

MEMORANDUM

TO : All Banders

FROM : The Biologists, Bird Banding Laboratory
Migratory Bird Populations Station
Laurel, Maryland 20810

SUBJECT: 1. Change of Chief, Bird Banding Laboratory
2. Thanks from the Outgoing Chief
3. Preservation and Shipment of Salvaged Birds
4. Status of "The Edit"
5. The "Moratorium"
6. Publishing Banding Data

August 18, 1971

MTAB-16

1. Change of Chief, Bird Banding Laboratory. Many of you are aware that Earl Baysinger, who served as Chief of the Bird Banding Laboratory for several years, has transferred to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Washington Office. Earl's new address is: Office of Endangered Species and International Activities, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, U. S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C. 20240.

Earl's successor, George M. Jonkel, is due to report for duty in the Banding Laboratory August 23. Jonkel has been with the Fish and Wildlife Service for several years and is leaving his position as the Supervisor of the Wetlands Acquisition Office in Huron, South Dakota, to accept the position of Chief of the Bird Banding Laboratory. He has been an active bander of both game and non-game species for many years.

2. Thanks from the Outgoing Chief. As I announced at the April meeting of the Eastern Bird Banding Association and as Brian noted above, there will soon be a new man in charge of the Banding Laboratory. On May 1, I accepted a position with our Service's Endangered Species and International Activities Program.

I wish to take a few lines in this MTAB to express my appreciation for the cooperation I received from you during the period I was in the Banding Lab. I sincerely hope you will all bear with Mr. Jonkel during the period required for him to get his feet on the ground and provide him the same splendid cooperation I received.

Although some progress has been made during the past few years, a great deal of work is still to be done--the file edit is not yet completed, the

major task of rekeying much of the 1960-66 data is just beginning, many of the code systems still need revision, and an EDP system as large and complex as the one used to process banding data is continually in need of review and modification--so George isn't going to be left looking for something to do.

Since many ornithologists are also involved in the Endangered Species Program, I suspect I'll continue to work rather closely with many of you. Irregardless, my stint in the Banding Laboratory has made a confirmed "backyard bander" out of me. One of my last "official" acts was to renew my banding permit for a period of two years, so I'll be a member of the banding fraternity for at least that period of time. Frankly, I'm rather looking forward to the opportunity of writing "sizzling" letters to the Banding Laboratory complaining of the "bureaucratic red tape" we banders are expected to put up with!

Best wishes.



Earl B. Baysinger

3. Preservation and Shipment of Salvaged Birds. In MTAB-15 (January 27, 1971) banders were informed of the new regulations authorizing them to salvage dead birds. Since then many banders have probably accumulated a freezer full of specimens and are beginning to wonder when they will get details on their disposition. The pursuit of science is a fine thing, but one can tolerate only so many turkey vultures in his deep freeze. With this in mind, it was decided that we should put out instructions to alleviate this problem.
 - A. What Birds Should Be Salvaged. Record and save every banding casualty or dead bird that comes into your possession that is not badly mutilated or decomposed. These birds, if accompanied by adequate data, are potentially valuable museum specimens. In questionable cases, let the receiving institution decide whether or not a specimen should be saved. Remember that specimens are used for not only the standard study skin but are also preserved in fluid, as skeletal material, or used in special preparations for scientific purposes. Birds of all ages and plumage stages are important in research collections.
 - B. Recording Data. The following data are essential and should be recorded in pencil or India ink (other ink blurs) on a label secured firmly to the bird's leg or on a paper that is in the bag with the bird (if only one bird is placed in a bag). The recovery information should be recorded on one side of the label and the banding information recorded on the other.

1. Recovery Data.

- a. Locality. Give airline (do not use road mileage) distance and direction from a town or other prominent landmark. Include the county and state and the map coordinates if they are known.
- b. Date. Record the date of death of the bird if known. If not known, record the date the dead bird was found and your estimation of how long it had been dead. Use the "alpha" name of the month (Jan., Feb., etc.) instead of numerals.
- c. Name of Finder. Be sure to record the name of the person who found the bird if you received the bird from another person. Also record your name. Do not use just initials as your name is the authority for the accuracy of the recorded data.
- d. Weight. If a balance is available, record the bird's weight to the nearest 0.1 of a gram.
- e. Soft Part Color. The color of the iris, mouth lining, bill, legs, feet and any exposed skin may be important and should be recorded if the specimen is fresh.
- f. Species. Record on the "recovery" side only if the bird was not banded with one of your bands.
- g. Sex. Record on the "recovery" side only if the bird was not banded with one of your own bands.
- h. Ecological Notes. Notes on the habitat, unusual circumstances at capture or death, behavior, etc., can be of added value to the researcher.

