

## THE INQUISITIVE CHICKADEE

By Michael J. Thomas

The family Paridae was someone's gift to the back-yard ornithologist. Most of my bird-watching has been done in Britain, where two species of Paridae always provide one with entertainment and interest. Parus Major, the Great Tit, is a remarkable vocalist. Many a long and arduous chase after an unidentified voice has merely revealed a new note in the bird's repertoire. This species provided the research material for a splendid paper in Bird Study, the publication of the British Trust for Ornithology, by Miss Terry Gompertz, who lives five miles from the center of London. Her paper was on the subject of the voice of the Great Tit.

Both the Great Tit and the Blue Tit (Parus Caeruleus) provided a mystery for British bird watchers a few years ago. There were widespread reports of milk bottles having their tops removed (the tops were made of aluminum foil) and the cream removed. Investigation showed that Blue and Great Tits were the thieves and that the habit appeared to be a learned one since the spread of such thieving was traceable and appeared to ripple out from a relatively small area where it was first observed. For those who are not acquainted with the facility of the species, Miss Len Howard's book, Birds as Individuals, is required reading.

These thoughts came to mind as a result of an observation made the other day in my backyard in Syracuse. I had just set up a new five meter net, and my first catch was in it, a Junco. A party of Black-capped Chickadees (Parus atricapillus) was feeding in the vicinity. No sooner had the Junco landed in the net than four of the Chickadees flew into an adjacent bush and one by one, or so it appeared, each flew up to the net to investigate. Three flew up to the trapped bird and hovered for a moment in front of it. One flew to the side of the net and perched on a loop before flying back to the bush. Not one of the birds showed the slightest intention of flying into the net.

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## BANDING WITH A PURPOSE -- THE DOWNY WOODPECKER

By Herbert A. Houston

In my banding program, I have begun to gather data on the Downy Woodpecker, especially weights. I have been doing this in a rather haphazard method on a number of species of birds for the past year, but I am now trying to begin a more orderly procedure.

You can probably appreciate the reasons for choosing this species; ease of capture, definite difference between sexes, and a resident bird in fairly large numbers. I have a current repeating population of about nine birds.

The data that I am presently keeping on the birds as they repeat includes the following: Date, time, weight in grams (to the nearest tenth, using a laboratory balance), temperature, and the amount of light as measured with a photographic light meter.

A cursory observation of this data reveals a gain in weight from morning until evening. No other correlation is apparent thus far.

(The author of the above would be very pleased if EBBA members will advise him in any way as to methods by which this work could be made more valuable. Are there any publications on the subject -- either this species or others? Are there people to whom he might write for information, or visit? The author will welcome any and all comments.)

731 Marshall Drive, West Chester, Pa.

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## 11-YEAR-OLD GRACKLE

By Bruce Adams

On April 12, 1962 I trapped a Grackle wearing band #48-363332, which was very worn, thin, and overlapped. I removed it and replaced it with band #663-75654.

Since the old band was not one of mine, I called Hope Geis who lives only a block from me, to see if it was hers. I learned that she had banded the bird on May 1, 1952. As the bird was an adult male when banded it is at least 11 years old.

Living so close to each other has produced some interesting surprises for Mrs. Geis and me. Although we both band fairly large numbers, we rarely get each other's birds. In the case of this Grackle, however, the strangest thing is that the bird never repeated or returned once to Mrs. Geis' station. It would be interesting to know if the bird has returned regularly to Riverside during these intervening years.

Normand St. Jacques and I noticed a somewhat similar situation with Evening Grosbeaks in Vermont. About six different residents of the Burlington area who maintained feeding stations invited us to their yards to show them how birds were banded. Although we would rarely capture Grosbeaks banded in one yard in another spot the same winter, we would get returns the following year in a place different from the original banding location but well within the same 10 minute grid area.

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How are you planning to get to next year's EBBA annual meeting?