

E B B A N E W S

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THE EASTERN BIRD-BANDING ASSOCIATION

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May-June 1953

Although this issue of EBBA NEWS is actually the May-June issue, it is being prepared during the first week in October. Various circumstances have transpired to prevent the Editor, who also must double as typist and proofreader, from getting out an issue during the past several months. The members have been very patient in waiting for another copy of EBBA NEWS to arrive, and the Editor very much appreciates their forbearance while at the same time apologizing for the delay. It is hoped that arrangements can be made for someone more expert in typing to assume that task, either voluntarily or on a paid basis, thus facilitating the preparation of copy.

The Blue Jay symposium, originally scheduled for this issue, will be presented in a later issue. For one thing, the paucity of material received makes a worthwhile report difficult; this is not due solely to lack of cooperation but also, and chiefly, to insufficient work with this species.

In accordance with action of the Council, the Editor has elected to combine the issues for May and June, July and August, and September and October. A decrease in the number of issues will, to a large degree, be offset by using an extra sheet in each of these issues, giving a total of 30 rather than 36 pages of material. The latter two issues referred to above should appear in close succession, after which we hope to return to a current basis.

AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

For the past month or so, Council Member Eleanor Dater (Mrs. John Y. Dater) of Ramsey, New Jersey, has been extending invitations to banders in the northern New Jersey and southern New York area to attend a get-together at her home for the purpose of discussing problems of local interest, etc, on Saturday, October 17.

However, about a week ago, Mrs. Dater called the Editor to say that, due to the critical illness of her son with polio and pneumonia, she would have to cancel plans for the affair. Although it will not affect the cancellation of the meeting, it is good to report that a phone call to Eleanor Dater last night (October 4) provided the encouraging information that her son is now improving, and I know that all members of E.B.B.A. will join in wishing him a speedy recovery.

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PENNSYLVANIA BIRD BANDERS -- WANTED!

In a letter to the Editor, Dr. Paul H. Fluck, of Lambertville, New Jersey, active bander, author, and human dynamo, makes the following offer which should sound good to licensed Pennsylvania banders.

"The banding station at Washington Crossing Park, Pennsylvania, is now open to licensed Pennsylvania banders who are welcome to come there and band any time they please.

"All bands are tagged by species and are hung on a large board. The record book is self-explanatory. Repeats are listed on filing cards. All you need to bring is your lunch and some baits for the

traps. There is an indoor bathroom with hot and cold running water and ample room in the Hoagland house for shelter in bad weather. All that you have to do is set the traps and bait up.

"The Washington Crossing Park Bird Banding Station is a new experiment in bird banding. The public is invited to watch birds being banded. Naturally, we don't let folks flock around the traps, but we do bring the birds back in collecting cages to show the visitors. We pass the bands around, then band the birds, and away they fly. In the past twelve months more than 3,000 Boy Scouts, nature groups, bird watchers, and school children have visited the station. Next year we hope to pack in 5,000 to 10,000 visitors.

"Right now, the station is being operated only on Saturdays and Sundays -- but with the help of more banders we should be able to keep things going three to four days a week. Last year we banded 1190 birds of 42 species. Our big day -- May 2nd -- brought over 200 birds, including 79 new birds that were banded. Almost any day in October and November we should take at least 50 new birds. There are more than thirty traps -- all set up and ready to go.

"If you want to try your luck at the Washington Crossing station, just call Dr. Fluck (Lambertville, N.J., 109) or Mr. Norman Fisher, Nature Director, Washington Crossing Park (Newtown, Pa., 3786), or write directly to Dr. Fluck, or stop in to see us some weekend so that there will be someone on hand to show you around the traps.

"The fall migration will be heavy, and we need your help. Let us know when we can look for you."

Editor's note: Banders from outside of Pennsylvania are welcome, too, provided they are licensed to operate in that state. To get such authorization, it is necessary (1) to send your permit to the Bird-banding Office at Patuxent together with the request to have Pennsylvania added to it, after which the permit will be returned to you, and (2) to write to the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Harrisburg, Pa., requesting that you be granted a Pennsylvania permit, giving them your Federal permit number. There is no charge involved.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH BY A FORMER PRESIDENT

The following sketch by former E.B.B.A. President Horace Groskin, of Ardmore, Pennsylvania, was originally sent to John V. Dennis, of Leesburg, Virginia, in reply to his request for data in connection with his book on attracting birds which is now in preparation. Mr. Dennis thought that the sketch was of sufficient interest for use in EBBA NEWS, so he sent it on to the Editor. In order to bring it a little more up to date than it was originally, Mr. Groskin was asked to revise it as of May of this year, and he also consented to its use in EBBA NEWS. The sketch follows.

