

Ebba Nus



A FRIENDLY REPORT ISSUED MONTHLY TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE EASTERN BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION

REACHING
OVER
375
BANDERS
EVERY MONTH

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"LET US BAND TOGETHER"

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WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT WHITE-THROATS?

As all members know, the Federal Government took over bird banding in 1920 and placed it on a nation-wide basis. Much has been accomplished in the past twenty-odd years through the medium of banding and much more remains to be learned. The period in which banders learned how to band birds has long since past. Now we are in a stage which might be termed the "Harvest Time", - a period when we should reap the knowledge derived from the bander's efforts during the past score of years.

With some species of birds, banding has revealed much avian knowledge heretofore unknown. With other species, banders have collected some data and with still other species, banders know little more than was known by observation years ago. Twenty years of banding has accumulated a mountain of data, some of trifling importance, perhaps, - yet some of great value in an ornithological sense. This mountain needs to be mined and the "gold" separated from the dross. In the mind of "Ye Ed" it would seem that the logical miners are the regional associations.

Banding has been described, aside from obvious descriptions, as a splendid "escape interest". This is particularly true at the present time when most of us have much we would like to escape from, for an hour or more. Now is a time, when banders can and should take a "mental vacation" from the problems of the day and study their banding accomplishments to see what their records prove or disprove. Any bander's records of an individual species, considered alone, may prove disappointing. It would be surprising if it were otherwise. Yet, such records when considered alongside of the records of many other banders, may point to a trend or facts that appear vague when such data is considered alone. Therefore EBBA asks each bander to send in their records showing the captures, returns and recoveries of White-throated Sparrows. EBBA has chosen this bird because a lot of them have been banded by a lot of banders.

Looking over numerous copies of "Bird Banding Notes", formerly issued by the Biological Survey, we find that White-Throats were banded by the thousands, evidence that it is a species easy to trap and band. This is one point banding has proven. The yearly catch of this species ran over 17,000 in some years and the lowest number banded in any one year amounted to over 11,000. We can safely guess that during the 20 years, 1920 to 1940, over 200,000 of these sparrows were banded. We can further assume that nearly all of these birds are now dead, for it is considered, based on banding experiences, that the life-span of this species averages less than 3 years.

As a result of this placing of 200,000 bands, what can banders say they have learned? A question easy to ask, but hard to answer. We must consult "the records".

We have learned that White-Throats are easy to trap, but as a species, seldom return to their place of banding, except at breeding and wintering areas. Two factors are thought to influence this result. One fact is that most of these birds are caught in the fall of the year and consist of a great number of immatures, supposedly

having a high death-rate. The other fact would appear to be that most of them are migrants at the place of banding and are passing through the area. A consideration of the banding results suggest, that while White-Throats may use the same general flyways during consecutive years, they do not choose the same "stop-over" points during their seasonal flights. In assaying the results of this banding, they point out to banders that the spring banding of this species will obviously produce more returns and recoveries than the fall operations.

In tracking down information on White-throats, Mrs. Mabel Gillespie, of Glenolden, Pa., wrote a very informative account in "Bird Banding", (Oct., 1931, Vol. II, p. 137-165) entitled "Some Details of the Migration Habits of White-throated Sparrows". Mrs. Gillespie thoroughly discusses the "stop-over" habits of this species during migration and also the wintering of certain individuals and groups. Her paper includes the records of the nearby banding activities of Raymond J. Middleton of Norristown, Pa., located less than 17 miles northwest of her station. At that time both stations had banded large numbers of White-throats, yet not a single one banded at Glenolden had been recovered elsewhere. Of 1,483 banded by Mr. Middleton none appeared at Glenolden. The mystery of where these birds go, either north or south, or the routes by which they travel, is not touched upon in this paper.

Prof. O. A. Stevens of Fargo, N. D., also wrote a paper on this species in "Bird Banding", (Oct. 1930, Vol. 1, p. 174-176). This paper based on 3 years banding, discusses "stop-over" periods and "peaks and lows" in the migration population passing through his station. While a goodly number were banded, no returns were taken and no subsequent recovery is mentioned.

