WHITE-THROATED SPARROW SYMPOSIUM

Traps

Nearly all kinds of traps, excepting a few very specialized types, were reported to have taken White-throats. Ground-opening traps were reported as most effective. Among those mentioned as particularly good were Potter, government sparrow, false bottom, and trip-doorstep traps.

Trap Location

General opinion is that traps located near shrubbery or brush are most successful. Bartel makes artificial brush piles with three or four niches large enough to hold the traps. Lerch digs up grass and sod to form a small area of bare soil on which he places several Potter traps together since he believes that one captured bird usually attracts others.

Bait

All of the usual baits including water were mentioned. Some unusual baits were peanut hearts, golden millet, and hygeria seed.

Repeats

Bowdish summarized this story when he wrote that there is much variation in repeating habits, with some individuals repeating very frequently. He had one which repeated more than 300 times in one year. Butler reports 35 birds repeating 577 times, one 68 times in two months. Middleton has obtained 7700 repeats from 5479 birds. Bartel deports all banded birds two miles north in spring and south in fall in order to secure more new captures.

Returns

Return records submitted strongly suggest that this species returns to the same wintering area from year to year but also that they follow different migration routes to and from this area. For example, Bartel at Blue Island, Ill., has had no returns from 4969 birds; Baechle at Collegeville, Ind., none from 2400 banded between 1941 and 1946; Lerch at Penn Yan, N.Y., none from 984; and Smiley at Mohonk Lake, N.Y., none from 760. These stations are all in areas where this species rarely winters. Middleton at Norristown, Pa., Groskin at Ardmore, Pa., Dumont at Pequannock, N.J., and Bowdish at Demarest, N.J., all have had some returns. Groskin's were 3.17% of 1230 banded and Dumont's 0.5% of 1878 banded. Middleton believes that one of his returns was a migrant, all others were or appear to have been wintering birds. Stations still farther south, such as those of Robbins at Laurel, Md., Davidson near Washington,D.C., Fast at Arlington,Va., Lynn at Collegedale, Tenn., and Ware at Clemson,S.C., all report more returns. Fast had 4.5% on 821 birds banded.

These data are much too incomplete to allow firm conclusions. It would be very worth while if all banders having return records for this species would review their data in an effort to determine whether returning birds were in every case wintering birds. Each return should also be examined to see if it is indeed a return according to the official definition.

Recoveries

A study of the recovery records submitted leads to the following tentative conclusions:

1. White-throats migrating through Illinois winter in the Gulf States. Bartel reported four recoveries--two from Louisiana and one each from Alabama and Mississippi.

2. Those migrating east of the Alleghenies winter most abundantly in the Carolinas. Middleton, Groskin, Matlack, Fast, Cool, Davidson, and Bowdish all reported recoveries from these states.

3. Two records of birds crossing the mountains were reported, one in each direction. One banded by Middleton in the fall of 1930 at Norristown, Pa., was trapped in April of 1937 in Wisconsin. And A-115956 banded by Bretch on Oct. 20, 1932 at Gary, Ind., was trapped by Davidson at Tacoma Park, D.C., in the fall of 1934. One other recovery of interest was found in an old copy of the News. A White-throat banded by Mason in Oct. 1939 was found dead on Jan. 28, 1940, at Mt. Horne, Tex.

It would be appreciated if recovery records were always accompanied by full information--band number, date, place banded, age and sex, date and place recovered. Such records are much more valuable than those which are only partly complete.

Winter Range

This species has apparently extended its winter range northward in recent years. Middleton reported that none wintered at Norristown, Pa., when he began banding but that they have been quite plentiful in winter during the last four years. Bowdish stated that he seldom had White-throats in mid-winter around 1913 to 1915 at Demarest, N.J., but that they have gradually increased in regularity and numbers as winter birds.

Parasites

Lynn reported that about one-fifth of the White-throats trapped at Collegedale, Tenn., during 1948-1949 had ticks usually near the eye or on the crown. None were found in the preceding or the following years.

Weights and Measurements

Data reported by Bender show the following average measurements:

Measurement	Avg.	Range	No. of Measurements	Units
Bill	10.9	9.9-12.5	47	Millimeters
Wing	73.5	65.9-79.9	47	"
Tail	75.2	68.0-85.9	47	"
Tarsus	27.7	24.1-30.0	47	"
Weight	27.5	21.8-33.4	92	Grams

Longevity

The four oldest birds reported were:

Bander	Location	Band No.	Age
Matlack	Bridgeton, N.J.	610604	4 yrs. 0 mo. 5 da.
Groskin	Ardmore, Pa.	39-167277	4 yrs. 4 mo. 4 da.
Davidson	Tacoma Park, D.C.	39-185085	6 yrs. 3 mo. 25 da.
Middleton	Norristown, Pa.	-	7 yrs. 5 mo.

Identification of Age and Sex

Dumont (Mrs.),who was the only bander to comment on this subject, suggests that after the bird is two years of age the throat-patch is entirely white, whereas previous to that it has two dark dividing lines. She believes the male throat-patch covers a larger area than the female and that the yellow patch before the eye is more highly colored in the male.

Behavior

Bergstrom warns that traps should be examined late in the evening as this species occasionally enters traps after dusk--in one case, after the street lights went on.

Butler reports one killed by a Blue Jay when both were in a government sparrow trap together and another injured by a Sparrow Hawk when in a trap.

Lynn had a healthy-looking bright-colored bird die in her hands without apparent cause, probably from fright.

Summary

Sixteen members submitted data for the symposium. Your Editor believes that some of the information is important in its implications. Most impressive, though, was the paucity of information about identification, measurements, parasites, behavior, and similar items. It is also apparent that data are needed on this species on its nesting grounds.