2. Banding Data. The following should be entered on the reverse of the tag if the bird was banded:

- a. Band Number
- b. Species
- c. Age. The age recorded should be the age at the time of banding, if known.
- d. Banding Location. If known, describe the banding location and give the coordinates.
- e. Date the Bird Was Banded, if known.

- C. IF A SPECIMEN IS BANDED WITH ONE OF YOUR BANDS AND THE BANDING SCHEDULE HAS BEEN SENT TO THE BIRD BANDING LABORATORY, leave the band on the bird and report the recovery on a Form 3-1807. Indicate in the "remarks" section the name of the institution where you plan to send the specimen.

On the label you attach to the bird, be sure to indicate that you have reported the band to the Bird Banding Laboratory. ALSO INCLUDE A NOTE REQUESTING THE MUSEUM TO RECORD THIS INFORMATION ON THE PERMANENT LABEL THEY ATTACH TO THE SPECIMEN. If this is not done, people who examine the specimen in future years will more than likely report the band number to the Bird Banding Laboratory.

- D. IF YOU SALVAGE A BANDED BIRD BEFORE THE SCHEDULE HAS BEEN SUBMITTED, simply remove and destroy the band and indicate "Band Destroyed" on the appropriate line of your schedule.
- E. Preservation of Birds. Place a bit of hardwood sawdust, cotton, paper towel or tissue on any bloody areas and in the bill and throat. Place the bird and data tags in a plastic bag (one bird per bag) and seal the bag to prevent drying. Arrange the birds with feathers smooth and straight. Avoid breaking or ruffling the feathers. Freeze the birds (in a home freezer or on dry ice) as soon as possible, keeping them cool until they can be frozen. If possible, avoid thawing and refreezing the specimens. If it is necessary to put more than one bird in a bag, be sure each bird is individually labeled and that the label is very securely attached to the bird's leg.
- F. Preparation for Shipment. Pack the birds, still in their plastic bags, in sufficient dry ice to withstand shipment. Remember that birds deteriorate quickly when thawed and a delay can be disastrous. Small birds will thaw more rapidly than large ones, so the specimen should be placed in an insulated container or wrapped well in newspapers. Use crumpled newspapers as packing material as dry ice sublimates ("melts"), leaving space, and the subsequent shifting of the birds may damage them. Be sure the shipping container is strong enough to withstand rough handling.
- G. Dry Ice Safety Precautions. Extreme care must be taken to insure that shipping containers are adequately vented and that the shipping agencies are advised of the presence of dry ice in the package.

As the dry ice sublimates ("melts"), carbon dioxide is formed and a dangerous explosion can occur if the specimen is in a sealed, un-ventilated container. Even though a package is properly vented, there is the danger of asphyxiation if large amounts of carbon dioxide are given off in a small, closed area. ANY PACKAGE CONTAINING DRY ICE SHOULD BE LABELED VERY PLAINLY, "BIOLOGICAL SPECIMENS PACKED IN DRY ICE."

You should use care when handling dry ice. Even brief, direct contact with your bare skin can result in a painful "frostbite." If you've not handled this material before, be sure to check with the supplier concerning proper handling precautions.

- H. Delivery or Shipment of Specimens. In general, specimens should be delivered or shipped to the museum listed at the end of this section that is closest to the bander's home. However, some banders have been delivering casualties to other institutions and may continue to do so. Some institutions, other than those listed, are willing to receive specimens brought to them, but do not have funds to reimburse shipping expenses. It is essential that salvaged specimens be deposited in a licensed, public scientific or educational institution where they will be cared for and utilized in a proper manner. Contact the Bird Banding Laboratory for clarification if you have any doubts as to the propriety of depositing materials in any collection not on the attached list.

The institutions on the list have indicated a willingness to pay shipping charges for specimens sent to them collect. Please keep in mind that the accumulated costs may be considerable and do all you can to minimize them. One means is delivering the specimens in person if at all possible, and shipping several specimens at one time rather than shipping each one as it is collected. By sending the material to the closest museum, you reduce both the expense of shipping and the time the specimen is in transit.

ALWAYS ADVISE A MUSEUM BY AIRMAIL LETTER OR TELEPHONE OF AN IMPENDING SHIPMENT. This will give them an opportunity to provide you with special instructions or requests and lessen the chances of specimens thawing and spoiling because of delays in transit.

Shipment by REA (Air Express Division) will be delivered, but may be picked up at the airport by Museum personnel if they have advance notice of shipment. Shipment by Air Freight (on individual airlines) must be picked up at the airport by the addressee unless he is willing to pay additional costs for delivery. An alternative, not generally recommended, is Airmail--Special Delivery. Such shipments must be prepaid and are relatively expensive. If you have a question concerning the best way to ship, contact the institution to which you plan to donate your specimens.

