



# Western Regional News

Western Bird Banding Association

Founded 1925

## From the President

As I sit in the shade of a grove of Arizona walnut trees on a warm afternoon, the reason my wife and I are here suggests a topic for this message: "using our ornithological skills as a public service." In this case we are censusing the birds of a riparian area by ear and eye rather than capture and banding, but the basic principle is the same, putting one's interests to work for organizations in need of data on bird populations. The need for biological information on which to make intelligent decisions about land management is acute. The age of the "indicator species" is here and birds are a favorite. Everyone wants an easy answer to the questions before them; For instance a vocal bird like a Yellow-breasted Chat tells by its absence that cows have consumed too much of the riparian vegetation in an area. Banding is a very useful method of censusing the birds in an area, minimizing the problems of observer variability, even though it takes longer than other methods.

Even if projects like this are not possible for you, the data available from the birds you band can fill many needs. There are still too many common birds for which a WBBA Worksheet is not available and it's hard to do a literature search with a bird in hand. Charlie Collins welcomes submissions of new sheets. Western Bird Banding Monograph #1 on bird weights by John Dunning is another place where banding data is indispensable. Have you examined weight and measurement data on the species you handle routinely? Could they be used for aging, sexing or distinguishing subspecies? Molt is another area too often neglected and banders have a unique opportunity to gather data here. When we capture a bird, we should gather as much data as practical while it is in hand. Steve Russell has discussed some potentials of pooling data and hopefully there will be some more concrete proposals in the future.

As Jerry Jackson indicated in his editorial in the Inland section of 8:4, we have an obligation to gather meaningful data and to report on it. Species studies, such as those on the Song Sparrow by Margaret Nice or the Cactus Wren by the Andersons, are very valuable, and a review of published studies where the techniques could be applied to other species or areas would be a valuable resource to all of us.

Finally let me close by expressing the thanks of WBBA to Martin McNicholl for his very successful efforts as President for the past two years, guiding the organization through a most stressful time, and all our best wishes to him in his new position at Long Point Bird Observatory.

Robert C. Tweit

### Western Bird Banding Association's Memorial Grant

The 1984 winner of this grant is Ann Marie Wyckoff of the Biology Department, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota. Her study is on the reproductive advantage of territory location in Chestnut-sided Longspurs. The WBBA Memorial Grant Committee, chaired by Robert C. Leberman, reviewed eleven applications for the 1984 grant competition.