

EBBA NEWS

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

"Let Us Band Together"

Reaching Over 375 Banders Every Month

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NOVEMBER, 1944

Vol. 7 No. 11

THOSE "HARD TO TELL" BIRDS

A Director of our Board, Jesse V. Miller of New Hyde Park, N. Y. suggests that EBBA devote an entire issue, possibly late next summer, to describe and suggest keys to the bird puzzles every bander captures in the fall. By bird puzzles it is meant not only "the little green warblers" which can be so easily confused, but the question of sex and age of some of the more common species. To tell the difference between an immature Field Sparrow and an immature Chippy in the late fall is not always easy. To tell the sex and age of such birds as Juncos, Finches, and Sparrows, Grackles and Starlings is not always the simplest thing to do. To outline what other banders do and on what they base their conclusions might be a help to us all.

During the coming months EBBA would like members to send in their suggestions and their different ways of answering such problems. EBBA will save all such comments, collate them and release them at the proper time. In submitting such identification helps, "Ye Ed" leans toward the visual characteristics, such as the number of white tail feathers in Juncos, which Raymond Fuller of Wintertown has worked out, rather than measurements, although measurements and weights should not be overlooked. However, it is not always convenient or practical for banders to measure and weight every bird, especially when the traps are taking a large quantity during a "wave". Just as visual characters will vary, so will weights and measurements. Birds as individuals are no more uniform than are humans. With humans if males were divided by measurement, say between 6 ft. 2 in. and 5 ft. 10 in., and women from 5 ft. to 5 ft. 6 in., just what would we classify the Mayor of New York or Mrs. Roosevelt? It is doubtful that sex can be based on size alone, but size and other visual clues, such as plumage or the color of the beak or iris may give a clue with only a slight chance of error.

With some species the determining of sex maybe beyond the realm of possibility, but in most instances the factor of age can be defined. Let EBBA hear from you in regard to your experiences along this line. Even if your findings seem simple and obvious to everyone, send them in. Even the most obvious is occasionally overlooked.

THE COFFEYS MEET SOME L. I. BANDERS

On a Sunday afternoon in September, Lieut. Ben Coffey and Mrs. Coffey of Nashville, Tenn. met a few Long Island banders at an impromptu picnic held on the grounds of the Manhasset High School. Lieut Coffey is a member of the Army Air Force and was transferred from Oklahoma to New York for a short time. It is understood that he now has been transferred to the South.

By working very hurriedly, due to unforeseen demands on Lieut. Coffey by the Army, it was possible for a few members to meet with the Coffeys at this time. A pleasant social afternoon was enjoyed, looking over the traps of the Manhasset Junior Banding Club, Mr. Miller's collection of Kodachromes and toasting frankfurters over an open fire in the woodland adjoining the school. If time had allowed, it is felt that many more banders would have been on hand to meet the former editor of "The Migrant" and his charming wife.

BANDING GRASSHOPPER SPARROWS
By Robert L. Smith, Reynoldsville, Pa.

For 3 seasons I have known the Grasshopper Sparrow. I first met this common but little known bird in 1942, at which time we moved from Brookville, Pa. to a farm near Reynoldsville. At this place I found many pairs of this species, as well as 4 pairs of Henslows Sparrows and 3 pairs of Savannah Sparrows. In Brookville, but .9 miles away, I had never found any of these birds.

Early in 1944, I decided to make a study of this species by banding and color-banding all the birds in a certain tract. I received a banding license of June 15th. From that time on I have been attempting to band these Sparrows.

The Grasshopper Sparrow is difficult to study and trap. The deep grass and secretive habits of this species imposes upon the observer a difficult task of watching their activities. It is even a greater task to trap them near their nesting sites. I have tried various means and experimental traps. I have used traps for ground feeders and traps with top entrances. I have tried dripping water, dead and live insects and grain as bait, all without success. My most recent attempt is to try and trap this sparrow with an automatic collapsible trap with dripping water, this being situated at an open spring, now dry, used by these birds.

