



Partners in Flight  
Monitoring & Inventory  
Working Group



Klamath Bird  
Observatory



U.S. Forest Service  
Redwood Sciences Laboratory



Bureau of Land  
Management



Cornell Laboratory of  
Ornithology

## Newsletter of **LANDBIRD MONITORING NETWORK OF THE AMERICAS**

<http://www.klamathbird.org/lamna/>

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### **Decision Support Tools: Bridging the Gap between Science and Management**

It has been suggested that bird monitoring, such as efforts carried out by LaMNA members, contribute more to decision-making and evaluating the effects of management (see “Opportunities for Improving Avian Monitoring” <http://www.nabci-us.org/aboutnabci/monitoringreportfinal0307.pdf>). In response, Partners in Flight (PIF), LaMNA, and others are working on improving ways for scientific information to get into the hands of the conservation and natural resource management communities, in order to aid them in implementing policies that benefit birds.

A Decision Support Tool (DST) is just such a mechanism that can be used to explore existing data. DSTs can analyze the data and create visualizations based on different management scenarios that are put into a query. These are being offered as a way to bring scientists, educators, the conservation community, and decision makers together to consider management options cooperatively, in order to bring the best available science to bear on management decisions.

At the 4th International Partners in Flight meeting held in February, 2008 at McAllen, Texas, a symposium titled “Bridging the Gap between Science and Management” focused on examples of these processes. Bird conservation-related DSTs that used existing information to enhance decision-making were highlighted. They use the best available science to link land management challenges with bird conservation objectives, using delivery approaches that are specific to target audiences (e.g., land management agency decision makers, private land owners).

Often, data visualizations make up important components of DSTs. Some examples of visualizations are graphs of population changes over time, and tables of species occurring at a location. To support the developments of DSTs, LaMNA affiliates are working to develop a variety of data visualizations using banding data, while the Avian Knowledge Network (AKN) develops tools for census data. It is LaMNA’s intention to develop and make data visualizations available that will function with many different banding datasets. These visualizations will be working with data hosted at the AKN’s Bird Monitoring Data Exchange (BMDE, <http://www.avianknowledge.net/content/>), which has just started accepting banding data. We encourage LaMNA members to upload your data into the BMDE so that you can be a part of this exciting effort to bring science and management together. Once your data are uploaded,

you and others will soon be able to explore your data with such visualizations, and use these to support land management decisions that benefit birds.

**Red de Anillamiento de Aves del Hemisferio Occidental Meeting  
(RAAHO, Western Hemisphere Bird Banding Network)  
Partners in Flight 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference, McAllen, Texas, 2008**

Neotropical migratory birds may be called “Summer visitors” or “Winter visitors”, depending on where you are in the Americas. By this wondrous nature, understanding and managing populations of migratory birds requires studies and monitoring efforts throughout North, Central, and South America, as well as cooperation and collaboration that knows no political boundaries. This is especially the case with bird-banding efforts. For instance, how would you know where and to whom to report the band of a bird you captured in Costa Rica? If U.S., Colombian, and Mexican institutions keep banding schedule records for birds that cross all three of these countries, which banding protocol should you follow if you are a Nicaraguan bander? Should you use bands from Colombia, Mexico, or the U.S.? These and other thornier questions were discussed at the special meeting of the Red de Anillamiento de Aves del Hemisferio Occidental (RAAHO – the Western Hemisphere Bird Banding Network). The meeting took place in February of this year in McAllen, Texas, as part of the 3rd International Partners in Flight meeting.

Participants from more than 20 countries in the Americas met in several meetings during the course of the conference. They reported on their activities and discussed problems such as the ones mentioned above (namely: a possible single source for bird bands and central distribution of schedules that have many repositories), and others, including training and certification requirements, facilitation of permit issuances, networking and information sharing and, most importantly, resource sharing. Among the many interesting proposals were internet-based servers to match donors of banding equipment with programs that could use them, advertisement of training opportunities, and matching of requests for training from banding institutions with funded projects that could afford a training component. This last idea would work as follows: say institution A in the Dominican Republic is seeking training and experience-building opportunities for two new members and institution B has two people that will be visiting the country for a 3-month survey. This shared knowledge (through a web service) would allow A and B to communicate and determine if institution B can offer institution A training opportunities during the visit. Information sharing has already started with RAAHO’s new website at <http://www.raaho.net/portal/>.

LaMNA can play an important role in data management for RAAHO. Commonly, institutions spend considerable resources in maintaining datasets and producing summaries and other outputs for reports to donors and governing institutions. At this meeting we (Dr. C.J. Ralph and Dr. Leo Salas) illustrated how datasets will be “federated” (i.e., brought together to a common data-holding structure) and managed via a web interface, lifting the burden of data management from the institution. We explained the most important reasons to do so: data security and proper sharing (with restrictions to sharing set by the data owner). LaMNA’s visualization and analysis tools will also help generate summaries of datasets. It was an exciting meeting and the enthusiasm of participants to collaborate was a very uplifting harbinger of a near future when we all, regardless of where we are standing, can understand, follow, conserve, and manage migratory birds.

