

CONCERNING THE ANNUAL MEETING

In the last several issues of EBBA NEWS, your attention has been called to the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Bird-Banding Association which will be held in Baltimore, Maryland, Saturday and Sunday, April 3 and 4. Your officers hope that you will be able to be there.

At the moment, final plans for the meeting are not available, although it is hoped that the January-February issue which should reach you about March 15th at the latest will contain complete information. However, President Raymond Middleton writes to say that there will be a meeting of the Council at 9:30 Saturday morning, an hour before the stated program which will begin at 10:30. Since the task of writing to each of the nine council members and three other officers is rather time consuming, he hopes that this will serve as notice to those concerned.

* * *

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

In response to the requests in the last two issues of EBBA NEWS, your Editor has received an encouraging number of contributions. Even so, it would be desirable to build up even a greater backlog than currently exists, since actually we are trying to catch up with the calendar and get back on a current basis. Thanks to the members whose contributions will appear in the next few issues, this now seems to be feasible. We are especially in need of longer articles representing more serious studies of various problems.

Thanks to a substantial increase both in the number of members and in the ranks of those who have taken out sustaining memberships, we are able to have EBBA NEWS, beginning with this issue, reproduced by the photo-offset process rather than by mimeographing. This will enable us to use not only line drawings but also photographs, provided the latter are glossy prints with reasonably sharp contrast. The cover of the last two issues was produced by the photo-offset process, and this same cover will be used through the March-April issue, after which it will be altered to show the new officers and council members.

One problem which has vexed the Editor for some time is that

postal authorities do not consider mimeographed material to come under the scope of second class mail; indeed, they consider it to be first class, the same as a personal communication. This is why it is necessary for your editor to pay first class postal rates on single copies which he mails out to those who have changed their addresses, to new members, etc. Perhaps more serious than this situation is the fact that many scientific authorities do not consider material which has appeared in EBBA NEWS to have been published, hence the omission of bibliographic references to articles in EBBA NEWS in such ornithological journals as THE AUK, WILSON BULLETIN, and BIRD-BANDING. In as much as material reproduced by the photo-offset process seems to constitute publication, in the technical sense of the word since printing is done from plates, your Editor hopes that EBBA NEWS may be given proper recognition in ornithological circles.

If this recognition should come to pass, it is hoped that more contributors will avail themselves of our facilities. Furthermore, if contributors would like reprints of their papers, it would seem quite likely that these could be obtained at moderate cost upon request.

Should it come to pass that EBBA NEWS would be regularly cited in various ornithological journals, it might prove desirable to restrict the first portion of each issue to more or less serious papers, with the latter part being devoted to notes and news, comments, and informal letters, all of which are features which we certainly want to continue. In other words, it is the belief of the Editor that original and significant contributions made in these pages should achieve proper recognition in so far as publication is concerned, yet at the same time he is mindful of the fact that many members like the relatively informal aspects of the publication.

If you have any comments concerning the above, we shall be very happy to have them. * * *

TWO ADDITIONAL SUSTAINING MEMBERS

Merrill Wood, reports that the following persons are to be added to the list of sustaining members for 1954:

Joseph A. Hines

Carl M. Montgomery

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF SUNFLOWER SEED

by John E. Dennis

As a year round bait, sunflower seed is just about tops. Even when natural foods are plentiful in late summer and banding is at low ebb, sunflower seed will bring a ready response. The big drawback is the high cost. Many of us have overcome this by planting our own, but, as I have found through several year's experience, the growing, harvesting, and storing of sunflower seed present some knotty problems.

Few other plants are as easy to get started. Plant the seed twelve inches apart in rows spaced every two and one half feet. There are no exacting soil and fertilizer requirements, and the plants can stand considerable wetness or drought. They need plenty of sunlight and a moderately rich soil. The showy blossoms alone are a good reason for planting them. As the heads mature, the plants become top-heavy and, with a combination of rain and wind, are likely to fall over. One year, just before the heads were ripe, a storm all but ruined my crop. This year much the same thing happened, but I saved the day by propping up the fallen stalks with poles.

