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EBBA'S PRESIDENT SAYS: Just about one hundred years ago, Lyman Beecher said, "No great advances have ever been made in science, politics, or religion without controversy." And for the first time, bird banding is engaged in such a controversy. The last issue of EBBA NEWS you will recall was filled with nine pages of controversy concerned with a new advance in bird-banding -- Mist Netting.

Wordwise, the pro-netters got off to a strong start and attained a five to two page advantage over the anti-netters. This bander who is always interested in fair and open discussion, hopes that the net controversy will not cool off until it has been completely discussed on the open floor of our annual meeting. At that time he as presiding officer will see that equal time is given to both factions to express their opinions, to bring forth the facts, and to introduce and vote upon resolutions which some of the membership may feel are necessary to prevent the misuse of nets.

Without abandoning his neutral position, (EBBA's President netted about 2,000 birds in 1956) this bander feels that amateur banders are almost always careful and humane bird handlers. It is possible, however, that criticism in regard to handling of netted birds, might not be misplaced if it were to be directed toward professional bird netters, working on various projects for state game agencies, and the like. Mr. Duvall, last spring, was heard to say that one netter, working on woodcock, requested and obtained 95 nets. It is only human to wonder just how this netter maintains a high standard of bird handling and how non-game birds -- woodpeckers, thrushes, etc., fare when they are taken in similar game operations. Finally, one might wonder who in these various game agencies, and research projects, decides on the qualifications, if any, for bird netting.

This criticism most assuredly is not directed toward Mr. Duvall, Seth Low, Chandler Robbins, or other Fish and Wildlife Service banders

known to EBBA's President. It is merely intended to show that regulations may be needed to prevent serious conservation catastrophes. One wonders what might happen if a really extensive netting project (for game, or non-game species) was to be conducted in the limited breeding grounds of the Kirtland's Warbler, during the nesting season, by untrained, heavy-handed netters.

A very few simple regulations might suffice to remove the criticism now directed by many bird lovers -- more every year -- in the direction of netting. Nets are for the most part imported, and their sale, and re-sale might readily be limited to the FWS. If the return of old nets was required to obtain new ones, and a limit of five nets to each operator was enforced, (this applying to game and research agencies too) careful handling might be almost assured. The limitations of netting privileges to those who have actually handled birds, and returned banding schedules for at least two years would, if enforced by state agencies, remove the unfledged bird handler as a menace. The designation of restricted areas, and seasons in regard to netting, might be an additional safe-guard.

Finally, this bander wants to take this first opportunity in 1957 to wish every member a healthful, happy, and successful banding year. He wants to thank all of those banders who sent him those nice Christmas and New Year cards for their interesting notes. He regrets that it is possible to include here only one note written on a Christmas card. But what a note! Read it carefully. Remember every word is true, and the whole account is backed up by careful scientific records.

"Banding picked up a bit during the past month. J.A. and I banded 5 tons of birds and caught 1500 pounds of returns. Percentage returns on some samples rivals your rate for red-eyes (vireos). For example: 76% return on 96 birds banded two years ago, and 20% return on 100 banded 18 years ago. At this rate the new birds we banded should continue to furnish recoveries after we retire. In case you haven't figured out what species we were working with, they were the Laysan and Black-footed Albatross on Midway."

You guess. Who was the bander ???

Remember! Schedules are due at the Banding Office by March 31. When you send your sum totals of birds banded, make an extra copy and send it to EBBA NEWS ***