

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

For Release November 2, 1969

Walker 343-2463
Carroll 343-5634

FEATURE

BANDING AIDS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

A technique originated by amateur naturalists a hundred years ago has been refined into an important wildlife management tool to learn how waterfowl migrate across thousands of miles to find ancestral breeding grounds.

This technique is banding--the marking or tagging of birds with numbered bands. Banding, or ringing as it's known in Europe, began there with amateur naturalists who were curious about movements of individual birds. Now scientists use it to determine migration routes for waterfowl and other winged creatures.

Banding also is revealing movements and distribution of species as diverse as salmon, fur seals, bears, turtles, and rodents. Even insects such as monarch butterflies and dragonflies are tagged.

In addition to migration information, banding is enabling wildlife managers to make better wildlife population estimates.

The world's largest banding center is the Interior Department's Bird Banding Laboratory near Laurel, Md., operated by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. In cooperation with the Canadian Wildlife Service, this facility coordinates banding activities of about 4,000 professional and amateur ornithologists throughout North America and several foreign countries.

Hunters and other outdoorsmen send in thousands of bands and recovery data annually to this center, which uses electronic computers to tabulate information.

From banding records, biologists have learned that the Arctic tern is the champion migrator, nesting in the Arctic and spending its summers near Antarctica.

Other individual members of varied species have been recovered at great distances from tagging points. Last year a sandhill crane that was banded six years earlier in New Mexico was recovered in Russia. More than 600 recoveries of snow geese banded in Russia have been made on the West Coast of the United States.

The Bureau and the Soviet Academy of Sciences have developed a program for prompt exchange of data on recovered bands.

The data from banding and other surveys, which provides Bureau biologists a good picture of migratory bird populations, is an important element in developing the Federal Government's frameworks within which the States set waterfowl hunting regulations. It makes possible regulations that are fair to the hunter, yet insure that enough survivors return to northern breeding grounds.

x x x