

COULD THIS BE YOUR SANDPIPER?

By Betty Knorr

On August 8, 1964, I caught a Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Ereunetes pusillus*) that was wearing a foreign band. The band was very worn, and the numbers were illegible. I was sure it was not one of my own old return birds as this sandpiper was banded on the right leg, and I habitually band on the left leg.

The band was so brittle and paper thin that it split into two pieces when I removed it. After rebanding and releasing the bird, the pieces of the old band were carefully wrapped and sent to the Banding Office for chemical etching.

The Banding Office regretfully informed me that the complete number of the band could not be determined, and therefore, this sandpiper would have to be considered a "new" banded bird.

After this disappointing news, about ten days later I received another more encouraging note from the Banding Office. Ted Van Velzen informed me that he still hadn't given up completely and was hopefully struggling with the remains of the band.

As portions of several of the digits were completely worn away, the possible combinations of the entire number seemed almost endless. The thought occurred to me that perhaps some EBBA members might be able to help the Banding Office save a lot of time and extra work in determining the original banding record of this sandpiper.

By a process of elimination, I feel certain that there is a good chance of locating the original banding data on this sandpiper. First of all, the band was extremely worn, indicating it had been on the bird for a long time.

Although there has been an increase in shorebird banding in the past year or two, prior to that not many banders were banding Semipalmated Sandpipers. Of the ones that were, perhaps only about half of them were banding on the right leg.

Next, this sandpiper was banded with a size 1B band. As this species is more commonly banded with a size 1 band, this further reduces the possibilities considerably.

Could this be your sandpiper? There is no need to spend a lot of time checking your records for dates and band numbers. All that is needed is an affirmative answer to the following three questions:

- (1) Did you band any Semipalmated Sandpipers several years ago?
- (2) Did you band them on the right leg?
- (3) Did you use a size 1B band?

If you can answer yes to all three questions, kindly notify Mr. Willet T. Van Velzen, c/o Bird Banding Office, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, Maryland.

Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

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1964 WORKSHOP SESSION ON
WINTER FINCHES AND MISCELLANEOUS SPECIES
Reports by Robert L. Pyle

Since illness prevented Alex Bergstrom from attending this year's EBBA Annual Meeting, his scheduled Workshop program on Winter Finches was placed in the capable hands of Bert Murray, and was combined in a single program with Jim Baird's discussion of Miscellaneous Species.

Bert discussed the group of finches, including Evening Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Goldfinch, Pine Siskin, Redpoll, Pine Grosbeak and House Finch, which are likely to spread more widely through EBBA territory in winter. For the first three species, which EBBA banders handle in greater numbers, he presented interesting diagrams comparing the varying timing with which males assume the brightly colored adult plumage. In Evening Grosbeaks, this occurs in the first autumn, after the postjuvenile (or first prebasic) molt. In the Goldfinch, males retain a dull plumage through the first winter, then acquire the bright body plumage with the prenuptial (prealternate) molt the next spring. Thereafter, males alternate between a dull basic (winter) plumage and a bright alternate (summer) plumage. In purple finches, the male remains dull through the first winter and also through the following summer since there is no prenuptial molt the first spring. Not until the second prebasic molt (second autumn) or later does the bright plumage first appear; but once acquired the bright plumage is retained permanently.

Further discussions of winter finch plumages are contained in Alex Bergstrom's article in the 1964 Workshop Manual, and in Eleanor Dater's paper on goldfinch plumages given at the Saturday morning scientific session.

Jim Baird's thorough and practical discussions of determining a bird's age by extent of skull ossification have become a fixture of EBBA Annual Meetings. This year Jim (the temptation is strong to nickname him "Bonehead") spoke on this topic at the Saturday morning meeting, but the subject came up for further discussion during his Workshop program on Miscellaneous Species. In addition, Jim displayed his expert and comprehensive knowledge of bird morphology by giving numerous pointers and answering many questions on identification, ageing and sexing. Among the points brought out at at least one session were the following:

CLOACAL PROTUBERANCE: Very distinctive in spring male chickadees, titmice, and song sparrows, etc. Not distinctive in catbirds.