

# AFO Afield



Vol. 18, No. 2 December 2013

## Sharpening the Focus on Our Past

### Continuity and Change have Propelled AFO from the Start

By Dan Lambert

One dollar. That's how much it cost to join the New England Bird Banding Association (NEBBA) in 1922, when it was formed in response to the federal government's call for support and coordination of regional banders and banding stations. Two years later, NEBBA members exercised their reasonably priced voting privileges to change the organization's name to the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association. Since then, the Association's geographic and scientific scope has continuously evolved to meet the contemporary needs of its members. The product of this evolution is today's Association of Field Ornithologists.

What began as a group of elite ornithologists, most of them based in Massachusetts, developed over the ensuing decades into a regionally active organization invigorated by highly skilled, amateur banders. During this period of growth, the Association's journal (first *Bulletin of the Northeast Bird-Banding Association* and then *Bird-Banding*) expanded in subject matter and achieved a continental profile. The publication's second name change, to *Journal of Field Ornithology (JFO)*, occurred in 1980 and reflected the organization's increasing scientific scope. This expansion, together with a desire to join the Ornithological Societies of North America, led

NEBBA to adopt our current, inclusive identity in 1986.

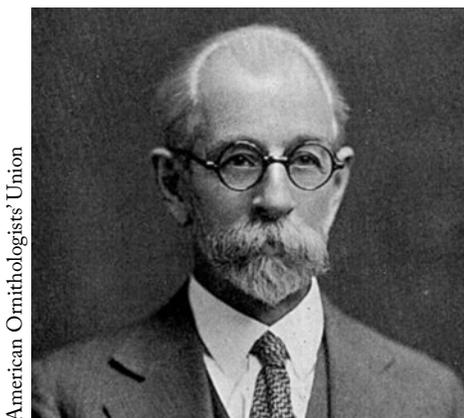
Over the years, several factors have driven changes in AFO's geographic reach, journal contents, and membership. These include advances in communication technology, research techniques, and scientific knowledge – particularly, an increased understanding of the links that connect North American birds to Central and South America. Shifting institutional structures have also influenced the trajectory of AFO, which has been discussing various consolidation or federation proposals since 1926 (Davis 2000)!

These factors continue to shape the AFO and have recently prompted the American Ornithologists' Union and the Cooper Ornithological Society to develop joint publication and communication enterprises. Why has the AFO remained a vibrant, secure organization in the face of complex and ever-changing challenges? Articles in this

issue of *AFO Afield* address this question and reveal an essential identity that has changed little since 1922.

Beginning on page 2, AFO historian and Past President William E. Davis, Jr. provides a brief account of our first 75 years in the abstract of his excellent history of NEBBA and the AFO. An accompanying timeline highlights some of the organization's key milestones. On page 4, Assistant Treasurer Brian Harrington describes the enduring contributions of E. Alexander Bergstrom, who began importing mist nets for AFO members in 1956. Pioneering ornithologist and AFO benefactor Alexander Skutch is the subject of a profile by AFO's first female president, Elissa Landre (page 5). Finally, a personal interview with former AFO Secretary Sarah B. (Sally) Laughlin illuminates the period between 1974 and 1989, when NEBBA matured into the AFO.

Accounting for inflation, the cost of a regular AFO membership is the same today as it was in 1925. Students, young professionals, and Latin Americans can join at even lower rates! But bargain-priced membership is not only thing about AFO that has withstood the passage of time. Despite all of the changes in name, geographic scope, and membership, the AFO's core identity has also endured. We remain a congenial group of field ornithologists dedicated to gaining and sharing knowledge about birds.



American Ornithologists' Union



Reed Bowman

*The more things change—Edward H. Forbush (left) was the first president of the New England Bird Banding Association. AFO Vice President Reed Bowman (right) still honors the “beard and spectacles” tradition.*

# Message from the President



Dan Lambert

Shortly after becoming president of AFO, I had occasion to rendezvous with Lee Robinson, recent past-secretary of AFO, at their family cabin near Lake Tahoe to receive the “Secretary’s Box”. Lee served as secretary of AFO for eight years, with a total of twelve years on the council. This box contains files of meeting notes, budget reports, committee reports, correspondence, past issues of *AFO Afield*, and other documents collected from 1992 through 2011. It weighs more than

seventeen pounds. This is a rich dataset that can be mined to provide insight into the issues faced by previous AFO Councils, the decisions they made, and the reasoning behind those decisions. Yet it covers only a small part of AFO’s ninety-plus year history. Much of our preceding history is stored in the Smithsonian Institution Archives, thanks to the efforts of Past President William E. Davis, Jr.

It has been said a million times that those who don’t learn from history are doomed to repeat it and I can’t help but wonder if we

aren’t trying to solve some of AFO’s problems over and over. AFO presidents serve only two years, preceded by two years as vice president and however-many years served as a councilor. This system does not ensure a long, institutional memory. Many presidents have come and gone before me, in a rather short period of time. This is why knowledge of our history is important, why it is important to maintain the AFO archives, and why it is important to celebrate our roots.

