

EBBA NEWS



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

REACHING
OVER
375
BANDERS
EVERY MONTH

July, 1944

"LET US BAND TOGETHER"

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MORE OLD AGE-RECORDS TUMBLE

The flow of old age-records arriving from banders has slowed, but some still arrive and these are usually "good". C. C. Ludwig, of Lansing, Mich., President of the Inland Association, has sent us the long sought record of an 8 year-old Brown Thrasher. Mr. Ludwig's record beats the former record held by Mrs. Amelia Laskey of Nashville, Tenn. by 3 months. The fact that there are so many 6 and 7 year-old Thrashers is evidence that a better record could be found. Mr. Ludwig also has records of 3 other Thrashers that are at least 7 years old. He reports that 1943 was an outstanding year for this species and notes that he had 11 station returns during that summer.

Just to make the records a trifle harder to beat, Mrs. Laskey sends in another record which beats her previous record for the Northern Yellow-throat. This individual bird is a female and when first banded in 1938, it was molting its plumage, proving it to be at least 1 year old. The records are as follows:

CHANGE OF OLD AGE-RECORDS

	<u>Bander</u>	<u>Banded</u>	<u>Returned</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Age</u>
BROWN THRASHER Lansing, Mich.	C. C. Ludwig	5/5/37	5/7/44	Same	8 yrs.
Nashville, Tenn.	A. R. Laskey	6/20/33	3/23/40	Same	7 yrs. 9 mos.
NORTHERN YELLOW-THROAT Nashville, Tenn.	A. R. Laskey	9/7/38	6/30/44	Same	7 yrs.

The age record for Catbirds, now standing at 9 yrs. 3 mos., and held by F. C. Labahn, Jr., of Blue Island, Ill., must have trembled on July 2nd. On that day a neighbor brought "Ye Ed" a dead Catbird wearing a band that proved it was 9 yrs. 1 month old. This bird had been taken in the traps in every year since it was first banded as an adult in the spring of 1936. One of most constant visitors of some 1600 of this species already banded.

FISCHER AT IT AGAIN

An early report from Dick Fischer, now at Beaver Kill, N. Y. reports the banding of 63 birds in the first four days of his vacation as well as the capture of 3 returns. It is interesting to note that he reports the return of a House Wren banded as a fledgling in a cranny near his cottage. This fledgling, now an adult female is busy raising her own family at another spot about 800 ft. from the place she was hatched. Her mother is back at the old cranny with another brood of youngsters. He also reports the banding of 40 Cliff Swallows of which 13 were adults. He has 2 pairs of Tree Swallows nesting in his house as well as many Wrens.

NEWS OF THE BIRD BANDERS

Our "Prexy", Dr. Harold B. Wood and Mrs. Wood are spending the first two weeks of this month at Beach Haven, N. J. On a visit some years ago, he found thousands of birds along the shore. He hopes to learn, during his visit, why Laughing Gulls laugh. Possibly, he is on the brink of a sensational discovery. It is his thought that these gulls stamp on the mud, causing the bugs or worms, etc., beneath, to become curious of "just what is going on upstairs." They pop out of the mud to have a quick look around, and of course, end up by popping into the mouth of the gull. This makes the gull laugh. We are often puzzled about this.

Edwin A. Mason is now at the Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary at Northampton, Mass. He writes: "Given a little time we will have a bird and wildlife area here, worth traveling many miles to see. This is a definite hint to all the banders to place this spot on their schedule of postwar travel plans." Another such spot for banders from the New York area travelling up that way is the 280 acre Audubon Sanctuary sponsored by the Greenwich (Conn.) branch of this Society located just off the Merrit Parkway and in the Round Hill section of Greenwich. Mr. Robert L. Weaver, in charge, will be glad to see any bander there. The many nature trails are open to the public on Wednesday through Sunday and are all about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length. A beautiful tract.

Be sure to see a copy of the Saturday Evening Post dated July 15th.

Mrs. Leslie A. Stauber formerly of Stelton, N. J., has now moved to New Brunswick, N. J., where her husband, Dr. Stauber is with the Dept. of Zoology of Rutgers University. Mrs. Stauber is interested in bird parasites.

