

BANDING TALLIES - A SUGGESTION

By Jack P. Hailman

The more individuals of a single species that one bands, the more he learns about that species. If 10,000 miscellaneous passerines banded yield a single recovery for each of ten species, we do not learn nearly as much as we would from ten recoveries of 10,000 banded Myrtle Warblers, for instance. It requires a number of recoveries just to begin to sketch the migration routes or life span of a species.

Furthermore, the most abundant information from banding comes from inspection of the bird in the hand, since recoveries are so rare. If one bands many Catbirds, for instance, he may discover interesting facts about sex and age differences, time of moulting, parasites and so on. But if one bands a smattering of many species, he may learn very little.

These considerations suggest that when we tally up our banding accomplishments, some recognition might be due the bander who concentrates on a few species. A simple tally, for instance, might be the average number of individuals per species banded. However, with this tally alone someone who bands only three Song Sparrows and nothing else might rate rather "high". Furthermore, banding large numbers of anything, after all, does repay.

Therefore, I suggest that the average individuals/species be multiplied by the total number of birds banded, which would yield the peculiar statistic of $(\text{individuals})^2/\text{species}$. This number will be so large that a more useful index would result by dividing by 1000. For instance, last year I banded 884 individuals of 16 species, for an index of about 48,84.

Perhaps a tally such as this might encourage banders to concentrate on particular species. For instance, when the mist nets become loaded and there is insufficient time to band everything caught, concentrate on several key species in order to get a good sample of whatever data are taken. There is much to be said for studying a few species in detail.

Dept. of Zoology, University of Maryland, College Park, Md. 20740

