

EBBA NUS

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

REACHING
OVER
375
BANDERS
EVERY MONTH

January, 1943

"LET US BAND TOGETHER"

Vol. 6, No. 1



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WHY THE DECEMBER ISSUE WAS LATE

We sincerely regret that the previous issue was late in arriving in the hands of our many members and hope such a delay will not occur again. This tardiness was due to a lack of foresight in correctly foreseeing the extent of the Christmas jam in postal transit. The December number of Inland News was greatly delayed in its arrival from Fargo, N.D., reaching us on the 23rd. Not wishing to add to the load of mail then on the hands of the post-office workers, EBBA NUS was not mailed out until the 26th of the month. Under-manned as many of the post offices were, due to the war, it is our thought that the postal workers did a splendid job. We know that all banders are intensely patriotic and hope in that patriotism, there is a quality of patience, too.

HARDLY BELIEVABLE BUT TRUE

"Dick" Fischer of Flushing, N.Y., reported catching an owl with his hands some time ago. Recently George Dock, Jr., caught a hawk in much the same manner. This little tale is about a smaller bird, captured by hand without the aid of entanglements, and no doubt due to the age of the bird. It was a Downy Woodpecker and tops the 5-year old bird reported this month by Dr. Wood.

On Dec. 18th, a Downy, much darker than others, was seen feeding on the suet near the house. Observation proved that, in the woodpecker social scale, this chap was "low-man-on-the-totem-pole" as all other woodpeckers chased him at will. The Downy was a male, although his top-knot had but a trace of its former brilliance. He spent a lot of time just sitting still and on occasion appeared to tremble either with cold or anger at the boisterous disrespect shown by his younger relatives. By this time it was decided that his dingy appearance was due to age. He wore a band and as no woodpeckers had been banded hereabouts for 4 years, ways of catching him were discussed. Such a plan was given up as impractical, as he might never live the day out. However, he was still visiting the suet-baskets three weeks later.

On Jan. 9th, "Blackie" was still around and seemed very tame. Seeing him clinging to a suet-basket, the bander got within 3 ft. of him before he flew. An hour later the bander tried approaching him again and touched him before he flew to the woods. Later in the day a more cautious approach was tried, the bander keeping directly in back of the woodpecker and never moving until the bird was busy with the suet, suspended from an outer limb. This time the bander succeeded and gently grasped "the old gentleman" in his hand. Taking "Blackie" into the house, the band was carefully checked by his wife, who watched the capture through a window. "Blackie" was banded as an adult, Feb. 15, 1936. Assuming he was hatched in the spring of '35, if he lives to this spring, a few months hence, he will be EIGHT years old - a record, we think.

Did we mention the name of the bander? We meant to - you see it was "Ye Editor" and he considers it, hardly believable, but true.

MORE DATA ON THE SEX RATIO OF TOWHEE RETURNS

Carl Pedersen of Woodcliff Lake, N.J. adds his data to that sent in by many other banders and confirms the growing belief that males predominate the usual Towhee returns. In the years 1931 to 1942 inclusive, he has banded 126 of this species. Like so many of the reports previously published, a large proportion of the birds he banded have no definite clue as to sex. However, of the 29 individuals banded previously to 1942, in which sex is noted, 5 have returned in the following years. Three of these were adult males when banded and one was an immature male.

1932 and 1935 were Mr. Pedersen's best years. It appears that he has banded more than twice as many immatures as he did adults. 1932 is the only year in which he caught a Towhee in April. Incidentally this bird was a male and returned the following year in June. Another interesting point in his records is that they show no captures of this species in October during the whole 12 years. This is in direct variance with the results from other nearby stations.

If our joint compilation of the data on the sex ratio of Towhee returns proves nothing else to us all, it certainly emphasizes the importance of keeping better records of the birds we band. How much more important the work of all the stations would be if we took a moment more of our time, and the bird's time, to make sure, not alone of the band number and species, but its sex and any other notes a quick inspection would be sure to display. If a bander wants to band a big total of birds, then he should band Swifts or some of the colony - nesting shore birds; but if he really wishes to learn about birds, trapped around his home, he should not lean too heavily on the chance of one being recovered far away, years hence. A more dependable prop, on which to lean, are his own records as he handles the birds from his traps.

FABIAN TRAPS WORKING WELL IN GEORGIA

Raymond J. Fleetwood of Round Oak, Ga. writes that he has constructed two Fabian traps (EBBA NUS, Apr. '41) and one set since Dec. 20th has caught a Junco every day. Three Juncos is the largest catch at one time so far. He states: "It has been so warm and food so plentiful that Juncos have stayed away from my traps. However, I banded 30 in December and taken 3 returns. 1 was banded on Dec. 18, '40 and returned Dec. 17, '42 - another banded Dec. 8, '41 was taken Dec. 22, '42, and a third banded Feb. 14, '40 was retaken Dec. 22, '42, a return every year since banding."