The Grasshopper Sparrow is not afraid of traps. Indeed, within 15 minutes after I set them out these birds take possession and use them as singing perches, but at no time do they enter the traps. I have observed that they always choose the highest point of the trap upon which to alight and sing. In an attempt to exploit this habit, I built experimental traps in which the highest point of the trap would give way under the bird and precipitate him into a compartment below. However, the Grasshopper Sparrow would always fly up, just as quickly as the perch gave way.

Just how many Grasshopper Sparrows have been banded I do not know. I doubt if the number is large for most banders are not ideally located to work with this species on their nesting areas and the birds seem very reluctant to enter traps at this time.

If any reader has had experiences in banding this species, I would be very pleased to hear from them. May I ask that they send me banding dates, returns, and particularly the type of traps and baits used.

MORE ABOUT BANDED WRENS

Mr. and Mrs. John A. Gillespie of Glenolden, Pa. have banded 107 House Wrens in 22 years, - 31 adults and 76 immatures. No fledglings have been heard from again. 8 adults returned (26%) - 6 the following year; 1 the following 2 years and 1 the following 4 years. One immature trapped in 1939 was at this station for 5 consecutive seasons and was responsible for 48 offsprings. More about this wren later.

NEWS OF THE BANDERS

William Vogt, of Washington, D. C., now Chief of Conservation of the Pan-American Union returned from a trip to Mexico in the middle of October and left about a week later for Chile where he will be until around the first of the year.

EBBA is sorry to learn that our member Howard Mahnken of Lambertville, N. J. lost his mother on October 10th.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS ARRIVING EARLY..

Prof. O. A. Stevens of Fargo, N. D. reports the trapping of the first White-throat for the season on Sept. 17th. Not to be outdone by the INLAND, many of EBBA's banders report them early and in good numbers.

Mrs. Caroline Van Heeswyk reports from her banding station at Cape May, N. J. that between Oct. 1st and the 4th, she had banded 15 White-throats and states that if could have devoted more time to banding, she could have tripled the number with ease. One of her traps takes this species 3 at a time without fail. Last year the White-throat flight appeared thereabouts between Oct. 21st and the 29th. Mrs. Van Heeswyk also reports taking a White-crowned immature on Oct. 4th and reports her station alive with warblers during the latter part of September.

B. S. Bowdish of Demarest, N. J. writing on Oct. 1st, doesn't mention this species, but it was probably present right after he mailed the letter. "Beech" Bowdish reports "In the past few days there has been an influx of Robins, Jays, Towhees, Catbirds a few, Grackles in hordes. Yesterday (Sept. 30) things broke loose a bit. Banded 12 Bronze Grackles, - big for us; 12 Blue Jays, - a record for us in one day; 6 Towhees, 5 Robins, 1 Black-poll Warbler, 1 Black-throated Green and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Total 38, which is the best day for a long time."

Miss Heather G. Thorpe of Buffalo, N. Y. when reporting that she has added two new traps to her station equipment on Oct. 5th, remarks, "With all the White-throats that have been here this past week, wouldn't you think I would catch more than just two?" This implies a heavy flight in Buffalo late in September and early in October. As far as only catching two of this species "Ye Ed" mourns with her. With ten times as many traps as Miss Thorpe, "Ye Ed" has only caught 6 of these "critters" in the first 20 days of October. Scores have been around the traps and the station but even millet seed doesn't seem to tempt them here.

Mrs. Betty Carnes of Tenafly, N. J. also reports a large flight of White-throats. In her letter of Oct. 5th she reports the banding of 192 birds between Aug. 13 and Oct. 5th. The list includes 11 Red-eyed Vireos, a Bicknell's and a grey-cheeked Thrush, a Parula Warbler and lately lots of Ruby-crowned Kinglets and White-throats AND 14 squirrels, 27 Chipmunks and 4 rats!

