

RAYMOND J. MIDDLETON
A Profile by Rev. Garrett S. Detwiler

One of the most successful and best known banders in EBBA is our former president Raymond J. Middleton of Norristown, Pa. He has been an active Audubon member of long standing and the President of the Audubon Club of Norristown for many years.



Photograph by Raymond J. Middleton, Jr.

Here is a man whose interest in ornithological studies brought about his invitation to become a bander. Mr. Middleton has been engaged in banding since 1921 and holds permit #2073, but states, "I do not know the number of my original permit as it was sent back many years later and this new permit was issued. Surely I was one of the very first banders as I received a letter suggesting that I might be interested when the Biological Survey first took it over. I answered at once and soon had trap plans, bands, and a permit and I began banding in July of 1921."

Until 1928 only one trap was in use at his banding station. Since that time the Middleton Thrush Trap has come into being and has proven to be his most successful trap. At present he operates 60 traps of three types -- Middleton Thrush, Modesto and Chardonneret, with a Potter being used at times during the year, on a 4 acre plot of lawn, thicket, and deciduous woods.

The success of the banding at the Middleton station can best be told in figures. As of January 1957, 42,892 birds of 133 species had been banded, from which he obtained 1,482 returns, 42,668 repeats, and 312 recoveries. Species of which he has banded the greatest number are 7,379 White-throated Sparrows, 4,728 Robins, 3,823 Catbirds, 3,700 Song Sparrows, 3,242 Slate-colored Juncos, 5,350 Warblers, and 2,690 Thrushes. These bandings have been recovered in 16 states and a province of Canada.

The special interests that have been followed by means of this banding have been relative to the ages and ability of the birds to return to the same area again. Another interest has been migration, with special attention being given to the length of time the birds remain at any given spot during their flights.

It is only to be expected that many interesting experiences would be forthcoming from banding over so long a period of time and we find that Raymond Middleton has had his share of interesting experiences.

Back in the Twenties he had the first Lincoln Sparrow ever to be banded in the State of Pennsylvania. As one would expect, he also had many who viewed his report of this feat with no little skepticism. His identification was verified by none other than Frederick Lincoln, who was visiting him when the sparrow repeated. Some years later he banded the first Orange-crowned Warbler. Here again the identification of the bird was substantiated by Allan Cruikshank. "What a stroke of luck," says Raymond Middleton, "to have two such fine bird men here when you catch two rare birds."

Among those 312 recoveries were a Scarlet Tanager found dead in northern New Jersey 8 years after banding; a White-throated Sparrow trapped in Milwaukee 7 years after banding; another White-throated Sparrow trapped on an island south of Newfoundland 3 years after banding; a Blue Jay found dead during the winter in Massachusetts 7 years after banding; a Slate-colored Junco found dead on Christmas Day in Alabama 11 months after banding; a Robin found dead in North Carolina 7 years later; another Robin found dead 8 years later but only 15 miles away from the place where it was banded; a Starling found dead in Florida 3 years after banding.

There have been a number of interesting returns recorded as well. Among the most outstanding were 2 Tree Sparrows returning for 8 consecutive winters; 6 returning for 7 winters and 5 for 6 winters. A Crested Flycatcher nested at the banding station for 8 summers, another for 6 summers and 2 for 5 summers. A Slate-colored Junco returned for 8½ years and was taken all but two winters. A Catbird returned for 7 summers, another 8 years old was taken all but 2 summers. A Robin, banded as an adult, returned for 8 summers. A Red-eyed Vireo was found dead a mile away 6 years later. An Ovenbird retrapped 5 years after banding. 2 Purple Grackles taken 8 years after banding. A Song Sparrow present for 6 summers. A Tufted Titmouse nesting in area for 7 summers. A House Wren nesting in the area for 4 summers.

It is not difficult to understand that a bander of such experience would play a large part in such an organization as EBBA. This has been true, for Mr. Middleton has held many of the important offices. He was EBBA's president during the years 1952-54 and is at present on the Board of Governors.

Salem, New Jersey.

A LETTER FROM CHARLES H. BLAKE

I was much interested in Chandler Robbins' rejoinder to John Dennis' article. (See Ebba News, 20-53 and 20:86.) I think there is probably a good deal to be said on both sides. There certainly must be some difference in the ability to detect a mist net. Mockingbirds are peculiarly difficult to net under most conditions. On one occasion in Jamaica when it was already dusk, a mockingbird zoomed right over the top of a net set against a high, dark hedge. Did it conclude because the top of the net was visible that the obstruction went all the way to the ground; or had it, as our underworld friends would say, "Gased the joint" on some previous occasion?

Some swifts must be even more adept at seeing small objects in dim light. On another occasion in Jamaica I tried to net palm swifts that were flying only two or three feet above the ground when it was almost dark, and they still flew either over or around my nets, one of which was set against a sufficiently dark background. On another occasion there in the Port Royal mountains, we had some nets set on the brow of a hill and just at dusk two large swifts -- the black and the collared -- were flying across the yard and diving down the side of the mountain. They uniformly avoided the nets, but some bats of the genus *Tadarida* slammed right into the nets. They apparently did not expect any obstruction and had not turned on their sonar.

Hillsboro, North Carolina.
