

My peak day of the fall, however was on October 10th when 93 birds of 20 species were banded. On this day I could not get my nets furred until 3:30 p.m. Thirty-eight white-throats, 14 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 8 hermit thrushes and 5 purple finches among others were banded.

In all 704 birds were banded. The five most numerous were: White-throated Sparrow 99, Gray Catbird 69, Purple Finch 58, Common Yellowthroat 39 and Red-eyed Vireo 39. All have appeared on the list of most commonly banded birds at this station in previous years.

As in former falls most of my birds 60% - were HY. Of the others 29% were U and 11% were AHY.

There were no unusual birds but a few trends were noted. Hermit Thrushes went up from 0 in '70, 16 in '71, 12 in '72 to 30 in '73. Ruby-crowned Kinglets were especially numerous. They went from 1 in '70, 19 in '71, 22 in '72 to 27 in '73.

Red-eyed Vireos were better than last year but still down from years previous to that. I banded 72 in '69, 112 in '70, 76 in '71, 24 in '72 and 39 in '73.

The most conspicuous change I noted, however, was the decided decline in Parulidae.

Nashville Warblers went from 25 last year to 5 this year; Magnolias from 25 last year to 14 this year. Only 2 Cape May Warblers showed up. Previous records show 35 in '70, 36 in '71, 7 in '72. Aside from the Yellowthroats the only wood warbler to reach 15 was the Black-throated Green Warbler. The total number of Parulidae for '73 was 156. In '72 the total was 226, in '71 - 198, in '70 - 160.

All banding was done by me, Harriet Marsi, #7964, or my sub-permittee, Rick Marsi.

--Harriet Marsi

Bird Bander's Diary



From my vantage point in eastern coastal Maine one tends to be a little more concerned with migration patterns than with plumages. Birds pass along the coast in distinct waves often concentrating on heavily wooded headlands, sometimes in vast numbers. Fog, rain, and wind often interrupt the banding activities of those of us with small stations. Even with the large numbers of birds found in small areas it is often impossible to band the headlands themselves. Private property, lack of roads, and thick trees prevent more than occasional samplings at these locations. More avid (and physically fit) birders and occasional banders to venture out offshore islands where one has a better than average chance at a western rarity or perhaps large numbers of one certain specie.

For me interest in migrants extends even beyond the offshore island. Once a month and especially in September a trip is made across the Bay of Fundy on the Canadian National Railways auto ferry Bluenose. The trip takes six hours each way and one can leave Bar Harbor at 8 a.m. and return by 9:30 p.m. Taking the trip means sacrificing a day of banding since the day of the trip must be clear and calm (I am quite prone to seasickness) an ideal banding day along the coast. I can look across from my banding station on Wakeag Neck at the head of Frenchmans Bay at sunrise and if no surf is running then the decision is made to cross to Nova Scotia. I was a birder first and a bander second for many years. This, plus the presence of one or two out-of-state birders who usually want to see pelagic birds prevails so I usually decide that there is probably nothing but Swainson's Thrushes and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in the back yard anyway and the day of banding is sacrificed. A forty minute ride around the head of the bay where we board the vessel, eat breakfast, then take stations in the bow for the six hour trip across. Notes taken on the trip as follows.

First hour: We have cleared Frenchmans Bay and are now heading eastward into a 2 foot ground swell. Sixty-five degrees, wind NW at 10 mph, clear. A flock of Red Crossbills flew over

the ship as it passes Burnt Porcupine Island. Bald Eagle roost on Burnt Porcupine Island was empty but a number of Black Guillemots around the ledges provided the first live birds for two Texas birders who are making the trip with me. Flocks of several thousand female and immature Common Eiders around Egg Rock at the mouth of the bay. At three miles out a Hummingbird crosses the bow headed toward shore.