Richard Fischer of Flushing, N. Y. stops long enough at midnight to scrawl the following memo, "What a migration! From Sept. 23rd to Oct. 23rd, I have banded 181 new birds. About 70 of them were White-throats. Got 2 Bicknell and 2 Gray-checks, a male Sapsucker, (my first) a Blue-headed Vireo, (Also my first) 2 Nashville, 3 Winter Wrens, etc." It would seem that White-throats are early at his station also.

NO OLD AGE RECORDS IN THIS ISSUE

It is believed that it is more convenient for all of our membership to have old age records listed in substantial portions, rather than submit just a few new records at a time as has been done in the past. Therefore, no new records will be added to the list in this issue. It is probable that enough new records will be on hand by next month so that they will take up a full page and become our ninth list.

While on this subject it will be of interest to know that EBBA had a request recently from an ornithologist in England for a copy of these lists. The entire set of 8 lists were sent with the wish expressed that if any of the data was used for publication the individual bander should receive full credit for the record.

NEWS FOR THE BIRD BANDERS

Dr. Carleton M. Herman of San Francisco, Calif. has a fine paper in the July issue of BIRD BANDING, on the subject of bird malaria. While the theme is a long way above the head of "Ye Ed", he has heard it mentioned by those who know about such things, that this particular paper is one of the best that has ever been published on the subject in our quarterly. Dr. Herman is a former president of EBBA and was instrumental in founding EBBA NEWS. All our heartiest congratulations, Doctor, on a fine article.

In our issue of April, (1944), the matter of bridging the gaps in a bander's record book was discussed. The thought was expressed that many banded birds might be around years after banding, but be just far enough away from the traps so that they were never again caught. An illustration of this came to light recently. On Sept. 17, 1939, (The very same day that Raymond J. Fleetwood banded the Swift that was recovered in Peru), a young Catbird was banded. Since this immature bird had never been caught since banding, it was believed that it was dead by now. On Aug. 18th, this year we received a phone call reporting that this bird had been killed in a rat trap only $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the place of banding. This bird was then over 5 years old and it is a question whether it had always returned to the same spot where it was killed during each of the intervening years and had passed its natural life just out of reach of the traps.

Rev. Edward Stoehr of Pittsburgh, Pa., writes: "My banding was curtailed during the summer, due to work, the loss of a few traps and a broken water line. In the first 5 months of the year, I am happy to report the banding of 750 new birds of 45 species. Among these were 4 Yellow-throated Vireos, Juv., which I consider a rare item. 60 Cardinals, 21 White-crowned Sparrows and 4 Spotted Sandpipers. Only 6 species of Warblers were handled after trapping scores of species by the hundreds at Washington, D. C., a few years ago. On Sept. 9th a Ruby-throated Hummingbird still had a youngster in the nest. Believe it or not, but this is true. Rev. Stoehr resumed banding late in September, but wasn't able to band during October due to his work. He hopes to make up for the loss now.

The "Livingston Manor Times", Sullivan Co., N. Y., a weekly newspaper, published a fine banding story on the front page of their issue of Sept. 7th. The yarn was written by Richard B. Fischer of Flushing, N. Y. and relates his summer banding experiences in that area. Beside telling the public how to report a banded bird when found, "Ye Ed" admires it because it deftly brings a local angle into the yarn and nicely mentions the farmers and their barns from which many swallows were banded. In some instances it relates how many birds returned to a particular barn from the previous season. It is a sure bet that many farmers will read it, recognize either their own name or that of a neighboring farm and be more ready to cooperate with Fischer during the next season's banding. A nice yarn -- orchids to you, Dick.