A late report from Raymond Fleetwood of Round Oak, Ga., reports a total of 255 Bluebirds banded this summer so far. He also writes that he has had a 16 room Martin house, on a 30 ft. pole, erected since 1940. While Martins are around, they have never used the house. The house has never been used by English Sparrows either, so those pests couldn't be the trouble. He reports that Martins seem to prefer gourds in his neighborhood.

The Purple Grackle mentioned elsewhere in this issue (bottom of Page 4) as being captured by Mr. Miller at New Hyde Park, L. I., N. Y. on June 9th, was banded by Richard Fischer on April 14th, 1944 at Flushing, L. I., N. Y. Another Grackle banded at the same place and by the same bander on Sept. 23, 1942 was shot July 5, 1943 about 2 miles south of "Ye Ed's" station. Dick, with a gleeful snicker, jumps up in the air at this report and asks, "What was the story on your vaunted educational campaign?" In rebuttal, we meekly whisper that our aim was never so high as to expect the 35,000 people hereabouts would stop killing birds altogether, but we did hope that if they killed a bird wearing a band, they would report it to the proper authorities. Which brings to mind the fact that members of bird clubs, who it would be assumed have heard of bird banding and know the importance of making a report of any band found, occasionally do not report such finds.

Charles L. Whittle of Hancock, N. H. is always on the lookout for old copies and sets of the Bulletin of the Northeastern Bird Banding Association and copies of Bird Banding. In a recent letter he states he especially wants No. 4 of Vol. 1 of the first series and No. 1 of Vol. III of Bird Banding. Anyone having spare copies should get in touch with him.

A member of the Kirkland Bird Club, Cleveland, Ohio, now serving in the Merchant Marine, reports that he was able to take his usual bird walk hundreds of miles out to sea. He walked around his boat and found no less than 13 land birds resting among the deck cargo. Many of them were Towhees.

THE SEASONAL SOJOURN OF SONG SPARROWS

By Harold B. Wood, M. D.

The migratory habits of Song Sparrows are definitely known, although to some persons these birds are considered permanent residents. Excellent studies of the habits of individual Song Sparrows have been made. While I have made no particular study of Song Sparrows, a review of my records is of interest. During the past 15 years I have banded 404 Song Sparrows, all trapped in my yard at Harrisburg, Pa. This total comprises 220 adults and 184 birds regarded as young of the year. The two groups will be considered separately.

The 184 young were trapped, none being banded as nestlings: 54 (or 30 percent) repeated during the same season. 9 of these young (or 5 percent) returned the next year to the same traps. Since many of these young sparrows were first trapped during August or later, it is not known how many were hatched within a reasonable distance of the banding station. Hence it is not correct to say that 5 percent returned to their natal neighborhood. There is, however, considerable opportunity for much Song Sparrow nesting in the immediate vicinity of the banding station.

One young Song Sparrow, first trapped Aug. 5, '35, repeated twice in Aug., twice in Oct., once in Nov. and twice in Dec. and Jan. up to Jan. 19th. This is the only Song Sparrow of the entire 386, excluding those banded in Dec., Jan. and Feb. which remained during the winter. There are always a few members of this species that winter here and of these 12 were banded in Jan. and Feb.

Adult Song Sparrows give more definite records. Only 7 were trapped in Feb., but March records show 53 and April 38 banded; 14 were banded in the first half of March, 39 during the second half, (24 in the last week). Field trips indicate that the spring migration of Song Sparrows is well underway during the 2nd week in March hereabouts. City migration, or banding, lags behind rural. 31 of the March and 25 of the April, (or 60 percent) of the migrants passed directly through without delay, being trapped only once. A few others tarry a few days and 11 repeated long enough to suggest they nested nearby.

Fall migration doubtless begins early in Aug. here, as revealed by banded Song Sparrows, of local breeders first. 60 percent of the Sept. bandings and 90 percent of the Oct., are birds making 1 day stops. No bird banded between March and May repeated after August.