Second hour: The lower shoreline has now dropped out of sight in the haze but the tops of the mountains on Mt. Desert Island are still in good view. At 20 miles out a Flicker passes, headed toward Mt. Desert. We pass through a flock of 2000-3000 male Eiders. They are in molt and are flightless. Apparently they come out here for safety while in this stage. The water is over 250 feet deep so they cannot be feeding. The closer ones dive under the ship while the further birds rapidly paddle off to either side. At 30 miles out two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers approach from ahead, circle the ship once then head for Mt. Desert, now nearly hidden in the haze. Many Herring and Black-backed Gulls follow in the wake. A cloud of black smoke on the horizon ahead indicates another ship, unusual on the Maine side of the Bay.

Third hour: A flock of Cowbirds, 12 of them fly across ahead of us. They are on a beeline to the south. The nearest land for them will be Cape Cod 180 miles away. One wonders if the NW wind will blow them further and further from shore and they will be lost. My attention is called to a flock of 5 Purple Finches hopping along the lifeboat deck. I did not see them come aboard. Four are brown and one is a good ASY-M. They refuse to settle down and keep flying from the ship being snatched away by the slipstream passing around the superstructure. They laboriously fight their way back along the wake then land and hop around the deck. Amazingly the male has a bright band on his right leg. At 40 miles out two Ovenbirds and a Cape May Warbler fly on board, perch awhile, then fly off over the stern. We do not see them again. Forty-five miles out; the ship seen ahead turns out to be a Soviet trawler. The second I have seen in two years. She is gray with the numbers A6-565 painted across the side and a hammer and sickle on the stack. It is about 200 feet long with large nets hung along the sides. About 200 Greater Shearwaters and a few Manx Shearwaters fly along side as she makes her way slowly northward toward Grand Manan Island.

Fourth hour: Many pelgics now. A few of the Greater Shearwaters are in a plumage which is not described in any of the field guides. A brown, diffuse cap, lack of rump patch, and a "softened" rather than scaly appearance to the back. These resemble the Cory's Shearwater but as the birds sweep very close ahead of the bow it can

be seen that they have an all dark bill lacking the diagnostic yellow patch at the base characteristic of the Cory's. Many petrels at 50 miles out. They do not follow the ship as stated in field guides. With the number of birds around us it doesn't take very long to point out to my visitors the distinct difference in flight patterns of the Leach's and Wilson's Storm-petrels. With practice one can identify them at a half-mile in poor light. In August I observed a small petrel which was seen flying beside and thus in direct comparison with a Wilson's Petrel. It was undoubtedly a British Storm-petrel although sight records are not yet accepted. One was captured in a mist net on Seal Island, Nova Scotia in 1972. At 60 miles out another flock of Cowbirds with one Red-wing with them passes beside us heading west. Although only 40 miles from Nova Scotia they continue toward Maine. Two Redstarts, both female and 2 Cape Mays have appeared on deck. A Cape May perches only 2 feet away and a Redstart hops across the foot of a tourist who is braving the wind for a few minutes. He does not notice the bird. The Purple Finches are still with us and although they seem to have elected to ride back to Nova Scotia they do not rest and continue to exhaust themselves flying about the ship. Attempts to read the number on the male's band are unsuccessful and they do not come close enough to capture by hand. Sixty-three miles out; two Pomarine Jaegers fly by. A few Herring Gulls follow. The Black-backed Gulls are much more pelagic. I pick them out as I scan ahead with my binoculars. They are just sitting on the water, miles from anywhere. They fly toward the ship as we approach. Two years ago a Herring Gull with a distinctive grease mark on the breast was seen to follow the ship all the way from Bar Harbor to Yarmouth, 98 miles. The gulls "surf" above the slipstream and often go 10 minutes without flapping even though we are going 16 knots with a 10 mph wind from the side.

Fifth hour: Approaching the Nova Scotia coast but it is still invisible in the haze ahead. A Great Blue Heron flies by about 3 feet off the water. He is only 30 miles from land but is headed south into open ocean. If the wind blows him far enough eastward he might hit the Cape Sable area.