"From May 1937 to May 1953, I have banded a total of 17, 448 birds representing 60 different species. Of these, 814 individuals returned to the banding station. Several hundred of my birds were retrapped by other banders or found dead.

"The species I have banded in largest numbers was the Purple Finch -- 7,971 individuals. Returns numbered 158 (2.1%). Many of these returned a number of times in following years, up to eight and one half years later. Of my Purple Finches, 138 were retrapped by other banders or were found dead at distances of from 10 to 1,184 air line miles from the banding station. The Purple Finch does not nest in this area. They are present only during the months between November and May.

"I have banded 2,171 Goldfinches, 2,471 Juncos, over 1,500 White-throated Sparrows, over 500 Song Sparrows, 226 Pine Siskins, and 419 Cardinals. For bait I use sunflower seed, and for Song Sparrows, Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, and others, I use a mixture containing hemp and millet. I keep suet all the year around for woodpeckers and, in summer, for Catbirds.

"One cannot expect to get any large number of birds to band unless a large number are present the year around, and the best way to obtain large numbers is to be liberal with food. The food should be distributed liberally upon feeders where there are no traps. When the birds are accustomed to coming for food, then the traps can be placed nearby.

"The most interesting birds I have banded recently were the Philadelphia Vireo, Common Redpoll, Summer Tanager, and White-winged Crossbill."

Note: The story is going the rounds that Mr. Groskin really proved his point when he announced the capture of the Summer Tanager at a meeting of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club, which organization is noted for the good-natured going over that members got when they announce records of rare birds such as the Summer Tanager.

As I heard it, Mr. G. stood up and announced the occurrence of a Summer Tanager on a certain day in April (1952). "Hah, hah!", said a member; "Tell us another", said a notorious razzor. "And what's more, I banded it", said Mr. G. "Probably was a Cardinal", said a doubting Thomas. "And furthermore, here it is in this box", triumphantly concluded our former president!

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CONCERNING BAND SIZES

In a previous issue of EBBA NEWS, a letter was published from the Reverend Charles Stoehr, of Annapolis, Maryland, concerning the discrepancy between suggested band sizes and those which many banders find to be better fits. In response to a plea for such data as members may have accumulated in this connection, the following from Dr. Charles H. Blake, Lincoln, Mass., is the only communication received. If any other members have any information at all concerning better band fits, please send it in immediately. This topic is of even greater importance now than it was several months ago, since, as readers know, the banding office, in connection with issuing a manual in loose-leaf form, plans to revise its list of recommended sizes, so why not send Seth Low a copy of what you send to EBBA NEWS so that he may have it to use when they work on their revision of the present list?

Dr. Blake writes as follows: "Pending the completion of a study in progress, I submit the following suggested changes in the list of band sizes:

Crested Flycatcher	1B
Cowbird	1B (nestlings need 2)
Redwing	1B
Baltimore Oriole	1B
Evening Grosbeak	1A
Eastern Purple Finch	1
White-winged Crossbill	1 (one bird)
Tree Sparrow	1
Slate-colored Junco	1
Eastern Song Sparrow	1B
Eastern Fox Sparrow	1B
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1A
Dickcissel (one bird)	1 (one bird)
Scarlet Tanager	1B
Black and White Warbler	0
Blackpoll Warbler	0
Yellow Palm Warbler	0
Yellow-breasted Chat	1B (one bird)
Catbird	1B
All Hylodichla thrushes	1B
Eastern Bluebird	1B

"The extent to which log sizes may vary from one population of a species to another has never been determined." (Wouldn't this make a worthwhile cooperative research project?--Ed.)

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WHITHER GOEST HE?

