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## DANGER OF LEG MUTILATION FROM THE USE OF METAL COLOR BANDS

By PARKER C. REED

Bird banders do not realize the incipient danger in the use of colored metal bands. Where two metal bands are mounted one over the other on the same leg, the lower one will flatten and thicken until it is a hazard to the bird's leg, if not its life.

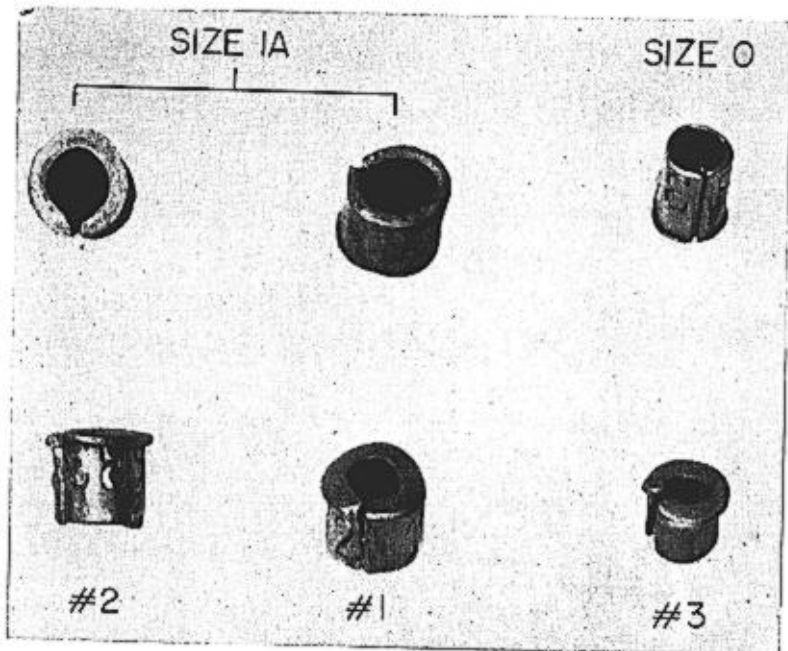
During the early spring of 1952, when summer residents were returning to the vicinity of our banding station in Lexington, Massachusetts, we first noted an occasional bird with one leg. As we saw more, and gave them our focused attention, we noted that the right foot was missing in all cases. Since we band on the right leg only, we were con-

cerned that the reason might in some way be connected with our banding.

The answer came in May when we took one male and one female Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*), both of which had been color banded, using the new color-anodized aluminum bands. Both of these birds were coded "gold over numbered" to identify them as individuals. The female was 42-161632 (set no. 1 in photograph) banded and coded May 19, 1951 and retaken May 17, 1952. The male was 42-161633 (set no. 2 in photograph) banded and coded June 17, 1951 and retaken May 17, 1952.

The lower bands were in both cases the numbered bands, and these were so severely flanged at the top edge that the right foot of each of these orioles was swollen and the diameter of the tarsus had been reduced by about one-half. The pounding by the colored aluminum bands had so shortened the lower numbered ones, that the prefix number was entirely obscured on one and partly obscured on the other.

Further evidence was brought to us by Black-capped Chickadee (*Penthestes atricapillus*), 48-39593 banded "numbered over gold" on July 29, 1950. Set no. 3 in the photograph shows these two bands, removed when the bird was retrapped December 14, 1952. The same flanging effect was present, the bird's tarsus was somewhat reduced in diameter, but the flanging had not progressed far enough to produce crippling damage.



When one aluminum band is mounted above another, the top band acts as a hammer to shorten the under band and to spread the metal, producing a flange on the inside and on the outside of the pounded upper edge of the lower band. The resulting inward flange is thin and quite sharp, and tends to grip the tarsus progressively tighter as the hammering action of the upper band continues.

In the photograph the bands are arranged in sets. The lower band in each set was the lower band on the bird. The upper bands in sets no. 1 and no. 3 are shown with the striking edges downward to indicate the normal thickness of the metal. The upper band of set no. 2 has been turned to show that its lower edge has also been flanged to some extent, though not as severely as the top of the lower band. In each set of bands, the upper one was less flanged than the lower one.

Elimination of the use of two metal bands on the same leg will reduce available color code combinations. This suggests the desirability of returning to the use of the "wrap-type" plastic band, at least for use wherever two bands are needed on the same leg to regain the maximum number of color codes.

Every opportunity should be seized to remove or break up such pairs of metal bands. Where flanging has not yet taken place, the color band only may be removed; however, if flanging has occurred, both bands should be removed. It is urged that these cases be reported and that the offending bands be turned in.

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### GENERAL NOTES

**John Beck the second American bird-bander.**—Audubon is acknowledged as the first bird bander of America by his tying silver threads to the legs of nestling Phoebes (*Sayornis phoebe*) at his home in Pennsylvania about 1803, and finding these marked birds the following spring. John Beck (1791-1873) of Lititz, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in August 1812 sewed a piece of chamois leather around the tarsus of a Purple Martin (*Progne subis*), and saw its return to its box early the following spring. Thus John Beck, the grandfather of Herbert H. Beck, Director of the Franklin and Marshall College Museum in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, deserves the recognition by ornithologists as the second bird bander of America, and with the second record of a migrating bird.—Harold B. Wood, 3016 North Second St., Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

**Shrike Visits Banding Trap.**—One of my traps at my home in Benicia, California, is what is ordinarily called a house trap. It is four feet square with a door for the operator to enter and is constructed of hardware cloth covering a redwood frame, and has two ground openings easily entered by birds but difficult of exit for most birds.

On July 20, 1952, as I approached this trap I found a state of avian excitement. In the cage were four linnets (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) and a California Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*). Two of the linnets had already been killed by the shrike and the other two were in an exhausted condition. The two dead linnets had been lacerated about their heads. The two live ones recovered sufficiently to be banded and released, as was also the "butcherbird" with the hope that the latter would not return to my banding area.—Emerson A. Stoner, Benicia, California.

**Green Frog catches young Phoebe.**—On July 4, 1949, along the Huron River at Ann Arbor, Michigan, I banded six Phoebes (*Sayornis phoebe*), which were nearly ready to fledge. They would not, in fact, remain in the nest when replaced. I released them one by one and each bird flew to nearby trees. The