AGE-RATIO OF FALL MIGRANTS AT AN INLAND BIRD-BANDING STATION - 1970

By Harriet Marsi

I read with interest the article in EBBA NEWS, Volume 34, No. 2, March-April 1971 by Jerome T. Barry on DIFFERENTIAL FALL MIGRATION. My attention concentrated particularly on that sentence which stated "Almost all migratory species in Eastern North America with only a few notable exceptions (e.g. Tennessee Warbler and Yellowthroat), have a higher percentage of adults migrating southward by an inland route than a coastal one, and correspondingly a higher percentage of immatures migrating along a coastal route than an inland route."

My banding station is located 1 mile southwest of Binghamton, N.Y. (Coordinates 420-0755) and therefore would surely be considered an inland station. My nets (1-1/2" mesh) were strung along the contour of an abandoned hillside pastureland now 90% grown up to thornapple averaging 10 to 12 feet high. The hillside is about 3 mi. south of the Susquehanna River.

Last fall, August 1 through 10, I banded 591 birds. Of these 361, approximately 61%, were HY; 162, approximately 27.5%, were Unknown and 68, approximately 11.5% were AHY. In general ageing was done by skulling with the aid of a 10 power loupe and good light. Even in species like the red-eyed vireo where it was done by eye-color, the catbird where it was done by eye and mouth color and the Tennessee Warbler where plumage was used, regular spot skulling was done for checking purposes.

Considering only the species of which I banded 10 or more I got the following results:

SPECIES	TOTAL BANDED	NUMBER HY	NUMBER AHY	NUMBER U	APPROX % HY
Least Flycatcher	16	12	2	2	75.00%
Red-eyed Vireo	111	104	7	0	93.50%
Nashville Warbler	10	7	1	2	70.00%
Tennessee Warbler	27	26	1	0	96.00%
Cape May Warbler	34	33	1	0	97.00%
Magnolia Warbler	19	10	4	5	52.50%
Blackpoll Warbler	21	14	3	4	66.66%
Ovenbird	14	7	5	2	50.00%
Catbird	53	39	3	11	73.25%
Grey-cheecked Thrush	13	7	4	2	54.00%
Swainson's Thrush	45	28	4	13	62.00%

In all cases the percentage of Hatching Year birds is larger or as large as the total of both After Hatching Year birds and Unknown birds combined.

My conclusion, therefore, from both my overall percentages and the

percentages for individual species is that at this inland station, among the fall migrants, the immature birds decidedly outnumber the adult birds.

In theorizing about why the results at my station should differ so directly from those at the stations studied by Mr. Barry, I notice two things about my station. The first is that I trap a preponderance of small birds. Of the 591 bands used last fall (1970), 373 (approx. 63%) were 0 or 1; 134 (approx. 22.5%) were 1B; 69 (approx. 11.5%) were 1A and 15 (almost 3%) were 2 or 3. The second fact about my station is that it is 3 miles from what could be considered a conspicuous "orientational cue", i.e. the generally southward-flowing Susquehanna River. As Mr. Barry suggests, an immature bird, on its first southward migration, might find a large geographical feature easy to follow. I also think that small birds particularly would have a better chance for survival by following an inland route than by having to contend with the violent autumnal storms of the Atlantic coast. Therefore, survival rates would be higher among those following a good inland geographical cue than among those following a good coastal geographical cue.

These, of course, are just theories and offer no explanation at all as to why adult birds do not seem to be also following the river - if this is what is happening - or at least why they are not getting caught in my nets.

I would appreciate any comments.

-- Friendsville Stage, Binghamton, New York 13903

DID YOU KNOW THAT 332 DIFFERENT AUTHORS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO EBBA NEWS SINCE 1950? WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE THE 333rd.....?