



# NORTH AMERICAN BIRD PHENOLOGY PROGRAM



E-Newsletter  
November 2010

*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*

## Announcements



- The BPP is very excited to announce the hire of computer scientist, Asif Jamil, to help develop the BPP database and interface.
- 160,000 new migration cards were uploaded onto the transcription page, adding many new species.
- We have a treat this month, our **Observer of the Month** is written by the observer's grandson, Winthrop Gross of Portland Oregon.
- The "**Observer Bios**" page has been updated. The page now has photo's of the observers and recent "observer of the month" bios have been added.
- Many of you have expressed the desire to have a message board where you can interact with other transcribers. We've added a link to our **Facebook** page on the BPP homepage. Feel free to leave messages for other transcribers or for us in the BPP office.
- Five new volunteers have started coming into the BPP office this month. If you would like to volunteer in the BPP office contact **Brandon**.
- The BPP has a new general email address [bpp@usgs.gov](mailto:bpp@usgs.gov). All of us in the BPP office will have access to the inbox and it should increase our efficiency in addressing your questions and concerns.
- Judy Reynolds, one of our online transcribers, has updated the Bird Observers excel file to make it easier to search by location. You can find it on the left side panel of the **Transcription V3 page**.

## Current Progress



### Current Migration Card Count:

**1,979**  
Online Volunteers

**346,786**  
Cards Transcribed Online

**17**  
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**

**Find us on Facebook** 

**USA-NPN**

## What We're Working to Bring You



- We will be sending an email with the results of last month's online survey shortly.
- We are working to create new google charts and add to existing charts on the webpage.
- We are working to keep the webpage up to date, keep all links functional, and provide any information you need.

## Volunteer of the Month

### Charlotte Cooke-Fuller



Charlotte Cooke-Fuller

This has been a great volunteer opportunity for me because it combines my love of birds and travel with a project that I can fit around other things. I became interested in birds many years ago in Girl Scouts and was lucky to have a husband who became equally passionate. We pursued it over many trips both in this country and abroad until his death in Bhutan. Luckily our bird guide is still willing to plan trips abroad for me, and - after a few years elsewhere, I am excited to return to South America next fall.

I grew up in Illinois, graduated from high school in California, and returned to the Midwest to Iowa State at Ames for my undergraduate work. After some years as a homemaker, I returned to school and then moved to Maryland to teach at Towson

University. I retired in 2000 from the Health Sciences Dept., where my specialty was nutrition. Since then I have pursued a variety of interests that include sewing and gardening. I volunteer with the county Court Watch program and am a docent at Evergreen House. Besides birding, I am passionate about old grist mills and travel. I have just returned from a 2-month, 12,000 mile trip west that included the Lewis and Clark Trail, a week of birding along the Rio Grande in southern Texas, and about 20 new mills.

## Observer of the Month

### Alfred O. Gross



Alfred O. Gross was born April 8, 1883 on a farm at Atwood, IL, the son of German immigrants. As a teenager, he showed an early interest in natural history, collecting and mounting specimens of birds and mammals, insects, snakes, frogs, etc., found around his home. Hating farm work, he took and passed an examination given by the University of Illinois Academy, and matriculated to Urbana, where he spent most of his time in the Natural History Museum and the Taxidermist's quarters. Alfred's skill at taxidermy brought him to the attention of Dr. Frank Smith, Professor of Zoology, who allowed him to attend zoology lectures (avoiding tuition fees)



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.

[Learn More....](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)



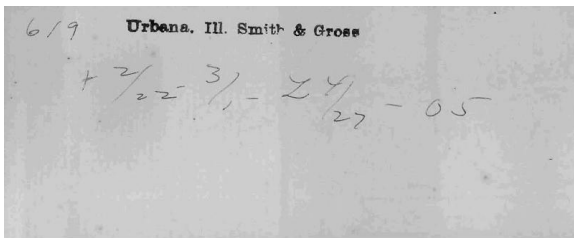
and invited him each weekend to study the birds at Crystal Lake Park in Urbana.

Alfred Gross (right) and Howard Ray

While a junior at the University, Gross was selected by Prof. Stephen A. Forbes, Director of the Illinois Natural History Laboratory, to conduct the first ever "Illinois Statistical Ornithological Survey". Beginning in 1906, and continuing through 1907, Gross and his assistant, Howard Ray, walked more than 3000 miles, usually in straight lines through all sorts of habitat, making the census. According to the Illinois Natural History Survey website, "this was the first extensive statistical analysis of bird populations in this country". The census has been repeated twice: on the 50th and 100th anniversaries of Gross's census.

Gross completed his Ph. D. at Harvard, and accepted a position as Professor of Zoology at Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME, where he spent the rest of his life. His lifelong research was field ornithology, compiling detailed life histories of many species both in North America and the Neotropics. He wrote over 20 species accounts for Bent's "Life Histories of North American Birds", but today he is best known for his work on the Heath Hen, documenting its decline and extinction on the island of Martha's Vineyard (cf. Cokinos, "Hope is the Thing with Feathers"). Alfred Gross died May 9, 1970, in Greenwich, CT.

Gross's contribution to the North American Bird Phenology Project appears to be confined to his years at Urbana, birding with Dr. Smith. As my grandfather, he nurtured my early interest in birds. I vividly remember him stamping his foot with excitement at seeing a singing Common Yellowthroat chased by a Sharp-shinned Hawk on one of our bird walks together. I have a dimmer recollection of finding a pile of blank NA Phenology cards in his office one day, sometime in the early 1960s. When I asked about them, he replied rather disgustedly, "oh, that's a project where they ask people to send in lots of data, but they have no way of analyzing it!" I have enjoyed finding the occasional card from "Smith & Gross" while transcribing, even if it proves him wrong!



Thanks again to Winthrop A. Gross, a BPP participant and Alfred Gross's grandson, for writing this biography.

## Trivia

Congratulations to last month's winner Patrick Johnson who answered correctly with the Laughing Kookaburra.

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

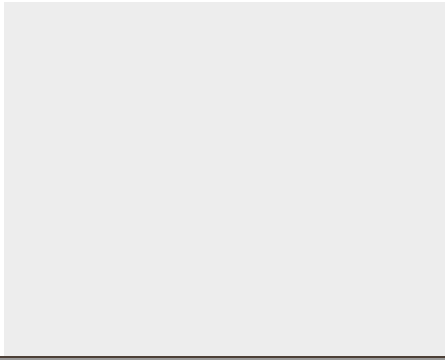
When the Air Force conducted test runs to break the sound barrier, fields of turkeys dropped dead, why?

As always, if you have an 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



[Forward this email](#)

 **SafeUnsubscribe®**

This email was sent to bwk055@yahoo.com by [jzelt@usgs.gov](mailto:jzelt@usgs.gov).

[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Email Marketing by



North American Bird Phenology Program | USGS/ Patuxent Wildlife Research Center- Beltsville Lab | BARC-East, Bldg 308, Rm 105. | 10300 Baltimore Avenue | Beltsville | MD | 20705