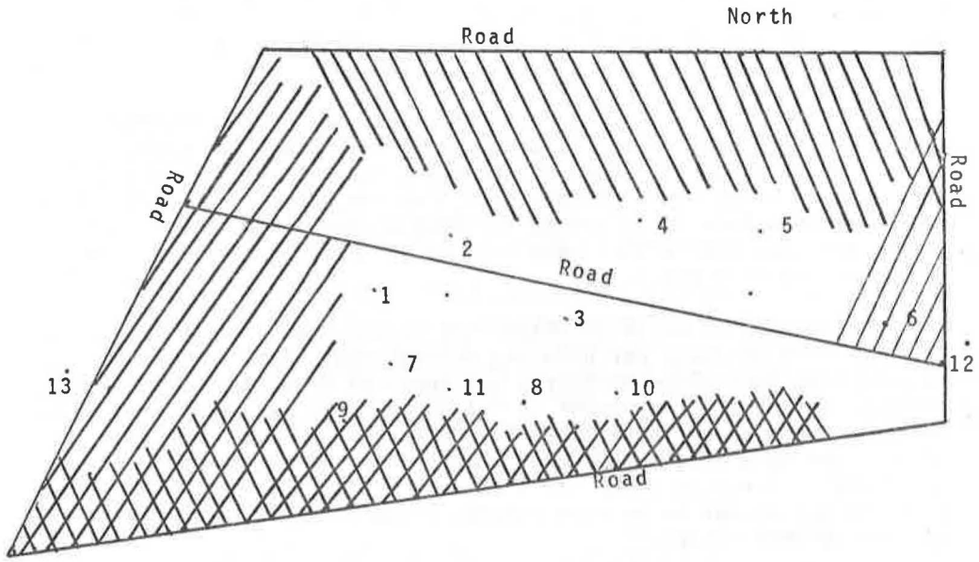

SWAMP AND HARDWOODS

YOUNG PINE 4 to 12" diam.

LARGE PINE AND HARDWOODS WITH ENVELOPING UNDERSTORY

From current literature we can readily understand that any conclusions drawn from habitat acreage needed in this particular study site would not necessarily apply to other sites, such as some marginal areas of Florida or Texas. We do not, in fact, have a picture of what an optimum habitat consists. We can safely state that thinning of trees beyond a certain minimum will cause abandonment and abnormal predation in a clan.

One of the greatest problems in the study of the Red-cockaded woodpecker continues to be the fact that there is no species which approximates its life history. New questions continue to arise that have no parallel in the literature. Many of its current habits are possibly relic in origin and no single answer will suffice in its current habitat utilization.

The greatest single need today is for our federal government to set aside, on public lands, areas to be manipulated for optimum use by the Red-cockaded woodpecker. These areas should be available for scientific study and possible manipulation to gain knowledge of minimal requirements of the species. If the Red-cockaded woodpecker is to survive in the current projected 25 to 30 year clear cut rotations that are in use on so much of our pine land in the south today, it needs help. I, for one, believe that this is highly possible and have some field observations that will support this line of thought.

--Rt. 4. Charleston, S. C. 29407

OPERATION WINDOW-TRAP: How to do your Thing, Bit by Bit, or Confessions of a Small-time Bander.

By Maurice Broun

It was early December, 1971. The birds were having a ball. Everywhere I looked my feathered guests were swirling from feeder to feeder. A bander's dream. Great potential for large-scale banding. But I had decided, earlier, to put off my usual commitment to winter banding.

A few days passed. The well-stocked feeders (eight altogether) became more heavily patronized. Birds attract birds and our farm, with its hedgerows, weed-covered fields, abundant cover, has been an oasis for wildlife. The nearest feeding station, a mile distant. No competition. Then I had second thoughts, and the

nagging feeling: to band, or not to band? With so many birds around, I mused, I might be missing the boat.

My apparent inertia was really traceable to a heavy load of desk work and a desire to avoid distractions. Nor did I care to wrap up continuously to hike from my desk to the choice trapping areas on the east side of the house, a hundred paces or so round trip. Besides, I was reluctant to take on the usual clerical work associated with banding!

From my desk one morning I gazed down upon the dense thicket of lilacs. The nearest branches reached to within ten feet of my window. Beneath this excellent cover my best feeding station was jam-packed with birds, perhaps twenty species. Another feeder, however, was right under my nose: a tray 34 x 11 inches, attached to the window-sill and protected from the elements by a wide, slanting sheet of glass. Here a score of goldfinches and tree sparrows were feeding shoulder to shoulder.

A banded goldfinch alighted on the window tray, generously stocked with sunflower seeds, fine-cracked corn. The bird had a band on its left leg. Not one of my birds! All of my birds are banded on the right leg. That settled it. I'd have to catch that goldfinch. But when. . .

One morning while I was giving the typewriter a workout I glanced to the tray to see a junco with what appeared to be a well-worn band, on the right leg - a return, no doubt. Thanks to a one-way window which allows the birds to feed in peace no matter how much movement there may be indoors, the junco continued to feed, within inches of my elbow. An eyeball to eyeball confrontation developed and, with patience, I was able to make out the band number: 74-83271. I had banded the bird as an adult, on 3 April 1968. Great! And welcome back. . . This bird, and the aforementioned goldfinch provided the fresh stimulus that launched me on a most pleasant, nearly effortless and rewarding winter of banding - without leaving my desk!

