

December 23, 1946

Professor Leon J. Cole  
Department of Genetics  
University of Wisconsin  
Madison, Wisconsin

Dear Leon:

On this occasion for casting up your many good works, I want to remind you, and your colleagues in Genetics, of the one item which is outstanding from my point of view: your importation of the idea of bird-banding (See Wood, H. B. The history of bird banding. The Auk 62:256-265).

Banding has become the foundation of research in the profession of wildlife management, and in the fields of ornithology, mammalogy, and animal ecology. While the idea would eventually have invaded America on its own momentum, your forcing the issue in 1901 probably advanced by many years the actual beginning of banding operations in this country.

Few people realize as yet that banding is now not only a means of studying animal movements, but has become the principal means for analyzing the sex and age composition of populations, and for detecting their internal control mechanisms. It thus lies at the root of animal conservation techniques.

While all this is common knowledge among animal ecologists, it does no harm to remind you, and ourselves, of our intellectual debt to you.

Yours sincerely,

Aldo Leopold

✓ Ewington