Always send specimens early in the work week (preferably on Mondays) and especially avoid sending shipments that might be delivered during a holiday period. Use enough dry ice to insure safe delivery in case of an unexpected delay and insulate the vented package as well as possible.

An invoice listing the specimens in a shipment must be placed in an envelope attached to the package marked "Scientific Specimens-- Invoice Enclosed." As mentioned above, the package should also be prominently marked that it contains dry ice.

I. Records. Until you receive more specific instructions, you should keep a record of:

1. Species
2. Band number (if banded)
3. How the bird died or came into your possession
4. Date of death
5. Location of death
6. Institution to which the specimen was sent
7. Date on which it was sent

By the end of the calendar year, you will receive forms for reporting to the Bird Banding Laboratory all of the birds you salvaged during 1971. When these forms are mailed this winter, a complete set of instructions will be included.

J. Institutions. The following is the list of institutions that have stated they are interested in receiving specimens and will pay shipping costs:

DEPOSITORY

ADDRESS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Alaska

University of Alaska

Dr. Brina Kessel
College of Biological Sciences
and Renewable Resources
University of Alaska
College, Alaska 99701

(907)-479-7671 or 479-7505

Arizona

University of Arizona

Department of Biological Sciences
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona 85721
Attention: Dr. S. M. Russell

(602)-884-1588

California

California Academy of Sciences

Department of Ornithology
and Mammalogy
Golden Gate Park
California Academy of Sciences
San Francisco, California 94118

(415)-221-5100

San Bernardino County Museum

Ontario International Airport
Public Relations Office
Ontario, California 91761

Mark: "On arrival call
Eugene A. Cardiff, 875-5358, or
San Bernardino County Museum,
877-2272."

District of Columbia

U. S. National Museum of
Natural History

Bird and Mammal Laboratories
National Museum of Natural History
10th and Constitution Avenue, NW.
Washington, D. C. 20560

Mark: "Call (202)-381-5633 on
arrival at Washington National
Airport."

Mark: "Convert to G.B.L."

Florida

Florida State Museum

University of Florida
Florida State Museum
Gainesville, Florida 32601

(904)-392-6571

Illinois

Field Museum of Natural History

Mr. Emmet R. Blake
Curator of Birds
Division of Birds
Field Museum of Natural History
Roosevelt Road and Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60605

(312)-922-9410
REA only.

Kansas

University of Kansas

Dr. Robert M. Mengel
Division of Ornithology
University of Kansas
Museum of Natural History
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

(913)-864-2700
REA or write in advance

Kentucky

University of Louisville

University of Louisville
Department of Biology
(Attention: Dr. B. L. Monroe,
Room 220, L. S. Building)
Louisville, Kentucky 40208

(502)-636-4779, 636-4431, or
245-8084

Louisiana

Louisiana State University

Louisiana State University
Museum of Zoology
Drawer MU
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

(504)-388-2855

Minnesota

University of Minnesota

Curator of Birds
Bell Museum of Natural History
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

(612)-373-2423

New Jersey

New Jersey State Museum

Bureau of Science
New Jersey State Museum
205 W. State Street
Trenton, New Jersey 08625
Attention: Heintzelman

(609)-292-6330
Air Freight to Mercer County,
New Jersey, Airport.

New Mexico

University of New Mexico

Dr. J. David Ligon
Department of Biology
University of New Mexico
Museum of Southwestern Biology
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87106

(505)-277-2135, 277-3315, or
277-2624

New York

Cornell University

Cornell University
Section of Ecology and Systematics
Langmuir Laboratory
Ithaca, New York 14850

(607)-256-1000
Attention: Mr. Rollin Bauer

Ohio

Ohio State Museum

Museum of Zoology
The Ohio State University
1813 North High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43210

(614)-422-8560

Oklahoma

University of Oklahoma

Dr. Gary D. Schnell
Curator of Birds
University of Oklahoma
Stovall Museum of Science
and History
Norman, Oklahoma 73069

(405)-325-4711
Air Freight preferred

Utah

University of Utah

Dr. William H. Behle
Department of Biology
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah 84112

(801)-322-6161 or 322-6184
(or 322-7576 or 322-8510)

Washington

Puget Sound Museum of
Natural History

Dr. Gordon D. Alcom, Director
Thompson Science Hall
Puget Sound Museum of Natural
History
University of Puget Sound
Tacoma, Washington 98416

(206)-759-3521, Ext. 722
REA only.

