DEATH BY MISADVENTURE

By Constance Katholi

In November I received a telephone call from a new neighbor, a young Norwegian woman, who said that she had found two dead banded birds. Because of the bands, she had felt an obligation to report their deaths to the proper authorities. The Department of Natural Resources of West Virginia which she contacted referred her to me. It was, consequently, only because of my banding activities that I learned of the following strange story.

The birds were wearing my bands--one, an adult chickadee, had been originally banded a year ago in November, 1963; and the second, a titmouse, had been banded as an immature in August of this year, 1964. In our telephone conversation I had difficulty understanding the cause of the tragedy, so was considerable surprised and dismayed to discover that the birds had met death in the interior of a child's backyard swing or gymnasium set! Their bodies had been found when the equipment was moved for winter storage and indications were that the birds had been dead varying lengths of time.

This particular outfit which has numerous adaptations for swings, rings, and a slide is not a home-made affair but a standard product. The apparatus consists of four open-ended steel tubes, each $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter, forming a pair of "A" frames, which support a sealed horizontal member to which the swings, etc., are attached. (See accompanying diagram.) The holes at the top of the "A" frames invite curious, shelter-seeking birds to enter--those birds which would use nesting holes anyway--and on proceeding down the diagonals, whether by intent or accident, are unable to retrace their path.

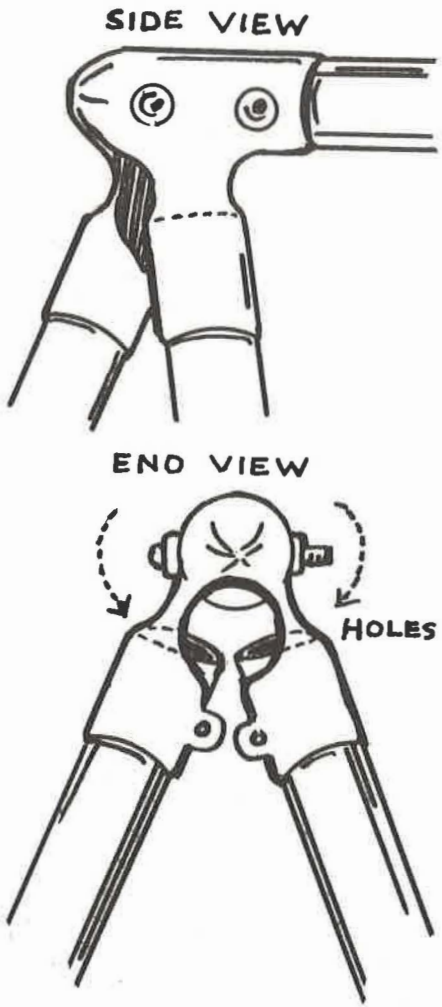
I was told that a third bird of unknown species had also been fatally trapped, but being unbanded, it had not been saved for my examination. A fourth bird had been trapped in the same manner last summer. Luckily, this bird was still alive when found by children playing in the yard, who heard it fluttering in the pipe. The bird was rescued by tilting off the ground the supporting leg in which it was imprisoned.

Unfortunately, the holes at the top of the frame were not immediately plugged with rags or paper--as they are now. This is a simple home remedy to be sure, but one which should not be necessary if the outfit had been properly designed in the first place. How many of these swings are currently in backyards and playgrounds all over the country?

A little publicity on this subject, coupled with an appeal to manufacturers to cap the hollow tubes in the factory, could save many birds in the future.

Footnote: In talking to a retailer of these products, I learned that the manufacturer of another brand of different construction which has open ends on its horizontal member supplies plastic caps to cover them. I am told, however, that these are not very satisfactory, as they tend to deteriorate or are misplaced. The designer in this case would seem to have recognized the possible hazard. Furthermore, the retailer mentioned that locally this past summer another serious problem had developed with the open pipes, as they proved a haven for yellow jackets.

930 Woodland Avenue, South Charleston, West Virginia



FURLING DEVICE

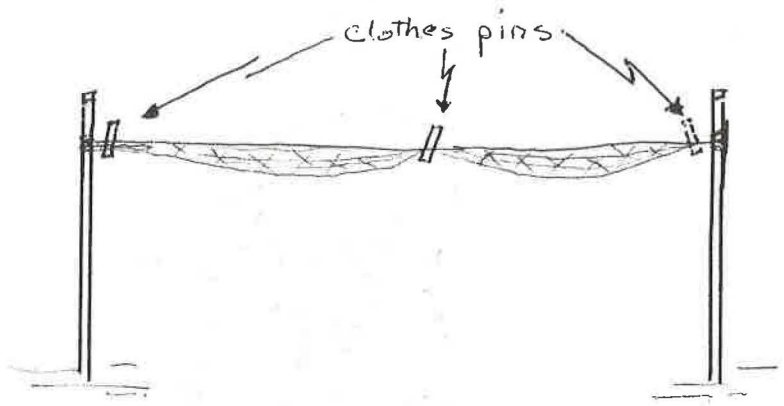
By T. A. Beckett III

The writer, after shifting to aluminum electrical conduit poles for permanent net lanes, has had a considerable amount of trouble with the ears of nets dropping down when furled, unless securely tied close to the poles with cord. This is quite a chore when any number of nets are set daily.

