



Audubon Rockies 2016 Bird Banding Report

It is fall and that means the Community Naturalists have ended yet another summer of banding birds. We'd like to share our results, a few fun stories, and invite you to get involved with other citizen science projects. So read on and feel free to get in touch!

Why we band birds? By Zach Hutchinson

Audubon Rockies currently participates in MAPS Bird Banding. What is MAPS? What is bird banding? Why do we band birds? Let's address the banding questions first.

Bird banding is a form of research that allows for individual identification of birds by placing a small, metal (usually) band on the leg of the bird. This band has a unique number that identifies this individual anytime it is recaptured in the future.

Now, why do we band birds? Bird banding data are useful in both research and management projects. Individual identification of birds makes possible studies of dispersal and migration, behavior and social structure, life-span and survival rate, reproductive success and population growth. (USGS, 2016)

Every bander participates in studies of dispersal and migration by sending all their banding data in to a central site, the Bird Banding Laboratory. When banded birds are captured, released alive and reported from somewhere else we can reconstruct the movements of the individual bird. (USGS, 2016)



Finally, let's address MAPS. The MAPS acronym stands for Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship. The MAPS Program is a continent-wide collaborative effort among public agencies, non-governmental groups, and individuals to assist the conservation of birds and their habitats through demographic monitoring. (IBP, 2015)

Keep abreast of Audubon Rockies banding news and other citizen science opportunities at:
<http://rockies.audubon.org/get-involved/citizen-science>

About the Stations



Keyhole State Park Bird Banding Station – near Pine Haven, WY (KEYS)

Station Managers: Jacelyn and Dusty Downey

Established: 2007

2016 Highlights:

Number of birds banded = 288

Top 5 most numerous birds banded = Yellow Warbler, House Wren, Common Yellowthroat, American Robin, Spotted Towhee

Unusual birds sighted or banded = First time we've seen or captured Starlings! The Ovenbird was a highlight as well as the Orchard Oriole.

Cool birds seen but not banded = Juvenile Bald Eagles, Virginia Rail, Belted Kingfisher

Total number of species recorded = 71

Number of birds caught that already had a band = 51

A big thank you to all of the donors = Devon Energy, Keyhole State Park, B. Easley, D. Ernst, T. Maxted



Edniss Kimball Wilkins State Park Bird Banding Station - Casper, Wyoming (EKWS)

Station Manager: Zach Hutchinson

Established: 2016

2016 Highlights

Number of birds banded = 178 birds banded

Top 5 most numerous birds banded = Yellow Warbler, House Wren, American Goldfinch, Black-headed Grosbeak

Any unusual birds sighted or banded = Lazuli Bunting and Audubon's Warbler both banded as early fall migrants and Common Loon and Rose-breasted Grosbeak seen within the first two weeks of banding.

Number of species recorded = 51 species recorded

Number of birds caught that already had a band = 28 birds recaptured, this is significant because this station was not here last year and so they must have come from another station near or far!

A big thank you to our donor = Natrona County Recreation Joint Powers Board

Watch this video of a bird release at Edniss Kimball Wilkins State Park:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAHznrIUYmo&feature=youtu.be>



Linzey Ranch Bird Banding Station – Near Laramie, WY (LIND)

Station Manager: Alison Holloran and Kayla Baker
Established: 2001 (even earlier through UW)

2016 Highlights

Number of birds banded = 173

Top 5 most numerous birds banded = Yellow Warbler, Veery, Song Sparrow, and a 3-way tie between Northern Waterthrush, Savannah Sparrow, and Gray Catbird.

Any unusual birds sighted or banded = American Redstart, Green-tailed Towhee, Warbling Vireo, MacGillivrays Warbler, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Rufous Hummingbird, and Red-wing Blackbird.

Cool birds seen but not banded = Sandhill Crane, American White Pelican, Wood Duck, Red-tailed Hawk

Number of species recorded = 37

Number of birds caught that already had a band = 32

The Life and Times of a Bird Bander: Dr. Oakleigh Thorne II

By Jacelyn Downey

Audubon educators enjoy sharing the bird banding experience with the volunteers, families, and youth who help at the banding stations, but we also enjoy taking the show on the road. School programs, community events, and workshops are great opportunities to raise awareness of citizen science projects like bird banding and to demonstrate what fun it is to hold a bird in your hand.

