

USING THE BINOCULAR AS A MAGNIFIER

By The Reicherts

Reprinted from EBBA NEWS (1958) 21(1):3-4

All of you, when you work at your banding traps, undoubtedly keep your binoculars handy. And perhaps you sometimes wish you could convert the glasses into a magnifier for close examination of a bird band. You can easily do this by looking through one side of the binocular the reverse way, with the bird band about 1 - 1½ inches from the eye lens of the binocular. But -- to an amazing extent -- the magnification you obtain depends primarily ON YOUR EYES! Whether a 6x or an 8x makes little difference; what matters is your ability to focus on close objects ... in short, on your "reading distance." The following figures (based on a 6x) are indeed astonishing:

If your reading distance is 10 inches, you see the band magnified 6 times. But if you hold print 20 inches away to see it clearly, the magnification is 3; if 30 inches, the magnification is only 2! However, if your reading distance is much over 10 inches, you doubtless use reading glasses, or wear bi-focals. If so, when you use your binocular as a magnifier, look through your reading glasses or the lower (reading) part of your bi-focals. You will obtain higher magnification -- probably the full 6 power.

Also, the further out you screw the bridge of the binocular, the greater the magnification. Few glasses can be screwed out as far as is desirable. So we, with the facilities of our Shop, modify 6 of our models so you can screw out the bridge much farther than when the binocular left the factory. When you use such a glass as a magnifier you obtain the maximum magnification.

Should you wish to have your hands free to handle the bird band while you use the binocular as a magnifier, rig up some sort of a stand to support the binocular. We can furnish a clamp that fastens on the center post of the binocular and need not be removed when you put the glasses in the leather case. The other end is threaded to fit on any standard tripod, or on a screw that you can readily obtain and install in a stand of your own devising.

If you are a bird watcher, as well as a bander, binoculars with an extended focusing range will fill a long felt need. How close can you see birds clearly through yours? 25 feet? 20 feet, perhaps? With these glasses of ours you can see down to 9 to 12 feet -- even if your eyes have very little reading accommodation! So great is the demand among birders for this close-up feature that we do the work at no extra charge -- as one of our contributions to the cause of better birding.

If by any chance you are doing experimental work, and want to see much closer, say down to 2 to 4 feet, we can solve this problem also -- we've done it for scientists on special assignments. So, if you have any binocular problem, contact us; we'll do our best to solve it.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Robert J. Reichert and Elsa Reichert have specialized in binoculars for bird study for over 30 years. At one time Mr. Reichert computed a binocular of his own design. Every binocular model ever to reach this country has at some time or other passed through their hands. Binocular consultants since 1923, they operate as the Mirakel Optical Company, 14 West First Street, Mount Vernon, New York.

THE CASE FOR SERENDIPITY

By Mabel Gillespie

Alexander Bergstrom and the other experts are right when they stress the planning of banding projects. What follows is not intended to challenge or refute that emphasis. But it is a fact that projects planned in advance may backfire, while apparently aimless banding may lead to significant discovery. This, I think, is often true in the case of beginners, particularly when they are not located on major flyways.

When my husband and I started banding over forty years ago, the idea was to band whatever you could get. However, we weren't quite so naive as to think that the main idea was to decorate the bird, and we looked eagerly for returns and recoveries.

There was then a fairly wild, wooded ravine adjoining our property. In autumn we placed traps on the near slope of the ravine and caught a few dozens of migrating White-throated sparrows. There were also wintering flocks of this species. After some years of amassing banding data we tabulated the results. This seems to me a fine method of finding out whether or not you have significant leads. From a study of our charted data we developed some theories about the migration trends of this species.¹ This was pure serendipity. We had caught and banded the birds just because they were there.

In time I was inspired to plan a project in advance, choosing the Carolina Wren for my victim.² And do you know what happened? There came a series of severe winters that wiped that species right off our local map for an appreciable length of time. Its numbers have never been as common since. The worst of this discouraging fiasco was that I had given advance advertisement of my intentions.

For some years we had Crested Flycatchers nesting in a bird shelter attached to a wall of our house. This was a made-to-order project, and we concentrated on a fairly intensive study of the current family year after year.³ In those days before mist nets, we were able to catch the