Three to four cords are needed per 12 meter nets. If the cords are knotted nylon they frequently become entangled in the mesh of the nets. If the nets are left furled for long in high winds they sometimes work loose from restraining cords, thus becoming a menace to flying birds if unattended.

Through the use of new spring type clothes pins this problem has been entirely eliminated. I say new pins because old ones with weak springs and chipped jaws will not give perfect results - if they are of no use to the wife they are of little value to the netter.

When the net is in operation the clothes pins are simply clipped to the top ears of the net where they are ready for immediate use. This is very important when sudden rain squalls develop.



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RECENT RECOVERIES OF CHICKADEES

By Robert C. Leberman

Reprinted from Bird Banding at Powdermill, Research Report No. 12

We have been notified by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the following three chickadee recoveries:

(1) #33-15628, banded at P.N.R. on October 11, 1961, trapped and released by R. E. Dirig in the area of Hancock, New York, in March, 1963.

(2) #106-28917, banded at P.N.R. on October 26, 1963, found dead at Morgantown, West Virginia, on December 20, less than two months after the date of banding.

(Of this chickadee Dr. George A. Hall, who reported the band to the Fish and Wildlife Service, writes (in litt.), "This bird was hit by a car in downtown Morgantown on December 20, 1963. A workman at a nearby car dealer's saw it happen, and picked up the bird which was still alive. It died rather shortly. As it happened my wife's mother works for that car dealer and so the bird and band came into my possession.")

(3) #107-38169, banded at P.N.R. on November 3, 1963, trapped and released at Elkview, West Virginia, on February 23, 1964, by Glen K. Phillips.

Although ornithologists seem generally agreed that the so-called "permanent resident" Black-capped Chickadee may, at times, demonstrate seasonal movements, there has been considerable question regarding the full extent, causation and frequency of these movements. Do these "invasions" constitute true migrations, or are they merely random winter wanderings? Do the birds travel long distances, or are the movements usually of a more or less local nature? Is there a reverse flight in spring that returns the chickadees to their original areas? Do the invasions occur in random years, or in regular cycles? Some of the answers to some of these questions, at least as far as they can be answered in the western Appalachian region, are beginning to emerge from the Powdermill banding data.

Since beginning mist-netting operations at the Reserve in 1961, I have been able to detect especially heavy chickadee "flights" in the Ligonier Valley in the fall seasons of 1961 and 1963. Conversely, during the autumn seasons of 1962 and 1964, no extensive movements were noted. In this four-year period, therefore, the birds have shown seasonal movements only every other year. In the future, as our records extend over a longer time interval, it is hoped that the exact nature of this periodicity will become more evident.

Graphic comparison of a "flight" year (1963) with two years of no invasion (1962 and 1964) is shown in Table 1. Note particularly that only 44 chickadees were banded between September, 1962, and April, 1963, a period representing the winter half of the year when movements would be expected to occur. In sharp contrast, during the same period of 1963-1964, 388 birds were handled, 254 of these in the month of October

"return" north to a new area. Spring migratory "waves" of chickadees (as, indeed, most species at Powdermill) are less concentrated than fall flights, the birds apparently moving more gradually north over a longer period of time. The factors regulating this more gradual spring movement are not understood, nor is the set of stimuli that initiate the entire movement pattern in either fall or spring.

The single recovery of a summer chickadee in Hancock, New York (#33-15628) gives some basis to the belief that the birds do return north in the spring of a flight year. Additional evidence is offered by two recoveries of chickadees that were banded in winter at my home station in Meadville, Pennsylvania, and which were subsequently found in central New York--one during the breeding season of the same year it had been wintering in Pennsylvania.

(Not included in the above report, because this was for Powderhill Nature Reserve birds only, are two Meadville, Pa. recoveries)

#33-15734, banded at Meadville, Pa. on December 28, 1961, trapped and released by Mrs. E. W. Fields, Gloversville, New York in February of 1964.

#102-71509, banded at Meadville, Pa. on April 8, 1962, "killed by flying into object" at Penn Yan, New York in June of 1962.