In perusing the contents of the “Secretary’s Box”, I ran across a rather lengthy online discussion about whether to print the AFO meeting notes in the *Journal of Field Ornithology*, in *AFO Afield*, or simply have the AFO secretary make them available to all upon request. Apparently all three approaches have been used at one time or another. While the details of by-laws changes make for rather tedious reading, they need to be documented somewhere. Clearly, maintaining the AFO archive is important.

It is with the importance of the history of AFO in mind that we focus this issue of *AFO Afield* on our past. I encourage all AFO members to learn about our history in this issue, and to help us recall what we’ve forgotten. At our 2014 annual meeting, to be held jointly with the Wilson Ornithological Society in Rhode Island, we will host a special luncheon for past AFO officers and others who have knowledge of our organization’s history and its special niche in ornithology. Please join us there!

Kathryn Purcell, AFO President



## Mark Your Calendar

Joint meeting of the

Association of Field Ornithologists and  
Wilson Ornithological Society

Salve Regina University, Newport, RI  
May 29–June 1, 2014



Student travel awards deadline: January 15, 2014

Abstract and early registration deadline: March 15, 2014

Conference website: [www.wos.salvereginablogs.com/afo-wos-meeting](http://www.wos.salvereginablogs.com/afo-wos-meeting)

Local host: Jameson (Jim) Chace, [jameson.chace@salve.edu](mailto:jameson.chace@salve.edu)

Scientific program co-Chairs: Mark Deuschlander, [deutschlande@hws.edu](mailto:deutschlande@hws.edu)

Martin Raphael, [mraphael@fs.fed](mailto:mraphael@fs.fed)

## A Look Back at AFO’s First 75 Years (1922–1997)

### From Bird Banding in New England to International Field Ornithology

Editor’s note—The following abstract is reprinted with permission from:

Davis, W. E., Jr. 2000. History of the Association of Field Ornithologists (Northeastern Bird-banding Association). In: *Contributions to the history of North American ornithology*, volume II (W. E. Davis, Jr. and J. A. Jackson, eds.), pp. 263–309. Nuttall Ornithological Club, Cambridge, MA. To download the full chapter, visit [www.afonet.org/about/Davis2000.pdf](http://www.afonet.org/about/Davis2000.pdf). The entire volume is available for sale at [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com).

The New England Bird Banding Association (later Northeastern Bird-Banding Association) was formed in 1922. This was a response to a growing need for regional organizations

stemming from the federalization of bird banding in North America and a rapidly growing interest in bird banding. During its formative years the organization was run by established

Massachusetts ornithologists, including Edward H. Forbush, Charles Wendell Townsend, Alfred O. Gross, Francis H. Allen, John C.

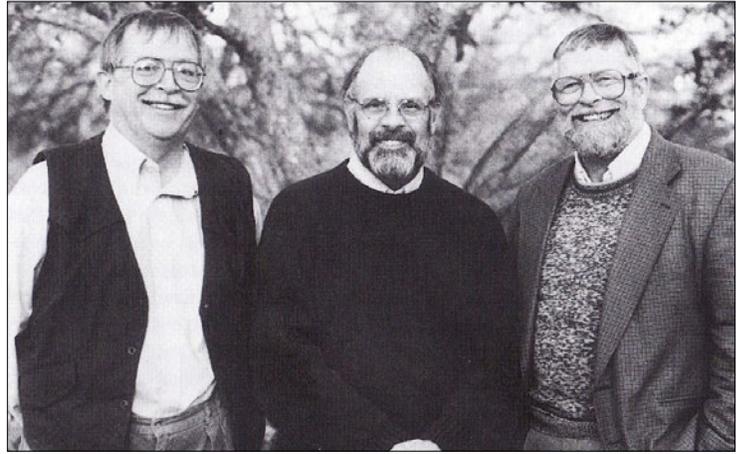
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# A Look Back at AFO's First 75 Years

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Phillips, and Arthur Cleveland Bent. Against strong opposition the Association began publication of a journal (*Bulletin of the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association*) in 1925. In 1930 it became the national journal *Bird-Banding*. The financial survival of the Association and its journal in these early years was largely the result of patronage of a few prominent members. The *Recent Literature* section of *Bird-Banding* became an internationally recognized feature of an increasingly prominent ornithological journal under the leadership of Margaret Morse Nice. Through the 1970s the organization retained a parochial northeastern identity while *Bird-Banding* matured into a journal of international significance. The constant financial problems associated with increasing journal production costs were balanced by revenues from mist net sales under the direction of E. Alexander Bergstrom and Brian Harrington. During the 1980s the organization metamorphosed into a national organization with the journal renamed *Journal of Field Ornithology*, the organization becoming the Association of Field Ornithologists and accepted as a member of the Ornithological Societies of North

Photo courtesy of Jerome Jackson



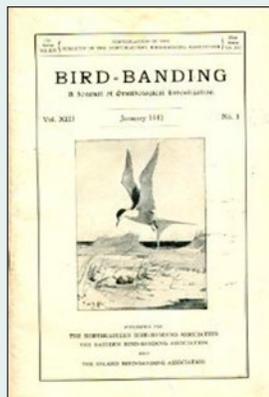
Past AFO Presidents Jerome A. Jackson, John C. Kricher, and William E. Davis, Jr. in 1998.

