

CORRESPONDENCE

*To the Editors of The Bulletin of the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association:*

I cannot help fearing that many readers of the April *Bulletin*, especially those who have taken up bird-banding recently, will become disheartened after reading the article, "The Scientific Aspects of Bird-Banding," by William Rowan. I fear that they will interpret the author's words as a severe condemnation on their work.

Very properly Mr. Rowan speaks of bird-banding from the viewpoint of Biology, his own profession; he speaks truthfully and earnestly, but in his earnestness he has obscured the value he sets on the efforts of the conscientious bird-banders, untrained though they may be in "anatomy, physiology, genetics, etc." If we turn, however, to his second paragraph on page 34 and to his concluding paragraph on page 42, we shall see that Mr. Rowan welcomes contributions from any source provided they be accurate.

I hope that readers of Mr. Rowan's article will remember that advance in scientific research is measured by the *truth* of each step and I hope that, taking courage from Mr. Rowan's words, they will continue their bird-banding, novices though some of them are, with a resolve to make their returns with such care that even the most exacting biologist can accept them as a record of absolute fact.

WINSOR M. TYLER.

Boston, May 14, 1928

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*To the Editors of the Bulletin of the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association:*

As an active bird-bander since 1921, maintaining an all-the-year-round station at Cohasset, Massachusetts,—a bird-bander who has passed through all the "stages of a bander" during eight years,—I cannot refrain from replying to the article in the April *Bulletin* written by Mr. William Rowan.

When a person first attempts the gentle art of bird-banding, it is usually through the suggestion of some bander, or through the "come-on-and-band" lectures, or some similar approach. There is often at first some hesitation on the part of the person to do active banding, but encouraging remarks usually re-

assure him, and after he has passed muster at the Bureau of Biological Survey, a small banding-station is started, feeding-shelves are arranged, and finally the first bird is banded. From that moment the interest in the individual bird, its life-history, habits, migration, its protection, etc., become important. This bird-bander may have been studying identifications through binoculars more than anything else previously, but now a much deeper interest takes place. Through constant banding and watching the shelf and station the bander now wants to know much more about his banded birds, and without being aware of it he or she is adding to the chain of evidence and knowledge much desired by the scientists.

Many of the best and most useful banders that we have at the present time were "picnic banders" in their early stages, and, had they been discouraged at the start, would have been out of the picture long ago. Five fledgling Song Sparrows were banded by a "picnic bander," and the result of that banding has been no little valuable information as to the return of the fledglings in answering to the question "Do birds return to their birthplace and in what proportion?"

Banding *develops* care and accuracy, and all phases of banding can bring about important results. It seems to me that much of importance can be accomplished by even the casual bander, providing he will do serious work, and in most cases I think he will be led into serious work by the ever-increasing interesting results.

Nothing is more deplorable than careless banding. On the other hand, we need more banders and more banders, and it seems to me that a person who is interested in this new method of bird-study, who passes the requirements of the Bureau of Biological Survey, and who takes the trouble to maintain a station, buy traps, supply food, study the birds and band them, should be counted as an important member of our Association and should be encouraged in *any* phase of the banding work that his or her time will permit.

My only purpose in writing this is lest some beginner in banding may be discouraged by Mr. Rowan's article.

LAURENCE B. FLETCHER.