

## WBBA helps host banding webinars.

WBBA, the Institute for Bird Populations, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are hosting a series of (approximately) monthly webinars on topics related to the conservation of birds and bird banding. Presenters from across the hemisphere have recently presented on topics such as: translating MAPS ageing codes to WRP; long-term bird banding and monitoring in the Maya Mountains of Belize; Art + Science = Scientific Illustration; An Introduction to Autonomous Recoding Units and Artificial Intelligence; Adventures in Bird Molt -- Finding fun in a forbidding yet fundamental process (Peter Pyle); the Bird Genoscape Project; and others. All of the webinars are recorded and can be found at <https://birdpop.org/pages/videoRecordings.php>. -- Steve

### Next May at Bear Divide!

Next year's Annual Meeting will feature the amazing spectacle of thousands of passerines streaming at eye level (or lower) over the mountain pass (and even right through observers' legs) at Bear Divide in the mountains above Los Angeles. Save the dates, **Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup> through Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup> 2023!** Come and enjoy interesting talks, field trips, workshops, food, and camaraderie with other banders, near and far. Check out our webpage for more information. The local committee chair will be Tania Romero (t4lromero@gmail.co) .

### Is the Term "Bird Banding" Obsolete? And What Should We Do About It?

Steven Albert<sup>1</sup>, C. John Ralph<sup>2,10</sup>,  
Adam Hanneksela<sup>3</sup>, Walter H. Sakai<sup>4</sup>,  
Allison Nelson<sup>5</sup>, Chrissy Kondrat<sup>6</sup>,  
Michael Krzywicki<sup>7</sup>, Holly Garrod<sup>8</sup>,  
Colin Woolley<sup>9</sup>, and Claire Stuyck<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Institute for Bird Populations, PO Box 518, Petaluma, CA, 94953

<sup>1</sup>Corres. Author, email: [salbert@birdpop.org](mailto:salbert@birdpop.org)

<sup>2</sup>USDA Forest Service; Arcata, CA

<sup>3</sup>Sonoran Joint Venture; Tucson, AZ

<sup>4</sup>Thousand Oaks, CA

<sup>5</sup>Gold Country Avian Studies; Nevada City, CA

<sup>6</sup>Arizona Department of Game and Fish; Phoenix, AZ

<sup>7</sup>Navopatia Field Station; Missoula, MT

<sup>8</sup>Birds Caribbean; Missoula, MT

<sup>9</sup>Bird Conserv. of the Rockies; Broomfield, CO

<sup>10</sup>Klamath Bird Observatory; Ashland, OR

*Authors 1-9 are members of the Board of the Western Bird Banding Association*

Key Words: Bird Banding, Geolocators, Movement Ecology

When the Eastern, Inland, and Western Bird Banding Associations were formed in 1925, bird banding was one of the only tools available to document the movement ecology of birds through recaptures or recoveries. Banding remains an integral tool for studying many aspects of avian ecology. Its utility has grown exponentially along with the sciences of population modeling, molt, and demographics. Today avian ecologists use a plentitude of tools and methodologies to understand the seasonal and annual movements of birds. Light-level geolocators, GPS trackers, the Motus network, the Icarus project, the analysis of stable isotopes, the delineation of population-specific genotypes, and radar tracking can pinpoint the movements of birds and bird populations from regional to meter-scale precision.

While many of these devices obviate the need for recapture of a bird, greatly increasing sample sizes and analytical capability, one downside of these new tools is cost or the need for expensive, highly technical equipment and/or laboratory space. In short, these tools will not make bird banding obsolete. In most cases, the new technologies and banding are complementary, and the micro-aging, morphometric, and physical condition data derived from "banding" provide essential data for understanding important aspects of avian ecology that are not obtainable by other methods. In addition, bird banding provides enormous opportunities for environmental education and outreach. Most banders we know have or know of stories of people whose lives were profoundly changed by closely observing or handling their first live bird.

Because most of these tools (1) are used by bird banders, (2) are often affixed to birds during the course of banding operations, (3) strive to gain much of the same information as bird banding, and (4) are often seamlessly integrated into unified research designs, we believe it is time to change the mission and the name of the Eastern, Inland, and Western Bird Banding Associations, and our flagship publication, *North American Bird Bander*, to reflect the diversity of tools utilized by the profession.

As the field of ornithology evolves, and a younger, more diverse, and more technophilic work force comes of age, embracing these new technologies in our name and “branding” would make our organizations more modern, innovative, and inclusive. In our experience, “bird banding” is viewed by some as rather old fashioned, and implications of “ring and fling” science are inevitable. As one long-time bander has noted, it is odd that the EBBA, IBBA, WBBA, and even the North American Banding Council are professional associations formed around what is essentially a field method, rather than, say, a scientific objective, such as understanding the movement ecology of

birds. Bringing other tracking technologies “into the fold” makes sense in that it would broaden and slightly redirect the focus of our organizations toward the essence of what bird banding aims to do: to protect and conserve birds by understanding their movements, demographics, and general ecology. We also believe it will help reestablish banding as critical to the field of ornithology.

So, what might this new “branding” look like? Here are a few ideas to get the ball rolling:

Western Association of Applied Bird Science  
Western Association of Avian Research Support  
Western Association of Avian Migration & Research Monitoring

Western Avian Migration & Monitoring Working Group

Western Association of In-hand Ornithology

Western Avian Demographics and Movements

We hope this is only the start of a much longer conversation in which we can reach a wider consensus. (We use as an identifier “Western”, as that is where all the authors are members, but obviously they could apply to any BBA that wishes to come along for the ride). What are your ideas? Let us hear from you.



**Song Sparrow**  
**ComStock Studios**