America (OSNA). During the 1990s increased membership and an inheritance from Charles Blake have produced a strong financial base for the organization. A focus on Latin America, together with a journal that emphasizes field ornithology, have produced a niche for the organization as it prepares to enter the 21st century.

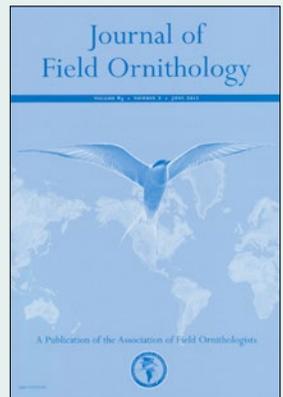
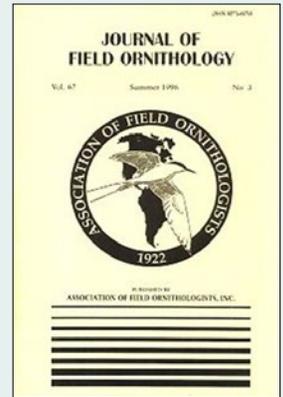
## A Timeline of AFO's First 75 Years

Editor's note—This timeline is based on William E. Davis, Jr.'s history of the AFO (see full citation on page 2).

- 1922** The New England Bird Banding Association is formed in Boston at a meeting chaired by Glover M. Allen, president of the Nuttall Ornithological Club. Massachusetts State Ornithologist Edward H. Forbush takes the helm of NEBBA. Annual dues are \$1.
- 1924** NEBBA changes its name to the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association. Its expanded geographic scope includes Quebec and the Maritime Provinces of Canada. Dues are doubled to \$2, which amounts to roughly \$28 in 2013.
- 1925** Volume 1, Number 1 of the *Bulletin of the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association* is published. NEBBA banders report having banded 38,400 birds with 1,309 returns since 1922.
- 1926** A proposal to consolidate the publications of four ornithological associations, including NEBBA, is rejected by delegates to an American Ornithologists' Union meeting in Ottawa.
- 1930** *Bird-Banding* replaces the *Bulletin of the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association*, serving the



- Northeastern, Eastern, and Inland Bird-Banding Associations.
- 1932** Margaret Morse Nice begins ten years of writing literature reviews for *Bird-Banding*.
- 1950** E. Alexander Bergstrom assumes editorship of *Bird-Banding*.
- 1956** NEBBA begins selling Japanese mist nets as a service to ornithologists. Bergstrom oversees imports and manages the operation.
- 1960** Members incorporate NEBBA in Massachusetts for "for scientific and educational purposes".
- 1973** Brian Harrington assumes management of the NEBBA mist net business, which begins operating out of the Manomet Bird Observatory.
- 1975** NEBBA establishes the E. Alexander Bergstrom Memorial Research Award following the passing of Bergstrom in 1973.
- 1980** The first *Journal of Field Ornithology* (JFO) is published, replacing *Bird-Banding* as NEBBA's scientific



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# A Timeline of AFO's First 75 Years

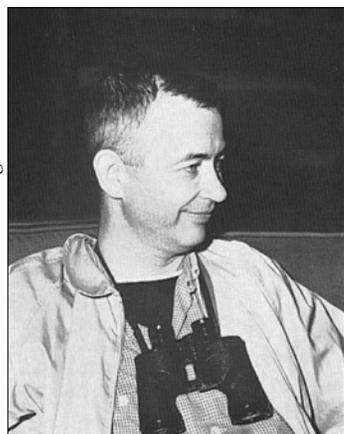
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- publication. Jerome A. Jackson takes over editorial duties from David W. Johnston.
- 1986** Under President John C. Kricher's leadership, NEBBA changes its name to the Association of Field Ornithologists. Members vote forty-five to zero in favor of the change, with one abstention. Edward H. Burt, Jr. becomes editor of *JFO* and begins publishing abstracts in Spanish.
- 1987** AFO joins OSNA, leading to a three-year surge in new members. The Smithsonian Institution becomes the official repository for AFO documents, thanks to the efforts of William E. Davis, Jr.
- 1993** AFO receives a \$300,000 bequest from Charles Blake, a past President of NEBBA. An endowment fund is established with this gift.
- 1995** Elissa Landre is elected as the organization's first female president.
- 1997** AFO celebrates the 75th anniversary of its founding at a joint meeting with American Birding Association and the Costa Rican Ornithological Association in San José, Costa Rica. Alexander F. Skutch presents the first Skutch Medal for career achievement in ornithology to F. Gary Stiles.

