

WHO IS BANDING THE MOST OF WHAT - ANOTHER VIEW

By Frederick R. Scott

It seems to be the fashion nowadays to air any controversy with a pro and con view, as though there can be only two extreme answers to every question. Although this appears to be the most convenient way to present opposing points of view, the end result is that neither view, as a rule, is the logical one, and the authors are often put in the awkward (and sometimes untenable) position of having to push their point of view to an extreme that they do not truly believe. In the September-October 1960 issue of EBBA NEWS Mrs. Elise Dickerson and Walter Bigger give their reasons for wanting to continue the section, "Who is Banding the Most of What", and the negative viewpoint is presented by Joseph R. Jehl and Bertram G. Murray, Jr.

In any debate it is requisite for the participants to have the same basis for their arguments. In this case Mrs. Dickerson and Bigger rather indirectly take the practical viewpoint of an editor who has to have copy to fill his pages, and the better that copy is, the happier he is, but he has to choose his copy from the material at hand. Jehl and Murray, on the other hand, emphasize the theoretical viewpoint. They give their views on what types of articles EBBA NEWS should publish (and by extension, of course, this means what type of articles banders should write and submit). This is all very fine, and few could argue with their ideas, but this is not the question at hand, which concerns only the value of the column, "Who is Banding the Most of What".

It is unfortunate that some banders regard banding as an end in itself, even though their raw data are often highly useful to other people. But the fact that one bander is able to capture a large number of any one species may be a matter of vital interest to another bander, as Mrs. Dickerson and Bigger have pointed out. One thing that has scarcely been mentioned is that by making known the banders who are banding or can band large numbers of a given species, this column can bring together people of like interest and encourage them to pool their banding results or to initiate joint projects that will have far more value than the individual bander could produce alone. This last, it appears to me, is by far the greatest potential value of the column.

To fulfill its potential, however, the column should be expanded and made more complete. The biggest problem here, of course, is to get banders to send in their totals, or at least their interesting totals. This is not as simple as has been indicated, for in spite of the request in frequent issues of EBBA NEWS for banders "to send in a carbon copy of the annual report that accompanies their schedules", most banders simply do not send in such an annual report (summary of species totals) with their schedules. As a bander of only four years, I can state unequivocally that I have never been requested to make such a report. At the

EBBA annual meeting in Annapolis, it was officially indicated that such a report was not required. And many banders undoubtedly take the attitude that it is useless and perhaps even a bit embarrassing to report (to EBBA NEWS) only 2 Song Sparrows or 3 Bluejays banded in a year.

But the greatest problem (and I don't pretend to have the answer) lies with those quasi-scientific banders who feel that this column is a waste of time, and they don't want to be bothered. These include many federal employees as well as some eager young graduate students. Some of these annually band hundreds of young of many colonial nesting species, such as herons, egrets, terns, and skimmers, but the results of this banding are almost invariably lost in the mountains of data at the Bird Banding Office and never published. To run down all banding records of a given species at the Bird Banding Office requires an extensive run through card tabulating machines, but if the banders' names are known, the original banding schedules, and returns and recoveries, are readily accessible without recourse to card tabulating equipment.

The column should also be expanded to include more than the top one or two banders of a given species. It would be highly revealing, if somewhat space-consuming, to list all banders who handled over, say, 250 Purple Finches in one year, or 100 Evening Grosbeaks. The possibilities of cooperation suggested by such lists are obvious. Emphasis on the more commonly banded species would be far more useful (but not necessarily more interesting) than lists of people who banded one or more individuals of accidental or casual species.

In short, it appears that this column is one attempt to correct the abysmal lack of intercommunication between banders. Better communication is a necessity if banders are to make better use of their banding results, and although this column is surely not the definitive answer, until a better suggestion is put forth, I vote for a continuation and expansion of "Who is Banding the Most of What".

Richmond, Virginia

(There has been an enthusiastic and thoughtful response on the part of many banders to this question, so much so that space does not permit publication in full of all the letters received; excerpts follow which present the principal points. -Ed.)

David A. Cutler, Phila., Pa.: "I enjoy the column and find it interesting in correlating field observations. You have all types of people to satisfy in the publication and no doubt this is a necessary part of the group even though it may not contribute to science."

J. Davidson, Orlando, Fla.: "... It is a nice personal touch ... to

strive to make us personally interested in fellow-banders. God forbid that EBBA NEWS should ever become a dry tool for specialists."

Stuart D. Henderson, Ballardville, Mass.: "I believe that this space might better be use to publish descriptions of trapping methods ... but since banders seem willing to contribute to this type of endeavor I see no reason to discontinue..the "Who's Banding What" column. This column serves two purposes which I consider important. (1) A bander interested in a certain species need only look through the column to see which banders have large totals of this species and he can then corresponds with these persons. (2) This column encourages competition which if not blown out of proportion...can be a very beneficial force on banders. I believe most banders to be intelligent people who would be unlikely to succumb to competition merely for the sake of competition... I believe this column capable of encouraging healthy competition."

Frank A. Clinch, Watertown, N.Y.: "While there is some interest in this information, there must be many members who feel that there is little use in sending in their totals. What I would like to see published for one year, 1961, is the total number of birds of each species banded in 1960, by all the EBBA members, and no names mentioned. This might take more work to compile, it would, however, take only half the space to publish. It means very little to me as a bander that one person banded 78 House Wrens in one year - it gives no idea of how many were banded by the EBBA that year."

Robert L. Pyle of Washington, D.C., has suggested a much expanded plan for an annual banding summary, which will require more investigation into its possibilities and application: more of this in a subsequent issue of EBBA NEWS.

NEW MEMBERS AND NEW SUSTAINING MEMBERS

(This is a supplemental list to the last published in EBBA NEWS; Sustaining members are shown by an asterisk. A complete directory of EBBA members will be published, as is customary every two years, in the May-June 1961 issue. Any changes of address should reach our Treasurer, Mrs. Dickerson, prior to April 1, and on that date members whose dues are in arrears are removed from membership rolls, until they are reinstated. --Ed.)

- Audubon Center of Connecticut, Quaker Ridge, Greenwich, Conn.
 *Karl D. Bailey, 5275 Adams Road, Birmingham, Michigan
 *Ralph K. Bell, R.D. #1, Box 142, Clarksville, Pa.
 *Ralph T. Bullard, Jr., 5427 Slayton Ave., Chattanooga 10, Tenn.
 *Mrs. George Ballentine, 268 Oakwood Road, Charleston 4, West Virginia
 Mrs. Herbert M. Church, Jr., Janelia Farms, Ashburn, Virginia
 *William H. Colby, 28 Shawnee Trail, Sparta, N. J.
 Dr. Albert E. Conway, 932 Sconnettown Road, West Chester, Pa.
 *Alan Crawford, Jr., White Horse Road, Devon, Pa.