



Logo sketch by Barb Petorak

## Vulture Vibes

With my deepest respect and admiration, I would like to dedicate this column to the memory of Carl B. Koford, who pioneered the research on the California Condor. Mr. Koford passed away shortly before Christmas, after dedicating many years of his life working for the preservation of this species. While not all of us agreed with his solutions, we all do agree that he was a greatly talented scientist who will be missed. What greater tribute could we pay to him than to continue the attempt to preserve the California Condor!

I attended the recent Raptor Research Conference in California, which was both interesting and rewarding. After the conference, a group of us accompanied Condor Naturalist, John Borneman, to a ranch in southern California to search for the condor. About 1300 PST, an adult condor was sighted, awesome to behold as it foraged. There, soaring effortlessly above us, was the largest vulture in North America. The impact of sighting one of the 25 to 30 remaining condors in North America is mind-boggling — 3 to 4% of the entire population.

After watching the condor in the wild, we traveled

to Los Angeles Zoo, to visit Topa-Topa, the only California Condor in captivity. It is devastating to realize the severity of the condor's plight, when one has the opportunity for a close-up look at this magnificent bird.

There have been many responses to my last column. For you Californians: Ms. Autumn Davidson has begun to tag Turkey Vultures in the East Bay area. She is using 10 X 15 cm (4 X 6 inch) green dorsal and patagial tags with black numbering. Any sightings of these birds should be reported to: Bird Banding Laboratory, Laurel, MD 20811 and to Ms. Autumn Davidson, Dept. of Forestry and Conservation, Wildland Resource Science, 6 Mulford Hall, Univ. of Calif., Berkeley, CA 94720. It will be greatly appreciated.

I have received several reports of color-tagged birds which were seen. Seth Benz of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, south-central PA, reported a Turkey Vulture with a white wing tag on the right wing, seen 18 September 1979 at 1345 EST. It was seen again on the following day.

A report was received from Franklin C. Haas, who saw a Turkey Vulture with a blue wing tag (No. M-66), near the Little Mountain Hawk Lookout, southwestern PA, on 11 October 1979 at 1114 EST. The bird was seen with two other vultures flying west along the ridge. This bird (No. M-66) was wing-tagged by Shiela Gaby of Miami, FL. The bird apparently came north for the spring and summer and was returning to Florida for the winter (smart bird). Ms. Gaby has been informed of this sighting and is looking forward to seeing the bird again this winter.

Alex Nagy, also of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, reported two additional sightings of blue tagged vultures (also Ms. Gaby's). These birds were sighted by Jay George in Lancaster County, south-central PA, on 18 October 1979 at 1440 EST and again at 1505 EST.

I am interested in the white tagged bird. I am assuming that it was tagged by J.D. Bittner in Ohio, since he is the closest tagger to the sighting area who is using white. If there is anyone else wing-tagging with white, please let me know. These reports are fascinating and point out one of the

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## News, Notes, Comments

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reasons vultures are such interesting birds to study. I encourage anyone sighting wing-tagged vultures to send in the reports.

Question: Where do the vultures go when they mysteriously disappear? I have yet to establish any concrete evidence for my "temperature relief" theory. Robert Simpson of Middleton, Virginia, reports a similar happening in his area. There is, usually, a vulture roost of approximately 1200 Black and Turkey Vultures there. In 1978 not a single bird used the roost. In the fall of 1979, there were about 70 Turkey Vultures and 300 Black Vultures using the roost, and by late December there were approximately 750 Turkey and 500 Black Vultures using the roost. Why did they neglect this roost the previous year? This is just one more unanswered and interesting aspect of the vulture question.

Seth Benz, Hawk Mountain staff, reported that on 25 November 1979 approximately 54 Turkey Vultures circled above an isolated hill, in a thermal, and proceeded southward along the ridge of the Kittatiny Mountains.

Please send any general information, comments, problems, or solutions about vultures to: Nancy L. Karner, 126 Pennsylvania Ave., Bangor, PA 18013.