So I installed a 4-cell trap that fitted snugly on the window tray. The operation was highly irregular. Whole days passed without catching a bird. The trap was filled with food, left unset most of the time, and the birds were free to come and go. But when time and circumstances permitted, I would trap and band, a half hour, perhaps as much as an hour, during the forenoon only. The daily catch varied:

six to thirty birds, and twice I caught fifty or more birds on bad-weather days when the birds swarmed to the feeders. It was banding de luxe, for I never had to bundle up to run out into the deep freeze. And at no time did the operation become a chore.

During the 21 weeks beginning 13 December when I recorded the return junco, I handled from this one trap a total of 923 birds of 13 species. Indeed, I handled well over a thousand birds if we reckon with repeats. I was in for some very pleasant surprises.

Evening grosbeaks were by far the most numerous birds at the farm most of the winter and they registered accordingly at the window tray. We may easily have entertained at least a thousand grosbeaks, however.

Tree sparrows and juncos were present in good numbers - perhaps a hundred of each, but only the bolder individuals came to the window to compete with the aggressive grosbeaks, goldfinches and purple finches. In short, the table scarcely reflects the total wintering population of birds at Strawberry Hill Farm.

Details on some of the more interesting returns and recoveries follow:

Purple finch 75-08261, banded as a full-plumaged male on 12 December 1968, returned 2 January 1972 - probably 7 years old.

Purple finch 75-08322, banded in brown plumage on 8 March 1969, returned as a sparkling adult male in rich strawberry-colored plumage, on 2 January 1972.

Tree sparrows 115-83073 and 115-83080 were banded on 12 November 1968. Thereafter they became extraordinary examples of togetherness, showing up, always together, on the following dates: 22 February 1969; 12 December 1969; 13 December 1971; and 21 February 1972. And 115-83073 is with us at this writing, having "signed in" as a return - 5 on 7 March 1973 - at least five years old. I marvel at these wee feathered travellers returning to us, year after year from some nesting area in northern Quebec or Ontario. Come to think of it, 115-83073 has logged at least 12,000 miles of travel (four round trips), really amazing for a bird weighing a few grams.

Evening Grosbeak 69-197371 was banded as a "2nd-year male" on 27 January 1966 by R. A. Harlow, Jr., at Wareham, Massachusetts, and was taken by me on 2 January 1972.

Goldfinch 105-78560, with the band on left leg, the bird that started it all, finally entered my trap on 22 December. It has been banded 20 April 1971 at Storrs, Connecticut, by members of the Natchaug Ornithological Society.

Goldfinch 123-55563, banded by me as an immature male on 13 December (the first day of operations) was "found dead along highway" at Erie, Pennsylvania, on 15 July 1972. It was reported by a gentlemen from Harrisburg. Both goldfinch recoveries point up what all of us know: these birds really get around.

And so, I have demonstrated what one small trap can do, ideally located, among large numbers of birds. But it presupposes a lot of elbow grease. I wonder how many times I raised and lowered that window to haul in over a thousand birds (repeats included)?

Bandings from one trap, 13 December 1971 - 10 May 1972

	Species	Returns	Recoveries
26	Chickadees		
6	Tufted titmice	2	
6	White-breasted Nuthatches		
2	Cardinals		
1	Indigo bunting		
382	Evening grosbeaks (166 males)		2 (1 local)
180	Purple finches (39 adult males)	2	
1	Common redpoll		
23	Pine siskins		
181	Goldfinches (146 males)	4	3 (1 local)
27	Slate-colored juncos	4	
55	Tree sparrows	10	
5	Field sparrows	1	—
895		23	5
23			
5			
923	Total		

--Strawberry Hill Farm, R. D. 1, New Ringgold, Pa. 17960

PURPLE FINCHES - 1958-1970, Storrs, Conn.
By Ruth A. Løf

Purple finches have been an intriguing bird to observe and study. For some time it has interested me to try to establish means to improve determination of sex through plumage variations, but as yet I have discovered no simple rules which apply to every case.

My property has open lawn with shrubby edges bordering woodland containing mostly deciduous trees, also a few hemlock groves and an occasional pine tree. Abutting the property is a large open field. Mostly, I have used Potter traps on a stand to capture purple finches. However, the year that I had an abundant population, I set Cloverleaf and Mason traps on the ground and caught them 15 and 20 at a time.

The first year that I banded a substantial number of purple finches was in 1959 when I banded 192. This stimulated my interest in the species. Each year thereafter it appeared that I could depend on a reasonable number coming to my station in the spring. Also, returns and recoveries were beginning to show up. (See record at end of paper)

During the year 1963, which happended to be a "finch year", I banded 682 in March, April, and May. This was truly a fine opportunity to make careful observations of plumage with the expected hope of seeing at least an average return the next year. Of the 682 birds, 254 were in male plumage, and 428 were in varying shades from plain drab brown to spotty and extensive olive, yellow, orange, and rosiness mixed with brown. A year later only four birds returned: two that had been banded as males, one banded in brown plumage returned as adult male, and one brown bird that was still brown. I also had three foreign recoveries a year after banding: one each from North Carolina, Nova Scotia, and Ontario.

So recovery of seven out of 682 was disappointing, and my plans for seeing again many of the finches on which I had made plumage descriptions had to be abandoned. The following years have never produced additional recoveries on the birds banded in 1963. It was an unusual year, and the purple finches that were here must definitely have been out of their regular flight pattern.

In spite of the low recovery on the 1963 birds, in a total of 1452 purple finches banded from 1958 to 1970, 80 birds returned or were recovered elsewhere. This makes a recovery rate of 5.5%.