At 25 miles from Nova Scotia another Yellow-bellied Sapsucker flies up, circles once then heads westward. The migratory drive must be very strong. It is now noon and the sapsucker must have left the coast well after sunrise. As we pass the Lurcher Shoal hundreds of Shearwaters, mostly Greater but with a few Sooty and Manx along with both storm-petrels and thousands of Red Phalaropes around us. (In this account I have not been describing the sightings of most of the pelagic birds as they occurred. The

count is now 2321 Greater Shearwaters, 13 Sooty, 12 Manx, plus many others such as Gannets, Parasitic Jaegers, Red and Northern Phalaropes). In the Lurcher Shoals we pass several fishing boats. Harrassing gulls and shearwaters among them are two Skua. This is the high point for the Texas birders. I wish there was some way the Arctic and Antarctic races of the Skua could be distinguished visually. Theory has it that the Skua seen in the Bay of Fundy in summer might be the Antarctic forms which would be biologically wintering as are the Greater Shearwaters and Wilson's Storm-petrels.

Sixth hour: The much lower Nova Scotia coast is now fully in view, 6 miles ahead. At this point the Purple Finches leave the boat and head for Cape Forchu at the mouth of Yarmouth Harbor. There are only three birds, the male and two others. No sign of the other two. The finches drop close to the water and pull away from the boat. About 100 yards ahead of the bow a Black-backed Gull sweeps around and knocks the male into the water. The gull quickly lands, grabs the inert male then flies down the side of the ship as we approach. A second gull hits one of the brown birds so hard that a puff of feathers erupts and drifts down wind. There is no sign of the third bird. This is not an unusual occurrence. Lobsterman have often reported this to me as occurring around their boats in fog when land birds often land on their decks. I only regret not having been able to get the band number. Someone would have had an interesting return.

Yarmouth Harbor: It is 2 p.m. Low tide and Willets, peeps, and many Great Blue Herons are standing on the mud flats close aboard either side of the ship as we slowly head into dock.

2:05 p.m. As we tie up to the dock 3 Starlings fly up from the parking lot and perch on the stern. Perhaps they intend to perch in some sheltered spot and ride across to Bar Harbor. If they are evolving any sort of intelligence perhaps they may realize that it would be the safest and logical thing to do.

-- William C. Townsend, Box 373, Sorrento, Maine 04677

THE EASTERN BLUEBIRD PAIR BOND: COMMENTS AND CALCULATIONS

Benedict C. Pinkowski

The question of the duration of the pair bond among various bird species has long interested ornithologists, banders, and other avian enthusiasts. We all know that at least some individuals of certain species are known to enter into a union lasting for more than one breeding season. Such species are normally quite large and have a rather long life expectancy. A list of these species which remain faithful to the same mate for more than one season would include such diverse groups as the albatrosses and petrels, some geese, swans, terns, and gulls, eagles, certain owls, and many members of the family Corvidae.

Smaller species with a correspondingly shorter life expectancy are rarely observed to have the same mate for more than one season. Nice (1943) found that in the Song Sparrow (Melospiza melodia) a re-pairing of mates occurred in only 8 out of a possible 30 instances in which both adults returned for a subsequent nesting season.

Among those songbirds that raise more than one brood per season, it is not unusual for a pair bond to be dissolved after one nesting as both adults seek new partners for their second nest. Kendeigh (1941) reported that in only 40% of his cases did House Wrens (Troglodytes aedon) remain mated to the same adult for a second nesting. Nice (1930) summed up much published information on this matter by stating that in the majority of cases the mates stayed together, except for those species that leave a territory after the young have fledged.

During the past 4 years I have color-marked 80 AHY Eastern Bluebirds (Sialia sialis) at 4000-acre Stony Creek Metropolitan Park in southeastern Michigan. On only one occasion have I observed the same pair of adults to be mated together for more than one season. That observation gave me cause to wonder about the likelihood of that event ever having happened in the first place.

Of 34 adult males which I color-marked, 8 (23.6%) returned for at least one subsequent season. Four of these returned for one season and 4 returned for two seasons. The corresponding figures for females are 46 banded and 5 returned (10.9%), 4 for one season and only 1 for two seasons.