

EBBA NUS

A FRIENDLY REPORT ISSUED MONTHLY TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE EASTERN BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION

REACHING
OVER
375
BANDERS
EVERY MONTH

March, 1943

"LET US BAND TOGETHER"

No. 3, Vol. 6



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BARE-HANDED BANDING IN A BARN

Considering the present outlook on the farm labor situation and the possibility that some banders may help farmers this year, it is interesting to note the banding done in 1942 by Richard B. Fischer of Flushing, L.I., N.Y. in a barn.

Mr. Fischer writes, "Mr. Ackerly, a friend of mine at Beaver Kill, N.Y., has a barn with a hay loft on the top floor. There is a window at the far end of this loft. Since the doors are always open, birds can and do enter to eat seeds off the floor. One day I entered the loft and surprised a Song Sparrow in the middle of his lunch. Since the window and the doorway are light places in the dimly-lit barn, the bird would naturally fly toward them in escaping. As I approached from the door-way, this sparrow naturally headed for the window, the top of which was closed and the bottom half open about eight inches. After fluttering against the glass for a few minutes, the bird hopped or fell down into the space formed by the overlapping window frames. Escape was then almost impossible. I climbed up to the window and slipped my hand over the bird.

"Following this first capture I caught between 20 and 30 birds in the hay-loft in the same manner; most of them were Song or Chipping Sparrows, but I once caught an Ovenbird. A Chipping Sparrow which I banded in this manner on Aug. 30, 1941 was recaptured in the same barn in the same way on Sept. 5, 1942 and again the next day. I've added a few improvements which makes that set-up almost perfect. Most birds would fly to the center of the window, but a few went through the open part and escaped, so I fixed that by fastening a piece of burlap across the open space. Instead of leaving the sliding doors wide open, I closed them half way. Quietly approaching the barn from one side so the birds can't see me coming, I suddenly entered and quickly closed the doors behind me. The birds are both frightened and attracted to the window, where they are soon caught and banded.

"Larger birds, such as Catbirds and Thrushes occasionally enter the barn, but they are too large to fit into the space between the windows, so I keep a long-handled insect net handy for them.

"Capturing birds bare-handed is even simpler down on the first floor of the barn where the cows are kept. Some of the grain mixture fed to the cows always falls on the floor and attracts birds. I use the same manner of entering the barn as I do upstairs in the hay-loft, but I keep all the windows completely closed. Since the space is quite small and the ceiling only 7 ft. high, the birds are easily captured by driving them to a window and quickly grabbing them. Last summer I caught about 20 birds in the lower part of the barn."

Mr. Fischer closed his third year of banding on Nov. 26, 1942 with an annual total of 3,592 birds of 98 species.

A FREAK NUTHATCH

Late in January friends described a bird to A. L. Baily of Westtown, Pa. that he believed couldn't exist. A bird with a crossed bill, Nuthatch-like habits and shape, yet darker than the regular White-breasted Nuthatch. It didn't seem right to him. Mr. Baily was told that the bird was coming to the window-sill for food regularly, so he went to see for himself.

"I was surprised when I saw it, for it was just as they described. I set up a one-cell Albe Ground Trap on the sill and within 10 minutes had the bird in my hand. It was decidedly a freak Nuthatch. Its basic markings were those of a White-breasted Nuthatch, but all the underparts, breast, and head markings which should have been white or light gray, were a very dark gray color, the head being the darkest. The bill was crossed all right and the lower mandible measured 15/16 of an inch while the upper mandible measured 13/16. There was no sign of the bill ever being broken in any way. From all appearances growth appeared natural.

"The bird measured 4 and 7/8 inches from tip of bill to tail." (This is about an inch short of museum specimens although I have always believed many museum skins are slightly stretched, so that there would be a variation between a living bird and prepared specimens.-Ed.) "After placing band 42-136085, I released it. The Nuthatch can be seen regularly and I believe I can catch it for close observation at almost any time."

Mr. Baily would be interested in any other bird freaks that banders may have caught or anybody's opinion on this bird. His address is in care of the Westtown School, Westtown, Pa.

BANDING AT PRATTSBURG, N. Y.

