

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

This, the September-October 1954 issue is going forth on January 30, 1955, with the November-December issue to follow within a few days. It is hoped that the January-February 1955 issue will appear before the end of February. To a large degree, the delay has been occasioned by the Editor's being occupied with the work of his new position which requires that he be out of town quite a bit and which also interferes with his evening activities. He regrets the late appearance of recent issues.

Another trap is featured in this issue, but good India ink line drawings of other traps are urgently needed. If anyone has talents along this line, please help out.

We repeat our plea for good contrast glossy black and white prints of traps and other topics of interest to EBBA NEWS readers. Also, if members have received newspaper publicity of banding, we can reproduce clippings of such publicity now that the entire issue is reproduced photographically.

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MORE IN DEFENSE OF THE STARLING

The January-February issue of EBBA NEWS (Pp. 8-10) carried a letter from the Reverend Garret S. Detwiler, of Salem, New Jersey, telling of his experiences as a new bander, in which he mentioned his having banded nearly a thousand Starlings.

In the March-April issue (P. 11), there was a note from Mrs. Mary W. Lair, of Landenberg, Pennsylvania, in which she deplored the fact that Mr. Detwiler had, in her opinion, missed an opportunity to destroy members of a species which she considers pests. In the May-June issue (Pp. 2-5), Mr. Detwiler ably presented a defense of the Starling which has inspired several communications to the Editor.

Under date of September 28, 1954, Dr. John W. Aldrich, Chief, Section of Distribution of Birds and Mammals, United States Department of the Interior, wrote the Editor as follows:

"In looking over the May-June 1954 issue of EBBA News I noted an article entitled 'In Defense of the Starling' by Rev. Garrett S. Detwiler, in which the author commented on a previous article expressing the opinion that it would be better to kill starlings caught in banding traps rather than band and release them. I was quite impressed with what appears to me to be a complete oversight of the main purpose of banding in both of these articles. Whether to band or not to band is not a question of whether the species is considered desirable or undesirable. Banding is for the purpose of finding out more about all species of birds, and usually it is the undesirable ones that we need information on the most.

"Incidentally, the number of starlings that might be killed by bird banders would be merely a 'drop in the bucket' and of no significance in controlling the population of this species. There is no doubt that starlings are an economic problem in some areas, either by their destruction of crops or by defacing of buildings. The more we can find out about the movement of these birds by banding, the better we can understand these problems and be able to meet them.

"My only purpose in writing this is to try to bring to the attention of banders that the primary purpose in conducting a cooperative bird banding program is to determine basic facts about birds. A decision as to whether to band or not, based on the bander's opinion of the nature of any given species, would tend to defeat this purpose. I hope that more thought will be given to these matters by our banders."

It is the opinion of the Editor that Dr. Aldrich has very clearly stated the major purpose of the banding program; however, agreement with his thesis does not preclude the presentation in this publication of other comments concerning the economic value of the Starling.

Another defender of the Starling is Arthur O. Stone, Jr., of Barnegat Pines, Forked River, New Jersey, who wrote under date of September 17, 1954:

"After reading the May-June issue of EBBA NEWS, I, too, am inclined to come to the defense of the starling as Rev. Detwiler did.

"In fact, I would like to nominate a bird which has more obnox-

ious habits than the starling, at least in our own area -- our ever-present and contemptible Blue Jay.

"In the past two years, at my banding station, I have seen the Jays not only rob other nests of their eggs but deliberately molest any and all smaller birds, even to the extent of killing fledglings who happened to get close to the Jays' feeding spot.

"I would like to suggest to your readers that perhaps all our birds have both good and bad habits. Some of them may be criticised and condemned more than others, but I am sure that Mother Nature knows these facts and also the reason why.

"If we are to police all the actions of every bird in our respective areas, we will surely need more help even with the combined efforts of every EBBA NEWS reader and EBBA member.

"I suppose this article should be titled 'Live and Let Live' or 'The Survival of the Fittest'."

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COMMENTS ON THE JULY-AUGUST ISSUE

Dr. Charles H. Blake, Department of Biology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge 39, Mass., has the following interesting observations to offer:

"May I offer a few disjointed comments on some of the items appearing in the July-August EBBA News:

"(1) In his comparison of dripping water versus still water, I think Merrill Wood gets the right answer, but I doubt whether his data actually prove it. I note that eight species showed more taken with still water than with dripping, and two other species were tied. The difficulty seems to be that for most of the species, the number of individuals taken was so small that it is doubtful whether they were in fact exposed to the same conditions in fact exposed to both conditions. Further, some of the species, such as the House Wren, will go into traps for no apparent reason. If we take the three species that were trapped in reasonable numbers, i.e., Robin, House Sparrow, and Grackle, we find that the ratio is 55