

## LETTERS TO EDITOR:

Sir:

Re Mrs. Erma J. Fisk's bulletin "DO NOT AGE AMERICAN GOLD-FINCHES BY THE OLYPHANT SYSTEM": EBBA News, Vol. 36, No. 3, page 179, I would like to make a few comments about the individual birds she mentioned in the "MAILBAG".

No. 1270-43888----noted to have 17 mm of white measured from the base of the feather on apparently no. 8 primary upon return. In my project with American Goldfinches, I noted what I saw, i.e. presence or absence of "white spots", and I did not spread the primary coverts to see whether or not there was any "concealed" white underneath near the quill of the primaries themselves. But in handling large numbers of adult plumaged individuals, I saw many adults with "concealed" white on the primaries near the quill. I based my reasearch on what was visible on primaries both spread and closed resting positions; not what was or is "concealed" under primary coverts.

No. 1310-07142----I note in my paper in Bird Banding: Vol. 43, No. 3, pp 174, under 1 (d), that "on a very few individuals, sometimes a trace of white appears on one or two primaries". I ask Mrs. Fisk, which primary or primaries had "white", and was she measuring from the base of the entire primary or from where the white was visible with primary coverts in normal "covering" position? Was there alot of white (broad, i.e. width) or was white narrow (thin i.e. width)?

No. 78-65947----Generally the above applying to No. 1310-07142 could be repeated for this individual AHY F. Again in my paper in Bird Banding Vol. 43, No. 3, pp 177, under 1 (d), I stated that "on a very few individuals a trace of white might be found on one or two primaries, these showing up as faint specks". I ask Mrs. Fisk which primary or primaries had white "spots", and where was she measuring the feather(s) from (true base or visible base when the primary coverts are in natural "covering" position?). Commenting further, both age classes of females also have pencil thin edgings on outer vane of No. one through eight primaries which are either white or buffy-white. Was there alot of white ("spots"), or was the white narrow (edgings) on outer vane?

No. 125-22208----My basic and continued work with American Goldfinches was and is based on visible "white spots", not white "concealed" under natural positioned primary coverts. I refer to my above comment (last two sentences), written under No. 1270-43888.

Regarding "Four birds judged SY F on the basis of their nondescript olive plumage"....How does Mrs. Fisk define "nondescript"? The important thing here is what was the general color of the wings?, were the middle and greater covert wing bars broad or narrow? what was the color of the wing bars?, was there much wear to the wing bars, so that they appeared very worn, ragged, or were they not worn to any degree?

In Mrs. Fisk's use of the words "nondescript olive plumage", was she saying that these four individual females were still in their winter body dress? Where were these birds banded as to Latitude? Here in St. Paul, Minn., on the 45th parallel, most females (American Goldfinches), in June are in their summer breeding plumage which is yellowish to dull yellow.

In Mrs. Fisk's last paragraph, she suggests that the white "can be measured either from the base of the outermost primary ...." In no part of my paper "A Method For Aging Female American Goldfinches", do I record having seen any "white spots" on the outermost primary. I presume she means No. 9. This ninth outermost primary is described in three of the four age classes as being plain except for either whitish or buffy tip.

In conclusion, the challenge of banding gives us the perenniel chance to learn new facts and to pose new theories about birds. One glaring fact in this regard is that there are a few individual exceptions to any rule or theory. A bander comes to this realization when he or she is conducting a plumage study. This type of study can be difficult and puzzling (if these are the right words) as each bander has his own "private eye" of interpretation as to just how a bird's plumage patterns and characteristics look, to say nothing of how to describe colors accurately!

By continued effort on the part of many banders who have the opportunity to trap and band American Goldfinches, the scientific truth about aging techniques will finally emerge.

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#### CRANES OF THE WORLD

By Lawrence Walkinshaw

Winchester Press, 460 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. 10022  
1973. Pp. 370. \$25.00.

This volume is the work of the world's leading authority on the 15 species of living cranes. It is a detailed non-technical account of crane biology, ecology, life history, systematics, distribution and conservation. To prepare the book, the author journeyed to five continents and studied in the field 14 of the 15 species of cranes. In addition, he extracted a large quantity of data from the worldwide literature. Serious students will find the detailed bibliography of great value.

Numerous black and white photographs, plus a few in color, illustrate the book. Unfortunately the photos vary greatly in quality and some should have been omitted.

Anyone interested in cranes will find this volume a major source of information and doubtless will first turn to it as a reference before digging into the periodical literature. Cranes of the World is a valuable addition to an ornithological library. EBBA members living in areas where cranes breed or winter will find the book especially helpful.

--Reviewed by Donald S. Heintzeman.

#### ATLANTIC FLYWAY REVIEW - Region V

Edited by Chandler S. Robbins

All seven of the Maryland-Virginia stations are located along what the Europeans call "leading lines"--topographic features that tend to a greater or lesser degree to concentrate the migrants. Three of the stations (McKee-Beshers, Baltimore, and Towson) are along or close to what is known as the Fall Line, the rather sharp demarcation between the Coastal Plain and Piedmont physiographic provinces. The degree to which these stations benefit from their locations has never been satisfactorily measured as far as nocturnal migrants are concerned. Daytime migrants, however, such as hawks and jays, definitely follow the Fall Line as they do coastlines and mountain ridges; so some of the nocturnal transients can reasonably be expected to do the same, at least on clear nights. A larger network of small backyard stations, some along and some distant from "leading lines," could provide some interesting comparisons. The Piscataway station, which has the lowest catch per netting effort, is located on the east shore of the Potomac River estuary, a rather ineffective "leading line" in that it extends only a short distance in the direction the birds are heading. The other three stations are along the eastern shoreline of Chesapeake Bay.

Most of the individual station summaries include a monthly breakdown of bandings per 100 net-hours. Note that the catch at each station is rather low in August and September, then picks up sharply in October. At every reporting station the capture rate in October is more than double that of September. Thus stations that are most active in October (and especially late October) tend to achieve a high seasonal catch rate, other considerations being equal.

To provide for easy comparison, seasonal data on capture and effort at each station in the Region are summarized in Table 1. In general, stations ran from 30 to 60 days, providing a good cross section of the migration period. Nearly half of the 16,508 birds banded in Region V were captured at the Kiptopeke station, although both Piscataway and Damsite had more net-hours of operation. The capture rate for all stations combined (excluding Towson, which was not operated in 1971) was  $7\frac{1}{2}\%$  less than in 1971, which is too small a difference to suggest any