The returns of Song Sparrows banded as adults show some results. 20 (or 9 percent) made subsequent returns to this station. B-105907, banded Oct. 23, 1931 returned Mar. 30 to Dec. 18, '32; Feb 10 to Sept. 3, '33 and Feb. 19 to Aug 6, '34. - 37 trips to my hands. Another banded in Oct. returned next year up to Dec. 20. These late repeats on returns were rare. No bird banded during the breeding season made a primary return except during a breeding season. Not one was here during Jan. or Feb., except the one cited above. No Song Sparrow banded in Jan. or Feb. made his appearance in the traps during the year, except in those same months, except one, banded Feb. 9 and repeated Feb. 25, April 22 and May 12 of the same year. It returned the next year on Feb. 17th. Among the Song Sparrows classed as young when banded, between May and Sept., 8 returned at various times between April 1st and Sept. 8th.

One test was made in 1930 of the homing instinct of Song Sparrows. A-144885, banded June 2, '29, returned the next year and during April was taken 3 miles away. It promptly returned. Then taken 15 miles south it returned within a few days; then taken 8 miles east, it returned 5 days later. In May it was taken 50 miles away and was never heard from again.

SUMMARY: The trapping of Song Sparrows shows certain characteristics of

these birds. Song Sparrows migrate, with long migration periods, beginning early. The nesting Song Sparrows leave the neighborhood soon after they have completed their breeding duties. Migrating birds may tarry a few days enroute. A summer bird remains as such, rarely appearing during the winter. Song Sparrows are not trap shy, and readily become familiar with complex traps, escaping from them easily. They repeat frequently and return in high ratios. They have a marked homing instinct. Studies of their habits are therefore easy to conduct.

DO YOU BAND NESTLING HOUSE WRENS?

"Ye Ed" has banded nestling House Wrens in the past, but has come to the conclusion that he won't in the future, unless something of a change in the chances of recoveries or returns happens. During eleven years, 1933 to 1943, 409 House Wrens have been banded of which 254 were nestlings. Only one of these nestlings has ever been heard from subsequent to banding.

In the same period 155 adult House Wrens have been taken in the traps. Why and how is a mystery. Their capture apparently depends on the bird's curiosity rather than any bait or type of trap. Of the 155 Wrens trapped 9 have been taken in following years, most of them in the year subsequent to their banding and seldom more than once.

With the exception of the year 1939 all fledglings were banded in boxes right on the grounds of the banding station, which usually is the site of two or three broods. During 1939 a special campaign was conducted to band as many House Wrens as possible and 155 nestlings and 14 adults were banded. From this total of 129 Wrens not a single record was received. Many more could have been banded if time had allowed, but such a campaign is very time taking and means constantly covering any area for 6 weeks. House Wrens in this part of Long Island are very plentiful and breed in nearly every garden. The problem is that the nestlings in one box are ready to be banded one week and those in the neighboring garden may not be ready until the following week. Such a campaign means visiting every box week after week and covering the same ground again and again. To get best results the adults should be caught and a similar campaign should be conducted during the following year. A bander willing to concentrate on such a study for two years or more might get a fair percentage of returns of the adults. Whether he would get returns from the nestlings is doubtful. The number of recoveries he would get from House Wrens is nil. To the writer's way of thinking the occasional banding of a brood of House Wrens is useless and a waste of good bands, yet on the other hand, the unbanded adults that each year wander into the traps must come from somewhere and certainly must have been young once. Where do they come from?

The only worthwhile information I have from this banding of Wrens is the data on the size of the broods which run as high as 8 to a nest in the early part of the year to 1 in very late broods. Hereabouts these wrens may have 2 successful broods a season.

NEWS FOR THE BANDERS

Howard Mahnken of Brooklyn, N. Y. succeeded in banding 50 birds while teaching school in Lambertsville, N. J. during the term just closed. During the summer he intends to see that some more of the Brooklyn birds will be wearing bands.