## Avian Influenza Update

Many of the LaMNA cooperators are working hard to get as many samples of birds in our joint effort with several institutions as possible for bird flu. LaMNA sent out kits to 60 organizations for Avian Influenza Virus (AIV) sampling during 2007. We received back 4,100 swabs and 2,700 feathers, and this spring we still continue to receive samples for both fall and winter. Samples were collected in all seasons, with almost half of them collected during the fall. So far this year, we sent out kits to 16 organizations for spring collection and have received 250 samples back so far. We will continue to send out kits through the year.

UCLA continues to make progress on screening samples for AIV. The new, exciting techniques they are developing will give researchers a more sensitive screening test for the smaller samples that are derived from passerines. More information is available in last month's newsletter (at <http://www.klamathbird.org/lamna/>) and at the UCLA Center for Tropical Research's Avian Influenza website:

[http://www.ioe.ucla.edu/ctr/research/AvPath/avian\\_influenza\\_main.html](http://www.ioe.ucla.edu/ctr/research/AvPath/avian_influenza_main.html). Thank you to all of the banders who have helped make this project such a success. If you are interested in collecting samples and have not been receiving sampling kits, you are encouraged to contact Linda Long (llong@fs.fed.us, 707-825-2947) for more details.

### The Saga of Hart Mountain — The Legend of the Lost Data Lode

*C. John Ralph*

The story of the banding station operated by Dr. L. Richard Mewaldt in the beautiful high desert of southeastern Oregon is a cautionary tale for us all. Dick operated this productive station from 1972 to 1979 in the relict grove of Ponderosa pine and riparian habitat at Blue Sky on the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge. The effort involved 580 days of censusing and mist-netting, in which he and assistants banded almost 13,000 birds. As was his habit, instilled in all of us who banded with him (and carried on to this day at stations he helped start), I am sure the data were meticulous and would be extremely valuable today. The data would contain all the usual variables, such as weight, fat, etc., as well as a journal to allow us to calculate net hours. Additionally, the site is in an area of unique habitat with few other comparable data - the western Great Basin Desert, just to the east of the Klamath Bird Observatory's main concentration of stations at Upper Klamath Lake.

As near as I can reconstruct it, after Dick died (it is said from his habit of licking birds' heads to skull them!), his data went to one of several places (it gets murky now). Among the locations that were rumored to be the site of this data lode were a couple of bird observatories in California and a museum in central Oregon. Various friends and I have searched long and hard, and spent hours on the phone and in writing looking for the data. The nearest we have come is a story of a box of data labeled "Hart Mountain - L. R. Mewaldt" that was last seen (now the stories begin to differ) in an abandoned (and then burned) trailer on the grounds of a banding station, or on the back shelves of a museum. Earnest efforts by many people to find this slowly decomposing box of precious data have proved futile.

If you know of orphaned banding data like this, please let me know ([cjr2@humboldt.edu](mailto:cjr2@humboldt.edu); 707-825-2992). We will do our best to make sure all this effort becomes part of the LaMNA databases and can contribute to our understanding of birds' biology. Even some bird observatories today have data that has not been entered, and they should have the resources to at least copy the sheets, and we will do our best to get them entered. Or perhaps a reader might even know where Dick's lost and valuable data might still reside!

## **Banding Stations Can Keep Reference Specimens**

Through the efforts of the North American Banding Council (NABC), a nationwide permit has been obtained from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to allow banding stations to have readily available bird specimens for training and data quality. Many birds come to stations, salvaged from various sources, including the occasional sad mortality from our contentious efforts.

While many Bird Observatories and other stations will have their own permit, what we have obtained is a specific permit so that other, often smaller, stations can have study specimens readily available. This is in addition to the permission that comes with the federal banding permit, allowing the salvage of specimens, but doesn't specifically allow the station to keep these valuable birds. The Service agreed with our worthwhile intent, and will allow NABC to issue federal station permits to qualified stations. In order to qualify for a subpermit, a station should apply to NABC to become a NABC-affiliated station for purposes of this permit. Each station would be expected to provide annual reports electronically of the specimens under their care, and their location. If you would like the details of the permit, and an application form to become a NABC station, please check with us (see below). Some states will require an additional permit, but many consider the federal banding permit sufficient.

We have some additional exciting news. The NABC has obtained a source of free standard museum specimen cabinets that will hopefully be stored near the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. These are 40 inches deep, 29" wide, and 40" high, with about 15 specimen trays. They would be available to NABC stations for shipping costs. For more information contact C. J. Ralph at [cjr2@humboldt.edu](mailto:cjr2@humboldt.edu) or 707-825-2992.