



Connie Katholi's note in the January-February issue of EBBA News (Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 46) about the unloved creature at the left, has prompted several articles and notes...

STARLING BEHAVIOR

By Dr. Charles H. Blake

Mrs. Katholi's recent note on Starlings escaping from Potter-type traps reminds me of some points in their behavior. In the European literature it is pointed out that Starlings get a considerable amount of their food by prying up small stones or bits of wood. In so doing, they acquire a rather unusual food, millipedes. I should think that these would be very disagreeable to eat because of their repugnatorial secretions. In fact, in some cases, the secretion, on exposure to air, releases hydrocyanic acid. This mode of feeding would seem to require that a Starling be able to look close to the end of the beak binocularly. If you hold a Starling facing you, you will find that the eyes can swivel around so that they look right at you, so evidently they do have the proper kind of binocular vision.

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STARLING LONGEVITY

By Dorothy L. Bordner

Among the many longevity records published recently there have been none for Starlings. Perhaps this is because many banders consider them pests and do not band them. Two Starlings have provided us with interesting records in the last few months.

On January 6, 1968, we trapped and released a male Starling, No. 532-64383, which was banded February 16, 1958. Unfortunately, I was not aging Starlings in 1958 so do not know if the bird was a second year bird or older at the time of banding. He had not repeated or returned at any time in the intervening ten years. The band was worn thin on the edges and was replaced, but was not much more worn than some four year old bands that we replaced earlier in the winter.

No. 532-42697, also a male, banded on April 4, 1957 was recovered (found dead) in State College on March 27, 1967. Again, I do not know the age of the bird at the time of banding. He returned to us three times: March 2, 1959; December 23, 1960; and February 4, 1963. Although we have no breeding season records for him it is possible that he was a member of

the permanent resident population.

Considering the number of recoveries from Starlings that are shot, ten years seems like a ripe old age.

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MORE STARLING INGENUITY

By Mabel Gillespie

In the January-February 1968 issue of EBBA News, Connie Katholi wrote of the ingenuity of Starlings. I had a similar experience years ago. I was about to release a Starling, just banded, when it occurred to me that a friend whom I expected at any moment, would be interested to see banding technique. So I put it in a receiving trap and went into another room. In a moment the bird flew into the room after me.

There followed the difficulty of catching a bird loose in the house, after which I put the Starling back in the receiving cage. Again I left the room, but this time I peeked.

The Starling slid its long bill under the metal shutter and succeeded in bouncing it up a fraction of an inch, although it must have weighed almost as much as the bird. Then the shutter dropped on the bill. The bird continued the raising and dropping, establishing a rhythm. With each effort the shutter went a bit higher than before. Soon it was high enough for the bird to make a quick dive forward, to catch the descending shutter on its shoulders, and to escape with a final wriggle.

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Finally, from a recent letter to the Editor from Connie Katholi: "...I can't resist one last word to those trap-opening Starlings: Wish you'd learn to reset the triggers when you leave!"