If we assume that 10,000 of these birds were banded in each year for the past 20 years and that the average life-span is 3 years, then it would follow that there are 30,000 banded White-throats flying around during this period. Certainly some of these would be picked up dead or trapped at places other than where they were banded. On another page in this issue we list the recoveries reported so far. Undoubtedly, many banders can add to this list. We wish they would do so, by sending in their records of recovery at once.

In the matter of banding and returns, it is interesting to list the captures of this species at some stations along the Atlantic Flyway. This list is not complete but embraces some 18,000 birds. It gives a general idea of where these birds have been banded in quantity and in small lots with a suggestion of the returns to be expected. This list, in most instances consists of individuals banded previous to 1943 which have had an opportunity to return. Nearly all banders have banded more than the totals shown, but recent bandings have been omitted. For instance Mr. Astle has banded 189 in Canada, but 93 were banded in 1943. In the matter of returns, only those birds that have returned after a breeding season are considered. A bird banded in November and appearing in the traps in the following March or April, may be a migrating return and then it may have wintered nearby and just not visited the traps, during the winter months. Such "returns" are so controversial and hard to define in such a mass of material that it has been thought best to disregard them. The list has been arranged as closely as possible in geographical order so that reading down they go from north to the south.

BANDING RESULTS AND RETURNS

Bander	Locality	Seasons	Number Banded	Individual Returning
W. O. Astle	St. John, Canada	4	96 -A	4
G. H. Parks	Millbridge, Maine	-	26	3
Wm. P. Wharton	Groton, Mass.	10	426	0
M. J. Lerch	Penn Yan, N. Y.	5	152	0
R. T. Fuller	Winterton, N. Y.	-	137	0
G. H. Parks	Hartford, Conn.	-	160	0
Marie A. Beals	Elmhurst, L.I., N. Y.	10	6,705	4
W. O. Astle	Flushing, L.I., N. Y.	5	201	0
Mrs. G. A. Dumont	Pequannock, N. J.	9	1,119	0
C. A. A. Pedersen *	Woodcliff Lake, N. J.	10	141	0
Dr. H. B. Wood	Harrisburg, Pa.	14	48 -B	0
Mrs. C. R. Von Heeswyk	Germantown, Phil. Pa.	4	24 -C	0
R. J. Middleton	Norristown, Pa.	20	4,435	4
Mr. & Mrs. J. Gillespie	Glenolden, Pa.	18	1,095	65 -D
Dr. Wm. Pepper	Melrose Park, Phil. Pa.	18	1,053	8 -E
H. S. Bristow, Jr.	Cedars, Delaware	2	32 -F	4
Wm. Davidson	Takoma Park, Md.	12	466	12 -G
R. E. Ware	Clemson, S. C.	6	1,186	86
Dr. Wm. Pepper	Pawleys Island, S. C.	12	260 -H	11 -I
R. J. Fleetwood	Round Oak, Ga.	5	52	0
			17,814	197

-* Deceased

-A - Includes both adults and young.

-B - 3 times as many White-throats are caught here in spring than in fall.

-C - "I can only get White-throats here in Spring." Also has a capture in July which repeated again in July and August.

-D - Mr. and Mrs. Gillespie have a splendid series of returns. The 65 individuals have made 110 returns. 4 birds are at least 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ years old and another is at least 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ years old.

-E - One bird banded Apr. 12, 1934, trapped $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from station on Jan. 1, 1935 is considered as a return.

-F - This figure includes some birds banded in 1943 which haven't had a chance to return.

-G - Has a sight record of White-throat on June 15th, Note "C".

-H - Banded during frequent visits of 7 to 10 days; 58 banded in Nov. & Dec. and 202 banded in March and April.

-I - One bird banded Mar. 26, 1935 killed by hawk within 15 miles on Jan. 29, 1936 considered as a return.