It is a great learning experience for our educators too! This summer we had the extraordinary opportunity to observe and learn alongside a seasoned veteran bird bander. Dr. Oakleigh Thorne II, founder and honorary president of the Thorne Nature Experience located outside Boulder Colorado, came to Sheridan Wyoming to help with an event organized by Audubon, Science Kids, The Sheridan Community Land Trust, and the BLM. Our goal? Banding Cliff Swallows at an I-90 underpass at the Welch Recreation Area.

Used to our normal banding protocols as we are, banding swallows was a whole different ball game and such fun. Dr.



Thorne brought along tools he'd crafted by hand over the years to band birds. My favorite was the band-stand, a clever wooden stand fitted with all the tools needed to band birds in the field. There was also the swallow pod, a holding container for swallows awaiting processing. I also learned of other inventions using solenoids.

I caught up with Dr. Thorne early in the fall to learn more about his life and times as a bird bander.

JD: How and when did you become interested in birds?

OT: *When I was 6 years old in the early 1930's. My oldest sister and uncle were interested in birds and I became interested too. My uncle studied birds through egg and nest collections. My job was to find nests and identify what bird made the nest. If there were more than three eggs, then we would take one. To preserve the specimen, we would hollow the egg out, label it, and then carefully wrap it and store it in the cigar boxes my uncle collected for the purpose. This project got me interested in finding out more about birds.*

JD: How did you become aware of bird banding?

OT: *My high school biology teacher had a bird banding permit. I went to Millbrook School in NY and his name was Frank Trevor. He thought bird banding would help students become interested in biology and research. He was right. Frank Trevor started a small school zoo with mammals, birds and fish. Now it has grown to become an AZA accredited zoo complete with an on-site Veterinary clinic. It is the only zoo at a high school and it has student curators. I got my banding permit at age 18 with Mr. Trevor's help. I'll be 87 this year!*



JD: Why do you think bird banding is important?

OT: *I feel it is very important as an educational tool. It gets youth interested in research. It's a hands-on activity and gets youth involved. Many of the students who are part of my banding club go on to careers in science. I think it's important to give youth opportunities.*

JD: What sort of insights have you gained through banding?

OT: *It's interesting to see longevity, my record for the oldest cliff swallow is 11 years. Also migration patterns. We banded grackles in Boulder, CO that were recaptured in Fort Worth, TX. I banded a red-wing black bird at a ranch in Wyoming then caught it back at our boulder station. I've also seen local migration trends with swallows that move from one culvert to another one nearby. We didn't know they did that.*

JD: How has bird banding changed over the years?

OT: *It's harder to get permits. Now you have to be affiliated with an agency or scientific organization. I have a master bander permit and I can oversee other banders. A high school student in my banding club did a study of juncos for a science fair project. He couldn't have done it without finding someone with a permit.*

JD: What is the favorite bird you've banded?

OT: *I like cliff swallows. Cliff swallows go all the way to Argentina in the fall then return each spring. They catch flying insects so they must follow a perpetual summer.*

JD: Interesting banding story?

OT: *When I was at Millbrook School, we banded some snow buntings one winter. Three months later, one landed on a ship 20 miles off the coast of Iceland. A man captured it, gathered the data, and reported it. People had long suspected that they came to nest in Scandinavia but didn't have evidence of this. Some years later, a few students wrote to the shipping company to see if they could get in touch with the man who captured the bird to see if the bird was caught alive and generally what shape it was in. Sadly, we learned that the man's boat was hit by a German U-boat and he was lost at sea.*

JD: Any parting comments?

OT: *I joined Audubon as a Life Member at age 15 for \$100. That was 73 years ago! What a bargain, I think it is over a thousand dollars now.*

Hungry for more Citizen Science?

Join Bird Conservancy of the Rockies biologist Nancy Drilling in banding owls this fall. This work is part of a long-term study of the migration patterns and local conservation status of Northern Saw-whet Owls, a little known but fascinating species. If you are interested, please contact Jacelyn Downey at jdowney@audubon.org.

Head to Lander December 1-2 to attend Wyoming's first Citizen Conference. Audubon Rockies Community Naturalists will be presenting about our banding program. Register at: <http://www.wyomingbiodiversity.org/programs/wcsc/>

Participate in Audubon's 117th Christmas Bird Count. Counts are taking place December 14th through January 6th in a community near you. Learn more at: <http://www.audubon.org/content/join-christmas-bird-count>

Taking place year-round everywhere: e-bird! E-bird is a great outlet to record and report your bird watching results anytime, anywhere. Learn more: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>

