

## CONCERNING COLOR-MARKING AND NETS

The following letter, written by Seth H. Low, seems sufficiently important to bring to the attention of members of EBBA. Dated February 5, 1953, it was written to Dr. Alden H. Miller, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley 4, California. In the following, the underlining is by the Editor; in the sixth paragraph, the words 'stationary' and 'manipulated' in connection with nets were originally underlined by Mr. Low. The letter is reproduced here in its entirety, with the exception of the last paragraph which merely dealt with the suggestion that the letter be called to the attention of the various areal banding groups:

"Your letter of January 26, 1953, relative to the memorandum of December 29, 1952 from Director Day to holders of federal bird banding permits is at hand.

"There is no intent on the part of this Service to hinder research on migratory birds by the use of markings but rather to facilitate it. The memorandum was occasioned by definite need to control a recent increase in the use of markings of all sorts, some of which proved to be definitely objectionable. We were particularly concerned about some types which proved injurious and were resulting in some severe criticism. (See note later in this issue re this.--Ed.)

"We would like to point out that both conditions end with this statement "unless specifically stated on the face of this permit" and the last paragraph reads "If your present banding activities indicate the need for an exception to be specifically stated on the face of your permit, please return your present permit directly to the Bird Banding Office, Patuxent Research Refuge, Laurel, Maryland, with a detailed statement of and the justification for the exception which is desired". It would not seem that it is asking too much of a bander to do this in view of the need for keeping the marking program under control. (Below, in paragraph 5, Mr. Low mentions the need for coordination of color-marking within a particular species, especially if members of that species are banded in large number. Obviously, it would nullify one bander's results if his birds were to intermix with those color-banded by other persons using a similar scheme, hence the need for some means of assignment of marking systems, etc.--Ed.)

"The first condition does not specifically mention colored-leg-bands but is an all inclusive restriction on all types of marking without prior approval nor does the memorandum anywhere state or infer that the use of colored-leg-bands would be restricted or curtailed. As of this date, it is believed that most of the cooperators who wish to use colored-leg-bands have returned their permits with a request for such authorization and in most cases these have already been approved.

"While the value of colored-leg-bands has long been recognized, the promiscuous and independent use of such bands (especially-Ed.) on migratory birds by one individual cannot be permitted to jeopardize cooperative regional studies already in progress. This applies to Evening Grosbeaks and Mourning Doves at present. Additional marking of such species should be coordinated with studies already in progress so that confusion will not result which will nullify the value of both studies.

"The second condition does two things, namely: (a) The existing requirements that each individual trap and net must bear a tag or label showing the name, address, and permit number of the operator is modified to permit the posting of the immediate area with 3-1155 posters in lieu of tagging each and every trap and net. (Some banders do not seem to be aware of the requirement, which has existed for some time, that each trap and other device of capture be marked individually; actually, this new requirement is to ease the means of compliance with this particular requirement.--Ed.) Posters may be requisitioned by means of the request postcard (form 3-644) the same as bands and other supplies. (b) Controls and limits the use of stationary nets such as the Japanese mist nets and Italian Bird nets for purposes of banding, and is not considered as applying to manipulated nets.

"The control and limitations of the use of stationary nets, in particular the Japanese mist nets, has been necessitated by the following considerations:

1. The realization that these nets are non-selective and exceedingly efficient for taking birds. (Therefore, demand quick and able assistance in their operation.--Ed.)
2. That permits have been issued to persons who are sufficiently (?-Ed.) qualified to identify the common species which come to feeding stations but who are not competent to identify all the warblers,

vireos, flycatchers, thrushes, etc. (In this connection, it has been apparent to your Editor that there are some persons who are now licensed cooperators who are utterly unfitted, for various reasons, to be entrusted with banding operations wherein the value of later captures usually depends on the accurate identification of the person banding the bird. One case in point concerns a bander who visited the writer's station who was unable to identify a common bird in one of the traps, calling it an entirely different species; the other case concerns that of a person whom the writer would not endorse because of gross inability to identify even common birds yet who later was granted a permit. Responsibility for this does not rest with the Banding Office but rather with the persons on whom they have to depend for recommendations. In this connection, it has occurred to the present writer that the regional associations, such as EBBA, might do well to formulate some scheme which would better enable the Banding Office to issue permits only to qualified persons.--Ed.)