Recently Mr. Fleetwood submitted 591 return cards for his banded Chimney Swifts representing his returns for 3 years. During his banding of Swifts this autumn, he trapped 12 birds with foreign bands. The details on these will be published in an early issue.

NEWS FOR THE BIRD BANDERS

Charles J. Spiker of Branchport, N.Y. reports banding more birds in '42 than ever before. He ran his total up to 863. During December he banded 20 Tree Sparrows as well as other winter birds. He has set as a goal, 1 new bird a day from Nov. 1 until March 1. If he accomplishes this he will be well satisfied. From Dec. 4 to the 24th, there have been 4 Meadowlarks in his fields. Since then there have been only 3. He has had a trap set purposely for them ever since they arrived and reports that on Dec. 31st they were approaching within 3 ft. of the trap. Here's hoping he catches them.

Raymond T. Fuller of Winterton, N.Y. will soon publish another nature book, "Now That We Have To Walk" (Dutton). It is an interesting group of nature essays.

George Dock, Jr. of Scarsdale went home on New Years Eve with an immature Red Shoulder Hawk. What you can't find in New York! More about this later.

BANDING AT PENN YAN, N.Y. DURING 1942

Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Lerch, who operate a fine banding station at Penn Yan, N.Y., report that they have banded 1,232 birds since January 1, 1942. This is almost 100 more than their 1941 total. They write, "The Spring migration of White-crowned Sparrows was very disappointing. This year we banded only 15 of this species. During some springs we have caught as high as 130. However the Fall migration was better than usual. It seems as though when one species falls off in numbers, there is another to take its place to keep our totals up. We noted a very large increase in Juncos banded here this Spring and last winter we banded almost 300 Starlings." (It has been noticed that when Starlings are dominant around traps, they will keep smaller birds from being caught.--"YeEd")

As of December 2, Mr. and Mrs. Lerch report that they have banded only 2 new Tree Sparrows this Fall, but have taken 7 returns. On December 2, they trapped 4 Tree Sparrows and all were returns. Two were banded last winter, one in January, 1941 and the other in January 1940. They add: "The returns of this species are by far the most plentiful and for that reason the most interesting of all the birds we trap."

A BARE HANDED CAPTURE

From time to time, a bander reports catching a live bird with his hands. George Dock, Jr., of Scarsdale, N.Y., is the first one, to our knowledge, who has caught a hawk this way. He relates the incident this way: "I caught a beautiful young male Sharp-shin Hawk, right in my own backyard, with my bare hands on December 6th. The yard contained 4 hawk traps at the time, loaded with pigeons, starlings and house sparrows, -- a menu to please any palate from Sparverius to Goshawk. Instead my Sharp-shinned customer pulled a "sneak-attack", close to the ground and never came within 20 feet of a trap".

"I had just shot a rat with a 22 from an upper window and when I went out to bury him, I noticed, through the evergreens, a large bird thrashing about trying to get through our anchor fence. I promptly closed in on him and grabbed him, just as he was getting clear. He is a 1942 vintage bird and I have already tamed him so that he will eat while perched on my wrist. I hope I can get him through the early dietary apathy that these accipters display and train him as a useful citizen. After all my numerous hawk traps and trips for miles afield, it is certainly ironic to get my best hawk in this simple manner, right here at home!"

NEWS FOR THE BANDERS

Gilbert Raynor, recently of New Britian, Conn., reports that his banding days are over for the duration. He has returned all his unused bands and filed his final reports in Washington. The reason: He has enlisted in the Naval Air Corps and is now in training. He writes: "When we get rid of those "birds" from Berlin and Tokio, I'll resume my banding. In the meantime, I intend to continue my membership in the E.B.B.A." Good work, Gilbert and good luck - we know that you will keep them flying.

"What this country needs -- I mean us banders," writes Raymond T. Fuller of Winterton, N.Y., "--is someone who can prepare -- get published and printed, a handbook on Passerines as to their plumage characters and changes through the year, so that banders can be helped to KNOW sexes, ages and the intervals of all our catches."

Dr. Harold B. Wood of Harrisburg, Pa. was visited by a Downy Woodpecker on December 16 that he banded on April 30, 1938.

ENOUGH TO MAKE ANY BANDER BLUE

It is not often that EBBA NUS strays from the sunny side of banding, yet it is realized that the hobby is not always just sugar and cream. Occasionally a bander laments his luck, but such is part of the game. Recently we received a tale of woe, from a member, which by comparison may serve to prove how lucky some of us are.

This bander has had a bad cold for the last two weeks. To make a bander down at the mouth, we know of nothing worse than a cold in the head. He writes, "You will note that I didn't trap many birds in '40 and '41. The reason for this was that the WPA started cutting a road, leading from nowhere to nowhere, through woods right in my banding area during these years. They cut down several hundred trees and a lot of brush forcing the birds elsewhere. The birds that did come around were frightened away by seeing so many men sleeping in the woods.

