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# News, Notes, Comments

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## Crossing Borders, Finding Friends with American Redstart 2260-04849

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Beginning in 2004, Latta (Master Bander 23059), now Director of Conservation and Field Research at the National Aviary, and Richardson (Master Bander 20884), Patty Scott, and Michael Corcoran of Connecticut Audubon Society Birdcraft Museum and Sanctuary, met in southern Costa Rica several times a year to band birds. Their efforts were part of a long-term avian monitoring project in collaboration with the San Vito Bird Club. That study (Latta et al. 2017 PeerJ (DOI 10.7717/peerj.3539), one of the few long-term, constant-effort banding studies in the Neotropics, sought to explore patterns and magnitudes of temporal change in avian communities in secondary forest patches of southern Costa Rica, and targeted both permanent resident species and overwintering Neotropical migratory birds. Just as importantly, the four bird banders became fast friends and supporters of each other's ornithological forays.

When not in Costa Rica, Richardson, Scott, and Corcoran, returned to Connecticut and their seasonal banding activities at Birdcraft, where important banding data reach back as far as the 1970s. Meanwhile, Steve pursued other bird banding studies in the Caribbean and Latin America, but especially in the Dominican Republic with long-time collaborators, including Dr. Wayne Arendt of the USFS, International Institute of Tropical Forestry, as well as Danilo Mejía, and Luis and Maria Paulino of Grupo Acción Ecológico. In the Dominican, they pursued studies of overwintering migrants and focused on studies of the Louisiana Waterthrush, bird use of cacao plantations, and long-term population monitoring

of birds in key habitats. Through the years, these friends and colleagues banded thousands of birds in Connecticut and the Dominican Republic.

Fast forward to 10 Feb 2021. With Steve's support, Danilo, Luis and Maria, are banding birds in the National Botanical Garden of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic as part of Wayne's study of birds in urban environments. They pulled an after-hatch-year female American Redstart from one of their nets, and like hundreds of others of its species captured in previous seasons, the bird was carefully banded with a uniquely numbered aluminum band, 2260-04849. The redstart was then measured, weighed, assessed for health, and then gently released back into her winter territory in the Botanical Garden.

Little did we know, but that would not be the first and last time American Redstart 2260-04849 would be caught. By late-April or early-May, with the northern spring fast approaching, she would have fattened up for her return migration. Taking off across the Atlantic Ocean, she navigated northward until, by 11 May, she had reached the East Coast of the U.S., settling into a 2.4 ha patch of forest in the middle of Fairfield, CT. She may have stopped to rest and refuel on her way farther north, or she may have quickly found the spot attractive as a possible breeding territory. In either case, her presence there was an amazing, some might say, magical coincidence! When American Redstart 2260-04849 magically appeared in another mist net, this one is at Birdcraft Sanctuary, and Judy, Patty, and Michael happened to be there to pull her out of the net! Two worlds and four friends were joined together once again!

Patty wrote, "When I found the bird in the net, I knew it wasn't one of ours; the band was shiny and new, and I knew we hadn't banded any redstarts yet that spring. My first thought was, 'My first foreign recapture ever!'" Of course, we submitted the band to the USGS Bird Banding Lab right away. The lab responded that the data for that band number had not been received yet, so notification of where

the bird had been banded would take time. We expected it might have been banded just a short distance down the coast. Well, a couple weeks later, as I was walking along taking the nets down, Judy called me with the news and my whole body started tingling! What a cool coincidence!”

Many tens of thousands of small birds are banded each year without anyone ever encountering them again. To get a foreign recapture – that is, to recapture a bird banded by someone else – is a huge rarity. Rarer still is any direct line encounter, that is, an encounter between two points drawn by the same bird in the same season. In this case, that direct line distance is ~2527 km. Since it is unlikely that the bird took a trans-Oceanic route,

an overland route, through the Bahamas to the Florida coast and up the Eastern seaboard, for example, would be considerably longer. Beyond the direct line encounter, even more rare and uniquely thrilling, is having long-time friends and collaborators recapture one of your banded birds after such a journey! Every banding record results in the collection of some useful data, but records like this one are off-the-charts valuable to science and conservation! As Alison Olivieri, bird bander and former President of the San Vito Bird Club commented, “Congratulations to all concerned, especially the redstart that did the heavy lifting in flight! But it is so great to share this significant data point with good friends!”

**Figure 1.** Key banders in October 2004, on initiation of their long-term avian monitoring program in San Vito, Coto Brus, Costa Rica, including (left to right) Judy Richardson, Dr. Steven Latta, Patty Scott, Donna Corcoran, and Michael Corcoran. Their paths would cross 21-years later with the assistance of American Redstart 2260-04849.



**Figure 2.** American Redstart 2260-04849, banded in Santo Domingo on February 10, 2021, being processed by Michael Corcoran on May 11 at Birdcraft Museum and Sanctuary, Fairfield, Connecticut. Photo by Christine Penney.



### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Judy Richardson, Patty Scott, and Michael Corcoran of Connecticut Audubon's Birdcraft Museum and Sanctuary, and Alison Olivieri of the San Vito Bird Club, for sharing in their excitement of discovery. Thanks, too, to Dr. Wayne Arendt of the USFS, as well as Danilo Mejía, and Luis and Maria Paulino of Grupo Acción Ecológico, for their many contributions to bird banding in the Dominican Republic. Steven Latta was supported by the Avian Conservation Endowment of the National Aviary. Wayne Arendt and his field team conduct research as part of the Santo Domingo ULTRA (Urban Long-term Research Area) joint research and educational

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### The Chimney Swift in the Southeastern United States: Historic Banding and Future Research

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Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*) have been the focus of long-term and large-scale banding efforts as well as continent-wide citizen science monitoring efforts. A significant amount of information on individual movements and habitat use was obtained through these efforts. However, there are several aspects of the species' biology that need further study (Steeves et al. 2020). Herein we provide a brief overview of Chimney Swift habitat use and migration and discuss changes in landscapes that may have influenced the species and their migrations in the southeastern United States. We also discuss how bird banding has been used as a tool to learn more about Chimney Swifts, including extensive banding operations carried out throughout the United States during the 1930s. Lastly, we discuss how the southeastern United States is positioned as a key area through which we can learn about Chimney Swifts, their populations and demographics with the goal of furthering conservation of this species and the resources they provide.

Despite their specific epithet '*pelagica*', this name is likely not related to marine aspects for these birds but rather reflects the wandering behavior exhibited by them. This point aside, evidence indicates these birds are trans-gulf migrants, crossing the Gulf of