The first record of a metal band attached to a bird’s leg was when one of Henry IV’s banded Peregrine Falcons was lost and found later in Malta, about 1350 miles away.

Duke Ferdinand placed a silver band on a Grey Heron around 1669. The bird was recovered by his grandson almost 60 years later in 1728.

A German falconer captured a grey heron with several rings on one leg. The bander was unknown but one of the rings was placed on the heron in Turkey, more than 1,200 miles to the east.

The first records of banding in North America are those of John James Audubon, the famous American naturalist. He tied silver cords to the legs of a brood of Phoebes and was able to identify two of the nestlings when they returned the following year.

Hans Mortensen, a Danish school teacher, began placing aluminum rings on the legs of bird. He inscribed the bands with his name and address in the hope they would be returned to him if found.

Frederick Lincoln forms the North American bird banding program that we all know today as the United States Geological Survey (USGS Bird Banding Lab).

The real pioneer bander in the Americas was Jack Miner who established the Jack Miner Migratory Bird Sanctuary. Between 1909 and 1939 he banded 20,000 Canada Geese alone, many of which carried bands returned to him by hunters.

The oldest banded bird, Wisdom, a Laysan Albatross, has a baby at age 66.

Leg Bands

Ear Tags

Livestock ear tags were developed in 1799 under the direction of Sir Joseph Banks, for identification of King George III’s Merino sheep flock. Matthew Boulton designed and produced the first ear tags for sheep made from tin.

Ear tags were incorporated as breed identification in the United States with the forming of the International Ohio Improved Chester Association.

Ear tags were developed in Canada as a means to identify cattle when testing for tuberculosis.

The first ear tags were primarily steel with nickel plating. After World War II, larger, flag-like, plastic tags were developed in the United States.

The U.S. Government asked farmers to use EID or Electronic Identification ear tags on all their cattle. This request was part of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS).

National Band & Tag invents the style 49 ear tag for cattle.

The first two-piece, self-piercing plastic ear tag was developed and patented.

National Band & Tag invents the style 56 ear tag for cattle.

NB&T assists in getting the first USDA Organic Certification.

NB&T starts making Replica Bands.

Resources:
https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/homepage/historyNew.cfm
http://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/docs/4h/4h_news/Cattle_Tags_and_Electronic_Identification-1.pdf