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#### A WANDERING CATBIRD

Mr. Vernon C. Rossman of Coatesville, Pa. sends in the following record:

"On May 14, 1948 I banded an adult Catbird at Coatesville, Pa. and on July 6, 1949 it was trapped and released by William Pepper, Philadelphia. The story ends on May 6, 1950 when a cat caught and killed the bird on Smiths Island in Maryland. This is at the extreme southern tip of Chesapeake Bay."

#### WHO BANDED THIS BIRD

A sparrow-sized bird with an orange-colored band with No. 74-47NEB and an aluminum band (number lost) was picked up at North Park, Pennsylvania (near Pittsburgh) on August 10, 1949 by Mrs. H. S. Johnson. The bird may have been an escaped cage-bird.

#### BANDING NESTLINGS

Dr. Paul H. Fluck of Lambertville, N. J. on perusing the published summary of banding activities for last year was moved to comment on the small numbers of very common species which had been banded. He mentioned Red-eyed Vireos, Marsh Wrens, Seaside and Sharp-tailed Sparrows as examples, and suggested that it would be relatively easy to band these species as nestlings.

Dr. Fluck's letter was sent to Mr. Seth Low of the Bird Banding office for comment. It is thought that Mr. Low's reactions would be of interest to all our members so they are quoted below:

"Our purposes in publishing the totals of each species is certainly to stimulate more interest in the species which need more attention. The purpose of banding, however, is too frequently lost sight of. It is to get results; not to band as many species and individuals as possible. By results is meant returns, especially retraps in subsequent years.

"The taboo on banding nestlings is reasonable and justified, but it is not a hard and fast rule with no exceptions. There is no question

but nest hunting and banding fledglings are conducive to higher mortality. Also such banding has generally proved exceedingly unproductive. The notable exceptions are, of course, the hawks and owls and species which nest in bird houses. There is considerable doubt as to how much longer the wholesale banding of young gulls and terns can be justified when not simultaneously accompanied over a reasonable period of years by thorough trapping of adults.

"The criteria for judging any fledgling banding is the probability of retaking the same individuals as adults. The probability is zero for the types of banding suggested by Dr. Fluck. If the bird population of a given tract is to be intensively and thoroughly studied for a number of years, then it is in order to band as many fledglings as possible. It is also justified by a special study of a particular species. Both would, of course, involve thorough adult trapping.

"What is the criteria for the ordinary backyard bander? Nestlings of species such as Red-eyed Vireo, Robin, Catbird, etc. may be banded if due care and discretion are used in the immediate vicinity of the station. There is a reasonable chance of retaking one of these individuals subsequently at a regularly operated station. There is no such probability in banding fledglings away from a regularly operated station.

"Productive banding of Red-eyed Vireos, Marsh Wrens, Seaside and Sharp-tailed Sparrows and many other species is needed but the first step is not banding fledglings but developing techniques for taking the adults."

Dr. Fluck also suggested that subsequent published summaries include the total numbers of returns and recoveries for each species. Mr. Low advises that it may be possible to indicate the total number of form 3-137 cards on file for each species if and when all the cards are processed and filed up to date. No yearly tallies have been kept in the past and it is not anticipated that they will be in the near future. The two reasons that make it unfeasible are lack of clerical help and inadequate cooperation on the part of the banders. As too many banders do not get their schedules in on time, there is no reason to suppose the response would be any better with respect to return cards. The banding year ended April 30, 1950 and the banders had 60 days (two months) in which to send in their schedules. Since the deadline, schedules have come in so far for 36,292 bandings or 10% of the grand total.

Let's all resolve to do a better job of keeping and reporting records. Mr. Low's comment about devising methods to trap adults of some of these species should serve as a challenge to all of us to use our ingenuity and work out some practical methods.