

WALTER S. TERRY 1898 - 1968

With the passing of Walter Terry of Blue Point, Long Island last May, EBBA has lost one of its most dedicated and meticulous banders.

It has been my privilege to work with Walt during the annual fall banding program for the past six years. Since his retirement as an engineer with AT&T, he had been operating mist nets at Tiana along the Atlantic shoreline, in collaboration with Leroy Wilcox. This involved a daily pre-dawn drive of some thirty miles. In addition to this drawback, there was much annoyance from the public, since the net lanes were located along the busy Dune Road. So I persuaded him in 1963 to move the banding station to our own property on the edge of the salt marsh in the south shore village of Brookhaven, only about six miles from his home.

I confess my motives were partly selfish; I wanted a greater opportunity to work with him, and in having the nets practically in my back yard I would be able to put in several hours every morning before going to work. At the time, I did not fully realize the extent of the privilege I thus gained. Walt, besides being one of the warmest of friends, was able to teach me a great deal on the finer points of banding. Over the past years, I have come to admire him more and more for his high standards; he was a perfectionist in every phase of the work. In observing his techniques, I have often been reminded of the pat salesman's adage "the customer comes first". But in Walt's case, the "customer" was the bird, and its welfare was all-important to him. He could never approve of keeping a bird in captivity, either in net or holding box, any longer than was absolutely necessary. If birds were coming in too fast to be processed and released immediately, the number of open nets was unhesitatingly reduced. He was not interested in running up any record scores, nor did he waste his efforts going to great lengths to capture some rarity that would add to his "species banded" list. His aim, in which he was eminently successful, was to do a workmanlike job in compiling data of real value. His banding records are a permanent legacy to the science of ornithology.

I will miss Walter this fall and for many falls, as a fine friend and a devoted master bander. He was not one to display his sentiments openly, but his affection and reverence for his small captives would often reveal itself. I can recall many occasions, as he was releasing an exceptionally attractive specimen, hearing him mutter a few words of encouragement, and the bird would fly off to freedom with this whispered benediction.

Dennis Puleston, Meadow Lane, Brookhaven, N.Y. 11719