"Recently the landlord tried to increase my rent but was prevented from doing this, so he ran a wire fence across the place, cutting off access to my traps. I kept my traps in their usual place and with the cooperation of a neighbor, crossed through his yard to get to them. The next move was to turn chickens loose in my trapping area and spread chicken-feed between my traps. The chickens chased the birds and I finally moved my traps on to the land of my friendly neighbor. At present I am bothered by the sudden importation of five cats and am now happy to report that today there are only three." "Ye Ed" offers his sympathy and trusts in this bander's perserverance. We find great comfort in two little words in the above tale - possibly overlooked by others at first glance. These are "He writes". All of which leads into

SOMETHING THAT MAKES US HAPPY AND PROUD

It has never been the policy of EBBA NUS to toot any particular individual's horn or fill our scant pages with self-advertisement. We consider it a medium of expression for all members and squeeze on to its pages as much current banding news as we can. It is an instrument upon which all of you, from time to time, play your part. You are the NUS. The editor just puts it together. In the little notes of appreciation with which the editor acknowledges your contributions and letters, he does not speak for himself alone, but for all our members. Banders appreciate your efforts. To illustrate this fact we lift and condense paragraphs in letters recently received, as follows:

"My husband is in the service and I promised to keep a complete file of EBBA NUS for him when he returns. I have lost the June issue. Will you please replace it?" writes a lady in Connecticut.

"I wish EBBA NUS came out every week. It has grown a great deal since it started a few years ago." - A bander in upstate New York.

"Where is this month's EBBA NUS? Both Mrs. So-and-so and I can hardly wait until we see the next issue." - A bander in North Carolina.

"Am joining the army soon, so send all copies to my wife in New Hampshire and she will send them to me wherever I am stationed."

"I am moving next month and I am giving you my new address now as I wouldn't want to miss a copy of my EBBA NUS." - A bander in New Jersey.

"I have joined the Army Air Corps, but this station will not close down

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Continued:

completely, as I hope my father can keep it up in the little spare time he has. Please continue to send EBBA NUS to Dad. He will then send them on to me wherever I am stationed. It will give me a great deal of pleasure to hear about the activities of the banders who are able to continue this fine work." - A bander in Pennsylvania; and there are several other parents who are carrying on banding for their sons while they are in the service, that we have heard from and feel mighty proud about.

"I enclose my dues for EBBA NUS for 1943 and I consider it a very fair price indeed for the very interesting and instructive news-letter we receive every month." - A bander in Canada.

Your editor could fill this whole page with such words of appreciation, without scraping through the files, but the above will suffice. Our thought is only to pass along the appreciation shown by others for your splendid cooperation.

BLUEBIRDS STILL IN CONNECTICUT

H. R. Pease of West Hartford, Conn., writes, "On December 19th with the temperature just about zero, I observed four Bluebirds at a Bluebird House on my place. It would seem as if these birds are wintering in the vicinity as both my son, who lives across the road from me, and I have seen them at our bird houses several times within the past few weeks. I have often seen them late in November, in previous years, but never as late as this."

Mr. Pease also reports 5 returns on Dec. 20th, 2 Juncos and 3 Tree Sparrows. One Junco was banded in Jan. '40 and this is its first return, and the other banded in March '41, also a first return. Of the 3 returning Tree Sparrows, one was banded in March '41 and the other two in March '42. If Mr. Pease has banded a fair number of this latter species, we can safely predict that he will probably get many more returns this winter as Tree Sparrows seem to be the "Top Returners" of all winter birds at the northern stations.

NEWS FOR THE BANDERS

Maurice Broun of Hawk Mountain fame and formerly at Dr. Austin's banding station at Cape Code expects to be serving in the Army by the time you read this item. Samuel H. Brown of Chestnut Hill, Pa. is another bander who is in the service. Stanley Grierson of Katonah, N.Y. also expects to serve soon.

Jesse V. Miller of New Hyde Park, N.Y. sent us a page from an October 15th issue of a newspaper, "Manhasset Life" which gives a big display to the doings of his Junior Banding Club and gets in a good "plug" for the reporting of banded birds. The November issue of "Boy's Life" contains a page of pictures dominated by a photo of Stanley Grierson and "Bubo" his Great Horned Owl. "Bubo" was found by Mr. Grierson in Armonk, N.Y. after the parents had been killed. The owl is now about a year old and is in fine health and plumage.

Miss Edythe G. Williams, Librarian of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, 2717 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio, would like to obtain a copy of No. 7 - Vol. 3 to complete the Museum's file of EBBA NUS. This number is exhausted. Anyone having an extra copy of this issue and donating it to the Museum will win her appreciation and our thanks.

On Dec. 14, 1942, "Ye Ed" received a visit from a Blue Jay banded May 22, 1939. This was the first time this bird had been caught since banding.

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Sec. 562 P. L. & R.



Report a dead bird wearing a band, when found, to

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