

normal age of the species concerned. Lincoln (1925, *Auk*, p. 364, 365) cites European White Stock of 11 years and Great Gray Heron of 9 years, and we have seen no comparable age data of such large American birds.\* On the other hand, figures for the common passerine species (those which have been considerably banded) may be approaching the actual normal. Although he does no systematic banding, the writer banded in December 1923, and January 1, 1924, 14 House Sparrows, 2 or 3 of which, proving to be permanent resident individuals for the immediate vicinity of the banding station, were noticed casually to May 1925 or later. In the early months of the present year (1927) attempts to find even one of these birds have been unavailing, and it seems that one purpose of banding them, to obtain data on age of the House Sparrow, has been frustrated by too high a preconceived idea of that age. Four year Song Sparrows (another prolific species) are rarer in the records than one would expect if this were not near the normal maximum age, and very likely the House Wren is short lived.

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## RETURNS OF A CRESTED FLYCATCHER

BY MABEL GILLESPIE

ALTHOUGH banding is the infallible method of identifying individual birds, it sometimes happens that certain peculiarities of song or habit may also serve as identification marks for an occasional unbanded bird. This was the case with a male Crested Flycatcher that is now with us for the fifth year, a bird which was not banded until the third year of his appearance.

In May 1923, a pair of Crested Flycatchers chose for a nesting site a hollow fence-post which we had fastened to the side of the house for a winter feeding shelter. It was about five feet above the ground and five feet from a window in another housewall making right angles with the supporting wall. A sash curtain of sheer voile made it possible for an observer to watch the comings and goings of the pair without attracting their attention. After the fledglings were hatched, observations were made several mornings from dawn until breakfast time. Many days a camera was focused on the shelter with a thread leading from the shutter into the window.

The securing of satisfactory photographs required hours of patient waiting during which we became well acquainted with the pair.

When, in 1924, a pair of "Greaterests" again built in the shelter, we felt reasonably sure that it was the same pair. After three eggs had been laid, the female disappeared, having undoubtedly met death by accident.

In 1925 a pair of Flycatchers came to the shelter again. It was the male who brought the female, and when she finally built, it actually seemed as if she did so under compulsion. She possessed noticeably different habits than the other female. This year we banded both birds.

In 1926 the male again returned with an unbanded female who scorned the old nest shelter and built in a hollow tree an eighth of a mile away, where their nesting was unsuccessful.

In 1927 the male returned with an unbanded female and they are now nesting in the same old shelter site.

That the male has consistently returned to the nest shelter since he was banded in 1925, that no other male has been seen in the immediate vicinity, and that the shelter is such an unusual place for a Greatercrest to choose for a nesting site, all indicate beyond reasonable doubt that it was the same male in 1923 and 1924. This male was banded in a manner to make it possible to identify him at sight and to avoid confusing him with any other male banded as a fledgling in 1923 or 1925.

Observation of the females each year showed marked differences in the females of 1924, 1925, 1926 and 1927. The females of 1923 and 1924 had a marked similarity, and it is quite probable that it was the same female both seasons and that the pair of 1923 repeated in 1924.

A comparison of the nesting data for the five years follows:

NEST BUILDING BEGAN	EGGS LAID*	FLEDGLINGS HATCHED	LEFT NEST
1923 May 26	June 2 (5 eggs)	June 19	July 4
1924 May 29	June 7 (3 eggs)	Female disappeared	
1925 May 28	June 5 (5 eggs)	June 22	July 5
1926 Seen nesting May 29			
1927 May 27	June 4 (6 eggs)	June 22	?

\* The eggs were laid in early morning on successive days, the date given being the day the first egg was laid.

The most striking fact about these nestings is the *persistence* of the male in returning to the same nesting site each year. We hope there may be other observations in time which will indicate whether this is characteristic of the species or simply of an individual. Also of interest is the fact that the female apparently made the final decision. Three times the choice of the male was accepted without apparent objection; once the female seemed reluctant to follow his choice, and once she refused.

The above record of the male Greatcrest shows that he is now at least five years old.

Glenolden, Pennsylvania, June 24, 1927.

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## THE PROTECTION OF GROUND NESTS WHILE UNDER OBSERVATION

BY KATHARINE C. HARDING

FOR the past three years we have spent the month of June at a camp in New Hampshire, where I had an excellent opportunity to observe a large variety of nesting birds, at the height of the breeding season. The first two summers, I found it exceedingly difficult to study the Veeries (*Hylocichla fuscescens fuscescens*) and other ground nesting birds, owing to the fact that their eggs and young were so frequently destroyed, before the records of the period of incubation and growth of the fledglings were completed. Frequent visits to the nests appeared greatly to increase the chances of their destruction. Hoping to solve this problem, I decided in 1926 to try two new ways of safe-guarding the nests.

First of all, upon finding a nest I immediately looked for an "Observation Post"—preferably a rock or a stump from which I could look into the nest without actually going close to it, on my daily visits. This method worked satisfactorily and in several cases I was able to follow the history of the nest, until the fledglings were ready to band.

When a nest was concealed or no observation post was available, I used a different scheme. Placing a strip of dark green cambric, nine feet long and two feet wide, in water, I soaked it until the dye stopped coming out. Then every morning before starting out, the cambric was again placed