

IDENTIFICATION SESSION - EBBA WORKSHOP

By Betty Knorr

The Workshop session on identification of Shore birds, and identification, ageing and sexing of land birds was moderated by Dr. Jeff Swinebroad, Chandler Robbins, John Miller, and the writer. There were two parts to this discussion group, which was held at the annual meeting in East Stroudsburg, Pa.

The first part was devoted to identification of shorebirds and the second half to identification, ageing, and sexing of land birds. Due to the scope and complexity of the subjects plus the limitation of time, species that are difficult to identify were emphasized.

Prior to the discussion the moderators spoke on the subjects. Chandler Robbins opened the session on shorebirds and explained how to use his shorebird measurement table which appears in the Workshop Manual Vol. 2, 1963. He also made additional comments about his paper on shorebird identification which was also printed in the Manual.

Betty Knorr then spoke briefly on shorebird identification and pointed out ways to separate Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers when their bill measurements overlap.

Jeff Swinebroad continued with the land birds and briefly reviewed ways of ageing and sexing, including cloacal examination and skull ossification. On the identification of land birds he concentrated on the juvenal plumage of common sparrows. These streaked nondescript birds were a real challenge and of the 12 skins displayed not one bander at the session was able to correctly identify all of them!

Following the comments of the moderators the banders had an opportunity to study the skins on display. Chan Robbins answered questions on the shorebird skins while Betty Knorr answered questions relating to her paper in the Workshop Manual on techniques of banding shorebirds. Jeff Swinebroad had a delightful time by confusing everybody with the juvenal sparrow skins.

Unfortunately, due to the large auditorium and the many banders who attended the session, the discussion was divided into three different groups running simultaneously. Nevertheless, everyone agreed that the session was informative and worthwhile.

The skins of the confusing shorebirds and puzzling sparrows served as a visual reminder that banders should be extremely careful whenever attempting to identify, age, or sex any unfamiliar or confusing birds.

58 Steamboat Landing Road, Cheesequake, South Amboy, N.J.