### Excerpts from MTAB-39

- A. There seems to be some confusion regarding age classes L (local) and HY (hatching year). A young bird which is **incapable** of **sustained** flight should be aged L (local). HY is reserved for a bird **capable** of **sustained** flight and known to have hatched during the calendar year in which it was banded.
- B. Please allow 40-60 days to process requests for auxiliary-marking authorization. In requesting your authorization, **follow** the **instructions** in MTAB-37 to facilitate processing. You may call the BBL to discuss auxiliary-marking requests, **but** the conversation should be followed by written request.
- C. If bands are transferred between banders, obtain prior permission from BBL. Permission can be obtained by telephone with a following letter stating the **names, permits, and band numbers** involved.
- D. Please do not use two (2) metal bands on the same tarsus. One or both bands may flare and result in an injury to the tarsus.
- E. Banders who band colonial nesting birds **should not submit** banding schedules (Form 3-860) **if** they plan to revisit the colony to check for mortality. If banded birds are found dead within 90 days of banding, destroy the bands immediately and report them as destroyed ("Band destroyed") on the banding schedule. If schedules **have already been submitted**, send a list of the band numbers and a note of explanation to the BBL.
- F. Foreign retraps of birds which are caught several times should be reported only for the **last date of each month**. Do not report birds which you have banded unless they are trapped outside of the 10 minute block where originally banded. Multiple auxiliary marker and band sighting reports for the same bird should be reported once for each month, using the date of the last sighting for each location.
- G. Banders should put their **permit number on all correspondence**. Correspondence should come from the Master permit holder and **not** from the sub-permittees. If a sub-permittee finds it necessary to write directly to the BBL, he should use his **permit number** and **have the letter signed (approved) by the Master bander**.
- H. When telephoning BBL, you can save time if you explain the purpose of your call to the secretary. BBL personnel are trained to handle specific problems, and the secretary will direct your call to the appropriate person. Frequently, the person asked for cannot, or is not authorized to, handle your inquiry. If your call involves earlier correspondence, it can be pulled out and referred to the person actually working on it. Many different problems must be resolved daily, and we want to use your time, as well as ours, efficiently. Your cooperation will be appreciated.

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## **Snow Buntings: Winter banding activities**

*(Reprinted with permission from the Ontario Bird Banding Association's Newsletter, December-January 1979.)*

Are you interested in getting out of the house during those cold winter months? If so, why not spend some time banding Snow Buntings? I am looking for people to assist in a project designed to track the movements of Snow Buntings that move through Southern Ontario during the winter.

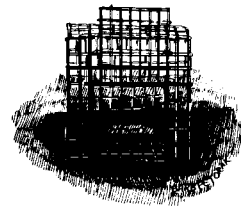
If you are a licensed bander, or someone who would like to help but you don't currently have a permit, I would like to hear from you. For those people who do not have a permit, I will try to put you in touch with someone in your area who is involved in this project. This project is not restricted to those living in Southern Ontario; we would like to include anyone who is interested, regardless of his/her locality.

The method that I have found successful over the past two years is to bait an area where the snow blows free, such as the side of a quiet road. Ground traps with dimensions of 4 feet long, 2 feet wide, and 1 foot high (1.2 X 0.6 X 0.3 m), made of 1-inch (2.5 cm) square welded wire work well. I have 2 holes on each side, offset from the ones on the opposite side. The holes are 4 X 4 inches (10 X 10 cm) with a funnel made of 1-inch (2.5 cm) chicken wire which extends into the trap 6 inches (15 cm) and is tapered to approximately 3 inches (7.6 cm). All of my traps have wire floors. There are 2 holes on the top, 10 inches X 10 inches (25.4 X 25.4 cm), with a wire lid 12 inches X 12 inches (30.5 X 30.5 cm) to allow the birds to be removed. If you don't have long arms, it would be a good idea either to shorten the length of the traps to 3 feet (0.9 m) or install a separator.

Perhaps you have some ideas of your own that you would like to pass on to other members. If you do, or would like to be part of this project in any way, please write to: Peter Lockhart, 86-520 Rossland Rd. E., Oshawa, Ont. L1G 2X5; telephone (416) 579-1185.