Carleton A. Sturdevant of Prattsburg, N.Y. writes that in his first year as a bander he placed bands on 1,482 birds. This was in the period from Nov. 9, 1941 to Nov. 30, 1942. Next year he hopes to do better as he now has his trapping equipment built. He now has 4 Govt. Sparrow Traps, 6 one-cell potters, 1 four-cell top-opening trap, a 6-cell Brenckle, A Fabian, a tilting self-setting trap and a small half-size Govt. Sparrow trap with a board bottom. He writes with these he trapped over 800 birds of 43 species.

"Charles Spiker lives about 7 miles from my station; Verdi Burtch about 8 miles and Malcolm Lerch about 20 miles. We get each others birds quite often. It is interesting to note how we all vary with different species. The other three banders all live within a mile of Keuka Lake and catch very few Chipping Sparrows while I caught 132. I banded 1 Towhee while they catch a lot and so it goes. I get a goodly number of Baltimore Orioles from 15 nests while they have very few. I trapped 12 adults of this species and banded 34 immatures last year. I also have a barn full of Barn Swallows and banded 387, mostly immatures. I caught 36 Robins in the fall migration using elderberries and woodbine berries for bait. This is also good Bluebird and Pheobe bait and I caught a Crested Flycatcher in a trap so baited."

"I catch Cowbirds in the Spring and Fall and consider them the worst birds for biting of any so far caught. Have had 18 returns and early in January this year I had a good run of Tree Sparrows. 83 banded up to Jan. 20th. I caught a Northern Shrike in a Govt. Sparrow Trap. It killed 4 Tree Sparrows in the trap at the time. Two of these I had banded the day before and the other two were new." ...A busy banding station EBBA would say! Congratulations.

ARTIFICIAL NESTS FOR CLIFF SWALLOWS

So many banders have shown an interest in the artificial nests built for Cliff Swallows by Carleton Sturdevant of Prattsburg, N. Y., that we offer a more detailed explanation of the construction this month.

In February's issue the material and method was fully described. Mr. Sturdevant has very kindly donated one of the nests to our Association. Unfortunately it was broken in the mail, - yet it was possible to reconstruct it and obtain the following measurements:

SIDE VIEW: The entrance hole is $1\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter and the throat is $1\frac{1}{2}$ " long. Note this has a very slight incline. This is sometimes built up by the birds, themselves, possibly to hide the contents of the nest.

FRONT VIEW: The main inner cup is 6" across and about $2\frac{1}{4}$ " deep. The lower inner cup is 3" across and about $1\frac{1}{2}$ " deep.

TOP VIEW: The top is made of $\frac{1}{2}$ " wood, beveled inward and resembles a pie-plate. It is roughly circular about 6" in diameter and should fit snugly but not too tight.

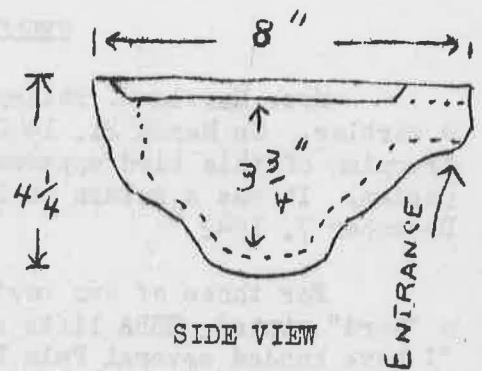
Sheet iron tabs with slots for screws should project slightly more than an inch on the sides. These are used to fasten the nest under the eaves and make it easy to install and examine at will for banding purposes.

BAIT FOR ORIOLES

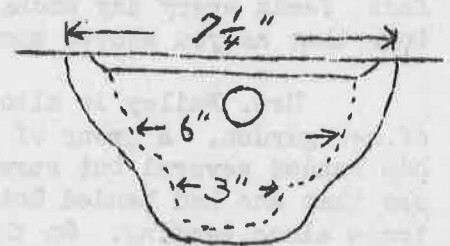
Mr. Sturdevant has also had very good luck trapping orioles. He writes that he tried all kinds of string but had poor luck. He then tried using horse hair and found it irresistible. Orioles would just flock to it and he caught them over and over again, 8 or 10 a day. This, of course, was at nest-building time. He also caught some Chipping Sparrows. He recommends pieces of horse hair 8 to 12 inches long.

