

At the Island Beach meeting I pestered quite a few people, including some Banding Office personnel, with my tale--but apparently no one knew of a similar situation.

Having suffered through this rather humbling experience, I returned home and with some misgivings sent in my schedule, listing my "strange one" as a probable melanistic House Finch.

I write this in the hope that other banders may profit by the telling, and thus I come to the "hindsight" part of my tale: Should some whim of chance permit that same bird to return to my net in any future Winter, I am determined to collect him for positive identification.

--Walter Post Smith, 3009 Chesapeake Avenue, Hampton, Va. 23661

REVIEW

"Of Mosquitoes, Moths, and Mice"

By C. Brooke Worth
c. 1972

W.W. Norton & Co, Inc., New York, N.Y. 258pp. \$8.95.

Here is a delightful book which should be read by all persons who enjoy nature. The author, a Life Member of the Eastern Bird Banding Association, and an entomologist by profession, has the unique ability to make the inner secrets of nature with emphasis on behavior, readily understandable through his easy-going "armchair style" writing.

The story doesn't only deal with the families mentioned in the title, but gives a finely balanced ecological picture of those and ecologically related families of birds and turtles. That picture is both factual, very informative to the reader, and humorous.

The site of his investigations is at his farm at Delmont, N.J., a place infested with mosquitoes; thus, it could not have been a better research area for an entomologist. Brooke Worth has the envious ability to realize that there's something worth noting in the behavior of all the creatures on his farm and he takes the

reader on a step-by-step guided tour, sharing his delights with us.

In this reviewer's opinion, what Niko Tinbergen is to the Herring Gull, Brooke Worth is to the mosquitoes, moths, mice, birds and other creatures on his farm.

(Reviewed by Fred Schaeffer)

WALTER P. NICKELL
1903 - 1973

On January 2, 1973, Walter P. Nickell, Ph.D., a longtime member of EBBA, passed away, at the age of 69.

An avid birder since his teens in the Kentucky Woodlands, watched with love the broods of wild turkey, caught the flash of the cardinal and the Baltimore Oriole, learned to recognize the great horned owl and all the birds found in the land where he grew up. Spending his early teens in his father's camp as a lumberjack and a cook, he entered High School at age 17. He finished High School in two and a half years and college in about the same time, and earned his B.A. degree from Kentucky Wesleyan College. He has worked in New York as a social worker, became a high school principal in the southern mountains of Kentucky.

In 1935, Walter Nickell joined the Cranbrook Institute of Science, where he was employed since. He has been an aspiration to the youth and to conservation. He has given his time generously and with devotion to his work.

In 1964, he was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws, by Central Michigan University.

Walter Nickell, as bander, naturalist, conservationist, lecturer and writer, has banded 200,000 birds of almost 400 species during his work. He has published over 100 articles in the Wilson Bulletin, The Auk, The Jack-Pine Warbler, American Midland Naturalist, The Ring, Bird-Banding, and many more.

In 1962, he presented a paper at the 13th International Ornithological Congress on "The Return to the Same Tropical Winter Quarters of Northern Migrants." This paper, given in 1965, was the result of several trips to the Yucatan Peninsula, Republic of Honduras and British Honduras to band North American bird migrants and endemics.

The Walter P. Nickell Memorial Fund has been set up at Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858. This fund will be used to provide financial assistance to students pursuing careers in natural history. The Center for Cultural and Natural History at CMU will be the repository for many of his scientific information and most of his ornithological research data.

If anyone wishes to correspond with Mrs. Walter P. Nickell, she is residing at: 101 Inn Lane, Apt. 213, Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830

The Editor

FURTHER SPECULATIONS ON MYRTLE WARBLERS IN WINTER PLUMAGE

Erma J. Fisk

The more I try to age and sex my winter birds, the more I search the literature, the more letters I get in answer to my queries for the Bird Banding Laboratory's projected updating and expansion of Wood's manual, the more I realize how little we all know, and how important it is that banders really study their birds and take notes that can be checked against possible returns. Take Myrtle warblers, for instance. How many thousands are banded each year! But what do we know about them?

I took Myrtle warblers (*Dendroica coronata*) this winter when banding was dull. To guide me I had Robbins A Guide To The Ageing And Sexing Of Wood Warblers In Fall (1964), EBBA News (Vol 27, No. 5) and Weske's Preliminary Speculations Of The Sexing Of Myrtle Warblers In Winter Plumage, 1961 sent me by the BBL. With two such authorities I should get along.

Well, as we all know, Myrtles don't come in twos and threes, they come in netfulls, and you don't have time to study them often. I didn't want to close my nets because of Returns, which was how I hoped to find out something (maybe) so I examined at random only about 300. I used a criteria of

Forehead, rump and shoulder colors.
The width of the black centers of the upper tail coverts,
and the color of the edgings to these.
The width of the breast and flank streaks.
The amount and color of the yellow at the shoulder.
The black, if any, of the facial pattern.

I have had 24 Returns from two, three and four past years. I examined 27 specimens of winter birds at the University of Miami, all but two of which corroborated my suppositions. (I thank Dr. Weske for the sentence in his paragraph on museum specimens that "Determination of sex by dissection is frequently difficult on immature birds." He also had two birds that didn't agree with his findings.) I came up with one Fact and three Suppositions, reinforced by much of Robbins and Weske, but not always agreeing with them.

THE FACT Based on my Returns, females cannot be aged, older birds showing no distinction in plumage from younger. As Robbins states, those with edges to the upper tail coverts brownish-grey are females. However, these edgings on winter birds are often badly worn, so a bird lacking the brownish-gray is not necessarily female and must be judged by other characteristics.

I found females to be brown birds with brown rumps, brown or greyish shoulders, narrow to medium black centers to the upper tail coverts (there is an overlap here with some males) and narrow and sometimes indistinct streaks on the breast and flanks. Usually, but not always, their wing lengths are below 70 mm. Unlike Weske I did not find that I could separate the sexes by the line of demarcation, or its lack, in the breast feathers. I pulled a series, glued them on a card and submitted them to my ornithological visitors. They were hesitant to claim a difference. Unlike Robbins I found I could not differentiate males by blue foreheads as I observed almost none. This is not an absolute statement, as on my early-winter birds I did not check the foreheads, but it applies to at least the last 150. Only four showed blue. These I