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# *Bander's Forum*

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## **Amateur Banders Dropped**

Dear NABB Officers and Fellow Banders,

I have just received word that once again the Fish and Wildlife Service is seriously considering eliminating the banding of non-game birds by non-government or non-university employees. This is a topic that raises its ugly head every couple of decades or so.

It is still in the discussion stage at this time and has not yet reached the planning stage. If it does go that far it will be very hard to stop. We all have a responsibility to let our personal, as well as our organizational, voices be heard by the Fish and Wildlife Service administration as well as our own congressmen and senators.

I was told that the Fish and Wildlife people are "looking to improve the efficiency of the banding program". To do so they are seriously discussing the elimination of non-professional banders. Some of our most dedicated banders are non-professionals; housewives, retired persons, teachers, and concerned individuals. Most of these banders do it because they feel they are helping to learn some very vital information about the "dickey" birds; their movements, survival and life history.

Twenty five years ago this idea of dropping the amateur banding program got past the discussion stage and it was hard to stop. I urge each of the banding organizations to start taking actions immediately to end these discussions. Such action on the part of the federal government would mean the death of the banding organizations as there would be no need for their existence.

The crux of the issue as I see it is: Are amateur banders vital to gaining the knowledge that is necessary to understand the life history of all of our birds? Can this same information be gained by only the professionals banding the birds?

I am very biased but over the past thirty years, as editor of *Inland* and coordinator for NABB, I have been able to learn first hand what tremendous studies have been carried out by the amateur banders. I, personally, feel very strongly about the fact that few of the professional banders become as dedicated to their work as many of these amateurs. It is the dedication that is so vital to gaining the necessary knowledge that we need to understand the

life history of these many species of birds. Many of these species are experiencing rapid declines in their populations. Yet few people in government positions are willing to speak up and ripple the water for fear their job will be jeopardized.

If we had waited for the government employees to speak up about DDT we never would have gotten it banned. Bird banding gives each of us, amateurs though we are, the opportunity to monitor our own local bird populations to better understand their population trends and movements. It is high time that we let the world know about the vital work we are doing.

I urge each of you to contact your local newspaper and TV station about your work and ask them to come out to document your efforts so the public will learn more about this work. Give them a good story about how vital this work is and how the Fish and Wildlife Service is considering the cancellation of your work. When you get a copy in the newspaper send it to your congressman, urging him or her to put a stop to the Fish and Wildlife Service even considering such action.

To win this battle we have to fight it the only way they know how, politically. If you talk to school children about your work, urge them to write also. School children and the public have a great influence on how our congressmen vote, especially when it comes to the government supporting the work of volunteers.

At the present time the amateur bander is provided bands, record forms, and lots of red tape for devoting a whole lot of time towards this whole endeavor. In return, the bander is given hassles from the banding office for errors on the records sent in and the opportunity to take a charitable deduction for his or her expenses incurred for the work. Whoopee!

My source has told me that the banding office may deny that any such discussion is going on, but don't let that lull you into not taking any action. The discussions are going on within the Fish and Wildlife Service on a level that has the ability to make this decision. Each of you must start today to take some action, now, before our banding program is eliminated from next year's budget. The future of the program is in your hands, so act today!

Terrence N. Ingram, Coordinator

## 20th INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS 1990

### Final Notice

The 20th International Ornithological Congress will take place in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 2-9 December 1990. The Congress programme will include 7 plenary lectures, 48 symposia, contributed papers (spoken and poster), workshops, round-table discussions and films. There will be a mid-Congress excursion day. Longer tours are planned to interesting ornithological sites in New Zealand before and after the Congress, including the post Congress cruises to sub-antarctic islands.

The Second and Final Circular of the Congress will be available from 1 October 1989 and will include the registration papers and forms for submitting papers. In late 1990 New Zealand will also host the 20th World Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation in Hamilton on 21-27 November 1990 and a Pacific Festival of Nature Films in Dunedin on 27 November - 1 December 1990. Requests for this Final Circular, which includes information on the above events, should be sent to:

Dr. Ben D. Bell, Secretary-General,  
20th International Ornithological Congress,  
School of Biological Sciences,  
Victoria University of Wellington,  
P.O. Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand  
(Telex NZ30882 VUWLIB; Facsimile NZ 64-4-712070)

## NORTH AMERICAN BLUEBIRD SOCIETY RESEARCH GRANT AWARDS

The North American Bluebird Society is proud to announce the presentation of the fourth annual research grant awards. The 1987 recipients are as follows:

### Bluebird Grant

Wayne H. Davis — Eastern Bluebird and European Starling: Competition for Nest Sites. \$1125

Steven G. Parren — Bluebird Nest Box Selection by Competing Passerines. \$950

### Student Grant

Danny J. Ingold — Nesting Phenology and Competition for Nest Sites Among Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers and European Starlings in East Central Mississippi. \$400

Kimberly A. With — Effects of Brood Size on the Parental Care of Western Bluebird Nestlings. \$836

### General Grant

Vasiliki Demas — Effect of Blowfly Parasitism on the Growth and Development of Western Bluebird Nestlings. \$1000

Gregory Hayward — Potential of Nest Boxes for Monitoring and Managing Boreal Owls. \$1050

William McComb — Microclimatic Characteristics of White-breasted Nuthatch Roost Sites. \$1110

The North American Bluebird Society annually provides research grants in aid for ornithological research directed toward cavity nesting species of North America with an emphasis on the genus *Sialia*. Information and application materials are available from Theodore W. Gutzke, Research Committee Chairman, P.O. Box 121, Kenmare, North Dakota 58746.