MYRTLES RETURNING IN THE SOUTH

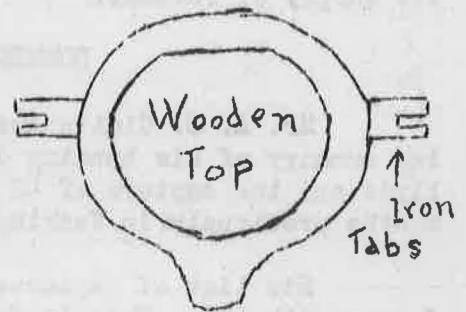
From 116 Myrtle Warblers banded by Mrs. Zora P. Jensen of Chapel Hill, N.C. last winter, 6 have already returned this winter up to Feb. 17th. This is a remarkable return percentage for warblers. She also reports the return of one of two Hermit Thrushes she banded last winter and the return of a White-throat out of 22 banded last year. Purple Finches have not visited her station at all this year. Mrs. Leslie Stauber of Port Norris, N.J. is studying the ticks Mrs. Jensen has found on her Juncos.



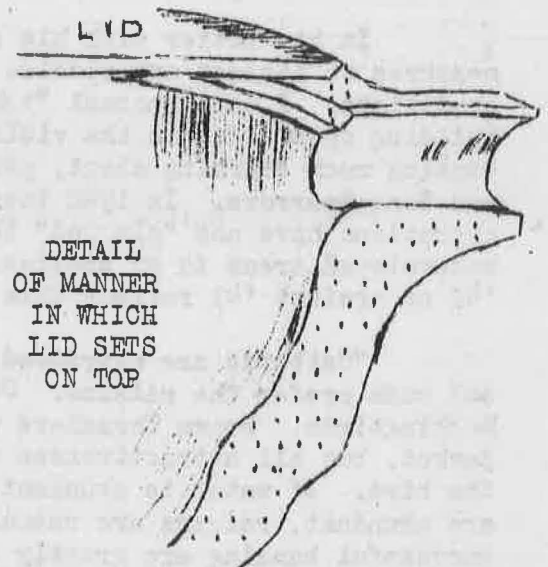
SIDE VIEW



FRONT VIEW



TOP VIEW



DETAIL
OF MANNER
IN WHICH
LID SETS
ON TOP

YELLOW PALM WARBLER RETURNS 3 TIMES!

Mrs. Harold H. Bailey of Coral Gables, Fla. reports an amazing record for a warbler. On March 21, 1940 she banded a Yellow Palm Warbler and to date her re-trapping of this bird apparently coincides with its migratory flights through her garden. It was a return on Dec. 9, 1940; retaken again Nov. 4, 1941; and again on December 7, 1942.

For those of our northern members who are now looking toward the close of a "hard" winter, EBBA lifts a paragraph from Mrs. Bailey's letter written Jan. 29th: "I have banded several Palm Warblers and often see them in the garden. One, in fact, feeds every day among the poinsettia blooms just outside the window". Picture that as you shovel snow away from your traps.

Mrs. Bailey is also interested in Blue Jays, referring to them as nomads of her garden. A group of 3 or 4 stay around for a few days, then disappear. She has banded several but rarely gets a return. On Jan. 7, 1943 she finally caught one that she had banded Oct. 20, 1941. This is the first time it had entered the traps since banding. On the other hand Mockingbirds are constant trap visitors and one, banded Dec. 15, 1942 has repeated 18 times up to the date of her letter. She believes it would have repeated more often if she had not decided to ration its supply of raisins.

COMMENTS ON BAITS AND LOCAL SURROUNDINGS

Mr. A. E. Clattenburg, Jr., of Washington, D. C. submits a most interesting summary of his banding during 1942. This report shows the banding of 437 new birds and the capture of 42 returns and 1 foreign recovery, a Starling banded 14 months previously in Washington by W. H. Lawrence.

His list of captures, containing 26 species, is headed by Slate-colored Juncos with 111. This is followed by Song Sparrow 49; Catbird 41; Starling 39; Cardinal 35; White-throated Sparrow 27; Robin 26; Brown Thrasher 20; and many others.

In his letter with his summary, Mr. Clattenburg writes: "I take no special measures to attract any species so that my "take" reflects local habitat and other conditions. I had abnormal "takes" in July and August, 1941, owing to various building operations in the vicinity which disturbed the entire bird population, causing much shifting about, particularly of juvenile Catbirds, Thrashers, Robins and Song Sparrows. In 1942 there were no corresponding disturbances. Building operations have now "plugged" the only natural approach from a nearby park and undeveloped areas to my station. The drop of 25 percent in the birds banded in '42 as against '41 reflect this difference."

