

## A BANDING "BONUS"

By Robert C. Dewire

Most banders can think of times when they were banding that a totally unexpected event took place that would be long remembered. Such an event happened to me during the past fall which may stir up similar memories of some banders and give still others something to look forward to.

This is the third year that I have been mist netting. I operate a station on the 50-acre Wadsworth Wildlife Sanctuary owned by the Mid-Fairfield County Youth Museum in Westport, Connecticut. In the fall I actively band from August through October with mist nets set up in shrubby areas surrounding a red maple swamp.

On the morning of August 22nd, I arose before sunrise to open up the six 30mm nets I had set up. At about 6:15 I returned with a gathering cage to remove any birds that were captured. I had three nets strung together with the last net at a slight angle from the others so that it was not visible when I approached. I had removed two birds from the first net, there were none in the second, and as the third net came into view I could see what was obviously a very large bird flapping his wings and pulling on the net. When I got there, I found I had caught a broad-winged hawk in my 30mm net!

The bird was an immature and was free except for his feet which both had netting wrapped around them. He hung upside down by his feet but at my approach flapped his wings and rose up in line with his feet, but the netting held him firm and he hung back down again glaring at me. I think you can imagine the excitement I felt as I realized what I had, especially since mourning doves were the largest birds I had ever caught previously.

The problem which now was evident was how would I get him out of the net without having his beak or talons sinking into my skin in the process. I had no gloves, and even though I was only a few minutes walk from my house I feared the bird would work his way out before I returned.

It took only seconds to decide to take the chance and get the bird out. I reached down with both hands and grabbed the legs. The bird made no attempt to reach for me with his beak and as I held the two legs together with one hand I worked the netting off with the other. When I got to the point where the final netting on the feet would release when I lifted the bird up, I took my free hand and very slowly moved it behind the bird sliding my first two fingers on either side of the back of the neck. Surprisingly the bird made no attempt to struggle. I lifted him up, the netting fell free and I had this spectacular

bird in my hands.

I carried him back to the house and another problem arose. I had no cage big enough to hold him and with both hands occupied how was I going to band him? Worse yet, I couldn't even open the door of the house to get inside to get to my bands!

All this time my wife, Mary Jean, lay peacefully sleeping not realizing what she was in for. She is an excellent birder and a great help with my banding operation, but prefers to begin doing these things at a more respectable hour than 6:30 A.M.

Nevertheless, I knocked on the bedroom window telling her that she wouldn't believe what I had. One look out the window and she was fully awake. While I held the hawk she banded it and then put gloves on so I could transfer the bird to her to photograph it. After taking several pictures my wife released the bird which flapped several times and then sailed across the field and into the bordering woodland. It was a spectacular way to start the morning and by day's end I had added a second bird to my "banding life list" - a prairie warbler.

It is the occurrence of this unexpected such as this that is the "bonus" that banders get for the long hours and hard work they put in, and an experience I felt would be fun to share with EBBA readers.

--15 Cypress Pond Road, Westport, Conn. 06880

## LAWRENCE'S WARBLER VARIANT BANDED

By Harriet Marsi

In the 13 years I have been banding in the general area of my present net lanes, I have known that Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers nested in the vicinity. Every year I record the first day I hear their call in the spring and every year I have a general idea where they are nesting although I have never found the nest. Over the 13 years, I have banded 18 Golden-wings, 8 Blue-winged Warblers and 2 Brewster's Warblers. I have often observed Brewster's Warblers. All these years, however, I have never seen or netted the other hybrid - the Lawrence's Warbler.

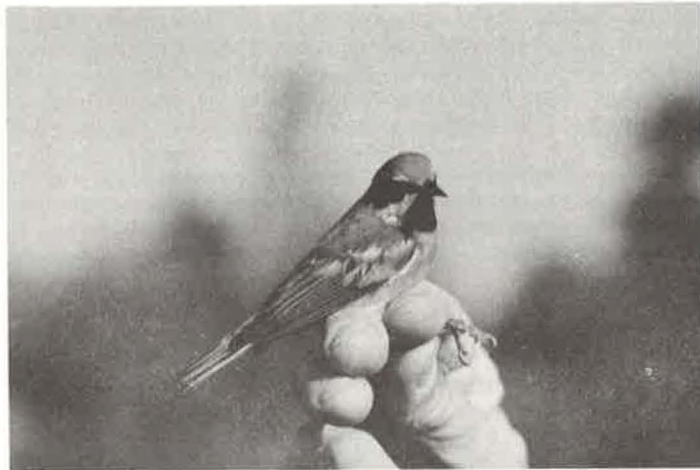
On August 19, 1972, however, I netted what I called my first Lawrence's Warbler. It had the black facial markings of the golden-winged warbler and the yellow upper breast of the blue-winged. It was not, however, a textbook model of a Lawrence's warbler nor did it fit the descriptions given in Merril Wood: Bird-Bander's Guide to Determination of Age and Sex of Selected species, for any of the Lawrence's variations.



Features like the golden-winged warbler were: 1. The throat, chin and cheeks were jet black; 2. Broad submalar stripes and narrower superciliary lines were white; 3. The wing patch was bright yellow.

Features like the blue-winged warbler were: 1. The center of the back was greenish-yellow although it faded to gray on the sides; 2. The upper breast was bright yellow. This yellow, did not, however, extend all the way down the breast but only about halfway to the crissum where it changed to white. The crissum was white.

This bird had an ossified skull and no fat. I called it an AHY-Male Lawrence's Warbler.



Lawrence's Warbler banded August 19, 1972  
by the author

--Friendsville Stage, Binghamton, New York 13903.

## A VISIT HELPS

By Robert McCullough

Twelve years ago I was issued a permit to band birds. I had to depend on back issues of *EBBA News* and make phonecalls to Mrs. Mary Schmid at her New York office. When I decided to try nets to supplement the traps I had bought and made, she said I might as well go to one of the best for my instructions. At her suggestion I made an appointment with Mrs. Eleanor Dater or Ramsey, New Jersey. She was then the president of EBBA, and to me this seemed quite awesome. I realized later that she had gone to considerable trouble to set things up for me on a poor day, and arrange for an assistant to be there.

On that day I realized how much I would have to learn to become a qualified bander. My wife accompanied me and we enjoyed the visit. Mrs. Dater was a wonderful instructor. I wanted to take some pictures but she said "We have no time for pictures, we're here to find out about nets." There was an unusual net for high flying birds that Mr. Dater had made. When I told her my favorite bird was a Chickadee she said that might change when I started using nets. I often think of her and that day, especially when a bird comes out "Dater Method" the way it is supposed to come out.

The following year I called Mrs. Dickerson at Island Beach and arranged to visit there for a day. It was a busy one and observing and helping experienced banders with wing measure weighing, identification, and gathering birds was a valuable contribution to the knowledge that I was trying to acquire. Everyone was busy that day, and I was able to be helpful, but all found time to give me some guidance and answer questions.

For the next several years I attended many annual meetings and met many banders. I didn't make another visit to one until recently. The excuse for this was brought about by a neighbor in our New Jersey banding area asking me to band her Purple Martin colony. We don't have Purple Martins and I thought I would arrange to see Ralph Bell when I went to Pennsylvania to see my cousin who lives near his farm.

The meeting was arranged by phone and my wife, cousin, and her husband accompanied me. We got lost on the way and came in to Ralph's farm by some back route that Ralph said he hardly knew himself.

First of all I felt familiar with the place from reading his *Diary*. He took me into his office while Mrs. Bell engaged the ladies in other fields of conversation. The next issue of his *Diary* was about, written on the back of letters and any