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# Western Regional News

## Notes and News From Around the Western Bird Banding Association

### WBBA President's message

We made it to 2021! It has been an interesting year, and it has been inspiring to see how people and banding stations alike have adapted to changing circumstances, still pushing forward to keeping research going amidst difficult times. While we unfortunately had to postpone our 2020 WBBA meeting in Grass Valley, California, we were able to launch a series of webinars on banding, molt, and aging birds. Be sure to check out our webinar summary and follow our social media for more updates! At this point, we are awaiting on a decision for our 2021 WBBA meeting. Stay tuned for more information. Follow our social media accounts (Instagram and Twitter: @wbba\_birds, Facebook: Western Bird Banding Association) for WBBA updates and banding opportunities. Be sure to tag us in your banding posts for the chance to be featured! We would love to hear more about how banding plays a role in your research, and how your banding station has adapted to continue during Covid. Thanks everyone for your continued work. It has been wonderful to see this community of banders come together.

**Holly Garrod**

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Research Coordinator

Costa Rica Bird Observatories

## Forest Fragments and Wood Thrushes in Costa Rica



A WBBA student grant was awarded to Samuel Lopes Oliveira, a PhD Candidate at Michigan Technological University, for his exciting project “Assessing the Value of Forest Fragments and Easements in Conserving Populations of Wood Thrush in Costa Rica”.

Populations of many migratory birds that breed in North America and spend the winter from Mexico to South America, have sadly declined in the past several decades. Extensive research in many areas shows that deforestation in the wintering grounds is an important factor in the sliding population trends of the Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), that has suffered a population decrease of 62% between 1966 and 2015. In its wintering area it mainly uses primary forests, but it can also be

found in secondary forests and agroecosystems. Although the presence of birds, or even their density, is one indicator of habitat importance, it can be improved on.

To learn exactly what habitats are best for the thrush in Costa Rica, Samuel will be working with the Costa Rica Bird Observatories in radio-tagging thrushes to compare body condition, home range size, and preferences in habitat variables between remnant forest patches in pineapple farms. This information will be a tool to guide in the choice of best fragments to protect through a conservation easement program involving payments to landowners from the government to protect vestiges of Wood Thrush habitat. The Costa Rica Bird Observatories has already had successful experiences in migratory bird conservation via the easement program.

Contribute to this program of student grants, if you can, through the WBBA web site (<http://www.westernbirdbanding.org/>)

### **WBBA Webinar Series An overwhelming success**

Since October 2020, the Western Bird Banding Association (WBBA) has been offering webinars to stay connected with many hundreds of our members and others and to share knowledge with both banders and non-banders alike. Because of the overwhelming success of these videos, offering webinars will continue into the future and will cover topics of interest to our members.

All of the webinars that WBBA is presenting are being recorded and are all hosted on the WBBA Facebook page in the "Videos" section. If you are interested in viewing any of the recordings, please visit the WBBA page at <https://www.facebook.com/Westernbirdbandng>.

The first webinar, held in October 2020, was given by Holly Garrod, WBBA's President and the Research Coordinator of the Costa Rica Bird Observatories. A few hundred watched as she covered the mission and goals of WBBA and a brief, entertaining introduction into bird banding. For people interested in finding out more about bird banding and how to become a part of WBBA, this is the webinar to start with.

The November webinar was given by Danielle Kaschube, WBBA's Membership Coordinator and the MAPS and Bander Training Coordinator at The Institute for Bird Populations. This webinar was very informative introductory talk, with a total viewing of about 1,700 folks, focusing on the basic concepts of passerine molt, covering how and why feathers are molted, how those molts can change individual's appearance/plumage, and on how to use plumage to age birds.

Jared Wolfe, a WBBA past President, Assistant Professor at Michigan Technological University, and one of the creators of the Wolfe-Ryder-Pyle (WRP) plumaged based ageing system was the speaker for the January webinar. This very popular webinar explained some underlying drivers of molt extent, the need for this biologically base, rather than calendar base, system of ageing for birds, and how to apply it to examples of several species. More than a thousand viewers watched it to rave reviews. Check it out yourself!

Upcoming webinars will include a presentations from: this year's WBBA grant winner Sam Oliveira on his thrush research; data management tips and solutions; a new on-line tool for exploration of providing thrilling insights into banding data; intricacies of woodpecker ageing; and much more! Webinars will be announced on the WBBA's social media sites, and emails sent to WBBA members. For more information, contact WBBA Membership Chair, Dani Kaschube at [wbbadani@gmail.com](mailto:wbbadani@gmail.com).

### **Latin American Banders Need Bands!**

It is winter. Do you know where your migratory birds are? They are in the tropics, of course, where many hard-working conservation professionals in Latin America are working to conserve their habitat and study their non-breeding season ecology. Bird banders in North America are lucky in that we have an established, centralized system of band distribution and tracking. Most smaller countries in the tropics are not so lucky. Many small conservation organizations struggle to make ends meet. One of the big items that are relatively expensive and hard to get are bird bands. You can make a difference. The Costa Rica Bird