A mistake I have made in the past has been to allow the birds to take too large a share of seeds from the standing plants. One year they made away with two-thirds an acre. It would have been of more benefit to them to have received this extra food during the lean winter months. This year I was away when one planting matured. When I returned, much to my disgust, I discovered that English Sparrows had virtually stripped every head. This sparrow competition is something new. Fortunately I had a later planting elsewhere which yielded a good harvest despite the drought.

Once the heads are harvested we still have problems. They quickly attract rats and mice and will mildew and spoil if not properly dried. The best procedure, I find, is to place the heads on shelves in a dry room or shed open to the sunlight. There I leave them, after taking rodent control measures. I see no advantage at all in shucking out the seeds unless it is for convenience in storing. Birds seem to come quicker to the unshucked heads, and the effort required to pick the seeds out keeps them around longer. I use the smallest heads for banding trap bait.

In their great popularity, sunflower seed offer a problem as it seems impossible to supply enough of them. One difficulty is that many of the birds which take them have the food-storing habit. The White-breasted Nuthatches and the Tufted Titmice work tirelessly all day long storing away the seeds, and so do the Blue Jays to a lesser extent. I suspect that chickadees have this habit also. Whatever use they make of them, the seeds vanish so quickly that we have to dole out the heads rather sparingly.

Here in Virginia, sunflower seeds are a great favorite with the Downy Woodpeckers. This does not seem to be so true farther north. One fall they came to my planting daily. The seeds were carted away one at a time to poles or fence posts. I suspected the food-storing habit but discovered the birds were only seeking out suitable crevices in which to place the seeds so that they could then pound the husks off.

Most birds either pound the husk off or, like the finches, maneuver it between their mandibles until it splits apart. Mourning Doves swallow the seeds husk and all, and I have even seen Cowbirds do this. Smaller birds, such as Song Sparrows and Towhees, can readily split the husks, but Pine Siskins seem to depend largely upon tidbits which the other birds leave behind. Towhees place the seeds edgewise in their mandibles so that it either splits open or goes shooting out with some force.

Some banders have had considerable success in catching birds which came to sunflower plants to feed. By placing traps in the rows, baited either with water or with sunflower heads, they catch such birds as Goldfinches and, in northern latitudes, Crossbills. I have had no luck along this line. Whenever I have placed traps in sunflower plantings, I have failed to take the birds coming to the plants for seeds. For instance, I have yet to take a Goldfinch in a banding trap here in Virginia; this is in contrast to Massachusetts where I banded nearly three hundred during one winter alone, all in seed-baited traps. But, it is a different story when sunflower seeds are made available in wooded situations. Not only do all the woodland birds which have been coming to the fields for sunflower seeds make their appearance but so do the sparrows and other birds of more open situations.

While I do not recommend sunflower seed as a sole source of food

at the feeding or banding station, I do suggest it as one of the best baits for year round use and one of the most economical when home grown.

--Route 1, Box 376, Leesburg, Virginia

* * *

STILL MORE ABOUT BAND SIZES

In a number of the recent issues of EBBA NEWS, there have been a number of communications dealing with the proper size bands to use on various species of birds, especially in so far as members have taken exception to the suggested sizes which the banding office has offered in various of their publications. In all fairness to the central office, it should be pointed out that their list of suggested sizes is based on information sent to them by banders in the field and that they have appealed to banders to bring to their attention any obvious misinformation which may have appeared. It is to be hoped that the various suggestions offered in this publications by many persons will assist them in revising their list for future publication.

Before proceeding further with discussion of the topic of band sizes, attention should be drawn to the provocative article in the current issue of BIRD-BANDING by EBBA member Dr. Charles H. Blake of Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Biology Department. This article is in the January, 1954 issue (Vol. XXV, No. 1, pp. 11-16). In passing, it should be remarked that the Editor of this excellent journal is EBBA member E. Alexander Bergstrom.

From Frank Frazier, EBBA TREASURER, comes the following note: "With regard to using size 0 on Juncos, I am entirely in accord with C. Hapgood Parks. (This is contrary to the recommendation of Dr. Blake (EBBA NEWS, May-June, 1953, pp. 6-7) that size 1 be used for the Junco; in the same communication he recommends size 1B for the Song Sparrow, exception to which is taken below. It would appear to the Editor that further study of the problem of leg sizes is indicated, for, as suggested by Dr. Blake (Op. cit.), it is possible that different populations vary in tarsus size. Before undertaking such studies, members are urged to consult Dr. Blake's article in BIRD-BANDING cited above.)

