Meeting of the Society for Caribbean Ornithology

The Third Annual Meeting of the Society for Caribbean Ornithology was held at the Hotel Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, from 19-23 August 1989. Ninety-two people attended the four days of meetings, field trips, and symposia, including 60 from outside the Dominican Republic. Forty papers were presented (see abstracts of selected papers in this and future issues of "El Pitirre"). The meeting opened with Dr. Herbert Raffaele's workshop, "Proposal Writing and Funding Sources for Caribbean Ornithologists," which was attended by 30 participants.

Papers were presented in eight sessions: I. "Habitat Characteristics and Avian Population Responses," II. "Conservation Overviews in the Caribbean," III. "Status of Some Parrot Species in the Caribbean," IV. "Avian Taxonomy/Exotic and Colonizing Species Biology," V. "Aspects of Avian Captive Propagation," VI. "Biology of Seabirds and Shorebirds," VII. "General Ecology," and VIII. "Legislation and Conservation." Ten resolutions were submitted and voted on by the attendees; all were approved. Three subgroups were formed: Caribbean parrots, Caribbean columbids, and technical assistance. Ms. Annabelle ("Tudy") Stockton de Dod, who was unable to attend, was given the Society's Distinguished Ornithologist Award.

The Fourth Annual Meeting of the Society will be in Jamaica in 1990.

Hurricane Hugo

On September 18, 1989, Hurricane Hugo, savaged the Virgin Islands and the eastern end of Puerto Rico, where, with sustained winds of 155 mph (gusts to 200 mph), it was considered a Class IV storm. Forest habitat in the Luquillo Mountains, the last stronghold of the endangered Puerto Rican Parrot (*Amazona vittata*), was particularly hard-hit by the hurricane. Some sections of the forest were completely stripped of leaves and fruits, although some protected slopes sustained very little damage. All 38 captive Puerto Rican Parrots survived the storm within the indoor aviary facilities in the forest. A forest-wide count of the wild population held 1 week after the storm yielded a minimum of 22-23 Puerto Rican parrots. Pre-hurricane surveys showed a minimum of 47 parrots in the Luquillo Mountains.

The area of Cidra, east-central Puerto Rico, home of the endangered Puerto Rican Plain Pigeon

(*Columba inornata wetmorei*), sustained only light-to-moderate storm damage. Post-hurricane counts of the Cidra plain pigeon population yielded a minimum of about 200 pigeons.

The outlook for the very small (<15 birds in recent years) population of the endangered Yellow-shouldered Blackbird (*Agelaius xanthomus*) at Ceiba is less optimistic. The hurricane apparently passed directly over this area, and severely damaged the remnant blackbird habitat. Post-hurricane surveys failed to reveal surviving blackbirds.

Bird Banding on Andros Island, Bahamas

By Joanne Dewey
(Reprinted from *The Ottawa Banding Group Newsletter*, 1989, Vol. 6[2])

In February 1989, several Ottawa Banding Group members, including myself, went south to visit our feathered friends of summer on Andros Island, Bahamas. We stayed, as before, at Forfar Field Station, run by International Field Studies, Inc., of Columbus, Ohio. The purpose of the trip was to do some exploratory banding and to further examine the possibility of studying North American migrants on their wintering ranges. We first banded on Andros in 1983 (March 20 to 25) and again in 1984 (March 10 to 17), and later Tracey Dean banded whenever she had spare time while working at the field station from April 1984 to March 1985 [1,2]. [A total of 1,251 individuals (474 in 1989) of 51 species have been banded on Andros by the Ottawa Banding Group.] In the future, we would like to band more regularly on the island. Below, I have summarized the results of each banding site and the banding highlights of the trip.

Our main interest in banding on Andros is the capture of North American migrants and, in the future, we would like to establish two, maybe three, sites where we would realize the greatest number of these birds. The number of birds banded and the percentage of migrants caught at each site varied considerably. It is difficult to evaluate the data comparatively as the number of nets used varied and the time of day when banding took place is also variable. We will have a set pattern for our work in the future.

When selecting the potential banding sites, location and availability of transport must be taken into consideration. More distant locations obviously dictate an earlier start in the morning especially, as nets must be put up each time. Station vehicles may only be driven by station personnel, therefore a staff

member must be available for an early departure. It would be a vast expense for us to have our own vehicle.