3. That nets may not, like traps, be left unattended for brief intervals.

4. That operators of nets must be extremely patient individuals with good eyesight.

5. That actual first hand instruction in removing a bird is a prerequisite.

"The use of nets will be limited to the most experienced and competent of the banders. Prime consideration will be given to where the net is to be used and the immediate surroundings of the site; not to the availability of the birds or the desire to take a special species which cannot be taken by other and by more selective means. (In this connection, it might be remarked that many persons react unfavorably to nets, thus giving rise to criticism of the whole banding program, as well as to the fact that many persons of recent European residence are led to recall the use of such nets in their native countries and might be led to attempt their use here.--Ed.)

"Apropos of banding permits this might be a good time and place to call attention to the following:

1. In two issues of Bird Banding Notes cooperators have been advised to bring their banding permits up-to-date. It is evident that some have failed to do so and are not now in possession of valid permits. Present permits are a full sized sheet of paper and will not now be

recognized as valid unless (1) the amendment of December 29, 1952 is attached thereto and (2) the signed acknowledgment is on file (in the Banding Office--Ed.). Permits dated on and after October 1, 1952 have the new conditions printed on them.

2. To facilitate law enforcement, every person who traps, handles, and bands protected species of wild birds must carry on his or her person a federal permit or sub-permit."

Your Editor hopes that careful perusal of the foregoing will clear up certain misunderstandings of the amendment of December 29, 1952, which were shared by many persons other than Dr. Miller. Compliance with the new regulations will in no wise interfere with current or projected studies of any banders and yet at the same time will prevent sporadic and uncoordinated efforts to interfere with more serious activities.

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#### CONCERNING COLOR BANDS

The following, from a letter from Elinor McEntee (Mrs. Howard G.), 490 Fairfield Ave., Ridgewood, N.J., dated August 19, 1952, was referred to above in connection with a possible hazard in the use of color bands. The Editor would appreciate any observations as to the extent of similar occurrences which members may be able to provide.

"I had an experience this summer with a Catbird return which brought home to me very forcibly the danger of putting two bands on one leg. Since I believe this is a fairly widespread practice when color banding is done to any extent, I hope other banders will take note. If the case of this Catbird is unique, perhaps there is no need for caution, but if others have noted the same thing, banders should be warned. This particular Catbird was extremely tame and had nested near Charlie Nichols' home for a couple of years, each year coming right into his or Mabel's hand for raisins without any hesitation. They asked me if I would try to trap and color-band the Catbird pair so they could keep track of them each year. A gold band (LA) was placed above the government band on the male and a blue one in similar position on the female.

On July 9th of this year (1952), Mabel Nichols phoned to say that the male Catbird acted as though his bands hurt him and asked me if I

would come up with a trap so that we could catch him and examine the bands. This I did the next day and discovered that the force of the two LA bands hitting together for just one year had caused them to flatten out, forming a very sharp ridge (or flange) both inside and out, which made the bands quite tight. The inner ridges were not as sharp as the outer, but undoubtedly in another year would have caused serious injury if they had not been removed. ....

"I have wondered if the fact that LA bands are made of heavier aluminum than the other smaller ones had any bearing on the case. Would the harder metal come together with more force than the lighter weight bands and thus cause the sharp ridges, or would two bands of any weight do it? I hope someone has an answer, or gets it, before a lot of birds lose their legs. Perhaps some of the Evening Grosbeak banders can shed some light on the subject since they do a good deal of color banding with the heavy LA bands."

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Arthur H. East, 4924 Rock Spring Road, Arlington, Virginia, trapped and banded two Juncos as follows:

<u>Band Number</u>	<u>Date Banded</u>
21-35454	Dec. 13, 1952
21-35489	Dec. 30, 1952

The markings on these birds were slightly different from the usual hyemalis (Junco hyemalis hyemalis, (Eastern) Slate-colored Junco-Ed.), most noticeably in having a wash of rusty on the sides. By comparison with specimens in the U. S. National Museum, Dr. John W. Aldrich and Mr. Allen J. Duvall identified these birds as the subspecies Junco hyemalis cismontanus, the Cassiar Slate-colored Junco. The normal range of this race is restricted to the northern Rocky Mountain region.

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#### CONCERNING THE BLUE JAY SYMPOSIUM

In the January issue, it was requested that material for the Blue Jay symposium be sent to the Editor's wife by April 1. To date, only three contributions have been received. If you have material on this species please send it in. It might be interesting to hear from banders who band considerable numbers of small birds and yet do not take this species. In 17 years, your Editor has never taken a single Jay!