## AFO Avian Research Supplies: Netting Birds & Revenue Since 1956

### Longtime mist net manager traces the origins of Bergstrom's legacy

By Brian Harrington



Association of Field Ornithologists

E. Alexander Bergstrom

AFO Avian Research Supplies had its start in 1956 as a business operated to import and sell mist nets from Japan by the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association, which later became the AFO. As I once heard told, the idea of bird-banders using mist nets was brought from Japan by Oliver Austin, Jr., who had been an ornithologist with the U.S. Navy. Austin was head of the Wildlife Branch, Natural Resources Section, GHQ, the General Headquarters of the Occupation Forces in post-war Japan.

Austin apparently was introduced to mist nets at the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology, and introduced mist nets to North American biologists in 1947 (Keyes and Grue 1982). He, Low (1957), and Bleitz (1957) were all pioneers in their use.

While this was a very promising new tool to banders in North America, it was difficult for individuals to obtain mist nets. In the October 1956 issue of *Bird-Banding*, the Association's journal, the "Notes and News" section announced:

To aid in meeting the increasing demand for Japanese mist nets, the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association is now stocking these nets for sale. . . Nets obtained to date have been a 12-meter, 4-shelf net for small birds, and a net with heavier meshes suitable for shorebirds or larger land birds. . . Address inquiries to Mr. E. Alexander Bergstrom . . . who is acting as agent for the Association in the sale of the nets.

Alexander Bergstrom continued to manage the mist net business for the Association for the rest of his life. His untimely death at

age 54 was a sad loss to the Association, and of course to his many friends and family.

From the start, the major purpose of the Association's mist net business was to make it convenient for banders to obtain the nets they needed; income was not the primary motive.

Following Mr. Bergstrom's unexpected death in 1973, operation of the business was transferred to the Manomet Bird Observatory (now Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences) with me serving as the Association's agent and mist net business manager. The business expanded in about 1999 to include items other than mist nets that are needed by banders. The banding supplies business arrangement between AFO and Manomet continues today.

I am confident that Mr. Bergstrom, who was a businessman in his professional life, understood that our Association would need some level of income beyond membership dues if it was to survive and thrive. As it happens, the business has indeed sustained our association, and allowed us to enjoy a productive presence in ornithology. Today we honor that history by maintaining the E. Alexander Bergstrom Memorial Fund, which supports field ornithology and young ornithologists throughout the Western Hemisphere.

### References

- Austin, O. L., Jr. 1947. Mist netting for birds in Japan. Natural Resources Section, Report No. 88, GHQ, SCAP, Tokyo, pp. 1–24.
- Bleitz, D. 1957. On the use of mist nets. *News from the Bird-Banders (Western Bird-banding Association)* 32:22–25.
- Keyes, B. E., and C. E. Grue. 1982. Capturing birds with mist nets: A review. *North American Bird Bander* 7:2–14.
- Low, S. H. 1957. Banding with mist nets. *Bird-banding* 28: 115–128.

### Links to Additional Reading Online

- A biographical sketch of E. Alexander Bergstrom: ([www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E.\\_Alexander\\_Bergstrom](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._Alexander_Bergstrom))
- An oral history of Oliver Austin's life in ornithology: ([www.ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00005958/00001/1x](http://www.ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00005958/00001/1x))

# Dr. Alexander F. Skutch and the AFO

By Elissa Landre

Editor's note—When Dr. Skutch passed away in 2004, the world lost a giant of Neotropical ornithology and the AFO lost one of its most generous benefactors. As we approach the tenth anniversary of his passing, *AFO Afield* reprints this remembrance, which was written by Skutch Fund committee chair and AFO Past President Elissa Landre. This article first appeared on [afonet.org](http://afonet.org).

On May 12, 2004, Dr. Alexander F. Skutch passed away peacefully at his home in Costa Rica. He leaves the legacy of over forty books and hundreds of scientific articles.

Early in his scientific career, after changing focus from botany to ornithology, Dr. Skutch received a grant from the Chapman Fund of the American Museum of Natural History to study resplendent quetzals in Costa Rica. He spent a year living alone in the forest and the result was a romantic novel called *Merenda*.

He lived intentionally, simplifying his life so that he could make choices that were consistent with his philosophy. He built his home, farmed the land for his food, and studied the birds that lived on the farm. He never had a telephone, only recently had indoor plumbing, and when his wife Pamela's health declined in the past few years reluctantly installed electricity. He was a vegetarian who preferred not to wear leather, although his reverence for life was not universal. He killed the snakes that threatened his beloved songbirds on his property and was not fond of bird-eating raptors.

For many years, Mass Audubon tours to Costa Rica stopped in Quizzara, a little town outside San Isidro del General, a five-hour bus ride from San José. That's where Alexander and Pamela Skutch lived in the home they built on their

farm, Los Cusingos. Their farm was a mecca for scientists and naturalists who had read Skutch's books. *A Naturalist on a Tropical Farm* describes their lives and work in Costa Rica and introduced many non-scientists to the nature of the tropics. The Skutches always greeted visitors warmly, inviting them to sit on the porch of their home overlooking fruit feeders. As Dr. Skutch discussed his work on bird behavior, including the pioneering ideas about helpers at the nest, visitors tried hard to focus on the conversation, while the distraction of many colorful tanagers and honeycreepers visited the feeders on the lawn.