Washington State Museum

Dr. Frank Richardson
University of Washington
Washington State Museum
Seattle, Washington 98105

(206)-543-4066

4. Status of "The Edit." MTAB's 12 and 14 discussed in some detail "The Edit" of our various banding and recovery files. To recapitulate, the edit consists of the identification of computer-detectable errors and their resolution by comparing the erroneous data with source documents. There are additional errors in the file which are not readily machine-detectable.

The edit of the "tub file" (which contains data for bandings since January 1, 1967) produced 58,000 errors, and these have been resolved. The data on schedules now being received in the Banding Laboratory undergo the same edit checks before being entered into the files. Therefore, every time new data are added to the file, a number of errors are detected and resolved, thus keeping the accumulating data "clean." The volume of the tub file as of July 27, 1971, was 5,890,341 bandings and is growing at the rate of over a million bandings each year.

In April 1970, the recovery file edit checked 1,490,909 records and produced 110,552 errors. All but 20,562 of these have been resolved and reentered into the file. These records are being corrected in AOU-number sequence and we are presently working on the blackbirds. We are hoping to finish the resolution of these errors by September. The logic of the recovery file edit has also been incorporated into the Report to the Hunter/Bander system. This is the system which processes and edits recoveries as they accumulate, which is at the rate of slightly fewer than 100,000 per year.

Other phases of the recovery file edit are still being programmed (see MTAB-14, page 5).

As might be expected, the summary file, containing summarized records of all game bird bandings prior to 1967 and non-game bird bandings

from 1955-66, inclusive, is proving to be full of inconsistencies. The banding summary record, it must be remembered, contains no band number. We had originally planned to edit these banding records, but found that for many pre-1965 bandings there is nothing in the computer record which can lead us back to those original schedules which are filed by band number. Therefore, we have tentatively decided to keypunch the schedules for bands size 3 and larger used during the 1960-66 period, and edit the summary file of only the pre-1960 material. We have already begun this repunching, commencing with the size 7 bands.

We have not yet edited the pre-1960 material, but a test program checking records for all years through 1966 found 55,639 errors in approximately 1,974,142 records (the latter number of summarized records represents 18,511,650 birds). Work on this edit will begin later this year.

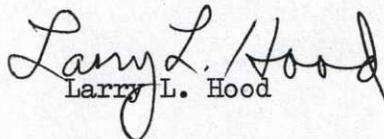
5. The "Moratorium." In MTAB-12 you were notified that because of the edit we would not honor requests for data from our files for an "extended period." Even though we are somewhat "overextended" at the moment, and though the incompletely edited recovery file is in disarray, we have decided to do our best to satisfy requests for data. We now have a general purpose retrieval program which can be used to retrieve most data from the files quite efficiently. Exceptions are current data that have not been placed in the master files (which is accomplished once a year) and portions of some song bird recovery files containing errors which were removed from the master file and have not yet been resolved and replaced.

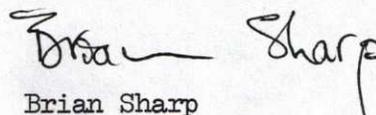
An important qualification, if we supply data, is the likelihood that we will be unable to correct any errors you may discover, or verify questionable records. We would appreciate being informed of any errors you find. This seems like an odd position to take but we are still a long way from completing the correction of errors revealed by machine edits of the banding files, and the orderly progress of this work demands that the limited staff not be interrupted to work on a variety of error correction problems. At the same time, knowledge that certain errors exist that might not be revealed by the machine edits adds to our understanding of several kinds of problems, including the reliability of the data, and the corrections of these errors can be completed at a later time.

An additional qualification is the likelihood that we will respond to requests rather slowly. Since we are limited by both staff and computer facilities, efficiency demands that we accumulate retrieval requests for a period of perhaps three months before running them. A request today for data tomorrow is not yet within the realm of our capability in spite of the supposed advantages of the "machine age."

With these thoughts in mind, if you need banding data and are willing to accept it "as is," we will do our best to honor your requests.

6. Publishing Banding Data. We encourage banders to analyze and publish data which result from their banding activities. However, during the past few months we have noticed several "interesting" recoveries published in various banding journals, some of which, after being checked out, have proven erroneous. Such errors can result from misread band numbers, key-punch errors, amnesia, or something even more unexpected. Before banders' cards and Certificates of Appreciation are mailed, the recoveries are checked by computer for machine-detectable errors (see MTAB-12, page 3) and by a biologist for "biological" errors, but due to the large volume (close to 100,000 recoveries a year) some errors still slip through. Therefore, please be suspicious of "interesting" recoveries and ask the Banding Laboratory for verification before publishing. Editors of banding journals and newsletters should request verification from authors that the information has been checked at the Banding Laboratory.


Larry L. Hood


Brian Sharp