

## INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS

By Frank P. Frazier, Jr.

The 13th International Ornithological Congress, the first to be held in the United States, was held in Ithaca, New York at Cornell University, June 17 to 24, 1962. Some 800 persons attended, of whom about 300 came from 30 or more foreign countries. Canada, England and Germany were among the best represented.

The Congress opened with an address by its president, Dr. Ernst Mayr, on Sunday evening, June 17th. Scientific sessions were held Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday morning; three concurrent sessions being in progress each day. With so much of interest going on at once, it was often difficult to decide which session to attend. In addition to the paper sessions, films were shown each evening, some of them of remarkable quality.

Too many of the papers presented had some relation to bird banding to mention each one here. However, EBBA members who presented papers at the Congress included O. L. Austin, "Comparative Demographies of *Sterna hirundo* and *Sterna fuscata*"; H. E. McClure, "Birds and the Epidemiology of Japanese Encephalitis"; J. B. Gollop, "Dispersal of Young Mallards. . .Based on Banding Records"; Edwin A. Mason, "Pesticides in Relation to Environments"; and Frances Hamerstrom, "The Use of Great Horned Owls in Catching Marsh Hawks".

Wednesday was devoted to field trips to several spots near Ithaca. It was rather a damp day, but although constantly threatening, it did not rain and the trips were a success -- particularly for the visitors from abroad, who saw numerous "life birds". After the trips, everyone gathered at the state park on Cayuga Lake for an outdoor barbecue.

The International Committee for Bird Ringing met Tuesday evening, June 19th, with 54 persons from 14 countries present. Dr. Rudolph Drost of Germany presided. The meeting began with a discussion of the purpose and scope of this committee; the sense of the meeting was that it meet every four years, at International Congresses, to discuss problems of a truly international nature; meanwhile the committee would continue in existence through its Chairman and Secretary. Dr. Robert Etchecopar of France was then elected the new chairman, and Dr. Oliver Austin of the United States secretary.

Several general problems of bird banding were discussed, including different types of metal - and plastic - for bands, publicity for banding programs, and matters related to nets, particularly the danger of nets falling into the wrong hands. The relative merits of importation of nets versus local manufacture were discussed: importation reduces the danger of nets falling into the wrong hands, whereas local manufacture, if not

carefully controlled, increases it. However, Mr. Spencer, of England, mentioned that the British manufacture their own nets, but with sufficient control so that it is impossible for anyone except banders to get them.

Another problem which was discussed in considerable detail was that of re-ringing: the practice of removing the band of a recovery (a foreign recovery) and replacing it with one's own band, and then sending the removed band with the recovery report. This problem fortunately does not exist in the U.S., but the practice is very prevalent in Europe where there are many different banding centers using their own bands. Arguments against this practice are that it cuts off contact between the bird and the original bander -- i.e. no possibility of further recoveries as far as he is concerned; also, no possibility of old age records on such birds, nor any possibility of continuing data as far as the original bander is concerned. On the other hand, some of those present, notably Dr. Schifferli of Switzerland, were strongly in favor of this practice principally because of the possibility of misread bands; if the band is returned with the recovery report there is no possibility of error. This reporter had the impression, however, that most of those present were opposed to the practice of re-ringing. It seems that this practice shows a restriction of interest on the bander's part to recoveries, as opposed to other types of information available through banding.

Among other matters discussed at the meeting were the status of The Ring, that it would serve as the official organ for this Committee. Dr. W. Rydzewski, its Editor, spoke briefly on The Ring and its need for continued support in the form of subscriptions and contributions of material. Extra copies of EBBA NEWS, the special enlarged May-June issue, were given to all in attendance at this meeting. (250 copies of the issue were brought to the Congress and nearly all were taken.)

On Thursday evening, June 21st, there was a meeting of the North American Council of Bird Banding Associations (NACOBBA), of which EBBA is a member. Dr. Oliver Austin presided. 43 persons attended, including several from foreign countries. The use of banding data occupied much of the meeting: the question of the advisability of publishing "raw data" before any analyses were made -- this is often done in Europe as well as here. Closely related is the matter of rights to data -- to whom does banding data belong? It was the consensus of the meeting that banding data is the property of the central office, in our case the Banding Office at Patuxent, but that it is incumbent on the Banding Office to use discretion in making this data available, to avoid "stepping on toes". Allen Duvall, Chief of the Banding Office, discussed this question and to illustrate his policy, gave the example of a bander who is making detailed studies, through banding, of Mallards in Canada. Although it is the general practice of the Banding Office to make banding data available to persons who are making serious studies, in this case obviously he would not release the Mallard bander's data to someone else without his consent.

The matter of errors in banding records was discussed briefly - something which is to some extent unavoidable, but which will be greatly reduced through the increased use of IBM data processing and other streamlining procedures in the Banding Office.

Dr. H. E. McClure, from Malaya, (a frequent contributor to EBBA NEWS) mentioned the good works of the regional bird banding associations in the U. S. and their publications.

The topic usually introduced as "banding with a purpose" was discussed in its various aspects, interestingly - but without any conclusion as to desirable policy. Interesting and helpful remarks were made by the designers attending this meeting, particularly Mr. Spencer from England, Dr. Schifferli from Switzerland, and Dr. Goethe from Germany. In Europe, apparently banding permits (or their equivalent) are seldom if ever given to people who merely wish to band but have no definite project or study in mind. Most banders there band a particular species or group, or if they band anything they catch, then it is likely to be for a study of migration of a particular sort. In England, however, indiscriminate banding is not discouraged. According to Mr. Spencer, they find it still desirable to have as many birds banded as possible. However a considerable proportion of banders in England do so in connection with a specific purpose.

The Congress closed Saturday evening, June 23rd, with a banquet. In closing this account, it must be said that the Congress was a resounding success with remarkably smooth-working arrangements - marred only by the last-minute inability of certain Russian ornithologists to attend. And as at most comparable meetings, some of the most interesting things which occurred were not on the program - namely, the constant informal conversation and contact among ornithologists at all levels of erudition in the science.

Colmena Derecha 208, Lima, Peru.

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