## **Ospreys nesting in Idaho: Color-marked**

Ospreys nesting in Idaho have been marked with red vinyl on the right wing as part of a study being conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Please report sightings of marked ospreys, with as much information as possible, to the Bird Banding Laboratory, Laurel, MD 20811 and Lawrence J. Van Daele, Dept. of Biology, Univ. of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83843.



## **Modifications to Potter traps**

**Susan R. Blackshaw**

As a new bander still learning the various tricks of the trade, I have come upon an idea that some banders using Potter traps may find useful.

My Potter traps arrived in the mail bottomless, as they all do. I simply cut out a plywood bottom for each. The bottom is slightly larger than the bottom dimensions of the trap, projecting about 4 cm beyond all four sides. This bottom piece is permanently attached.

Using a coat hanger which is cut in the middle of the longest part and carefully bent, it is possible to hang the trap similar to a bird feeder. This has proved very successful for me in catching many of my backyard birds that prefer hanging feeders to ground feeders (House Finches, chickadees, etc.)

A further improvement might be to mount the trap so that there is no shelf-like projection at the rear of the trap. Birds waste a great deal of time at the rear of the trap but, on the other hand, the projection seems to encourage their inspection and allay their fears when first investigating this new "feeder."

1333 Westmoreland Ave., Syracuse, NY 13210

## **Symposium on Estimating Populations of Terrestrial Birds**

### **Note date change**

The Symposium on Estimating Populations of Terrestrial Birds will be held 26-31 October 1980 at Asilomar, near Monterey, California.

The invited papers, to be given by authors from the United States, Canada, Europe, New Zealand, and Australia, will cover a wide range of subjects. The principal topics will be the problems, methods, and analyses of bird censusing.

There will be a variety of field trips during and after the Symposium to explore methods of censusing and habitats of coastal and interior California.

The Asilomar conference grounds are located in a state park on Monterey Bay and provide an attractive and stimulating setting.

For further information write the Symposium organizers: Dr. C. John Ralph and Dr. J. Michael Scott, Bird Census Symposium, P.O. Box 43, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, Hawaii 96718.

## **Dr. Van Riper named leader of National Park Service Cooperative Resource Studies Unit**

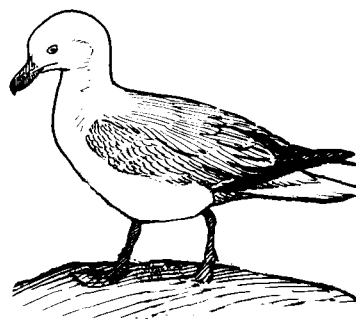
Dr. Charles van Riper III has been selected as the Unit Leader for the newly-established Cooperative National Park Resources Study Unit at the University of California at Davis.

A native of New York, van Riper holds a Bachelor of Science degree in zoology and a Master of Education in Science degree from Colorado State University. In 1978, he received his PhD in Zoology from the University of Hawaii. His doctoral dissertation was on the breeding ecology of birds found only in Hawaii — the Amakiki and the Pailila, on Mauna Kea.

Dr. van Riper has had more than 20 major articles, technical reports and papers published dealing with avian research in Hawaii. His interests are avian ecology and diseases with emphasis on endangered species of birds.

The Cooperative National Park Service Study Unit (CPSU) is a mutually beneficial relationship established by a formal agreement between the National Park Service and the University of California, Davis. The Park Service and the University will cooperate in conducting studies in ecological, environmental, and sociological management of units of the National Park System in California. When information is needed on which to base resource management decisions, the Park Service will call upon the CPSU at the University to assist in obtaining the required data.

Dr. van Riper will also be an adjunct assistant professor in zoology at U.C., Davis, and will teach, advise students, and conduct research.



## **Color-marked California Gulls**

California Gulls color-marked at Mono Lake, California, wear a FWS band and a red or light green band. Gulls captured as adults also wear a light blue patagial marker with black letters and numbers.

Observers are asked to note color and position on the legs of all bands, as well as the letter and number code on the patagial marker. Please report observations to the Bird Banding Laboratory, Laurel, MD 20811 and David Winkler, Mus. of Vert. Zool., Univ. of Calif., Berkeley, CA 94720.