Mr. Frazier continues, "I have banded more than 1900 Juncos in

the past five years and have consistently used No. 0. This size fits perfectly so far as I have been able to observe. I have had some 1200 repeats and returns and believe that size 0 is an ideal fit.

"I agree with Parks also with regard to size 1 for Song Sparrows. In banding some 286 individuals during the past five years, I have had only one instance in which I thought this size band was too snug. (In accordance with this observation, is the finding of a banded Song Sparrow by Dr. Paul H. Fluck, Lambertville, New Jersey, on January 31, 1954, which your editor saw, in which it appeared that the size 1 band used on it had been too snug. Dr. Fluck advanced the hypothesis that the difficulty was caused by the accumulation of snow or ice between the band and the leg. Your Editor and wife, in the banding of some 1500 Song Sparrows, have found no apparent difficulty in a considerable number of repeats and returns for this species.)

Further comment re the correct size for the Eastern Song Sparrow comes from Mr. W. M. Davidson, 1504 Bodell Street, Orlando, Florida, who writes as follows: "I have found the tarsus of this bird tending to be carinate (Keel-shaped, or oval-Ed.) and that a No. 1 band tends to compress the 'keel'. Therefore, I believe that a 1B band is safer."

Further support for Dr. Blake's recommendation comes from Marie Dumont (Mrs. G. A. Dumont, Sr.), 311 Pompton Turnpike, Pequannock, New Jersey, who says, "...I still am of the opinion that the No. 1 band is a little too snug on Song Sparrows unless it happens to be a small bird. I use mostly 1B, but occasionally a size 1 is applied. After twenty-one years of banding, we have found no ill effects from using bands that allow a little more space between band and leg, and we do get a goodly number of returns."

From Prof. LeRoy C. Stegeman, College of Forestry, State University of New York, Syracuse 10, New York, comes the following comment concerning band sizes for two species:

"I have seen no comment on the recommended band sizes for the White-throated Sparrow and the White-crowned Sparrow, and yet, in my limited experience with these two species, the leg of the White-crowned Sparrow seemed the larger. The directions call for a number 1 band for the White-crowned Sparrow and for a number 1B band for the White-

throated Sparrow. I should think the White-crowned Sparrow also should have a 1-B size." (In banding some forty of the latter species, your Editor, wife, and father-in-law have found the 1-B to be the best fit.)

A final comment concerning band sizes is from J. George Hitchner, 58 Kenton Avenue, Pitman, New Jersey, who tells of his experience with a Scarlet Tanager: "A week ago, on May 22, I banded my first Scarlet Tanager - a beautiful crimson male! I put the recommended 1A on the bird and immediately took it off with my diagonal cutting pliers. A 1B was quite loose, and I wondered if this should be the recommended size. This backs up Father Stoehr in the January 1953 EBBA NEWS." (Your Editor and wife have banded but two Scarlet Tanagers, an immature male and an immature female, and in both cases they felt that 1A bands were a good fit, although the bands they used were of 1940 vintage. They thought that the 1B band was too snug.)

* * *

CONCERNING FOREHEAD INJURIES

In the July-August issue (PP. 6-7) there are comments on forehead injuries by Mrs. Ernest E. Wanek and Dr. Paul H. Fluck. Along this same line are two more communications.

Dr. Stegeman also wrote about a Cardinal with head injury. He says, "In June 1951 I caught a female Cardinal in a single-cell trip-step trap. The bird had severely injured the top of its head. The top of the cranium was completely bare for the front two-thirds, and the bird was in a stupor. After giving it a drink of water, I carefully coated the skull with sterile glycerine. Several applications were made during the day, and, by evening, the Cardinal was feeding and drinking and moving about. The following morning she seemed quite alert. Two more applications of glycerine were made that forenoon, and at noon the bird was released at the trapsite. It seemed normal in every respect. About one month later it was seen in a nearby woods and was in good condition but without feathers on the top of the head.

"Perhaps Oxycel which was suggested by Dr. Fluck would have been much better. The glycerine evidently kept the tissue soft enough to heal and protected the area sufficiently for the bird to recover. This was more than I hoped for when I first saw the Cardinal."