In studying the returns shown above, it is obvious that the individual birds making the greatest proportion of these returns, are birds wintering at their place of banding. In other words, White-throats banded in New York and Pennsylvania during the winter, November, December and January, are more apt to provide the bander with records in subsequent years. Of the 65 returns reported by the Gillespie station, 5 birds were banded in October and may have wintered there; 46 were banded in the months of November, December and January; 7 in February; 6 in March and 1 in April. If repeat records could be studied, it is felt that nearly all these birds that have returned would prove to be wintering in that area at the time they were originally banded. Exceptions of course occur. This is demonstrated by a White-throat wintering one year near Hartford Conn. and being found dead the next winter in South Carolina.

RECOVERIES FROM THE SOUTH (Atlantic Flyway)

Bander	Place Banded	Date	Recovered	Date
R. P. Marsden	Hanover, N. H.	4/30/29	Florence, S. C.	1/30/30
Dr. O. L. Austin	No. Eastham, Mass.	10/2/30	Ravenels, S. C.	2/ /31
Wm. Wharton	Groton, Mass.	9/26/42	Bowie, Md.	5/7/43
R. M. Hinchman	Milton, Mass.	10/7/32	Summerville, S.C.	3/13/33
E. M. Davis	Shirley, Mass.	10/ /35 S.C.	Fol. Win.
.....	Ithaca, N. Y.	4/29/20	Cumming, Ga.	1/15/21
Mrs. M. E. Hubbard	New Haven, Conn.	12/9/25	Kinston, N. C.	3/5/27
Miss C. M. Teot	" " "	4/24/29	Florence, S. C.	1/30/30
Mrs. M. E. Beals	Elmhurst, L.I., N. Y.	11/1/30	Silver Spring, Md.	11/11/32
" " " "	" " " " "	10/15/37	Prosperity, S. C.	1/15/38
" " " "	" " " " "	10/14/35	Florence, S. C.	2/3/36
" " " "	" " " " "	10/14/36	Olanta, S. C.	2/3/38
" " " "	" " " " "	11/26/36	W. Englewood, N.J.	3/5/38
" " " "	" " " " "	10/22/32	Mullens, S. C.	2/20/36
" " " "	" " " " "	Fall (?)	Brookneal, Va.	Fol. Win.
" " " "	" " " " "	"	Williamston, N.C.	" "
" " " "	" " " " "	"	Hartsville, S.C.	" "
" " " "	" " " " "	"	Willacochee, Ga.	" "
B. S. Bowdish	Demarest, N. J.	11/9/42	Short Hills, N.J.	2/8/43
Keohon Garland	" " "	10/26/41	Bowie, Md.	11/14/41
B. K. Matlack	Bridgeton, N. J.	11/4/25	Barnwell, S. C.	3/23/26
R. J. Middleton	Norristown, Pa.	10/18/34	Bethel, N. C.	2/1/36
" " "	" "	10/9/35	Camden, S. C.	3/15/36
" " "	" "	10/15/23	Paoli, Pa.	10/26/23
" " "	" "	10/8/31	Hope Mills, N.C.	1/15/33
" " "	" "	10/17/34	Galivants Ferry, SC	12/10/34
" " "	" "	10/3/38	Ridgeland, S. C.	3/10/39
Dr. Wm. Pepper	Melrose Park, Pa.	12/2/38	Severn, Va.	2/2/39
Mrs. J. Gillespie	Glenolden, Pa.	10/27/38	Chester, S. C.	1/5/39
Wm. Davidson	Takoma Park, Md.	5/5/39	Colon, N. C.	3/10/41
I. H. Johnston	Charleston, W. Va.	12/6/24	Bamen, Ky.	3/15/26
Wm. P. Wharton	Summerville, S. C.	2/22/33	Four Oaks, N.C.	12/22/33
" " "	" " "	3/13/33	Concord, N. C.	11/6/33
" " "	" " "	3/22/34	Tuberville, S. C.	1/31/36