While Dr. Skutch had not left the country in recent decades, he maintained an active correspondence with scientists all over the world, responding with letters typed on his manual typewriter. One could not expect a fast reply as there was no postal delivery to Los Cusingos and a two-month lag between letter and response was not uncommon. Many correspondents never actually met Dr. Skutch.

I met the late Dr. Donald Griffin a few years ago on the Cape and learned that he had corresponded with Dr. Skutch for years and had hoped one day to meet him, but never did.

In 1997 the Association of Field Ornithologists and American Birding Association met with the Costa Rican Ornithological

Association in San José. It seemed fitting to honor the scientist who had put ornithology in Costa Rica on the world map, so the Alexander F. Skutch Award for excellence in ornithology was established. Pamela and Alexander made the five-hour trip to the capital, staying for the first time in a hotel that used keycards. At the culminating banquet, Alexander presented the first award to Dr. F. Gary Stiles of Colombia. Stiles, together with artist Dana Gardner, was co-author with Skutch of *The Birds of Costa Rica*.

After the banquet, Dr. Skutch told me he had planned to leave his money to the American Museum of Natural History because he had been the recipient of a Chapman Fund award and wanted to establish a similar fund. Because the Association of Field Ornithologists had honored him, and because of their focus on field ornithology, he had changed his mind and decided AFO would be a more appropriate organization to administer his funds. Thus, the Pamela and Alexander F. Skutch Fund of the AFO was established. The purpose of the fund is to provide grants that support life history studies of little known Neotropical birds, especially their reproductive biology and behavior, with minimal disturbance to the

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Alexander and Pamela Skutch

Elissa Landre



Dr. Skutch with Elissa Landre, Dana Gardner, and Gary Stiles at 1997 Annual Meeting in Costa Rica

Bill Giezentanner

## Skutch and the AFO

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birds. In short, Dr. Skutch wanted to encourage researchers who would follow in his tradition with the type of study for which very little money is currently available, especially in Latin America.

The Fund he established gives up to \$10,000 annually and has supported many deserving scientists, including a Peruvian studying the life history of a newly described antbird, a Colombian working on a suite of Andean birds, and a Brazilian observing the life history and reproductive biology of the Restinga antwren (*Formicivora littoralis*) on the island Cabo Frio.

The measure of Skutch's influence was most visible in the coverage of his passing away on May 12, 2004, a week short of his 100th birthday. Lengthy obituaries appeared in Costa Rican newspapers as well as the *Boston Globe*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Seattle Times*, *Irish Times*, and a lengthy interview was broadcast on National Public Radio. He was buried on his farm, Los Cusingos, which is now owned and administered by the Costa Rican Tropical Science Center. They plan to turn his former home into a museum of his life and work.

For more information about the Pamela and Alexander F. Skutch Fund including applications and deadlines in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, please visit [www.afonet.org/grants/Skutch/Skutch.html](http://www.afonet.org/grants/Skutch/Skutch.html).

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## "We were a field group for sure!"

### Sally Laughlin reflects on fifteen years as AFO Secretary



Photo courtesy of Sally Laughlin

*Sally Laughlin with her granddaughter in 2013.*

Sarah B. (Sally) Laughlin co-founded the Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS) in 1972. She served as its executive director for eighteen years and chaired the Vermont Endangered Species Committee for thirty-two years. Sally held a master banding permit while at VINS and ran its banding station for ten years. She also co-founded and chaired the North American Ornithological Atlas Committee. She began to fill in as AFO secretary in 1974 and was formally elected to the position in 1976. Sally performed the duties of secretary for a total of fifteen years, longer than any other AFO member since 1950.

#### How did you first get involved in the Northeast Bird-Banding Association?

I joined NEBBA in 1972 just as VINS was beginning. One of VINS's first programs was the bird-banding station in South Woodstock and I was one of the volunteers who ran it. I was so fascinated by bird banding, having the birds in hand and learning all the details about them, and the incredible teaching impact on the schoolchildren who

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## “We were a field group for sure!”

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visited and got to see birds close up. I learned so much from joining NEBBA. It was a congenial group of people highly knowledgeable about birds and banding, with an underlying love of birds and commitment to nature. Banders in those days were mostly volunteers, amateurs in that they weren't getting paid for their work, but they were expert at it – and were giving their time and energy to the study and conservation of birds.

I was so excited about banding and studying birds. I remember the first NEBBA meeting I went to was at Manomet (which was the Manomet Bird Observatory then and is now the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences) and meeting all those incredible people including Betty Anderson, who was the director of Manomet at that time, and Brian Harrington and Trevor Lloyd-Evans. It just was so exciting to meet all these people and it was a very congenial group of people who were very, very interested in birds and who all shared a passionate commitment to conserving them and getting their migration routes worked out. And the meetings were very interesting. People enjoyed each other's company and there was a really good feeling about it.

