

## ENCEPHALITIS IN BIRDS

Summary of a Paper Presented by Dr. Carlton M. Herman at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Bird Banding Association, April 22, 1961, at East Stroudsburg, Pa.

At the annual meeting of EBBA, Dr. Carlton M. Herman, Chief, Section of Wildlife Disease and Parasite Studies, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, Maryland, presented an excellent review of the current status of our knowledge concerning eastern encephalitis in birds. This virus disease is known to occur from Wisconsin and Texas to the Atlantic coast and is particularly prevalent on our eastern seaboard. It occurs in man, horses, several species of reptiles, birds and mammals. Knowledge of its occurrence in reptiles is very recent.

In man the disease is often fatal and in 1959 over 30 human deaths occurred in New Jersey. It is particularly fatal to horses and clinical cases or deaths have been noted in pheasants, English sparrows, chukars and Pekin ducks. Over 50 species of birds have been reported with either natural or experimental infections. No evidence of clinical symptoms are recognized in most of the birds that have been studied.

Although it has been shown that the disease can be transmitted in pheasants by pecking infected birds, it is thought that the infection is usually transmitted by mosquitos. The virus in infected man or horses is considered to be so low in the blood that these species do not serve as a source of infection. The virus occurs in the blood of birds for only a day or two and it is only during this period that a vector can become infected to transmit the infection. In one reptile it has been demonstrated that the virus is in the blood for 28 days and thus the potential for reptiles as a source of infection is much greater.

Dr. Herman pointed out that migration of birds does not seem to be important for the spread of the virus. Endemic centers that have been studied make the data much more suggestive that this problem is a local one, though geographically widespread. A knowledge of the incidence or activity of this disease in birds may only be an indicator of activity of the virus in nature and thus correlate to probable occurrence in horse or man.

It is recognized that it will be important for public health departments to keep abreast of new developments in this field, as comprehensive investigations of federal, state, and university research workers will undoubtedly clarify the many unanswered questions of this complex problem. At every opportunity bird banders should strive to collaborate with research teams investigating local outbreaks.

The full text of Dr. Herman's presentation will be published in one of our national ornithological journals.