R.D.1, Saeger Hill, Meadville, Pennsylvania

ATTENTION SPARROW HAWK BANDERS

By Donald S. Heintzelman

I am currently writing a paper on migration and population dynamics of the Sparrow Hawk (Falco sparverius). Migration data are being extracted from a machine listing of Sparrow Hawk banding recoveries provided by the Bird Banding Laboratory. I would appreciate receiving prompt notification from anyone preferring that I do not use their Sparrow Hawk recoveries in the above mentioned paper. The machine listing of recoveries prevents me from acknowledging contributions of individual banders. ----Donald S. Heintzelman, 629 Green Street, Allentown, Pennsylvania, 18102.

BAIT FOR GOLDFINCHES AND SISKINS

By Dr. Paul H. Fluck

Goldfinches--along with siskins, purple finches, house finches, etc.--can be effectively baited into traps of the allpurpose kind with a number of free natural baits. I recall that some years ago, I stopped to pick up some dead goldfinches which had been killed on the highway while feeding on smashed osage oranges. Every one of the birds has osage orange seeds in its crop.

Since then we have collected osage oranges in the fall and by January they have rotted so that the seeds are available to the birds. Not a seed escapes. Just unload a ton or so in your trapping area and rake them into the traps through the winter.

Right now you can bait your traps with the buttonballs from sycamore trees. Look around for a sycamore tree, and you may find one with heavy brown fuzz covering the ground underneath, like snow. Each piece of fuzz has been clipped from the seed by a goldfinch, siskin, or purple finch. Just set your traps under the tree and bait up with buttonballs.

Later you can use the seed stalks of dandelions, cockscombs, cosmos, or evening primrose next fall. During the summer you can collect the seed pods of bull thistles, and screen the seeds after drying. This is excellent bait. And none will cost a dime. However, we usually combine these special baits with small sunflower seed.

Lastly, remember that every seed-feeding bird arrives at your feeder carrying seeds. Often these are dropped in your area, and if you are not too energetic about the grass clipping next summer, many of these seeds will grow up. As far as bird feeding is concerned, the best bird feed is still free.

Every bander should be familiar with the paper-bound $2.00 book AMERICAN WILDLIFE AND PLANTS. A GUIDE TO WILDLIFE FOOD HABITS by Martin, Nelson and Zim. This book can be obtained from Dover Publications, 180 Varick St., N. Y. C.

However, it is interesting to note that even in this highly researched publication, the osage orange is given virtually no notice at all as a food plant. This is probably because it is a delayed food crop - and not fed on until it rots during the winter.

Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania

OPERATION RECOVERY AT McCLINTIC

By George Ballentine

The first effort of "Operation Recovery" at McClintic Wildlife Station was done from September 10th through September 17th. While the seven day participation was comparatively short for a study of this kind it was thoroughly worth while since it gave a very good idea of what might be expected at McClintic during a longer period and under weather conditions more conductive to migration. No doubt the study will be repeated next year and for a longer period.

The term "Operation Recovery" is applied to a continuous banding operation during the Fall migration. The Fish and Wildlife Service encourages these studies during the period from the middle of August through the month of October. Two weeks of continuous banding is considered a minimum study period. A location is chosen that is likely to attract birds. Such a location would have plenty of food, water and shelter.

The McClintic area was rich in food. There were 15 kinds of fruit including Autumn Olive, several species of Viburnun, five kinds of Dogwood, orange and yellow Bittersweet, Wild Cherry, Poke berry, Wild Grape, Mulberry and Multiflora Rose hips. In the seed department was Brown-top Millet, Buckwheat, Sorghum, Yellow Soy beans and field Corn, also Japan Clover, Korean and Bicolor Lespedeza.

There was no rain during the entire week. Atmospheric conditions varied from very heavy morning fog to nights as clear as a clear sub-zero winter night. The wind was usually less than five miles per hour and never reached ten. The temperature ranged from 31°F to 89°F. Most days were sunny.

Seven licensed banders and two assistants participated using from 9 to 25 nets depending on the number of banders present. The total operation required 1,345 net-hours.

All birds caught were processed following methods suggested by Fish and Wildlife Service. This included identification as to species, age and sex; measurement of wing and examination for fat; and determination of weight.

During the seven day period 282 birds of 41 species were banded. Most numerous were Indigo Buntings (43), Catbirds (34), and Song Sparrows (34). There were 15 species of warblers with Yellow-throats (9), Chats (9) and Palms (7) leading in number.

Banders participating were Charley Handley, Maxine Kiff, Ann Shreve, Conny Katholi, Mable Edgerton and Ruth and George Ballentine. The very able assistants were Jack Kain and Oscar Mairs.

268 Oakwood Road, Charleston, West Virginia