**Did you know that you served as secretary longer than anyone since 1950?**

No, I didn't realize that but it was a good long period. . . . I enjoyed the meetings and the people on the Board and felt the work was important, and just did my part. I guess I worked out the way to do it and I just did it on my own time above and beyond my professional life and everything else. I was on the board during the transition from NEBBA to AFO and it was complicated. All the officers were in it up to our eyeballs and felt we needed to continue until the transition was complete and we had everything worked out. Everyone was working hard and I really enjoyed the professional contacts and the people on the board. I suppose that's how I started and why I stayed with it for so long.

**During your tenure as secretary, you were responsible for recording a substantial portion of AFO's history. What was it like serving in that role?**

It was a tremendous amount of work. Being secretary then meant that you had to take all the notes longhand. There were no computers, let alone laptops. We did have an electric typewriter at VINS, but we didn't have a computer, so I'd take the minutes longhand and then have to come back and type them all up and then send copies by mail—usually for the president to look over first to make sure I hadn't missed

anything important and then to everybody else. If a vote had to be taken between meetings, then I would have to mail out ballots and phone anyone who didn't return them with their vote. As I recall, I used to do the NEBBA and AFO membership drives, too. The world is so different now. When I look back it seems so unbelievable that we dealt with some major things without the technology that we have now. I can't imagine how we did it.

**Who were some individuals in that group who made an impact on you?**

I would say that some of my all-time favorite people in the world I met at that time. Some people who became and remain close personal friends and also people I admired so much.

That Block Island meeting in 1974 was the first time I met Jonnie Fisk. She was a major figure in banding and served for a long time on

the NEBBA board and on the board at Manomet. Erma J. Fisk. She was an incredible woman. I certainly admired her greatly and think of her often now as I get older. After she became a widow in her 60s she became an author and a major figure in banding. She did amazing work on least terns in Florida and on Cape Cod. She worked as a consultant for Everglades National Park and the Cape Cod National Seashore and I think she kicked the US Fish and Wildlife Service into doing what they needed to do to protect the nesting birds on beaches. She was just amazing and when she was in her 70s she went off to manage a



Photo courtesy of Sally Laughlin

“It was a very congenial group of people who were very, very interested in birds.” *AFO meeting at Pinkham Notch, NH, April 1989. Left to right: Jean Jonkel, Tudor Richards (Director of NH Audubon), Nancy Martin (VINS staff), Chris Rimmer (VINS Director of Research), Elissa Landre (AFO Councilor), Bill Giezentanner, Sally Laughlin (completing 13 years as AFO Secretary).*

remote sanctuary in Arizona for TNC and wrote a book about it. She was very outspoken, very strong-minded. She became a well-known naturalist and bander in her 60s and an author in her 70s. We became very good friends and she always came to speak at our Vermont Bird Conference. She was really fabulous.

Deborah Howard was the secretary of NEBBA when I first became involved. She directed the Massachusetts breeding bird atlas and got me interested in doing it for Vermont. Chandler Robbins was such a major figure in banding and bird research, and helped us set up the Vermont breeding bird atlas and also to set up NORAC. And such a nice person and wonderful birder! And George Jonkel, the Chief of the Banding Lab through those years was a mentor and supporter and leader to us all. He almost always attended the NEBBA/AFO meetings and updated us on the Lab's research.

At another one of the meetings in Alexandria, Virginia, the Banding Lab had an open house. It was in a fairly rural area so George and his wife, Jean, provided lunch for everybody. They put together a big spread so that everybody could have lunch. I remember Jean saying that otherwise people wouldn't have had a place to eat because of the

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## "We were a field group for sure!"

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remote location of the Lab. "We weren't going to have people come out here and not have a place to eat!" I'm sure they did it out of their own pockets. That's the kind of camaraderie that went on. It was very nice.

Marian Metcalf was one person who was very influential in helping us when VINS got started. She was an amazing woman a total, real Vermonter. She ran a station in a leatherleaf swamp that was around their cabin on a pond in Marshfield. She spent all her free time during migration banding. She had boardwalks all through the leatherleaf. She was a really good, very committed bander. I spent time training with her.

And she was on the board of NEBBA for many years. It's probably the reason I went to my first meetings. I certainly know that later we always went to meetings together from Vermont. I think she worked in a custodial department at a college, but her whole passion was birds and banding. She had been with NEBBA for quite a while. In fact, she had NEBBA on her license plate. She was a marvelous person.

**Based on your experience, do you have ideas about how AFO can continue to be a meaningful resource for today's Marian Metcalfs?**

I wonder what the demographics are about that. At that time, most of the bird banders were basically very talented, very dedicated amateurs. I wonder if all that has changed now that there are more non-profit groups and maybe more people involved at the university level in ornithology.

