

SOMETIMES EXPERIMENTS PAY OFF

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In 1971, I had a paper published in the *Z für Tierpsychologie* entitled "Sensitive age parameters and other factors involved in conditioning to a danger call in Mallard Ducklings (28 164-174, with Eckhard H. Hess)." Here we found that the sensitive period for the learning of the danger call (and presumably environmental imprinting) lies between 36 and 60 hours. We also found that the danger call must be a monosyllable and the approach call to parent-surrogate a polysyllable and, if the learning was to be retained, the two calls must also differ in tonal quality.

In my banding operation I specialize in releasing hand-raised birds. In the past three years I have raised and released the following: Robins, Catbirds, Mockingbirds, Grackles, Starlings and Blue Jays. Of these species, only the Blue Jay has shown any noticeable lasting effects of the experience (imprinting). When given its liberty this Blue Jay's whereabouts could easily be followed by the peculiar call notes it had acquired in captivity. Three days and one storm later this Jay made its way into my barn. Here it allowed me to pick it up. Returned to its flight cage and to the diet to which it was accustomed, it regained its health and normal vocal activities after two days.

Ten of the Robins involved were removed from their nest at ages varying from 5 days upward. (I succeeded in hatching an additional bird in the incubator, but lost it when it was 5 days old.) A second group of Robins were removed from the nest, one at a time when they were about 6 days old. These were hand-fed for two days and successfully returned to the nest. All the Robins in the first group came to me for food until they learned to feed by themselves. None of the Robins in the second group came to me for food though one allowed me to feed it, though it followed only its mother.

In the spring of 1972 I took three Starlings from their nest when they were three days old. One day when I went to feed them - as I did every hour - I found that a large Pilot Black

Snake had lifted the lid over their box and two of the starlings were eaten by the snake. Of all the species raised, only the starling showed an antipathy toward me at this early age. By the time it was fully feathered and capable of flight, it would take food from me but each time it would also take a stab at the hand that fed it.

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BIRD TRAPPING WITH A TAPE RECORDER

By Robert Dewire

During the periods when my mist netting station is in operation at the Wadsworth Wildlife Sanctuary in Westport, Conn. I have found a method by which migrants can be lured to the netting area and subsequently caught in the nets. What I used is a small cassette tape recorder on which I have recorded the calls of the Screech Owl (*Otus asio*). As most birders and banders are aware, songbirds regularly mob owls when they discover them, and it seems that the mere calling of an owl will bring the birds to the source looking for the owl to mob.

I use a small inexpensive Panasonic recorder and got the calls of the Screech Owl on tape by merely recording it from the record of bird calls put out to supplement the Peterson field guide. I recorded the calls over and over until I had an unbroken string of about 15 playings of the record. This allows you to play the tape and not have to stop and keep backing up.

Having done this all I do to make it work is go to one of my lanes and go down to one end of the nets (usually the lane has two or three nets together). The tape is then played at a high volume to attract birds from a distance. Even when no birds are heard when I first arrive, they seem to materialize out of nowhere to hunt for the source of the call. Chickadees and titmice seem to come the quickest, but as they do so often,