GOING SOUTH (Mississippi Flyway)

Rev. G. C. Bierens	Fairmount, N. D.	9/30/37	Minneapolis, Minn.	10/6/37
" " " "	" " "	10/7/37	St. Paul, Minn.	5/5/38
M. J. Magee	Slt. Ste. Marie, Mich. Ala.
C. H. Anderson	Sherrill, N. Y.	10/13/31	Rector, Ark.	5/3/32

GOING NORTH (Both Flyways)

Wm. P. Wharton	Summerville, S. C.	1/19/34	St. John, N. Scotia	8/10/34
" " "	" " "	2/20/36	Millertown, Nfdland	8/6/36
Dr. Wm. Pepper	Pawleys Island, S.C.	4/20/37	Auburn, N. Y.	10/1/41
R. J. Middleton	Norristown, Pa.	10/8/28	Manchester, N.H.	4/29/30
" " "	" " "	10/4/30	S. Milwaukee, Wis.	4/26/37
" " "	" " "	5/2/35	St. Pauls Isl. N.S.	5/8/38
Dr. J. F. Brenckle	Northville, S. D.	10/6/30	Portage la Prairie, Manitoba	5/8/38

AS WE VIEW THE RECORDS

At this time, "Ye Ed" does not intend to go into an exhaustive report of what the records mean about the migration of White-throated Sparrows. First, because it is thought that many banders will have records to add to the data shown here. Secondly, EBBA NUS is not the medium to carry a paper of such importance. We do think the information collected, much of it not included in this issue because of lack of space, is important.

However, in a general way it can be noted that these records point out certain trends. There is evidence that both North and South Carolina are the main wintering areas of a major proportion of the banded migrants along the Atlantic Coast. A few go as far as Georgia and a few winter in all states south of a line drawn through New York City. A very few winter even farther north, but the number of banded winter residents is small until one goes below Washington, D. C. A study of the 1939 Christmas Census as to the numbers of this species found at different localities is in agreement with this thought. Another point brought out by this data is that individual White-throats are unpredictable. Some will winter much farther north of the Carolinas in one year and yet in the following year be found in the south. Again, birds, believed to belong to the Atlantic Flyway going south, will switch over to the Mississippi Flyway when going north the following season. One such case might be considered accidental, but there is more than a single instance on the records.

As to the returns, this species, both on its wintering grounds and north on its breeding area, seems to have as high a ratio of returns as other birds. Most of them have been banded between these two areas, as migrants, and like all migrants, give poor return ratios. It will be noted that the number of returns grow larger as the locality nears either their wintering or breeding area. A case in point is the number of returns in Maryland. These are higher than the returns in northern N. J. The return percentage in Maine and the Carolinas are fairly high.

Considerable attention has been given to the group habit among birds of this species. These records lend more evidence to this trait, but whether it is a family group, as some suppose, awaits the banding of parents and young in their nest. Cases can be cited from the evidence showing that migrants banded on the same day return in the same flock to the same spot a year later within a few days of each other. These might be nesting neighbors or mates.

In reply to the question as to how long these birds live, the average life span can be settled best by banders either on their wintering areas or at their breeding grounds. Banders elsewhere will lack sufficient return records to ever find out. The average age is probably less than 3 years, but records embracing 7 years can be found. As to the speed with which White-throats travel from one place to another, much interesting data is now available, and while it is not in sufficient volume to be conclusive, it will be set forth at a later date. Weather and food supply are factors to be considered in such a discussion.

It is evident from these records that the spread of this species radiates from their wintering area and not the breeding area. While this is not fully proven, the same can be said about many aspects of the migration problem. "Ye Ed" feels that many of the thoughts expressed in this issue maybe quickly criticised and some disproved. However, by such comment and discussion we will learn. EBBA has gathered and presented in one place more data than has been seen together before about this species. Comments of reasonable length and further data from our members will appear in a future issue.

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Sec. 562 F. B. & R.

"BUY WAR SAVINGS STAMPS AND BONDS"