On April 19, 1952, while banding under the permit of Dr. Paul H. Fluck, Mr. W. A. Jarvis, of Pemberton, New Jersey, now a very active bander in his own right, banded an adult male Red-eyed Towhee. Six days later, on April 25, 1952, it was reported killed about 20 miles away, the interesting thing being that, although it should have been migrating northward, it was taken southwest of its place of banding. It is also of interest to note that the imaginary line connecting Pemberton and Laurel Springs (the place of recovery) almost exactly parallels the southwesterly course of the Delaware River which lies some ten miles to the northwest, although the flat topography of the coastal plain makes it seem unlikely that the bird could have been

following the course of the river valley, and even if it were so, it would have been in the wrong direction for spring.

Very little is known as to whether birds ever do overshoot the mark during migration and subsequently retrace their paths to a place through which they had recently passed nor is there anything to warrant the assumption that, failing to find a mate in one location, a bird must continue in a northerly rather than a southerly direction. Since the date of banding is considerably earlier than one finds mated pairs in this species in the present locality, it would seem that failure to find a mate would hardly be a factor in the present case. Indeed, one can not even be certain that this bird arrived with the migratory wave of Towhees which hits the Philadelphia area during the latter part of April; it may have wintered in the general region and may have been wandering aimlessly around for some unknown reason. In any case, it is an interesting case to speculate about.

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MORE ABOUT FEEDING BIRDS

The following letter from Mr. John V. Dennis, Box 376, Route 1, Leesburg, Virginia, concerns the request for information from Mr. Dennis which was published in a previous issue of EBBA NEWS. As readers may recall, Mr. Dennis is engaged in preparing a book on attracting birds. The letter follows:

"Many thanks for the good treatment you gave my recent request for information on baits in the last issue of EBBA NEWS. Your remark on the desirability of including material on the use of water, decoys, nesting material, and other non-food attractants is very well taken. Since writing you I had pretty much come to the conclusion that I shouldn't limit myself to food alone. I am sure that many banders would have perfected successful techniques which need publicizing. I would be very happy, therefore, if EBBA NEWS readers would send me not only information on food baits but also on any other attractants.

"I might mention that I have had a good many valuable suggestions sent to me on the use of live insects as bait. One bander expressed hope that an animated imitation fly could be perfected for use in

taking flycatchers. Soaking of water baits, it has been suggested to me that water traps are highly effective under wild cherry trees bearing ripe fruit. The cherries are said to make birds thirsty.

"I think one of the soundest pieces of advice I have received is to make use of the agricultural produce of your own region which is taken by birds. Foreign food items may not be recognized as food, or taken only after a period of conditioning. As an illustration, I might cite my experience with soy beans. It is well known among game managers that geese, many ducks, and bob-white quail readily take soy beans in regions where they are grown. It occurred to me that here was a food that had been overlooked by banders and feeding station operators. Last winter I obtained a supply of soy beans, soaked them in water so as to make them soft and palatable, and offered them at my feeding station at Leesburg. They went untouched. Soy beans are not grown to any extent here, and the birds were as uninterested in them as in pebbles. Next I tried them on Ring-billed Gulls at Daytona Beach, Florida. This proved an exception to the rule. The gulls took them on first offering, but not with any great enthusiasm. But at Lake Eola in Orlando, Ring-billed Gulls which are fed to satiation by residents and tourists, passed them up entirely; so did the Coots and various species of ducks on the lake. My final experiment was at a very successful feeding station in Gainesville, Florida. Soy beans which I placed on feeders in early March went untouched.

"I have yet to experiment with soy beans in a region where they are grown extensively. It would be interesting to find out if they might not be taken by field foraging birds--blackbirds, grackles, cowbirds, meadowlarks, etc.

"I would advise that soy beans be thoroughly soaked before being offered. They swell from three to five times normal size. Swelling of soy beans eaten by Canada Geese is a not infrequent source of fatality. More than balancing this drawback is the fact that soy beans are non-persihable, rich in protein, and 100% edible. The main drawback so far is getting birds to take them."

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A NOTE OF FLORIDA BURROWING OWLS

by C. Brooke Worth

During three years in Tampa, Florida, I was able to band about a dozen adult Florida Burrowing Owls. These were all caught with a butterfly net in a building of an abandoned army camp at the Tampa International Airport. Several of these birds were later reported as having been found dead or caught and released, all of them in Tampa. The oldest owl was No. A-500661, banded on November 21, 1947, and reported as found dead in a letter to the E. and W. Service dated May 8, 1952.

These birds were common at the airport, being often seen at the edges of the landing strips, especially at night when the lights of incoming planes marked them out clearly. Some were killed by airplanes, but their abundance did not seem to be affected.