**You made some lasting friendships while serving the Association. You met Elissa Landre.**

Yes. Elissa and I have been friends for probably 40 years now, through thick and thin. I don't remember where the meeting was but we were



Photo courtesy of Sally Laughlin

*Birding at lunch at the AFO meeting in Pinkham Notch. A hawk had gone by in full view from the picture windows. The birder on the left is Edith Andrews, a master bander on Nantucket, and longtime AFO-NEBBA member.*

meeting in the early spring some place in the Catskills of New York State and it was an unheated place, a summer camp. We tended to go low budget with the conferences, so that people could afford to come. It was cold and it began to rain and the great herp migration began and a whole bunch of us—Jerry Jackson, Elissa and her husband Bill, and probably twenty-five of us—went out in the pouring rain at midnight to watch the herp migration. We came back and tried to find some wood that we could build a fire with in the fireplace – we were nearly frozen. We didn't find wood but someone came up with a bottle of scotch.

It is interesting to reflect that men headed that organization for so long—there was no woman president until Elissa became president in the 1990s. I found that kind of interesting. I mean—I didn't want to be president anyway. I had quite enough on my plate with VINS. I see now that it has become much more gender-equal and that is great!

**Were there other places or experiences that stand out in your mind?**

The meeting at Block Island where I started as acting secretary in 1974. No one had paid any attention to the practicality of it. They had a hotel for the meeting, but the hotel was not open for meals. The only meal that was provided for the weekend was the banquet and of course everybody arrived having no idea. There was one little tiny coffee shop in the town and suddenly there was, I don't know, probably sixty or a hundred people who needed to have breakfast and didn't have any coffee. And there was no place to have lunch. (laughs) People had come out on the ferry. No one even had a car, not that there was anyplace to eat anyway. I remember that Marian was very



Photo courtesy of Sally Laughlin

*Presenting a motion of appreciation (combined with a banding!) to George M. Jonkel, retiring Chief of the USFWS Banding Lab, at the 1989 AFO meeting at Pinkham Notch. Left to right: Nancy Martin of VINS (who made the band), George Jonkel, and John Kricher. John attached the band and measured George's wing chord!*

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## "We were a field group for sure!"

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unhappy because she hadn't brought anything to eat. I'd brought some crackers and cheese and peanut butter and I was extremely popular!

Do you get a chance to watch birds or band birds much anymore?

I haven't banded for many, many years, but yes I'm having great fun teaching my little granddaughter about birds. She lives in Burlington and I take care of her one day a week. She's almost two and can identify mallards by sex—she can tell mama ducks from dada ducks. We saw an eagle fly over and she told everybody that she saw a bald

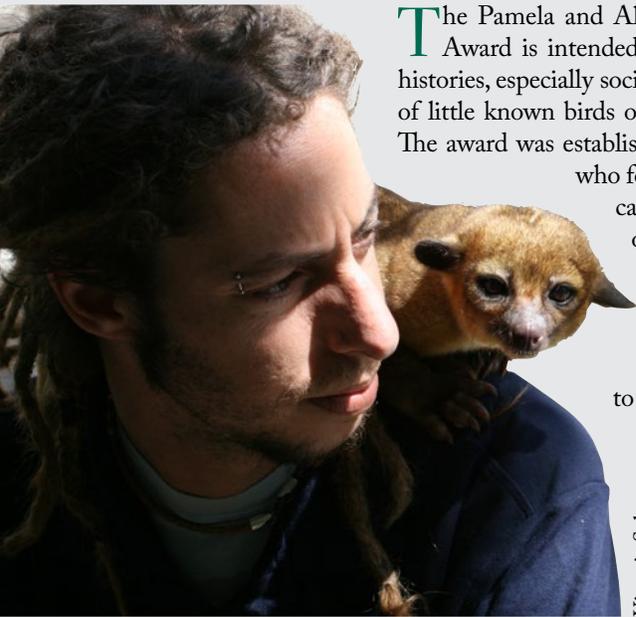
eagle. Teaching her some of the basics is fun. I greatly enjoy birding still and now that I'm retired I can get out more than before. It's fun. And I still get down to Woodstock where I have been compiler of that Christmas Bird Count for 39 years!

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk about your years of service to NEBBA and AFO. If you have any photos that might help illustrate our interview, I'm sure today's AFO members would enjoy seeing them.

I do have a photo of us at some meeting, I can't remember where. Anyway, we were meeting when someone saw a bird out this big window and the entire group turned around. They've all got their binoculars on and they're all looking out the window. They had their binoculars on *inside*. We were a field group for sure!

## The 2013 Pamela and Alexander F. Skutch Research Award

### Pablo Toledo-Monsonis Wins Grant to Study Agami Herons in Peru



Victoria Salas

The Pamela and Alexander F. Skutch Research Award is intended to support the study of life histories, especially social relations and reproduction, of little known birds of the continental Neotropics. The award was established to encourage researchers who follow Dr. Skutch's tradition of careful, detailed field observation of avian behavior and natural histories. The grantee may be an amateur or professional ornithologist of any nationality. One award of up to \$10,000 is given each year.

The AFO is pleased to announce that Pablo Toledo-Monsonis, has received the 2013 Skutch Award to carry out a study on the status and reproductive success of an Agami heron colony at Lake

*Pablo Toledo-Monsonis*

Cocococha in Peru. He intends to census the colony during the 2013/2014 breeding season, analyze its development since 2005, and measure nest and chick survival rates. He will also evaluate factors that may influence the colony's population dynamics, including anthropogenic disturbance. Pablo will share what he learns with the local residents and enlist their support in protecting this reclusive and vulnerable species.

