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## Join us for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meeting of the Eastern Bird Banding Association

### Willistown Conservation Trust's Rushton Conservation Center

<https://wctrust.org/rushton-conservation-center/>  
915 Delchester Road Newtown Square, PA

**March 24-26, 2023**

Our meeting will be hosted at the Willistown Conservation Trust (WCT). For over 30 years WCT has focused on land protection and habitat conservation in an area located 25 miles southwest of Philadelphia, PA. The mission of the Willistown Conservation Trust is to preserve and manage the open land, rural character, scenic, recreational, historic, agricultural, and natural resources of the Willistown area and nearby communities, and to share these unique resources with people of all ages and backgrounds to inspire, educate and develop a lifelong commitment to the land and the natural world. The 80-acre Rushton Woods Preserve is the crown jewel of our 3 nature preserves; it is where most of our nature education efforts occur and is the site of our sustainable, low impact community farm program. This program was established in 2008 and now feeds over 100 families and donates over 3,500 lbs of vegetables to the West Chester Food Cupboard annually. Rushton Farm is a CSA (community supported agriculture) that connects hundreds of people to the land each year through volunteer days, membership, and other community events.



Rushton Woods Preserve (RWPR) lies within an Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA), offering a great opportunity for banding and allowing us to study the seasonal and long-term population patterns and species diversity of migratory and breeding birds. The RWPR banding project contributes to continent-wide monitoring efforts and exemplifies the benefits of low-impact land management practices on bird populations. The RWPR station also allows us to train committed volunteers in the basics of bird banding and creates a setting for responsible nature education and conservation outreach.

We are thrilled to celebrate the history of EBBA and banding at this upcoming meeting. Did you know that banding dates back to 1595 when one of Henry IV's banded Peregrine Falcons was lost in pursuit of a bustard in France? The falcon showed up 24 hours later in Malta, 1,350 miles away; thanks to banding, they were able to calculate that the falcon averaged a speed of 56 miles per hour. Duke Ferdinand placed a silver band on a Grey Heron around 1669 and the bird was then recovered by his grandson in about 1728, indicating that the heron had lived at least 60 years. In 1803 John James Audubon tied silver cord to the legs of a brood of Eastern Phoebes near Philadelphia and was able to identify two of the nestlings when they returned to the neighborhood the following year. These centuries-old records are not only amazing but gave inspiration to naturalists and scientists interested in understanding the mystery of migration.

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In 1920, the Biological Survey (then part of the Fish & Wildlife Service, now part of the U.S. Geological Survey, Biological Resources Division) took over the administration of bird banding. Since then, millions of birds have been banded. The Eastern Bird Banding Association was organized in 1923 for the purpose of bringing together those persons interested in banding birds. Originally, the Association published a “Bulletin,” but in 1929 this was discontinued, and we joined forces with Northeastern and Inland associations to publish a quarterly journal, *Bird Banding*. The founders of the Eastern Bird Banding Association were Arthur Allen, Frank Burns, Maunsell S. Crosby, Beecher Bowdish, Howard Cleaves, John Gillespie, John Nichols, Witmer Stone, and Rudyerd Boulton. Carlton M. Herman was the first editor of EBBA NEWS.

Today, bird banding is helping to answer questions not only about migration and longevity, but also site productivity, dispersal of young, metapopulations, site fidelity, survivorship, behavior, ecotoxicology, and many other population ecology questions important to bird conservation and management around the world. In North America, banding is overseen by the US Geological Survey’s Bird Banding Laboratory (within the Department of the Interior) and the Canadian Wildlife Service. These offices issue federal permits, distribute bands, and compile all the data collected from bird banding.

Since 2007, WCT’s program area has been recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by the Pennsylvania Audubon Society. Today, Rushton Woods Preserve is labeled as a “birding hotspot” on e-bird and as a great place to view wildlife. There was originally significant opposition to adding the farm to this pristine nature preserve; conservationists believed that the farm would have a negative impact on the environment as most modern farms tend to do. However, Rushton Farm aims to include rather than exclude nature. Native wildflowers are planted between the farm fields to encourage native insects, eliminating the need for chemical pesticides, hedgerows are left standing to form an important habitat, crops are rotated to ensure soil health, and erosion is minimized with low impact techniques. Contrary to people’s worries, the bird diversity at Rushton has increased since the inception of the farm. The farm fits harmoniously into the nature preserve and provides additional habitats and resources for wildlife. For example, the hedgerows provide edge habitat for nesting orioles and an abundance of food sources for saw-whet owls, and the farm fields even provide seeds and insects for migrating warblers.

In May 2009, with funds from the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club (DVOC) Conservation Grant, WCT created the Rushton Woods Bird Banding Station. This ignited a successful program where science and education go hand in hand. The overwhelming popularity of this program persuaded the WCT Board of Trustees to create an official Bird Conservation Program, which is dedicated to protecting and restoring migrating, wintering, and breeding bird habitat throughout the Upper Ridley/Crum IBA. Since 2012, our banding station banded over 10,000 birds of 102 species, including Northern Saw-whet Owls and is visited by over 3000 people each year who received education in issues of bird and habitat conservation. In 2017 WCT formed the Northeast Motus Collaboration with relationships built from attending EBBA conferences. EBBA members Lisa Kiziuk of WCT, David Brinker of Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Project OwlNet, Scott Weidensaul of Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art and Project OwlNet, and Luke de Groote of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History and the Powdermill Avian Research Center used their common bond of bird banding to collaborate on a journey to blend technology and banding. By embracing the technology of the Motus Wildlife Tracking Program led by Birds Canada, this group of bird banders joined together to create an interior northeastern U.S. telemetry network to track migratory animals while taking a landscape-scale approach to conservation thus connecting enormous expanses of land through scientific research, for the benefit of both humans and wildlife.

We look forward to meeting in 2023 to celebrate the scientific banding process and work together to demonstrate the importance of healthy bird populations and the conservation of natural lands. More information will be available on our website. For questions, please contact EBBA 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

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