A pair nested for two years within about fifty feet of a building on the airport grounds where we had our laboratory. We used to see jets of sand flying out as the birds extended their burrow prior to egg laying. The resulting mound at the entrance was the customary perch of one or both adults throughout the day. Five young were reared in the first season, but the nest was flooded out by a heavy rain in the second year. I found one other nest; it resembled the first one exactly. Inquisitive people dug this one out, and one day I arrived just in time to prevent the same thing happening to the first nest. The enemies of these, defenseless birds therefore include man in at least two destructive categories.

(Note: Dr. Worth, who spent the last two years doing medical research in India, has now returned to this country, but we do not have his current address at hand. His last copy of EBBA NEWS was returned to the Editor bearing the notation "Moved" as well as three forwarding addresses, one of which was the intriguing advice, "C/o Poor Box 8"!)

TWO SUGGESTIONS

From Frank Frazier, E.B.B.A. Secretary, come two suggestions which are of interest.

The first suggestion really is in the form of a query which the Editor can't answer. Who can? Mr. Frazier says, "What is the latest word on the use of mirrors in traps? Inland (Bird Banding Association) seems to be excited about their use. I'm going to read up on it, but I haven't seen anything since I began banding over four years ago, until a month or so ago."

Mr. Frazier's second suggestion is one with which the Editor wholeheartedly agrees, for carrying it out not only often results in more recoveries being reported but it also focuses public attention on the whole problem of the need for wildlife protection as well.

His letter says, "Perhaps it might be a good idea to point out to banders the advisability of getting more local publicity for themselves, their stations, and the whole bird banding project. The results of this would certainly be more returns and possibly more recoveries. Inland has a poster, I bought some from them, which can be put up where it would do some good. Maybe we can make one up for E.B.B.A.--or get some of theirs and put our name on them. Most members need to be taught how to get publicity for themselves." How about some suggestions?

As a case in point, I have before me, thanks to member William A. Tompkins, 54 Ionia Street, Springfield, Mass., clippings from the Springfield Sunday Republican of May 31, 1953, concerning the spring field meeting of NEBBA at Arcadia Wild Life Sanctuary and with the banding activities of Bill Tompkins at Springfield. Nearly two full columns of text and eight pictures, seven of them reproduced in the rotogravure section of the paper accompany the story. Publicity such as this is very helpful to the banding program.

Locally, the Editor and his wife have been very fortunate in having the sympathetic interest of a local newspaper writer, Ben

Kizer, in matters relating to birds, and a number of interesting articles have appeared. In June, for example, a neighbor called to say that there were monkey-faced owls in his cousin's barn up the road a mile or so. When my wife and I arrived on the scene, plans were afoot to remove the owls and have them mounted by a taxidermist. When they realized that these birds were important enough to warrant banding them, and after they had been told what superior mousers they are, they received a reprieve and June and I climbed into the forty foot silo and banded five young. The next day, Mr. Kizer, accompanied by a photographer, visited the farm, photographed the farmer and his sons with the young owls, and ran a good story on how fortunate the farmer was to have such guests. After this, it is safe to say that Barn Owls in this barn will be given zealous protection, and we hope that other farmers will have been impressed by what they read.

NEW MEMBERS

We are happy to welcome the following new members of EBBA:

Mrs. Helen L. Coe, 101 Jefferson Drive, Clairton, Penna.
 Mr. John C. Malinowski, 205 Rockwell Terrace, Frederick, Maryland
 Miss Grace C. Moloney, 200 Chatterton Parkway, White Plains, New York
 Mr. R. Wyland-Smith, 137 Kenwood Avenue, Oneida, New York
 Mr. Arthur O. Stone, Jr., Deerhead Lake Drive, Barnegat Pines,
 Forked River, New Jersey
 Mr. Charles H. Nichols, Jr., 357 Pleasant Lane, Haworth, New Jersey

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MATERIAL NEEDED FOR EBBA NEWS.

There is hardly sufficient material on hand to fill the two remaining summer issues of EBBA NEWS, so the Editor would appreciate anything which members would be willing to submit for publication.

Apologies are due to several persons who have sent in material in the past and who did not receive a personal acknowledgment for it; it is appreciated nevertheless, and most of it has or will appear in EBBA NEWS.