Dr. Harold B. Wood, 3016 North Second St., Harrisburg, Pa., has this to say: "My birds get 'sore noses' a la Fluck. I never heard of any bird getting an infection from such a wound. I once cut a big clogging lump from a chicken's gizzard and without aseptic care sewed the place up with thread. Several weeks later we ate the chicken; no infection."

* * *

MORE ABOUT A JUNCO RECOVERY

In the September-October issue (Page 7) there is a note to the effect that a Junco banded at East Hartford, Connecticut, April 19, 1952, by E. Alexander Bergstrom, was trapped at Easton, Pennsylvania, October 29, 1953, by E. Earl Rider. The following is contained in a letter from Alex Bergstrom dated January 27, 1954:

"It was pleasant to hear that your father-in-law had picked up one of our Juncos. The account in EBBA NEWS can be amplified quite a bit.

- 1) The place of banding is West Hartford, Hartford County - not East Hartford. (Note: Your Editor slipped on that.)
- 2) The bird was very possibly an adult male when banded and was part of our April rush of Juncos, one of 19 banded that day and 150 that month. April generally accounts for at least half of our yearly total of this species.
- 3) While we have a few return records from Juncos banded in March, we have but one to date from the larger number banded in April.
- 4) 51-20380 is the first Junco banded here (out of 1200 plus, up to 1/1/54) to be retaken elsewhere.
- 5) The only Junco which we have taken that was banded elsewhere was 21-79001, banded at Middlefield, Middlesex County, Conn. (about 20 miles south of here), on 12/1/52 by Mrs. Eleanor H. Stickney and taken by us on 4/11/53." * * *

DON'T FORGET, BALTIMORE, APRIL 3 and 4!

JUNCO PLUMAGES

by Frank P. Frazier

Last summer, while on vacation in Maine, I banded several immature Slate-colored Juncos. I was struck by the fact that the outer tail feathers of these individuals, only a few weeks out of the nest, were very nearly as white as the adults I band as they migrate through my Montclair, New Jersey, station or winter here.

Here's the record of eight immature Juncos banded between July 5 and 15, 1953:

Band No.	Outer Feather	Second Feather	Third Feather
22-80786	all white	white; trace of gray near base	0.7 white
791	white; trace of gray near base	0.7 white	trace of white
793	Do.	Do.	Do.
795	all white	white; trace of gray near base	Do.
796	Do.	0.7 white	Do.
799	Do.	all white	0.3 white
800	Do.	white; trace of gray near base	0.5 white
804	white; trace of gray near base	Do.	Trace of white

During the winter of 1951-52, I checked the tail feathers of 108 Juncos with the following results:

Number of Birds	Description of Tail Feathers
21	Two outer feathers almost all white; third feather more than half white; trace of white on fourth feather.
66	Two outer feathers almost all white; third feather from a trace to half white.
13	Outer feather white; second more than three-quarters white; trace of white on third.
5	Outer feather white; second more than half white.
3	Outer feather white; second less than half white.
Total 108	

As far as the darkness of breasts and heads was concerned, most, but not all, the birds with the most white on the tails seemed dark enough to be adults. And some, by no means all, of the birds with the least white on the tail feathers were light brownish in coloring.

I re-read what Parks and Bergstrom had to say on this in the May-June 1951 issue of EBBA NEWS (Junco symposium issue), and I am still unconvinced that quantity of white on the outer tail feathers is a guide to age. -- 424 Highland Avenue, Upper Montclair, N.J.

* * *

NEW MEMBERS

Rev. Garrett S. Detwiler, 323 Fenwick Ave., Salem, N.J.
 Mrs. Ernest Dietze, Jr., 39 Cedar St., Nutley, N.J.
 Mrs. Martha Earl, Farmingdale Road, Blooming Grove, N.Y.
 Mr. Ken Harte, 45 Lawrence Road, Scarsdale, N.Y.
 Mrs. Bruce McGregor, Ellenburg Depot, New York
 Miss Mary K. McNabb, 619 N. Washington St., Baltimore 5, Md.
 Dr. Howard F. Young, Department of Biological Sciences,
 Western Illinois State College, Macomb, Ill.