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EBBA'S PRESIDENT SAYS: Entries in the visitor's books at Washington Crossing Park show that upwards of 135 EBBA, Inland, and Northeastern Banding Association members have visited the Banding Station. Most have come to look at traps, and to ask questions about baits, traps, and nets. Only a few -- a very few -- have asked questions about birds! One newly licensed bander showed a keen interest in the detailed construction of every trap, but when he was given an opportunity to identify two birds -- an ovenbird and a northern waterthrush -- taken from a mist net, he replied that he couldn't "WITHOUT HIS BOOK!" Just how and why this bander got a permit would be an interesting question. But your president thinks this serious-minded man will be a first rate bander AFTER HE LEARNS HIS BIRDS!

Every bander should own a copy of the superb new book entitled RECENT STUDIES IN AVIAN BIOLOGY which may be obtained from the University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois. In the first chapter, Alden Miller writes:

"The combination of attack on the problems....of Song Sparrows has been fruitful.... Through good fortune as well as the general advance of ornithological knowledge, we had available in connection with the same species an excellent population study and a most instructive set of local variations in characters and ecology. These combinations need not be matters of chance in the future for we can select working material carefully... for its potentiality in revealing evolutionary processes and on the basis of our ample knowledge of bird behavior and ecology for susceptibility for coordinated population analysis. In this direction lies a significant future.... A similar focus is also healthful for future population work which can all too easily lapse into purposeless counting and marking!"

In another chapter of the same book, David Davis writes: "to investigate some biological problems it is usually necessary to frame the question carefully and then collect the data. Rarely are data from miscellaneous sources adequately controlled to serve special purposes."

If all this sounds high-falutin to you, put it this way: In science you state your problem first! You collect your data, second! Bird banding is an important scientific arm of ornithology. Aimless banding, no matter how large the number of birds, remains aimless banding -- unless a problem is being worked out, or someone can make use of your data.

Margaret Nice whose monumental work has been quoted in virtually every scientific work on ornithology, chose a common and readily accessible bird for her study. She concentrated on the Song Sparrow!

To make the most of your banding time, stop chasing unusual birds and banding aimlessly. Concentrate on birds that are easy for you to trap in numbers. Band any others, of course. But ask yourself: What source of information pertaining to scientific ornithology am I equipped to supply? In Hickey's excellent book, A GUIDE TO BIRD WATCHING, there is a table on page 168 which lists 35 items of information still badly needed for ALL North American birds. Read Hickey's list and ask yourself a question -- the answer to which is still unknown. Then by scientific banding try to answer that question.

To apply all this to EBBA members, you may recall two recent articles in Ebba News by Reverend Garrett Detwiler, EBBA'S secretary, and Salem, New Jersey's banding Babe Ruth. In January 1955, Garrett who takes as many as 150 starlings and grackles daily throughout the winter months, chirped proudly about netting 103 juncos and a single yellow-breasted chat. Garrett's second article in the July 1955 News was an excellent analysis of the banding recoveries from 4,800 starlings. Starlings, the Reverend Detwiler found, move in a clockwise direction in migration. EBBA's secretary recognized his own special field, and his own problem. The Chat and the Juncos were merely window trimmings. Salem's Big League bander is concentrating again on his unglamorous starlings and grackles.

Is there a special ornithological problem that you can solve?
