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RED-EYED VIREO RETURNS AT WASHINGTON CROSSING
By Dr. Paul H. Fluck

The only "payola" the amateur bander is likely ever to receive is opening a fat FWS envelope and pulling out a sheaf of pink slips. Usually the pink slips tell about unglamorous recoveries of starlings from the next block, but once in a lifetime a really impressive recovery shows up. Recently on such a pink slip this bander read about the recovery of a Magnolia Warbler banded at Washington Crossing in May 1958, which was "shot" by a native in the spring of 1959 in a remote part of Mexico called Quintana Roo, a part of southern Yucatan.

But impressive as that pink slip may be - it is mounted in the Bulletin Board at the Banding Station - the Red-eyed Vireos at Washington Crossing are even more interesting. Although the total number is small: 195 banded, 41 returns, returning Red-eyes have flown a distance which is quite possibly more than twice that covered by the Magnolia Warbler mentioned. And many of the Red-eyed Vireos are still flying.

This bander believes that interpretation of banding data is a job for the "brains" in the Banding Office, or for someone who has the time and a travel allowance to make use of Banding Office data and IBM machines. And he agrees heartily too, that no single station or bander can possibly cover the field comprehensively enough to present a truly representative study of even a single species. But he thinks that perhaps some banders might find these statistical biographies interesting, although admittedly their number is small.

Skutch, as quoted by Bent, states that the Red-eyed Vireo in Central America is known only as a transient, journeying between its winter home in South America and its breeding range in North America. The winter range is listed as: east to British Guiana, south to the Matto Grosso in Brazil, west to the interior valleys of Peru and Colombia. Bond states that North American individuals migrate chiefly through Central America. He lists, however, migration dates in spring and fall for Cuba.

Bent listed only two recoveries of Red-eyed Vireos, neither from out of the country. Several years ago in a letter to the Banding Office this bander requested to be informed about noteworthy vireo recoveries. To date there has been no word of new recoveries. However, even without banding evidence to prove it, competent ornithologists are more or less agreed on the route and the mileage of the red-eyes, and it is likely that these hardy travellers clock off at least 4,000 or possibly more miles in each direction, to and from Washington Crossing. While an overall return rate on such a small series of birds can be hardly more than an indication, it seems quite probable that intercontinental migration for this species is hardly as hazardous as staying in one place, during the nesting and winter seasons.

Red-eyed Vireos provide a good species for study. They are easy to net, and easy to remove without injury. Their presence in the nesting season is clearly indicated by territorial singing. Adults can easily be differentiated from immatures by the presence of the red eye, so age can be determined in a large proportion. However, resident vireos are wary and rarely repeat. Only one bird on this list of 41 returns repeated more than three times. Usually the record cards show return records only. No bird is listed as a return more than once in a calendar year.

To obtain this high number of returns it was necessary to Quadrant Net, that is: the 17 acre banding area was divided off into quadrants, and the net line was moved to a new position every banding day during the nesting season. Even this technique, of course, failed to approach 100%, but its efficiency on adult residents is shown in Chart 2 below, which shows a return rate of 41% for Red-eyes banded in the month of May only. The overall return rate was 21% on 195 Red-eyed Vireos. Seven birds did not return in the first year. And of course it is obvious that not all of the residents nested in the 17 acre banding area.

One final observation, for which no interpretation is offered, is that the batch of vireos banded in 1957 (45) produced only one returning bird. There is still time for others, of course, to return. But of 51 birds banded in the 1954 batch, 18 returned! And of 30 banded in 1958, 8 have returned already, in the first year. Did the "class of 1957" fail to learn their navigation?

Chart #1
Number of Red-eyed Vireos Banded and Returns by Year

	<u>Banded</u>	<u>Returned</u>
1954	51	First year: no returns
1955	39	13
1956	30	15
1957	45	10
1958	30	7
1959	(42)	12
	195	57 (41 individual birds)

Note that 1959 vireos are excluded because they will not return until 1960.

Chart #2
Returns of Red-eyed Vireos Banded in May Only

	<u>Banded</u>	<u>Returned</u>
May 1954	12	8
May 1955	10	4
May 1956	3	-
May 1957	5	1
May 1958	9	3
	39	16, or 41%

Washington Crossing Park, New Hope, Penna.

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