Richard Fischer, of Flushing, N. Y. expects to conduct another banding expedition around Beaver Kill, N. Y. this summer. He headed off to his banding grounds on July 1st. Right now he is cloaked in radio silence and we await results with considerable awe. It should be added that Dick held forth on the radio for half an hour in May. Boasts of audience of 40,000. Yes, he talked about birds and banding.

Jesse V. Miller of New Hyde Park, L. I., N. Y. reports that he captured Purple Grackle No. 42-326248 in his traps on June 9th. Who banded it?

TIPS FOR THE BANDERS

EBBA apologizes for the repetition, but we again ask all members to keep an eye out for dead birds along the highways. Thousands of birds are killed annually by auto traffic. Banders should make it a habit to glance over such victims when ever they are seen. It takes no more than a minute to ascertain whether they wore a band or not. Possibly you will look at a hundred such dead birds without finding one with a band, but the 101st maybe the one wearing a band. This month, when the young birds take wing seems to be the worst month of the year for such accidents. It would be interesting for banders to keep an account of the number of birds and the species of all of them inspected and compare them with other lists. Ebba makes the guess that Robins will head the list while Starlings, another very common bird will be seldom found as killed on the highways. "Ye Ed" has viewed the remains of scores of birds killed by traffic and so far has only found 3 banded birds. However, the possibility of completing a record in this manner is great enough to make it worthwhile.

In the last issue mention was made that a salvaged 5 gal. tin oil can would be useful in building new traps or repairing old equipment. Two good size sheets of tin can be cut from each such can. Beside making a rodent proof bottom for traps it can also be cut in thin strips and used for edging doors or door openings, that won't scratch or catch on your sleeve. The idea is to cut a strip 3 times the size of the mesh used in making the trap. i.e. a trap made of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch mesh should have a strip of tin $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. This strip placed along the hardware cloth should then be marked for 3 or 4 half inch tabs that will fold through the mesh. When these tabs are scratched on the tin, take the piece oftin in hand and cut $\frac{1}{2}$ inch off the width with the exception of where the tabs are marked in. Your piece of tin will then be 1 inch wide with $\frac{1}{2}$ inch tabs on 1 side. Bend the piece over a straight edge allowing $\frac{1}{2}$ inch on each side so that it becomes V shape. Now slip it on to the edge of the door opening or door, bend the tabs inward over the mesh and squeeze it tight with pliers or using a block, hammer it tight and the result is a fine smooth edge. Continue this around both the door and the door opening, finish with a coat of paint and you will find that you have a very neat and substantial bit of trap construction.

Many banders are "plagued" by grey squirrel annoyance. These pert pests delight in stealing bait and springing traps as fast as they are set. Ways of controlling squirrels have been suggested for years, but aside from deportation to a distance, few of the suggestions have resulted in much relief. The current issue of the news-letter of the Western Bird Banding Association carries an illustration (without any text) of platforms for traps "up in the air." Placing a trap on a platform 14 ft. up in the air may have an advantage for western banders, EBBA, frankly admits ignorance on the subject. Why such a platform should need a 10 ft. base is puzzling, too. However, the idea of setting traps up in the air seems as though it would be the answer to "squirrel trouble". "Ye Ed" is toying with the idea, using a 4-cell top-opening wire trap suspended on "bell" wire so that it can be lifted up and lowered down at will. Raised to 6 ft. from the ground and kept 10 ft. from any overhanging branch, it is squirrel free. So far it has taken, Blue Jays, Grackles, Catbirds and 1 Song Sparrow. It should be added that the wires are all suspended from a overhanging branch of a large oak about 20 ft. from the ground.

Any bander trying this method should not underestimate the distance a squirrel can jump. "Ye Ed" did. The trap was 6 ft away from the top of a clothes-line post. "Mr. Squirrel" looked over the situation, went right up the post, sat on top for a moment, then "yumped" for the trap. He made it, so the trap was moved.

H. H. Poor of Yonkers, N. Y. found a dead Herring Gull wearing band No. 37-601964, June 25, 1944 on Great Pond Point, north of Cartwright Isle, off the shore of Long Island, New York. Who banded this bird?

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