"Catbirds are attracted to water-drip traps, white bread and to raisins and much prefer the raisins. Other birds attracted by raisins are Blue Jays and Mockingbirds. Brown Thrashers will go to any length to get peanuts in the red jacket, but all attractiveness of bait merely capitalizes on the basic desire of the bird. If water is abundant, the drip evokes no response. If wild berries are abundant, raisins are untouched. I am convinced that the factors leading to successful banding are greatly akin to those leading to successful predation and have felt that way ever since I read "The Great Horned Owl and Its Prey in North-Central U.S. (Research Bul. 277, Iowa State College). I have not determined any method of capitalizing on the situation, but the thought may help some one else."

A TOWHEE RECOVERED IN FLORIDA

Howard Mahnken of Brooklyn, N.Y. reports the recovery of a female Towhee banded by him Apr. 3, 1940 as caught at South Jacksonville, Fla. Mr. Mahnken has banded 13 Towhees of which 7 were males.

NEWS FOR THE BIRD BANDERS

In regard to the comments of Raymond T. Fuller of Winterton, N.Y. on a handbook describing plumage changes etc. throughout the year, (EBBA NUS, No. 1, Vol. 6), Winn Jones of Cleveland, Ohio writes the "Manual for the Identification of the Birds of Minnesota and Neighboring States" will be helpful. That part of it which has to do with keying out warblers is considered indispensable by this member of the Inland Ass'n.

Merrill Wood, at The Pennsylvania State College, is conducting an Agricultural Experiment Station project on the structure of feathers. The results should be helpful to certain wildlife investigations and some bird-banding work.

A change of address of Alfred F. Satterthwait to Urbana, Ill., reported in the Dec. issue of Inland News was the cause of two men, former school-mates, writing each other. Dr. Wood, our vice-president wrote Mr. Satterthwait, who is with the Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Entomology and formerly lived at Webster Groves, Mo. Mr. Satterthwaite writes in part as follows:

"When the Biological Survey took over the N. Y. Bird Banding project in 1920, we, with some of our Webster Groves Nature Study Society bird-lovers constituted 3% or more of all Bird Banding Cooperators. That was possible only because we were in on the ground floor. Dr. Harry Oberholser saw for the first time the bird banding operation when at our house. He saw us band a Brown Thrasher.----" EBBA NUS would like to know about more banders who have been banding for 25 years and would wager that Beecher S. Bowdish of Demarest, N.J. could tell about many of the missing 97%.

Mr. Satterthwait goes on to say in his letter that, "one Junco entered our trap and hands 99 times in less than 3 months; a Carolina Chickadee returned about 5 years to the day, each time to the same trap in the same position and that a Tufted Titmouse came in 42 times and a female Cardinal 73 times."

During December, Howard H. Krug, of Chesley, Ont., banded two Blue Jays and felt considerably elated as they are not common around his town. They entered a House Trap with a funnel opening in the top, attracted by a piece of beef fat. Due to the depth of the snow, Mr. Krug writes that ground-opening traps are almost useless in the winter for him, so he depends on the top-opening funnel type. During December and early January he caught 95 Starlings but stormy weather drove them further south, making them scarce toward the end of January. He writes, "Banding Starlings is not so interesting but occasionally I attract something else by keeping the traps in operation. A few years ago I found a Northern Shrike in the trap with a few Starlings and English Sparrows. This Shrike was blind in one eye where a scar tissue had grown over it which made me think that at some time or other it had tried to take something a little too powerful for it. It must have been a wary old bird that it could escape other predators with only the one good eye."

Edwin A. Mason of the Wharton Bird Banding Station at Groton, Mass. had a splendid banding article in the January Bulletin of the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Not only does this article tell of the romance of banding, the growth of the Wharton station from a beginning in 1914 until now they have banded about 48,000 birds, but adds a wealth of data as to the results obtained from studies centering around what are usually called "garden birds". All banders should attempt to obtain a copy of this article by writing to either Mr. Mason or the Society.

That they
BOOK
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HUNTINGTON, N.Y.

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Prof. Dayton Stoner
New York State Museum
Albany, New York



Sec. 562 P. L. & R.



Report a dead bird wearing a band, when found, to

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