the future.
- The BPP is sad to announce that our Volunteer Coordinator, Brandon Kell, will be leaving us at the end March due to lack of continued funding. He has contributed tremendously to the Bird Phenology Office and will be missed.

What We're Working to Bring You

Volunteer of the Month

Stella Walsh



I spent my professional life with Maine Department of Health and Human Services, helping provide economic stability to households until they could get back on their feet. I started to get serious about birds and conservation about 25 years ago. I began birding and volunteering primarily through Maine Audubon for any project that would allow me to learn something new. By the time I retired, I had been exposed to a range of things from vernal pool monitoring to bird banding.

I retired in 1993 and now spend time in spring and fall handling birds at the Appledore Island Migration Banding Station. June through mid-August finds me working with terns and alcids for Project Puffin on uninhabited islands off the Coast

of Maine. Late fall and winter finds me back home putting in time with Maine Audubon working to compile the Maine Rare Bird Alert and answering natural history inquiries. I'm also active with the Merrymeeting Chapter of Maine Audubon and maintain their web site, publicity, and email alerts.

Scott Weidensaul is indirectly responsible for my getting involved with the BPP. It seemed like a good way to contribute in late fall and winter when I am home. I find I can transcribe about 100 records an hour, so just an hour or two a day results in 1,000 - 1,200 records a week. By sticking to geographic areas I recognize and incorporating it into my daily routine the amount I can do really adds up.

I find it interesting to see that American Crows were almost entirely migratory in areas where they are now largely resident, that there was once a colony of over 1,000 pairs of Black-Crowned Night Herons in Massachusetts, and that Rusty Blackbirds were considered abundant a hundred years ago in a number of areas in Northern New England. Some cards have sent me on interesting Google expeditions for more information about the bird, the place, or the observer. It's surprising that the Birdseye reporting arrivals in Labrador was the same guy who figured out marketing frozen vegetables.

My plan was to remain active after I retired on something that mattered. I am very fortunate that it actually worked out.

Observer of the Month

Clinton Hart Merriam

Clinton Hart Merriam, was the central figure in a dynamic era connecting the pioneer period of exploration with the present time of experimentation and interpretation. To review his life is to recapitulate the events of this era and to indicate their far reaching effects not only in America but throughout the world.

He was born December 5, 1855 in New York City where his parents were spending the winter. The family home and where he would spend his

The BPP is part of the USA-NPN which brings together citizen scientists, government agencies, non-profit groups, educators and students of all ages to monitor the impacts of climate change on plants and animals in the United States.

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Featured Article

BPP Card Files and *The Rare Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia*

By Phil Davis, Secretary, Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee

The Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee (MD/DCRC) is a standing committee of the Maryland Ornithological Society that is chartered to review regional reports of rare and unusual birds and maintain the Official Lists of Birds for MD and for DC. Our committee is now making plans to publish a comprehensive book to detail the rare birds records that we have accepted within MD and DC.

The baseline for our MD/DCRC Official Lists for MD and for DC is *The Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia* by Robert E. Stewart and Chandler S. Robbins, 1958. However, in preparing for this publication, we are conducting a comprehensive canvass for any historical rare bird records that were not published by Stewart and Robbins (which covered only through 1955) or for any other records that were not submitted to or known by our committee (which was established in 1982). Sources of historical bird records include the specimens and the database of the Smithsonian

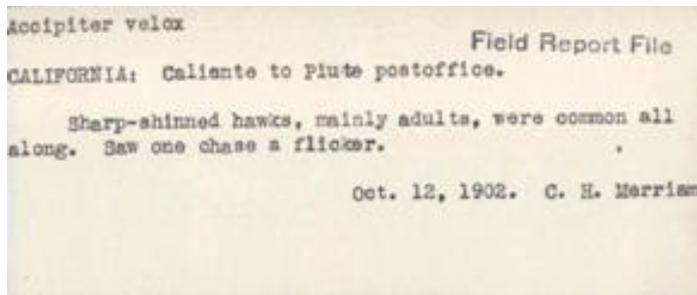


C. Hart Merriam

On September 26, 1883 the American Ornithologist Union was formed. Although Merriam was one of the younger members he was named Secretary and would become chief of the committee on Distribution and Migration of Birds, a subject on which preliminary work had been started by Prof. W. W. Cooke. As Secretary it became his duty to draft a memo to congress asking for the appropriation of funds for the development of the Division of Economic Ornithology.

The division's main task would be to collect bird migration data and relate it to advantages or disadvantages for agriculture. Most of the work done in the early days of the Division of Economic Ornithology and later the Biological Survey contributed directly to the bird migration records that now form the basis of the North American Bird Phenology Program.

Merriam would lead the Division for nearly 25 years. He accomplished much in his life, he published over 500 papers and discovered and described approximately 660 new mammals. In his final years he devoted himself almost entirely to studying the vanishing tribes of California Indians. Clinton Hart Merriam died in Berkely, California on March 19, 1942 at the age of 87 after several years in decline.



If you would like to read the complete biography of Clinton Hart Merriam please visit: www.nap.edu/html/biomems/cmerriam.pdf

Trivia

reviews of local and national historical ornithological journals.

The PWRC BPP card files provide a rich source of historical bird records. While many of the "reviewable" records (taxa that meet the committee's review criteria) in the card files were known to Stewart and Robbins and to the MD/DCRC, previously unpublished reports have been discovered in the files and additional details of previous record have been located which fill-in data fields in our MD/DCRC database. The BPP card files also summarize published citations of historical records and that reference information has also been captured and added to our committee's database.

Our committee is also preparing a related chronology of when new species were added to the various published regional bird checklists dating from the late 1700s until the establishment of the first MD and DC Official Lists by MD/DCRC in the 1980s.

The BPP files have been invaluable in providing dates and references of when species were first reported or when specimens were first collected within MD and DC.

In summary, the BPP card files provide a wealth of historical information on specific records and references to rare and unusual species that have been found in our region -- all of which directly enhances the data foundation of our future publication.

Here's this months trivia question, remember to send your answers to [Brandon](#).

C. Hart Merriam once had a public debate with President Theodore Roosevelt, what was the topic of their debate?



As always, if you have any questions, comments, suggestions or complaints, please [contact me](#).

Sincerely,

Jessica Zelt
Program Coordinator
North American Bird Phenology Program
U.S. Geological Survey/ Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

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