

"HOMING" COWBIRDS AT HAWK MOUNTAIN
By Maurice Broun

When it comes to Cowbirds, I confess that my impulse more often than not has been to wring their necks rather than 'ring' their legs. There was a time when we were hardly aware of Cowbirds in our terrain. But in recent years the critturs have increased greatly and, I regret to report, they have infiltrated all parts of our heavily wooded mountain. I daresay that most of our small birds suffer from the ubiquitous, subversive Molothrus. But, with apologies to Burns, a bird's a bird for a' that! And Cowbirds are grist to the bander's mill. . .

And so, during the early part of May, 1958, I started a program of Cowbird-removal, aided and abetted by certain visitors who departed with paper bags containing individual Cowbirds. My cooperators were most pleased to take part in this project, "in the interest of science." We had 17 Cowbirds "taken for a ride" and of that number, 8 birds were retrapped - all within a day - having returned from airmile distances varying from $8\frac{1}{2}$ to $45\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

One of these birds, a male, 56-185435, displayed a singular attachment to the Sanctuary. The saga of this bird warrants telling, for it was captured and removed no less than 5 times. This bird was initially released $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the east of the Sanctuary, in mid-morning of May 5; it was retrapped one hour and five minutes later. Its second excursion (on May 10) was to a point 14 miles south; it was retrapped the next morning. The same day the bird was released 31 miles to the southwest, at Lebanon. Bill Etchberger, who released the bird, reported that he hand-held it deliberately, for over an hour; it was also held upside down for 5 minutes prior to release. Then it flew south for about 100 yards, circled high, turned and flew north. Early the next morning, the 11th, I retrapped the bird. The same day, 435's fourth trip was made 20 miles to the south; and it was back early the next morning, perhaps sooner. On the 12th, it was released by Blair Evans, at Kulpville, $42\frac{1}{2}$ miles southeast of the Sanctuary. The bird was retrapped for the 6th time on May 15. I released the bird with my congratulations, and blessings, at the trap-site - but only because no courier was on hand to continue the transportation scheme.

A male Cowbird, banded on May 9, was released $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the south-east; it was retrapped early the next morning and the same day (the 10th) it was released at Hummelstown, $45\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the southwest. The bird was retrapped the next morning.

A female Cowbird 443, banded on May 9, was removed to a point $10\frac{1}{2}$ miles eastsoutheast. Retrapped early the next morning, it was promptly removed and released 11 miles to the southwest, only to reappear in the traps the following morning. On the 13th this bird was being courted

inside a big all-purpose trap, by Cowbird 453, that had been taken off to Kulpsville the day before, with the famous 435.

I think that the distance record for "homing" Cowbirds was chalked up in 1939, when a male Cowbird returned 184 airmiles to Park River, No. Dakota, one week after release (Bird-Banding, 1940, vol. 40, p. 23.)

WANTED: more couriers to spirit away more Cowbirds, in May!

Hawk Mt. Sanctuary, Kempton, Penna.

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NEWS

IN

BRIEF

People with new net permits may get a reprint of Seth Low's fine article on mist netting by writing Bird-Banding Editor E. Alexander Bergstrom, 37 Old Brook Rd., West Hartford 7, Conn. ★ ★ ★ Elinor McEntee, of Ridgewood, N.J., writes that of the 560 Redpolls she banded in 1956 only one has been heard from again - an individual found dead in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, April 10, 1958 ★ ★ ★ Dorothy Bordner, who with her family will hold Open House to EBBA members the evening before the Annual Meeting, banded 1667 Evening Grosbeaks in 1958. ★ ★ ★ Brooke Worth writes from Johannesburg, South Africa, that a Black Skimmer he banded as a nestling at Stone Harbor, N.J., July 13, 1957, was recovered (found dead) at Brigus Junction, Newfoundland, Canada, October 3, 1958, and says, "I didn't know they had Black Skimmers up there. And at that season! Was there a coastal hurricane at that time -- Betsy? Carol? Diana? or some other luscious female?" ★ ★ ★ An adult Mockingbird banded by Bennet K. Matlack at Bridgeton, N.J. June 29, 1958, was found dead two months later (Sept. 1, 1958) two miles west of Sidney, Ohio -- 500 miles away. ★ ★ ★ Incidentally, Bennett Matlack banded 11,013 birds of 97 species in 1958 ★ ★ ★ I hope every member will buttonhole the Editor at the Annual Meeting and tell him how to make EBBA NEWS more useful and interesting ★ ★ ★

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