



BEECHER S. BOWDISH
1872 -- 1963

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Beecher S. Bowdish, dean of American bird banders, conservationist and ornithologist, died at his home in Demarest, New Jersey, February 20, 1963. He would have celebrated his 91st birthday a week later.

Beech, as he was known to his many, many friends, is the bander who gave us our slogan "Let Us Band Together" (our early EBBA publications always carried his initials after the slogan) which appears on every EBBA News front cover to this day.

Beecher was one of the organizers of EBBA and served as its Treasurer. He described EBBA's and banding's early days in his own words (EBBA News, 21(5)76-78, as follows:

"Systematic bird banding, as far as this country is concerned, was born at Cambridge, Mass., when, at the December 1909 meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union, Dr. Leon J. Cole gathered together in a quiet corner an interested group of members and breathed life into the hatching bird banding embryo.

"For some time prior to this development of bird banding, I had been using a Dodson sparrow trap to help eliminate the over-population of English Sparrows. Quite naturally this trap caught many Song Sparrows and other of our common bird neighbors. Such catches were simply turned loose forthwith. With the introduction of bird banding it was automatic to realize that here was a truly ideal, natural and increasingly abundant source of birds for banding. . . . My first banding of which I now have definite record is for a Redwing nestling banded at Cobb's Island, Va., July 3, 1913, number 201 in the American Bird Banding Association's records. How the banding records have grown!"

Beecher Bowdish was born in Phelps, a small town in Western New York. His first interest was egg and nest collecting. His father's profession of photography gave young Beech training in that field and he used it to good advantage in his later bird work. He served as secretary of the N.J. Audubon Society from its inception in 1910 until 1946. He was a member of the American Museum of Natural History, the American Ornithologists Union, the Eastern Bird Banding Association, and many other of the nature and conservation groups.

During his lifetime, Beecher Bowdish trapped and banded more than 50,000 birds, most of them in traps he designed and made himself. He gave encouragement, advice and help to countless banders -- veterans as well as those just starting out.

He is survived by his wife, Christabel Everett Bowdish, and by a daughter, Constance van Ryder.