The field station is the easiest place to band as it is "home." Unfortunately, large numbers of birds are not caught, probably because there are no features to attract or concentrate them. The vegetation surrounding the station is typical of northern Andros; i.e., Caribbean pine with a thick understory of silvertop pine, poisonwood, and shrubs. Therefore, it can be argued that we obtain a representative sample of birds using the main vegetation type of the island.

Owen's Town is an abandoned logging camp and is an area of shrubs, fruit trees, and flowers. Although the number of birds has not always been high, North American migrants have consistently comprised about half the catch. In 1989, Owen's Town was by far the best place to catch birds. We attribute this success to arriving at the site at dawn and knowing where to place the nets.

Goby Lake and Somerset Beach were each visited once.. Neither site was reached until later in the morning and it is possible they may be more productive at other times. Goby Lake is surrounded by vegetation similar to that at Forfar, while Somerset Beach has a mangrove swamp edge. Lengthy travel time to both these sites is a deterrent.

In the past, San Andros Airport was an ideal choice, but this year the area was undergoing construction and expansion with much of the vegetation destroyed or disturbed. If the development continues as planned, this area may no longer be suitable. Close to the airport is a Central Experimental Farm that we have not explored. Its potential looks good, as the field edges have low shrubs and the birds appear plentiful. Special permission will be needed to band there and hopefully we will obtain this before our next visit.

In the future, we plan to concentrate our efforts at the field station and at Owen's Town and do some exploratory banding at the Farm.

Although the banding on Adros has been sporadic, we have caught some interesting birds. For example, at Owen's Town: Tennessee, Orange-crowned, Wilson's, and Nashville warblers have been caught. D.W. Buden [3] lists these warblers as rare. With further investigation we may better establish their status.

In spite of the relatively low numbers of birds caught, we have some very interesting records. One, an Indigo Bunting caught a the airport in 1984, had been banded in Florida during the previous winter and was later found dead in Nova Scotia in May 1986 [4]. Another, a Magnolia Warbler banded December 12, 1984, at Forfar Field Station, was found December 15, 1985, nearby on Andros Island.

A Black-faced Grassquit, banded in 1984, was recaught in 1989, making the bird at least 5 years old.

When we banded for three winter seasons in a row, we did recapture birds banded in a previous year. Many were Bahamian residents, but some were North American migrants, indicating that some birds show a winter site fidelity. The migrants returning included: Yellow-throated Vireo, Ovenbird, Gray Catbird, Palm Warbler, and Prairie Warbler [2].

We are waiting for information [from the Bird Banding Laboratory] on a Greater Antillean Bullfinch and a Thick-billed Vireo we captured with someone else's bands. It will be very interesting to see where these normally resident birds were initially banded.

It is hoped that Ottawa Banding Group members will band on Andros for two weeks in November and again in March next winter. At that time we would like to do some exploratory banding at the Farm and concentrate the rest of our efforts at Forfar Field Station and Owen's Town. If we can band consistently at a few spots and establish a firm data base, then we should be able to obtain better information on winter site fidelity and which migrants stay on Andros throughout the winter. Although our main concern is the migrants, our banding can't help but yield further information on Bahamian species.

If you are interested in joining the next Andros expedition, please contact Janette Dean, 45 Preslir Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 7V6, Canada.

Literature Cited

[1] "Banding in the Bahamas." 1984. Ottawa - Banding Group Newsletter Vol. 1(2).

[2] "Banding Returns to Andros Island, Bahamas, 1984." 1985. Ottawa Banding Group Newsletter Vol. 2(1).

[3] Buden, D.W. 1987. The Birds of the Southern Bahamas. B.O.U. Check List No. 8, British Ornithologists' Union.

[4] "A Remarkable Traveller." 1988. North American Bird Bander Vol. 13(2).

Membership in the Ottawa Banding Group may be obtained ($10.00/year) through Beryl Johnson, Membership Secretary, Ottawa Banding Group, P.O. Box 3633, St. C, Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4J7 Canada. All donations are gratefully received and will be used to purchase bird feed, mist nets, and banding equipment. A receipt for income tax purposes will be issued on request for donations over $2.00.
