

O. R. CORNER

Edited by: Robert P. Yunick

OPERATION RECOVERY 1967 The following is from Chan Robbins, Chief of the Migratory Non-Game Bird Studies at Laurel, Md.

"The Operation Recovery dates for 1967 will extend from August 1 to October 31. Emphasis in 1967 will be directed toward ageing songbirds, and the help of every participant is needed to achieve this end.

"We had hoped that we could send each station a list of priority species that could be aged without skulling. But when we tried to compile a list of songbird species in which every individual could be aged with certainty by all banders by plumage or soft-part characters alone, we found only three candidate species: the Red-eyed Vireo, Rufous-sided Towhee, and White-crowned Sparrow! There are dozens of other species that can be aged by the experts who handle large numbers of individuals and are familiar with minor differences in eye-color, mouth color or plumage. And there are scores of species in which some but not all individuals can be aged by these characters.

"Since it is of paramount importance to separate birds of the year from older individuals, and since so few species can be aged by methods other than skulling, the primary objectives for 1967 will be (1) attempt to age every songbird by skulling; and (2) test reliability of other characters in conjunction with skulling.

"We realize that some dark-skinned or thick-skinned species, such as Baltimore Orioles and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, are difficult to skull and that some individuals, especially when molting the head plumage, are almost impossible to skull. However, almost all O.R. songbirds can be aged by checking skull ossification.

"All of us should recognize the importance of ageing our birds and the great need for developing additional reliable methods for ageing them. This fall the section of Migratory Non-Game Bird Studies will distribute to O.R. stations a form for checking plumage and soft-part characters of known age (skulled) individuals. It is requested that each station select several species for special study and use this form to record diagnostic characters for these species. The results of the 1967 studies will be made available to O.R. participants prior to the 1968 season."

HELP WANTED The following are requests from station operators who are in need of assistance this coming season.

Maryland - Hooper's Island. From Henry T. Armistead, "I am planning on running an O.R. station for two weeks this September, from approximately the 15th, at the northern end of Hooper's Island, Dorchester County, Md. I have yet to approach property owners in this area, so the program is still tentative, but if anyone is interested, they should contact me at: 3627 Hamilton Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

"Hooper Island is a long (12-plus miles) island on Chesapeake Bay proper and is the scene of a rich variety of migration activity, perhaps comparable to Tilghman Island and Kent Point slightly farther north. But it has the added attraction of extensive marshes and sparser settlement. During a good day in September, it is not difficult for a good birder to list 100 species before noon. In sporadic visits there during the last six or seven years I have seen over 200 species. A few Black Rails nest and at nearby Golden Hill, up until a few years ago, a few Red-cockaded Woodpeckers were resident. The area they inhabited has been lumbered but they may still be in the area.

"I do not have scales, but may get some this summer. If anyone interested has scales, this would be a big help. I expect to operate ten nets, perhaps more on off days. I will accept any help, not necessary to be a bander. I will supply maps, lodging information, etc., to anyone interested."

Maryland - Damsite. In order to continue the important contribution of the Maryland stations to the O.R. program, Dorothy Mendinhall could use help at her station. In 1966 the commonest species was the Myrtle Warbler among the 3,467 birds taken in 7,715 net-hours. Her station, 156 acres of wildlife sanctuary along Chesapeake Bay, will operate in September and October; however, it may be curtailed later in the season due to Mrs. Mendinhall's involvement in the repeat showing of the American Bird Carving Exhibit in November. Therefore, assistance will be greatly appreciated, and interested individuals may contact Mrs. Edward Mendinhall at RD 2, Chestertown, Maryland.

West Virginia - Red Creek. From Ralph Bell, "Our O.R. station at Red Creek campground will operate as usual this fall. At least one resident bander will be there most of September and on at least two weekends in October. Working visitors will be quite welcome, especially those who are quite good at identifying birds in flight, as an attempt will be made to determine flight paths a few miles north and east of the station.

"This place is for the bander who prefers to 'get away from it all' and really live with nature. Outdoor fireplaces are provided and a large mountain spring is nearby. There are two outdoor toilets. Please do not attempt to find the place without first getting information from someone who has been there, or you will likely never make it this fall before snow flies. Our greatest need is for someone with scales and time to do some weighing."

New York - Tobay, L.I. Fred Schaeffer indicates that Tom Davis, Frank Enders, Fred Heath, Harvey Faber, Dr. Ben Mayne and himself will band weekends at Tobay this year. Because this station is on public land near a heavily populated area, it is frequented (plagued?) by many visitors who consume considerable valuable bander time. Therefore, this station could use assistance in manning net lanes, recording, public relations etc., in order that the banders could spend more time banding. It's an opportunity for a new bander to learn a great deal.

This station will operate through October and anyone interested in helping should call Fred at work (212-770-8673) during the day, or at home (212-657-5673; 139-48 85th Drive, Jamaica N.Y. 11435) during the evening by Wednesday prior to the weekend to make arrangements.

One added feature this year will be an attempt to band Tree Swallows at their roost at dusk. Any venture involving potentially large volumes of birds at dusk can always use help. Last year this station tallied 4,415 birds in 3,089 net-hours.

New York - Vischer Ferry. This weekend station in eastern upstate New York near Schenectady is mostly a sparrow station with two-thirds of its catch being about nine species of sparrows. It will operate from mid-August to about the end of October. Last year 1,273 birds of 59 species were banded in 3,230 net-hours. Included was an Acadian Sharp-tailed Sparrow. The station is manned by Walt Sabin and myself and anyone interested in helping or learning netting or O.R. technique should contact me at my address, or by telephone at 518-377-0146. The busiest times are early mornings in October.

SCALES It is apparent from two of the appeals above, that people are interested in scales or balances for weighing birds. I can highly recommend from personal experience and favorable comments of others who have them, the Pesola balances as supplied by the B.T.O. in England. Mine were obtained with the most gracious help of Phil Murton who I am sure would gladly offer information and details to interested persons on how they might go about ordering a set. I recommend the 30-, 100-, and 300-gram models, although these Swiss-made scales come in from 5-gram to 1,500-gram sizes. They display all the attributes of Swiss craftsmanship, are delightfully portable, accurate and easy to use. The set of three mentioned above cost roughly \$14 plus air parcel post and duty assigned at the rate of 22% based on whatever value Customs decides to assign (boy, that's a long story involving a few angry letters!). Details can be obtained from Sqn. Ldr. P.G. Murton, RAF, 25 Cliff Drive, St. Louis, Mo. 63125, or order direct from British Trust for Ornithology, Beech Grove, Tring, Herts, England.

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