

From the Editor

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From the Editor

There are few activities in life that I enjoy more than catching and banding birds. It is fun to put up some nets and see what gets caught. Perhaps there is a component of gambling to this, as you never know what species may be lurking in the underbrush. If you are netting in a spot where you have worked before, you have the chance of catching something banded in the past that is exceptionally old or unusual for some other reason.

Of course, the Bird Banding Laboratory does not want to hear that I am out banding for fun, so I usually disguise my activities as research projects or teaching. I started using mist nets while in high school, and the ability to use nets as a sampling tool was integral to my doctoral work. Some of my colleagues and I continue to do an annual sample using a netline that I started in 1973 in Puerto Rico. Most of my work and much of that of my students involves some aspect of marking birds.

Bird banding revolves around the idea that a mark makes a bird an individual that can be followed over both time and space. While the space parameter works well for waterfowl—birds that are fairly easy to band in large numbers on the breeding grounds and are hunted and gathered during winter—it does not work so well for small birds. The reality is that when you release a banded passerine for the first time, the odds are that no one will ever see it again unless you do, when you come back to your banding site at some later time. The fact that many birds, including long-distance migrants, are extremely site-faithful means that you often do recapture that banded bird and gather important information about avian survival. It was extremely exciting for me to find that a recaptured Puerto Rican Flycatcher (*Myiarchus antillarum*) was at least 17 years old, or that a Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*) was banded 11 years earlier, meaning that it had made nearly a dozen round trips between its winter and summer homes!

With recent concern about declining populations of long-distance migratory birds, it has become increasingly important that we understand the details about migration in these species. Understanding whether declines are occurring during breeding or wintering requires knowledge of how birds mix as they make their seasonal movements. With little mixing, loss of habitat during the wintering period could not only easily explain declines on the breeding grounds, but such knowledge would keep us from wasting effort on breeding season conservation.

Unfortunately, bird banding has provided little information about movements and linkages in migrant bird populations. Too few birds are banded, and these birds then travel over too much area. Fortunately, though, there are some new ways that allow us to determine linkage between breeding and wintering sites and to even measure some aspects of migratory behavior. *Ornithological Monograph No. 61* presents these new approaches as applied to two of our most widespread migratory warblers. While gathering blood and feathers might not be as much fun as banding, and the data gathered from DNA or isotopes may not be as precise as the information that will be gathered when someone finally catches one of my winter resident warblers on its breeding territory, this monograph presents what is undoubtedly the future for studies of bird movements, at least until some kind of minuscule radiotransmitter with a powerful signal is invented. Until then, I will keep on banding.

John Faaborg