

## CONCERNING BAND RETENTION

By Stuart D. Henderson

Recently I re-trapped an adult Blue Jay originally banded on 06-28-59 with a size 3 band. This band was no more worn than usual, however it was better than half open, and about ready to fall off. The old band was removed and replaced with one of the new harder-alloy bands which the Banding Office is now issuing. This incident prompted me to prepare this article recounting some experiences which banding acquaintances and I have had concerning band retention.

G. Ronald Austing of Harrison, Ohio bands many hawks and owls. Several individuals, of various species, being retained for study purposes removed the current issue butt-end type bands. A captive Red-shouldered Hawk has removed its band with apparent ease so many times it seems senseless to replace it. A Great Horned Owl, raised from a nestling, has also often removed its band with little difficulty.

Jack Holt, of North Andover, Mass., once received a recovery on a nestling Great Horned Owl banded with a butt-end type size 8 band less than five months earlier. The information from the finder, the Curator of the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary, indicated that this bird, still alive at the time, had apparently worked its band open to a point where it would have remained on, at the most, only a short while longer. I might add in passing that such valuable bits of information as this may no longer be forthcoming unless the Banding Office's most recent proposal for a comprehensive recovery reporting form includes space for such important bits of information which are provided by many band reporters.

Jack Holt and I have captured, on nests, female Kestrels which had been Bal-Chatri trapped and banded from three or four to twelve months earlier. Two of these Kestrels, one banded with a 3A and the other with a 3, had already opened their bands to varying degrees. Several other females which Jack and I felt very sure we had trapped and banded earlier in the spring, or during the previous winter, wore no bands at all at recapture!

During most of 1961, I used the new harder-alloy 3's on all my Kestrels, adults and nestlings, males and females, wherever possible. Females with exceptionally large tarsi may require use of a 3A, although I never found this necessary. In some cases, however, I was not left with sufficient leeway to oval the size 3 band.

I close the band to an oval instead of round configuration, with the ends in the "flat" of the oval to make re-opening of the band by the bird as difficult as possible. (See drawings on next page)

Band applied in conventional round manner →



Ovaled band →



On the last of my successful 1961 Kestrel nests, I experimented with size 4 locking-type bands on the three "just sexing size" young in this nest. Although certainly not a snug fit, this band size seemed to fit quite well, even on the one nestling male present. Since this experiment I have used locking 4's exclusively; banding several adult males (smaller legged generally than females), 3 or 4 adult females, and several nestlings of both sexes. I have yet to experience a poor fit.

During 1960, I banded all adult and nestling Kestrels with soft-alloy 3A's, not ovaled, and have to date had no recoveries. During most of 1961, ovaled harder-alloy 3's were used, and I have had one local recovery of an adult male four weeks after banding, which seems rather inconclusive. However, from the three 1961 nestlings banded with locking 4's, I have already received a recovery on one of the females. She was shot in Georgia three months later.

Another advantage of using 4's on Kestrels is that the considerably larger sized band is more readily noticed on a dead or shot specimen, and the larger inscription is easier to read, and less likely to become illegible with wear as quickly as on a smaller, thinner band.

Locking bands seem unnecessary on Screech Owls, as we have noted nothing which seems to indicate that this species is able to remove conventional bands. We are on rather intimate terms with many of our banded Screech Owls, thanks to their rather sedentary habits, and their apparent favorable attitude towards our nesting boxes.

The Banding Office is aware of the band retention problem in some species, and is currently running extensive tests concerning band retention in diving ducks and Canada Geese. Lock-on bands are available on request in sizes 4 - 9 (I would like to see a locking 3A). If you desire locking bands, indicate on the "Remarks" line of the Banding Supply Order. Possibly the new harder-alloy bands now being supplied in most or all sizes are an attempt to improve both the wearing and retention properties of current bands.

I should like to suggest that banders use locking bands in the sizes in which they are available on all hawks, owls, or other large and un-

usually strong species. Banders might also oval all butt-end bands on those species, including small passerines, where there is sufficient space between band and leg to allow this procedure. I have been applying bands in this manner for several months, and find no apparent disadvantages to the method and no adverse effects on birds so banded. Since this seems an innocuous method of band application, and may be of some advantage with relation to retention, I recommend it wherever possible.

The photographs accompanying this article are all of raptors banded with lock-on bands, excepting the male Kestrel which carries an ovaled hard-alloy 3.

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#### A CALL FOR TRAP PATTERNS AND NAMES OF MAKERS

By Willetta Lueshen

Recently a number of Inland Bird Banding Association members have been sending me requests for information concerning sources of traps and trap patterns. To fulfill this need, I have been compiling as much material as I can get. This file of material will be loaned to any bander requesting it.

Will EBBA members please send me patterns for traps and names and addresses of makers of traps for catching all species of birds? Send sketches and complete instructions for making the traps that serve you best. I need a plan for a walk-in trap, perhaps 5 or 6 feet tall, with comments as to the advantages of this trap. We want as great a variety of trap types as possible. Special notations on their use will also be welcome.

If you have any information that you wish to contribute to this cause, please send to Mrs. John Lueshen, Secretary, Inland Bird Banding Association, Wisner, Nebraska. If there is a call for it, we may publish the best portions of the materials gathered.

