

habit is being acquired by this species or whether I was witnessing the survival of a primitive custom which once might well have included gathering all nesting-material in this manner. If the latter view seems to be the more probable, it is natural to speculate why the species adopted such a laborious process of procuring nesting-material and the conditions under which the habit was gradually lost.

It has been a custom of mine for a number of years at nesting-time to place a considerable quantity of chickens' feathers in my garden for the use of Swallows in nest-building. Our four nesting species use them extensively, the Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon l. lunifrons*), the Barn Swallow (*Hirundo erythrogaster*), The Tree Swallow (*Iridoprocne bicolor*), and the Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*), but especially the latter species. I have seen fifteen or twenty Bank Swallows at the same time flying about these feathers, which were placed on the ground, gathering them up usually on the wing, and it is a beautiful sight to see with what ease, grace, and variety of movement the feathers are secured. The nearest colony of this last species known to me is located a half-mile distant.—WENDALL P. SMITH, March, 1925.

Juvenile Birds.—Banders should make every effort to recognize birds-of-the-year when they have them in hand, and their record-cards and note-books should record the fact. Not every bander handles fledglings, but most of us have visits from juvenile birds during July and August which should be identified as such in most instances, thus recording the age of the bird within narrow limits. At this season, juvenile birds may be recognized by the softness of the plumage and the absence of feather-wear. A lens is very useful to study the condition of the plumage, particularly the tips of the tail and wing feathers. The tarsi of many young birds are commonly larger than those of old birds. It is quite possible and very desirable to become acquainted with the fall and winter plumages of birds about banding stations, for sex and immaturity in several species can often be accurately determined at these seasons if the published data be studied. The best papers dealing with the subject, from the inland bander's point of view, are: "The Molting of Birds with Special Reference to the Plumages of the Smaller Land Birds of Eastern North America," by Witmer Stone, Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, 1896, pages 108-167, and "The Sequence of Plumages and Moults of the Passerine Birds of New York", by Jonathan Dwight, Jr., Annals of the New York Academy of Science, Vol. XIII, No. 1, 1900, pages 73-348, with seven plates. Many libraries contain copies of these periodicals. Dr. Dwight's article contains a splendid bibliography of the papers treating of the subject.

Recent Song Sparrow Returns.—One of the first birds I ever banded was Song Sparrow number 11057. This was on August 5, 1921, at Cohasset, Massachusetts. On account of the time of the year the bird may have been a juvenile. During 1922 nothing was seen of it, and this was true also of 1924, but on July 10, 1923, it returned after an apparent absence of two years. After an absence of another two years, 11057 was again taken at my station on March 15, 1925, the first Song Sparrow banded this year. On the assumption that the bird was a young-of-the-year when banded, it is now approximately four years old. Of course, however, it may well be even older.

On July 20, 1924, I banded three juvenile Song Sparrows, Nos. 125225, 125227 and 125229, and one adult bird, No. 125226. These four birds were trapped together in a government sparrow trap, and the adult bird

was observed feeding the young birds, who doubtless followed their parent into the trap.

From this time up to March 23, 1925, no record of these birds was secured, but on this date there was taken from the same trap the parent bird, No. 125226. Five days later, there were taken from the same trap two of the three young birds banded July 20, 1924, Nos. 125225 and 125227. These were secured four hours apart.

Of this family of young birds, 66.66 percent have returned to their immediate place of birth. This fact is of interest as perhaps bearing on the widely-held view that dispersal of the young by their parents from the place of their nativity is a law of nature adopted for the good of the species by preventing overcrowding.

Another aspect of the matter is of equal interest, namely, that these three birds apparently arrived at about the same time, suggesting that as a family group they have kept together during the winter season and returned to their home in Cohasset together, although of course there is no definite proof of this.

Still another aspect of the record is the coming of an adult and young birds at nearly the same time, as shown above, thus indicating that while it may be customary in the case of some species for old birds to much precede the young in the spring migration, among Song Sparrows this is not universally the case.—LAURENCE B. FLETCHER, Brookline, Massachusetts.

It is not an infrequent occurrence, during the process of taking a bird from the gathering cage, to have it escape by passing out along the hand at one of the upper corners. This trouble may be remedied by cutting a four-inch circular opening through the rectangular door, or slide, closing and opening the same with an auxiliary, superposed sliding-door running under two beveled strips of pine, say one-half inch thick, tacked to the door, one above and one below the circular opening. Certain types of gathering cages may require that the superposed door should slide vertically instead of horizontally.

Notes on Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers.¹ Between November 21, 1923, and March 14, 1925, there were banded at my station in Dover, Massachusetts, among other species, twenty-one Downy Woodpeckers (*Dyobates p. medianus*) and six Hairy Woodpeckers (*Dyobates v. villosus*) all doubtless in winter plumage, when banded. These birds were taken in a tree pull-string trap, six inches by six inches by twelve inches, made of No. 3 ($\frac{1}{3}$ inch mesh) hardware cloth. It is placed on an oak tree, five feet from the ground, and the back is the tree itself. It is closed at the top, but the bottom is hinged, forming a door, with a wire eight inches long attached in such a manner that when the door hangs directly downward the wire projects upward parallel to the long dimension of the trap and lying against it outside, so that when the string, which is attached to the free end of the wire, is pulled, the door closes. The string runs through the window-casing to my dining-room, some twenty feet distant. The trap is baited with suet, the woodpeckers entering it readily, as shown by the fact that on March 22, 1925, I took eight repeats, (Nos. 120705 and 129730 twice each).

Downy repeats total forty-seven. Of these No. 86726, a female, banded November 21, 1923, repeated eight times, four times in 1924, and three

¹ These notes are a condensation by the editor of my banding station records.