Dr. C. B. Worth, EBBA's smiling president, now in the Army, is no longer a lieutenant. Now it is Captain Worth. A recent communique reports he is "achin" to band, but there is a little matter of Army regulations until the war is over. He mentions a Chimney Swift of his that is 8 years old and offers it as an old age record. It was EBBA's painful duty to inform him the record was old enough by about 3 years. Lieut. Ben Coffey of Nashville, Tenn. also of the Army has an 8 year old Swift in his records. It would seem that this species has a fairly long life expectancy. As it is no longer believed that Dr. Worth's address is a military secret, we give it here. It is Capt. C. B. Worth, M. C., 01696107, A.M.S., Army Medical Center, Washington, 12, D. C. Possibly some member would like to drop the beaming brooke a line or two. He has a story about an Army parrot that EBBA can't print. It concerns the meeting of the Army parrot (with a naval vocabulary) and an owl. Since neither of the birds were banded, EBBA must pass it by.

WE, THE BANDERS SPEAK

On Nov. 13th Mrs. Betty Carnes of Tenafly, N. J. spoke before the Strathmore Vanderbilt Club on the subject, "Attracting Birds to Your Garden". She is thankful none of her large audience asked her "What to do about Squirrels and Cats?"

On Nov. 14th Richard B. Fischer of Flushing, N. Y. had the spotlight on the evenings program at the N. Y. Linnaean Society. He spoke on the subject of banding, illustrating his talk with experiences and the results he has so far obtained.

On Oct. 5th Miss Heather Thorpe of the Educational Dept., Buffalo Museum of Science received a film from the Fish and Wildlife Service entitled "The How and Why of Bird Banding." With this film, Miss Thorpe hopes to improve the co-operation from the children and especially some of the children around the park where her traps are usually set. One of her two Government Sparrow traps has already disappeared and vandalism from a certain "element" has been bad.

MORE ABOUT SMALL BAND OPENERS

In the June issue and again in September EBBA NEWS mention was made of a little gadget for opening small bands discovered in certain 5 and 10 cents stores by Mrs. Betty Carnes of Tenafly, N. J. This gadget is called a "Presto Staple Remover", selling at retail for 25¢ and is made by the Metal Specialties Mfg. Co. of Chicago. (Due to the war, it may now be out of production, conserving metals, as it is made of metal and plastic). As it is sold for the purpose of removing staples in booklets and letters, its original form is NOT suitable for opening bands, but if the prongs are filed down with care it is easily converted into a dandy and handy little tool for opening the smallest bands for Swifts, Warblers, etc.

Since the September issue arrived in our member's hands, Mrs. Carnes has been swamped with letters about this gadget. She very thoughtfully bought up everyone that she could find in the stores. Any member who would like one and can't find one in their local stores may write Mrs. Carnes, 25 Kenwood Ave., Tenafly, N. J. She will supply them as long as her small supply lasts. Please enclose 30¢ with your letter to cover cost and mailing. Remember, each bander must file the points down for him or herself, just as would be required if purchased in a store.

A SPLENDID IDEA

Miss Mabel T. Rogers of Milledgeville, Ga., advances the thought that some member, in every state in our area, arrange with each of the state educational journals to have published an article on bird banding stressing the correct manner of reporting any bird found wearing a band. This would be a great boost for the educational side of bird banding and seems a very good way to get help from teachers all over the country. They would be able to advise their students properly if their pupils inquired about a banded bird they had found. What member will volunteer to do this for their state?

"BILL" PEPPER, JR. PLANS COME-BACK

Sometime in February, next year, William Pepper, Jr. of Philadelphia has bright hopes of starting "a real-honest-to-goodness" banding station again, somewhere in the Chestnut Hill area. He vaguely speaks of a "1000 birds a year" station, like he used to run in pre-war days. Sounds promising and is the sort to be expected from him. "Bill" Pepper held down the post of Treasurer for seven long years when EBBA was in the doldrums. No easy task and one for which he deserves thanks.

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Issued Monthly by
Eastern Bird Banding Association
24 Overlook Dr., Huntington, N.Y.



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399 STATE STREET
ALBANY 6, N.Y.

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11/15/44*