

## COLOR-BANDED HOUSE FINCHES

By Richard Cohen

(The following is taken from a letter written to Mrs. Harold Silagy of Reading, Pa. on February 3, 1969, in response to her inquiry regarding sighting color-banded House Finches. -Ed.)

While visiting hawk bander Bob Robertson in Kempton, Pa. in November I heard that color-banded House Finches were seen in Reading. The colors, green or yellow on one leg, aluminum on the other were undoubtedly mine and in subsequent correspondence with Barbara Lake of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary I had Barbara spread the word on the origin of the finches over Jack Holcomb's program on WEEU. So I presume by now you already have that information; the following may be of further interest.

The green bands were placed on birds hatched in 1968 and banded by my wife or myself in our garden here before July 31. Yellow bands were used after that date for birds hatched that year. In all, 400 green and 350 yellow were used. Last year we banded 1378 birds of this species and a conservative estimate of the percentage of young birds would be 60%. We determine the age of the bird by the plumage, which in the juvenile is considerably more buffy than the adult female and, of course, the feathers are not worn as they would be in the adult. Then, too, the adults begin to moult their flight feathers by mid-July which the young birds do not normally do until the following year, further simplifying determination of age.

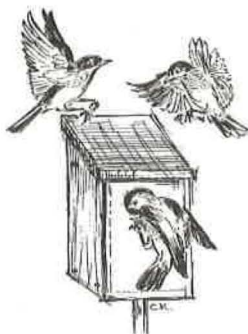
By the time the young birds reach Reading they have moulted into their adult body plumage so a red House Finch with my color band on one leg is a first year male. At the time of year (late fall and early winter) we can often determine the age by the degree of skull ossification. However, most are classified as age unknown at that season. The males do vary greatly in color from brick-red to orange and a few are even yellow.

In color banding these birds of known age we would like to know where they go, to supplement our recoveries by other banders. Your report is further west in Pennsylvania than any reported by other banders, but I have had birds recovered in the Baltimore-Washington area as well as trapping finches banded by others there. We have had one finch re-trapped in the Philadelphia area in two successive winters.

We are particularly interested in knowing where the color-banded birds will breed this year. Mrs. Virginia Ashfield of Reading tells me that two pairs of unbanded House Finches raised 14 young in her vicinity. I would be surprised if our Long Island birds remained in your area to breed; but if they do I'd certainly appreciate hearing about it.

I'd like to thank you for your interest in reporting these birds and would be pleased to hear from you further if they remain later this winter. You might be alert for red bands as well. They were hatched in 1967. There may be another color to liven up your feeder next winter!

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#### TWO GRACKLES Banded AND RETURNING SIMULTANEOUSLY

By Harold E. Burtt

Two common Grackles (Quiscalus quiscula) - 773-55283 and 773-55287 - were banded at a decoy trap in Columbus, Ohio on the same day, June 21, 1965. Three years later they reentered the decoy trap on the same day, June 23, 1968. It seems quite probable that they had remained "together" in the interim. The probability of their going their separate ways for three years and then meeting at the same time and place is rather small.

Their sex was not known but they may have been a pair. It may be noted that both captures were in the breeding season. Or they may have been members of a social group or flock that remained together during the period. Appreciable numbers of other Grackles were present on both occasions. In the first instance the operator had been away for a few days and let the birds accumulate and on June 21, 1965 banded 46 Grackles including the two noted above. On June 23, 1968 there had been a similar accumulation and 281 Grackles were banded. There were also ten returns and six repeats for Grackles on that day.

I have not heard of Grackles mating for life or of a flock comprising some of the same individuals over a long period. It seems best to withhold judgment.

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