THE PERMANENT RECORDING OF BANDING DATA

By Elise M. Dickerson

Early in 1958 I received a request from Dr. W. Rydzewski, the editor of THE RING, to write a description of the method of recording banding data that is in use at our banding station. Since I had already furnished many new banders with just such information, I was happy to do so and it subsequently appeared in the July, 1958 issue of THE RING (Vol. 11, No.16). However, this system was actually devised with the help of many other banders and it has since been improved by suggestions from various others; therefore, it must be understood that even though it has come to be known as the "Dickerson System" it is by no means the work of only one person.

In this account of my recording system which appeared in THE RING, I attempted to show ways in which an individual bander could keep his daily records. This I now consider unnecessary, since it is of little importance how a bander keeps his daily record provided it contains all the necessary data that must be available when needed. This vital information which must be written at the time of banding may be placed in a simple notebook, a daily journal or on separate sheets or cards - all of which are equally acceptable as an original recording system if maintained with a minimum of error. These may later be altered or amended to include special data for use by the bander engaged in a particular project.

The "permanent record" is the system with which I am most concerned and the one that should be more or less uniform among banders, so that their records may be used and studied by others. The permanent record consists of two loose-leaf notebooks holding 8½ by 11 inch lined sheets; one being labelled BANDS and the other SPECIES. The BANDS notebook is divided into sections by band size, with each section marked by tabs showing band size to facilitate posting and expedite reference. Both sides of the BANDS sheets are divided into three small columns and three large one (Table No. 1). In the small columns the band numbers are listed in consecutive order; in the large column adjoining the band number is posted the species on which the band was used, the date, and the place of banding. All other data is shown in the SPECIES book. The margin of error is lessened and the books may be posted faster if the band numbers are entered prior to actual use.

Table No. 1

23-188380	SONG SP. H. 9/10/58	23-188420	DOWNY W. H. 3/14/59	23-188460	Songs...
23-188381	" " " "	23-188421	WHT.THR. H. "	23-188461	
23-188382	" " I.B. 9/11/58	23-188422	SONG SP H 3/16/59	23-188462	
23-188383	DOWNY W " 9/12/58	23-188424		23-188463	

The purposes of the SPECIES book are several: 1, it is obviously helpful to keep all data relating to one species in one place; 2, such a record expedites scheduling at the end of each calendar year; 3, loss of either of these books does not mean that one's records are lost as any of the records may be reproduced from two of the others. This is most important as the daily journal or daily sheets used under field conditions undergo considerable wear and tear.

Table No. 2

SONG SPARROW - AOU #581 - Melospiza melodia

9-10-58	23-188380-AP-A-20.8(2039)35		
"	381-M2-J-21.3(2040)36		
9-11-58	382-N-J-21.5(2041)37		

Table No. 2 illustrates a page taken from the SPECIES book. The species, AOU number, common and scientific names are given at the top of the page. The 8½ by 11 inch lined sheets are again used but divided this time into two small and two large columns on both sides. In the small column is entered the date; in the large column opposite the date is post the number of the band used, the trap or net site that captured the bird, the age, sex, and measurements. These sheets are then placed in the book in AOU checklist order. Table No. 2 shows certain numbers following the measurements. These numbers indicate the status of the bird with regard to numbers banded of all species for that year, and the second number indicates the number of birds banded of that species for that year. Example: (2041) indicates that 2040 birds have been previously banded that year and the following number "37" means that this is the 37th Song Sparrow banded this year. These numbers or keys may not be wholly necessary but they greatly facilitate references to the daily record which is similarly numbered and they serve as an aid in using these books as cross references to eliminate errors. Any error becomes immediately apparent and as every bander knows, it is much easier to remember circumstances and situations that occured yesterday morning rather than the discovery of an error six months after the actual band in question was used.

In the past, many banders have used an individual card for each bird banded. Such a system is fine until the bander graduates to a thousand or more new birds banded annually; it then becomes an almost impossible chore. However, in the case of station repeats and returns the use of individual cards appears to have considerable value. As soon as the bird repeats it gets a card on which all subsequent date are recorded. Here too are recorded any special notes such as injuries, plumage, etc., that may have been noted in the daily record at the time of banding.

Table No. 3 illustrates the manner in which these data are recorded. On the first line the first item is the band number; the second space is for the species name, age and sex; the third is for the banding date. The remaining three columns are used to record subsequent recaptures by noting the date and underlining it if it is a return instead of a repeat. Red ink may also be used to denote returns, as suggested by Mrs. Warburton (THE RING, No. 18: 106). An asterisk is used to denote any "special notes" data which are recorded on the reverse side of the card. Reference cards, 3 x 5 inch, are used. This method was adapted from that of James Baird of the Norman Bird Sanctuary, Middletown, R. I., who additionally uses a signal system which tells him at a glance what birds are 2nd, 3rd, or 4th year returns. These cards are filed under the species name which is on a 3 x 5 inch tab card, again in the AOU checklist order.

Table No. 3

23-188380	SONG SPARROW	SEPT. 10, 1958
JAN. 28, 1959	AUG. 28, 1959	JAN. 8, 1960
FEB 4, 1959	DEC. 1, 1959	JAN. 23, 1960
FEB. 10, 1959	DEC. 3, 1959	
AUG. 13, 1959	DEC. 20, 1959	

Other banders using this system have called it foolproof. Within the limits set by occasional transcriptional errors which can happen in any system, it is a cut above other systems by providing double and even triple checks. I would suggest that any bander who feels that he is unable to post two permanent records compromise by at least setting up a BANDS book as soon as possible. If he has the same experience as other banders instituting this system he will be amazed and stunned at the number of bands for which he cannot account.

Spotswood, New Jersey

* * *

MORE RECOVERIES FROM NORRISTOWN, PA.
By Raymond J. Middleton

(Mr. Middleton's Bluejay recoveries were published in the Nov.-Dec. 1959 issue; more of his recovery data of over thirty years of banding appear below. -Ed.)

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW

A 100232 Banded October 8, 1928, trapped April 29,1930 at Manchester, N. H. by James McGreel

34-158883 Banded May 2, 1935, trapped May 8, 1938 at St. Paul's Island, off Cape Breton, Nova Scotia