The primary coverts and the primaries themselves of the HY bird were subtly paler and not intense, velvety black of the AHY bird. The difference is not quite as noticeable as is the black of a male vs. female American Goldfinch *(spinus tristis)* but is of that order. Similarly, the middle and greater secondary coverts of the HY bird were not as richly black as those of the AHY bird. These relative differences could be difficult to discern initially unless specimens of both color variations were available for a side-by-side comparison. No doubt one's eye could be trained to distinguish this difference.

However, the one characteristic that appeared very noticeably was the white marking of the inner vane of the primary coverts. Below I have illustrated this in figure 1. In the AHY bird these coverts were entirely black. In the HY bird, as illustrated, the first, second, seventh and eighth primary coverts were edged with slight amounts of white. The third through sixth coverts were markedly edged. The ninth covert, which is very rudimentary, was entirely black. It is this edging characteristic of the primary coverts that I feel banders should heed.

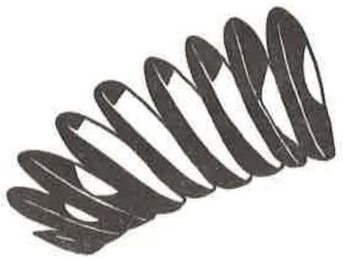

FIGURE 1. Primary coverts of the Juvenal and First Basic Plumage of the Female Evening Grosbeak.

After noting the differences in the birds in question, I later consulted Dwight (J. Dwight, Jr. 1900. *Annals N.Y. Acad. Sci., 13: 169-170*) and found that he alludes to these characteristics for differentiating females in first basic plumage (first winter plumage) from those in subsequent basic plumages. However, his description is a subtle one that can be easily overlooked, and apparently has been for years.

The last difference, and perhaps this is a variable one, was the extent of white in the primaries. The HY bird had extensive white on both vanes at the base of the first seven primaries. The eighth primary had a white base on the inner vane and a small spot of white on only the inner vane at the base. The AHY bird lacked white altogether on the 7th, 8th and 9th primaries. Based on the molt sequence of the Evening Grosbeak, these characteristics should identify young females for the first fourteen or fifteen months of their lives. -- *1527 Myron Street, Schenectady, New York 12309.*

AGEING OF OVENBIRDS BY RUSTY-TIPPED TERTIALS AND SKULL OSSIFICATION

By Walter Kingsley Taylor

The Ovenbird *(Seiurus aurocapillus)* is one of the most common wood warblers that migrates through peninsula Florida. In the past few years, large numbers of Ovenbirds have been recorded killed at several tall lighted structures in the Central Florida area. As a consequence, considerable data on this species have been amassed. In a previous paper (Taylor, 1972), I discussed several aspects relative to the Ovenbird's autumn migration through Central Florida. Since that time almost 300 individuals have been analyzed with particular attention being given to evaluating the techniques for ageing Ovenbirds by skull ossification and by the rusty-tipped tertials.

Methods

Of 277 freshly-killed specimens examined for the presence of rusty-tipped tertials, 188 were autumn migrants that hit the WDBO-TV tower, near Bithlo, Orange County, Florida. The remaining 89 were spring migrants that hit the Vertical Assembly Building, Brevard County, Florida on 4 May 1972.

First, the specimens were examined for rusty-tipped tertials. This was then followed by checking the skull for the presence of or absence of ossification. In addition, the individuals were checked for molting feathers in the wings and tail.

Results

The results obtained from the 188 autumn migrants are in Table 1. A correlation exists between the presence of or absence of rusty-tipped tertials and the presence of or absence of an ossified skull. All 53 individuals that were chosen because of having rusty-tipped tertials had unossified skulls and evidently were HY (immature) birds. In the 135 individuals assigned to the lacking-rusty-tipped-tertial category, nine were missed; that is, the skulls were unossified. A reexamination was made of the tertials for those individuals that were missed. If the tertials were rusty-tipped at all, they were faintly so.

Of the 89 spring migrants examined, eleven had rusty-tipped tertials and completely ossified skulls. The rusty color was not as intense in any of the eleven individuals compared to that of most autumn immatures.

Discussion

Assuming that the presence of an unossified skull indicates an HY bird, the technique of ageing Ovenbirds on the basis of rusty-tipped tertials seems reliable even though a certain amount

of error exists. The source of the error not only results from perhaps the observer's techniques but also from variations that exist in the tertial plumage; apparently some individuals retain their rusty-tipped tertials longer than others. When used in conjugation with the ossification technique the amount of error apparently becomes less. Fisk (1972) recently pointed out, and correctly so, that ageing of Ovenbirds should not be done solely by the tertial technique. In my estimation, ageing of Ovenbirds by both skull ossification and tertial coloration are the best techniques that are currently known. Both methods are more reliable for ageing Ovenbirds than by the wing length method (see Taylor, 1972).

Acknowledgments

Thanks are extended to the owners and operators of the Bithlo TV tower. Special appreciation is offered to Bruce Anderson, Bette Schardien, and other FTU students who have helped collect and process the birds that hit the tower. Mr. Lon Ellis of Merritt Island kindly supplied me with the spring migrants from the Vertical Assembly Building.

Literature Cited

Fisk, E.J. 1972. Banders' Shoptalk. *EBBA News, 35:58-62.*
Taylor, W.K. 1972. Analysis of Ovenbirds killed in Central Florida. *Bird-Banding, 43: 15-19.*

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ANNOUNCEMENT

It is with good reason that the 1972 Annual Banding Report form is not included with this issue of EBBA News.

In a letter received from George M. Jonkel, Chief of the Bird Banding Laboratory, dated 22 November 1972, we were advised that the BBL will henceforward compile the Annual Banding Summary. This is very good news indeed as Bob Pyle will conceed that the compilation of this summary was an arduous task which can be accomplished far easier with a computer.

The BBL will furnish a report covering the 1971 season, soon, to Bob Pyle. It will be interesting to compare the total banding summary (encompassing all banders within the EBBA area, rather than the banding from those banders who are EBBA members) to our 1971 summary. After that, each August, the BBL will furnish us with the data of the previous banding year. Further details of this agreement between the BBL and regional associations will be announced in the next issue of EBBA News. *Editor*