

BLUE JAYS TAKEN AT MONTCLAIR, ESSEX COUNTY, N.J., 1949-1954*

by Frank P. Frazier

The records and notes that follow are based on the banding of 394 Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) during the six years, 1949 through 1954, at Montclair, Essex County, New Jersey.

Table 1 shows the number of adults and immatures banded, returns, etc., together with the relationship of these data to that of all birds banded at the station. Note particularly that 13% of all returns were of Blue Jays and that 9% of all foreign recoveries were of Blue Jays, although this species represented only 5% of all birds banded during the period.

	BANDED	REPEATS	RETURNS	STATION RECOV.	RECOVERIES	TOTAL
Adults	326	93	47	22	3	491
Immatures	68	59	1	0	0	128
TOTALS	494	152	48	22	3	619
Per Cent of All Species	5%	3.5%	13%		9%	4.8%

Table 1: Numbers of Adults and Immatures Banded, Returns, and Recoveries of Blue Jays, in Relation to All Species Banded at Montclair, New Jersey, 1949-1954

Table 2 gives a breakdown of bandings by months and separately for each year. Eighty-six percent of the birds were taken during the five months, May through September, although a considerable number of Blue Jays winter near the station every year, with the exception of the winter 1950-51.

All Blue Jays left Montclair during the last week of November 1950

* Revised from paper given at EBBA Annual Meeting at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, April 16, 1955

and did not return until the first week of April 1951. Although we had a hurricane two days before the birds disappeared, the real reason appeared to be that the acorn crop was very poor in the vicinity that winter. During the other seven months of the year, Blue Jays are much warier of traps, although they come to feeders readily enough.

MONTH	BANDED	TAKEN	MONTH	BANDED	TAKEN
Jan	0	4	Jul	60	86
Feb	2	6	Aug	88	179
Mar	1	5	Sep	42	64
Apr	17	19	Oct	18	22
May	130	167	Nov	15	22
Jun	18	39	Dec	3	6

Table 2, part A: Captures of Blue Jays in Relation to the Month of the Year

YEAR	BANDED	TAKEN
1949	42	46
1950	79	143
1951	64	95
1952	37	54
1953	65	80
1954	107	201

Table 2, part B: Captures of Blue Jays during Each Year from 1949 to 1954

Tables 3 and 4 give the return and repeat figures for banded birds, as well as the known (minimum) ages of birds returning or recovered. It is interesting to note that only 18.2% of Blue Jays banded repeated at least once, compared with 37% for all birds banded at the station.

On the other hand, 16% of Blue Jays returned (including recoveries and station recoveries, birds found dead within five miles of the station); this is a much greater percentage than for all species, in which the figure is only 6%.

Number	Age	Number	Age
1	4 mos.	12	3 yrs.
12	1 yr.	5	4 "
28	2 yrs.	5	5 "

Table 3, part A: Blue Jays Returning, Relation to Age

NUMBER	WHEN RETURNED	NUMBER	WHEN RETURNED
10	Six Months	4	Fourth Year
26	First Year	5	1st and 2nd Years
7	Second Year	1	1st and 3rd Years
4	Third Year		

Table 3, part B: Blue Jays Returning, Relationship to Time Elapsed Since Original Banding

Few Blue Jays have been taken in my nets. My nets run from ground level up to six feet. Jays coming to my traps and feeders usually fly in to perch 15 to 50 feet in a tree and then descend almost vertically. When flying horizontally, they seem to clear the nets. When they do hit the nets, they often fail to become entangled. Doubtless they could be netted in greater numbers if proper plans were made.

Blue Jays feed and go into traps on the ground and on platforms

	NUMBER OF TIMES REPEATING									Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Adults	31	5	5	1	2	0	0	0	1	45
Immatures	9	7	4	1	1	3	1	1	0	27
Totals	40	12	9	2	3	3	1	1	1	72

Table 4: Frequency of Recaptures of Blue Jays

up to seven feet. Perhaps they will go higher, but none of the station traps or feeders is higher.

Many individuals of this species become unconscious in the hand, and many times even before being taken in the hand. This behavior is far more pronounced in Blue Jays than in any other of the 104 species handled at this station. It is a temporary condition, seldom lasting more than a minute.

Three of the birds which I banded have been recovered elsewhere, as shown in Table 5.

Band Number	Age	Date Banded	Date Recovered	Place	How
48-353870	Ad.	5-22-1950	8-23-1954	Baltimore, Md.	Dead
40-307439	"	10-6-1952	3-27-1954	West Haven, Conn.	"
523-28334	"	8-8-1953	11-10-1953	Campbell Co., Va., capt. & released	

Table 5: Foreign Recoveries of Blue Jays Banded at Montclair, New Jersey

Trap injuries to Blue Jays consist of the breaking of the skin above the upper mandible, which seems to heal rapidly, and occasional damage to the upper mandible itself. Speed in removing them from small gathering cages is essential. A specially built gathering cage, made from a large-mouth glass jar, has proved useful. No injury to any bird results when this is used. (Plastic is even better--Ed.)

There has been one instance observed of Blue Jays anting. Three individuals took part together for a period of twenty minutes. They picked ants from the ground and rubbed them through their feathers, under their wings, etc. Several of the ants were collected, after the birds had been scared off by an approaching dog, and taken to an entomologist at the American Museum of Natural Sciences in New York. Before an identification was made, however, the specimens were mislaid and are doubtless still somewhere in the museum. That was two years ago, but the entomologist is still hopeful that they will turn up.

	HOUSE	MAZE	TRIP	DROP DOOR	NET	OTHER
Adults	19	21	33	11	4	12
Immatures	38	34	11	10	1	6
Totals	22	23	29	12	3	11
Comparative Figures for All Sp.	15	30	24	13	13	5

Table 6: Method of Capturing Blue Jays

More than 70% of the Blue Jay captures took place before noon; this compares with 57% for Robins and 55% for Hermit Thrushes. The percentage of all birds taken before noon at this station is under 60%.

--424 Highland Ave., Upper Montclair, New Jersey

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EBBA MEMBERS FLOODED OUT BY RAMPAGING DELAWARE RIVER

At least six EBBA members were affected to greater or lesser degree by the flooding Delaware River on August 19, the sequel to hurricanes Connie and Diane. Perhaps the most serious damage was sustained by Reverend Garrett S. Detwiler whose attractive and well-equipped Summer home at Carpentersville, New Jersey, disappeared without trace, except for the foundations. Your Editor and wife, who live about two miles farther downstream, on the Pennsylvania side, saw the Detwiler cottage float by Saturday afternoon.

On September 5, Mr. Detwiler wrote: "We were up looking for our cottage the other day, Wednesday of last week, and on the way up, we stopped in at Doc Fluck's. He was just finishing up with a bunch of typhoid shots, so we asked them to go along with us. Well, before we knew what had happened, Doc had us in his car, Jeanne was still in her uniform, his bag was on the front seat for camouflage, and we were heading up the river toward Point Pleasant. He said that he would be able to get through where we would be turned back, so we let him talk us into going in his car.