

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BANDERS TO PRESERVE THEIR RECORDS
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During the past few years, I have been engaged in a number of ornithological research projects which required reference to original, often unpublished, data in the files of amateur and professional ornithologists and bird banders. As I examined these records, I was deeply impressed by their scientific value. In some instances, they represented the only scientific documentation of the birdlife of a particular region—documentation which not only covered long periods of time, but also was irreplaceable. At the same time, I was deeply concerned by the fact that many persons have not planned for the eventual permanent preservation of their ornithology notebooks containing a lifetime of observational and banding data. The tragedy is that often these notes become discarded as estates are being settled! What a loss to science this is! Yet, this happens all too frequently.

Therefore, I submit that it is the responsibility of all bird students, bird banders and other ornithologists, to take adequate measures to assure that their records will be permanently placed in a depository where they can be preserved and made available to all qualified research workers. Particularly, this responsibility weighs heavily upon active banders who are not formally associated with institutional banding programs where adequate security is provided for their records. Perhaps a good way to insure the future safety of private banders' records would be to establish as one condition of the renewal and granting of a banding permit a written agreement of intent that banding records and notebooks, at an appropriate time (usually the death of the bander), are to be deposited in a recognized depository for scientific records, the name of which would be supplied to the federal banding office and kept on permanent file there. When one considers the tremendous sums of money which are spent annually by the federal government to run the bird banding program, and the fact that the issue of a banding permit is in itself recognition that one is granted special permission to assist in a large scale scientific research program, it is not unreasonable to expect that a condition for the granting of this special permission should be written indication regarding the ultimate disposition of the records which are amassed under the authority of a banding permit.

This is hardly a new or novel idea. Persons currently holding federal scientific collecting permits must indicate, in writing, the name of the institution in which all of their specimens ultimately will be deposited. Why should the same requirement not apply to the records of bird banders?

Although the selection of a recognized depository would, in most cases, remain the option of the bander, it would probably be best if the bander deposited his original records in a depository in the state in which most of his banding was conducted. Remember, it was that state as

well as the federal government which granted special permission for you to conduct banding activities. Don't you owe that state government the opportunity to preserve your records if it wishes to do so? Should the government not wish to accept your banding notes, then the selection of another depository would remain your choice. A regulation of this type would apply only to private individuals holding bird banding permits; it would not apply to institutions operating banding programs. And, additional provision would be made to assure that close relatives (wives, husbands, daughters, sons, etc.) wishing to carry on the work of a bander would have every right to retain the bander's notes. Eventually, however, if they no longer wished to retain the notes, the records would be placed in a depository.

The development and coordination of a record depository program, or possibly a record depository center (resulting from the cooperation of several institutions agreeing to jointly serve in this capacity), would make an ideal cooperative project for the Eastern Bird Banding Association and similar banding associations, working in close cooperation with private institutions (chiefly museums), and state and federal governments.

As William Pepper wrote more than a decade ago (EBBA NEWS, 21: 84-85), it may be later than you think to arrange your records and select a depository in which to assure their permanent preservation. The time to act is now, when you are alive and mentally alert!

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