*Estudio del Estatus Actual y Éxito Reproductivo de La Colonia de Garza Agami (Agamia agami) Del Lago Cocococha, Reserva Nacional de Tambopata, Perú*

El objetivo general del presente proyecto consiste en la evaluación del estado actual y del éxito reproductivo de la colonia de cría de garza agami (*Agamia agami*) localizada en el Lago de Cocococha, en la Reserva Nacional de Tambopata, Departamento de Madre de Dios, Perú, durante la temporada de cría 2013/2014. Los objetivos específicos son:

1. Censar el número de aves reproductoras y de nidos durante la temporada de cría

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Daniel Toledo

*Agami Heron*

# E. Alexander Bergstrom Memorial Research Awards Bergstrom Grants Fund Four Projects in Argentina and Brazil

E. Alexander Bergstrom (1919–1973) was vice president of the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association (now the AFO) and the editor of *Bird-Banding* (now the *Journal of Field Ornithology*) for twenty-one years. The Bergstrom Awards honor his memory and dedication to bird research. Their purpose is to promote field studies of birds by helping to support a specific research or analysis project. In judging among proposals of equal quality, special consideration is given to those that: 1) focus on avian life history; 2) use data collected all or in part by non-professionals; and/or 3)

employ banding or other marking techniques. Approximately five awards (maximum \$1,000 US each) are made to applicants working in the US or Canada annually. Approximately three awards (maximum \$1,500 US each) are made to applicants based in Latin America. The most recent US/Canada awards were announced in the June issue of *AFO Afield*.

## 2013 Latin American Recipients

**Eugenia Bianca Bonaparte**, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina. Use and availability of nesting cavities for the

Vinaceous Parrot (*Amazona vinacea*) in the Atlantic Forest of Argentina.

**Milene Garbim Gaiotti**, Universidade de Brasília, Brazil. Mating system of *Antilophia bokermanni* (Aves: Pipridae).

**Emilio Ariel Jordan**, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina. Phylogeny, biogeography, and evolution of behaviour in the Doraditos (*Pseudocolopteryx* spp.).

**Cynthia Alejandra Ursino**, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina. Effects of brood parasitism on social dynamics of a cooperative breeding bird, the Bay-winged Cowbird (*Agelaioides badius*).

Paul Rodewald chairs the Bergstrom Award committee. The reviewers for the Latin American research proposals were: Nacho Areta, Dan Brooks, Felipe Chavez-Ramirez, Valentina Ferretti, Dan Lebbin, Paulo Llam-bias, Viviana Massoni, Gustavo Londoño, James Roper, Luis dos Anjos, Carlos Bianchi, Jason Mobley, and Renata Duraes.

## 2014 Application Guidelines

Applications from the US and Canada are due 7 January, 2014. The deadline for the Latin American awards is 15 July, 2014. To be eligible for a Bergstrom Award, applicants and/or their primary research supervisors must be members of the AFO prior to the application deadline. More information is available at: [www.afonet.org/grants/Bergstrom/Bergstrom.html](http://www.afonet.org/grants/Bergstrom/Bergstrom.html).

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## Toledo-Monsonis Wins Grant

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

2013/14 y analizar la evolución de la colonia desde el año 2005. 2. Evaluar el éxito reproductivo de la especie en el área de estudio (no huevos/nido, no pollos/nido y tasa de supervivencia de los pollos) durante la temporada de cría 2013/14 y realizar un análisis comparativo de las diferentes etapas y sucesos de nidificación respecto a otras colonias reportadas.

3. Analizar las posibles causas que puedan estar influyendo en la dinámica poblacional de la colonia, como variaciones en el clima y perturbaciones de origen antropogénico.
4. Informar y sensibilizar tanto a los habitantes del Departamento de Madre de Dios, como a los miembros de las comunidades indígenas vecinas y a los visitantes de la reserva, sobre la importancia de proteger la colonia de garza agami de Cocococha para garantizar el futuro de la especie en Perú y en su área total de distribución.

Elissa Landre chairs the Skutch Award committee. She is assisted by committee members Gabriel Colorado, F. Gary Stiles, Ken Rosenberg, Manuel Marin, Enrique Bucher, Jason Mobley, Luis Naranjo, and Dan Lebbin.

*AFO Afield* is a publication of the Association of Field Ornithologists (AFO) and is freely available on the AFO website, [www.afonet.org](http://www.afonet.org). Please direct comments, questions, suggestions, etc. regarding this newsletter to the editor Dan Lambert at [daniel.lambert@gmail.com](mailto:daniel.lambert@gmail.com). Send address changes to OSNA Business Office, 5400 Bosque Blvd, Suite 680, Waco, Texas 76710 USA, or send email to [business@osnabirds.org](mailto:business@osnabirds.org). For information about membership in AFO, contact OSNA at the address above or call (254) 399-9636.