



May-June  
*A Bird Bander's Diary*  
 By Ralph K Bell

May 6, 1968... It has often been said that "history repeats itself" and this was sure true today. While delivering eggs to stores this afternoon, I was taking a back country road and checking some Bluebird boxes. As I drove through a heavily wooded area about 10 miles southeast of here, a Killdeer suddenly flew up in front of the car. Her actions indicated possible young nearby so I stopped and looked back. Immediately a newly hatched baby Killdeer darted out of the weeds along the roadside and started running up the road. I soon captured and banded it - the mother scolding all the while. Last year on June 19 at almost exactly the same place along the road, two baby Killdeer were caught and banded. It was quite obvious that the young Killdeer were not hatched at the place found but were using the roadway as a passage-way through the woods from a slate dump (from a coal mine) where they were hatched, to a pasturefield approximately .6 mile away where food would be plentiful. Last year both parents were present but this time there was only one. One can only speculate whether the other had been hit by a car, or perhaps even had led other young to the field earlier and the mother came along later with a late-hatched one. I checked the fairly heavily travelled slag road for smashed young but did not find any. Several years ago I watched adult Killdeer lead their four young along a lane that connected a pond with a large field; therefore, I know that the feat being attempted today would not be an improbable one.

May 8 ... Banded my first nestling Common Grackles today. I wouldn't have dreamed doing such a thing before, but decided this spring that perhaps I might be missing a good chance to learn more about this species - especially the wintering grounds of the Grackles from this area. Grackles were seldom seen around here in the early 1950's. I caught my first one to band in 1956 and they have been steadily increasing in numbers ever since. During the spring of 1966 over 20 pairs moved into our young evergreens (planted to be sold as Christmas trees). Since some of the nests are as low as four feet above the ground, the young are very easy to band. A total of 69 were banded today - in 18 nests - and 20 other nests were

found that contained either eggs or young too small to band.

May 15... Each year seems to bring its share of welcome surprises. This evening, Wesley Knisley stopped by to tell me that Tree Swallows were sitting on the wire above Bluebird box no. 76. We immediately drove over for a check and found some feathers in the box. This was to be the first nesting record for Greene County in over 75 years. Although we live in the Carolinian Life Zone and this nest was about about 1000 ft. elevation above sea level, I guess it should not be too unexpected. We have noticed at the Brooks Bird Club Forays (held in June each year) that this species is being found nesting farther south in the West Virginia mountains each year.

I have always associated Tree Swallows with ponds, lakes, etc., especially in areas away from its normal range, but I have since learned that this is not necessarily so. This nesting site was along a rural road on the edge of a dry upland pasture and not near any water. Nest box #76 already had a history. It had contained an English Sparrow nest early this spring so I moved it three telephone poles down the road, to get it farther away from a barn. Immediately Bluebirds built a nest but a racoon had captured and eaten the mother. I had just cleaned out the nest and the Tree Swallows took over that same day. I stood on a nearby post and moved the box up the telephone pole to a height of about 12 feet as an added deterrent in case the racoon came back. The four young were banded on June 14 (one egg didn't hatch). As I climbed up and put the young back into the box, there was the mother Tree Swallow sitting in the empty nest. She was then banded also. The box was checked on June 26 and the young were almost fully feathered; by the afternoon of June 30 they were gone.

May 19... There were four distinguished Japanese visitors here today. Mr. Masashi Yoshii, chief of the Banding Center, Yamashina Institute for Ornithology; Mr. Reiji Nakatsubo, program director for NHK (Japanese Broadcasting Corp.); Mr. Hiroyoshi Nimura, Science and Industry Division for NHK; and Mr. Masaru Ichijo, NHK cameraman. They were quite businesslike and here for a purpose: to take pictures for their educational broadcasts on television in Japan. They were gathering material for television in color, paying special attention to conservation of primeval nature, sanctuary for animals, preservation for rare species, maintenance of recreation areas, afforestation of urban districts, and education for conservation. To accomplish these goals many stops were planned in the U.S., Canada, England, Switzerland, West Germany, and the Netherlands.

To explain the true purpose of the program, I would like to quote from a recent news release by the Japan Broadcasting Corp.

"The recent industrial development in Japan has aroused considerable public attention as to the importance of natural conservation. Yet, in reality, the Japanese people have not organized any decisive measure to

preserve nature, because they are lacking in the knowledge of effective solutions. Without some counterplans, it is obvious that the nature of Japan will be ruined by air and water pollution. In contrast to this deteriorating situation, the Western nations, recognizing the value of nature, have long pursued active and consistent policies of conservation. The well-preserved nature of North America and Europe provide fauna and flora with inviolable sanctuaries and people with beautiful recreation areas. The many examples that reflect the regional characteristics of these areas will surely contribute much for the Japanese people to re-compose their present disorder."

We should feel proud that our conservation efforts are being noticed by a progressive country like Japan. Their main interest here were the Purple Martins. My brother Frank (now living in Japan - and a member of EBBA) knows Mr. Yoshii quite well and had told him about our Purple Martins. While they took a large number of pictures of the Purple Martins, Bluebirds, etc., and some of banding at the nets (mostly Redwings), I feel they obtained much better pictures earlier in the month at the home of EBBA member Mrs. Murray Olyphant in St. Paul, Minnesota. While there, the Japanese visitors took many pictures of traps, nets in operation, etc., that should give Japanese TV audiences a good idea of what goes on at a typical banding station in the United States. Mr. Yoshii said their next scheduled stop was the banding office at Laurel, Maryland. There they were, no doubt, impressed with the new procedures and equipment initiated by Mr. Baysinger and his staff.

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A Reminder . . .

DOLLAR BILLS ARE NEEDED ...

(or checks, if you'd rather.) As every member realizes, we feel sure, the cost of the 9-year Index which accompanies this issue of EBBA News must come from EBBA's scanty savings account.

Each member who can spare a dollar, therefore, is urged to put one in an envelope and send it to the treasurer or the editor.

The dollar is needed - please send it now!

This note was mailed with the May-June issue and the 9-year Index, and the response has been most heartening. But the greater part of EBBA's membership has not been heard from yet...so please remember to send that dollar to the Treasurer! And our sincere thanks to those who have already done so - and are about to.