

EVENING GROSBEAKS IN ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA
1958

By Arthur H. Fast

The banding of birds on our home acre in Arlington, Virginia, began with the first invasion in this area of the Evening Grosbeaks in 1945-46. At that time 51 were banded. (EBBA NEWS, Vol. 9, No. 12, Dec. 1946.) After a 6-year interval, these birds came again to our home acre during the greater 1951-52 invasion. At that time 315 were banded; 5 re-trapped and released up to 5 years after being banded by other banders in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and 51 re-trapped and released after being banded, in nearby areas, by other banders during the same invasion. (EBBA NEWS, Vol 15, No. 3, and No. 7.) After another 6-year interval, these birds came for the third time to our home acre, during the 1957-58 invasion. This time they arrived here quite late - April 12, 1958. At 9:00 A.M. about 15 of them were first heard and seen high in the trees, scattered in this and neighboring yards. They were restless and called almost incessantly while here on that day; they fed on hemlock cones, and on the old seeds and the new buds on the other trees. Later they fed on the natural seeds on the ground - principally under the dogwood trees. One female came to the bird bath. A liberal supply of sunflower seed was scattered on the ground around the bird bath. The birds left for the day about 1:00 P.M.

On succeeding mornings, the Evening Grosbeaks came progressively earlier and became less restless. They came to feed more and more on the sunflower seed on the ground, and within a few days, on the feeding trays. Potter type traps were placed on the ground and on the feeding trays. At first they were wary of the traps; they would reach for a seed and trip the traps without being caught. On April 18, the first one, a male, was trapped and banded. Thereafter they became more settled and were trapped rather easily. To and including May 12 a total of 112 of them (43 males and 69 females) were banded. There were 12 repeats. 3 banded by others were trapped and released: 1 banded by Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock on February 24, 1958, in Fairfax County, Virginia, re-trapped here May 3, 1958; 1 banded by Mrs. Eleanor Dater on February 21, 1955, in Ramsey, New Jersey, re-trapped here May 8, 1958, and 1 banded by Mrs. Margaret Fitzgerald on January 19, 1956, in Amsterdam, New York, re-trapped here May 4, 1958. Not more than an estimated 25 of these birds were seen or heard at any one time; also very few banded birds were seen on the trays. It would seem that a large number of them circulated around and through this area. None of these birds banded in previous years has returned here; it should be noted, however, that they were trapped and banded here only in 1946, 1952 and 1958.

On the morning of April 19, 1958, a male Evening Grosbeak displayed before a female. He threw his head back, and his breast almost touched the tray; his wings were spread downward and outward and they vibrated; he moved toward the female and almost touched her. This display continued for about 15 seconds. The bills of these Grosbeaks were distinctly green, which has been described as being "similar to that of the skin of a maturing apple just before the sun has tinted it with the first faint blush of ripeness." (See "Evening Grosbeaks Choose Their Lipstick Well," by G. Hapgood Parks, Audubon Magazine, March-April, 1948, page 110.) In this article, Mr. Parks (one of the top banders of Evening Grosbeaks) after referring to the "uniform bone color" of the bill in winter, says that by late March all the bills were green. He concludes that the color of their bills matches the fresh young leaves. He visualizes the female on her nest in this protective coloring.

After they became established, the Evening Grosbeaks on the trays - together with the Purple Finches (430 banded) and Goldfinches (300 banded) - put on quite a display for everyone who came to see them. Mr. Ralph Lawrence and Mr. Donald Sutherland, both nature photographers of Washington, D.C., each spent several hours taking colored movies of these birds. On most days the Evening Grosbeaks followed a predictable pattern: they came shortly after full daylight, with two hour-long periods of peak activity and display, beginning about 8:00 A.M. and 11:30 A.M. Most of them left by 1:00 P.M. A few scattered birds were usually seen and heard briefly during the afternoon - one as late as 5:40 P.M., Daylight Time. Decreasing activity was noticeable after May 7. The last two birds - one male and one female - were seen briefly several times on May 14.

4924 Rock Spring Road, Arlington, Virginia.

BLACK DUCK - MALLARD HYBRIDS
Information Wanted by Paul A. Johnsgard

"As part of a PhD dissertation I am interested in determining the frequency of hybridization between the Black Duck and the Mallard in various parts of the United States, and have found that the best source of such information is that provided by banding records of persons who band large numbers of both species. Frequently these persons record hybrids separately from the parental forms, or at least have noted their relative frequency among the banded birds.

"Anyone who has such information please contact me. All that I need to know is the total number of Black Ducks, Mallards and their hybrids (with the sex ratio of the latter if possible) banded over a particular time period. This information would be of very great assistance to me. Thank you very much."

Dept. of Conservation, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.
