

## GENERAL NOTES

**Trap-shy House Sparrows.**—In the winter of 1923-24, I banded several House Sparrows at Garden City, Long Island, N. Y., cornered, by chance, in a pigeon-enclosure from which they could not readily escape. Although no attempt was made to retake these birds, for a couple of years thereafter I made occasional observations on banded sparrows about the place with a bearing on certain interesting problems, and had it in mind to follow these problems up by banding and trapping at some favorable opportunity.

There is a good deal of loose feed about for poultry and pigeons, and in January, 1930, the flock of House Sparrows frequenting the premises probably numbered upwards of one hundred. A wire sparrow-trap was obtained (with the kind assistance of Mr. W. I. Lyon), and my son and I started operations on January 26th. That day we captured, banded, and released nine birds. Sparrows went into the trap three times, three at a time. The two following Sundays we had the trap set all day—not a sparrow entered it.

The singular feature is not that House Sparrows that had been in the trap should be trap-shy, as they unquestionably are, but that this small minority should thus communicate their caution to the entire flock.

The last two Sundays in February I was out of town, but on March 2d the trap was set out again. Meanwhile two or three Song Sparrows had arrived upon the scene and were frequenting the neighboring shrubbery, and in the course of the day all three Song Sparrows (there proved to be three) one by one, found their way into the trap. Not a House Sparrow entered, though at times they crowded about the opening. We had not had the trap out since February 9th.

How did the few trapped sparrows communicate the *tabu* to their fellows? Have other observers noticed this same thing? Do House Sparrows become trap-shy as quickly when trapped birds are not released? Presumably not, as we understand they can be, and are, 'controlled' by trapping.—  
J. T. NICHOLS.

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**Weighings of the Northern Form of the Eastern Song Sparrow** (*Melospiza m. melodia*).—The writer's station is directly on the south shore of Lake Erie in Ohio. While direct observation is impossible owing to the migrations taking place at night, the direction of the calls of migrating birds heard during foggy nights and other observations tend to show that the smaller birds, including sparrow, juncos, warblers, and thrushes, fly directly across the lake during the fall migration, a distance of not less than sixty miles.

For several years it has been noticed that the Song Sparrows arriving here in September and October, after nearly all the resident Song Sparrows have departed, have had weights not differing to any extent from the resident birds, but after a period of several days their weight increased until it averaged from three to four grams more than the weight of the resident birds. A possible cause is the weight lost during the uninterrupted flight across the lake. If this is true, then the same effect should not be observed in the spring when the flight from the south entirely across land affords opportunity to find food and rest when required.

From February 17th to 26th, 1930, the weather here was unusually warm, and on the 22d, when the temperature reached 72 degrees, a few Robins, Bluebirds, and Song Sparrows appeared in Lakewood. On the 27th winter again returned with a one-inch snowfall. At this time the first Song Sparrow came to feed at the traps, but it remained shy until four inches

of snow fell during March 2d and 4th. To determine the effect of fasting on the weight of this bird, it was kept supplied with water but without food for twenty-four hours, when it was released apparently as strong and active as before. The weight with crop full was 28.19 grams; at the end of six hours, 26.05 grams; at twelve hours, 25.21 grams; at eighteen hours, 24.60 grams; and at the end of twenty-four hours, 24.11 grams, showing a total loss of weight of 4.08 grams. The average weight of 25.61 grams compares favorably with average weight obtained for the larger form of Song Sparrow recorded by Charles L. Whittle (*Bulletin Northeastern Bird-Banding Association*, October 1929, p. 153), which is given as 26.00 grams. Mr. Meyers is quoted in the same article as obtaining an average weight of 26.25 grams for the same type of bird.

These Song Sparrows at this station have a length greater by from one quarter to one half of an inch than the summer resident form. The length of the individual mentioned, which was marked with band No. B98231, was 6.79 inches. The color corresponded with others of the northern form, being much browner than the resident form.—E. C. HOFFMAN, Forest Cliff Drive, Lakewood, Ohio.

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**Methods of Capturing Wrens.**—Three species of Wrens may be found about our banding station in Glenolden, Pennsylvania. The Winter Wren (*Nannus h. hiemalis*) is a regular winter visitant, though found but sparingly. The House Wren (*Troglodytes a. aëdon*) is a common summer resident, nesting in the vicinity wherever there are bird-boxes. The Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus l. ludovicianus*) is a fairly common permanent resident. Carolina Wrens stay in pairs within a rather limited territory throughout the year. Thus it is evident that although all of these Wrens are regularly present, they never occur in numbers within the limits of our banding station.

Since the spring of 1923 we have banded three Winter Wrens, fifteen Carolina Wrens, and sixty House Wrens. The method of capturing many of these Wrens is the remarkable feature of their banding history. Wrens are almost entirely insectivorous birds, and the bait of bird-traps does not ordinarily appeal to them. Of course, the experiences of station-operators differ. Miss Marion A. Boggs of Waynesville, North Carolina, writes me that Carolina Wrens find ground nut-meats irresistible, and that they are moderately fond of cheese. Forbush in "Birds of Massachusetts" mentions that Mr. Don V. Messer, of Huntington, used Hamburg steak as bait with success. The only bait I have actually seen Carolina Wrens feed upon is suet. Since, therefore, Wrens are not readily attracted to traps by bait, it is evident that when we have caught them the lure, instead of being food, has undoubtedly been the characteristic curiosity of the Wren tribe.

Two of the Winter Wrens were taken in a Chardonneret trap. The third found its way into a screened porch, entering through a small hole in the screening.

Of the sixty House Wrens forty-five were banded as fledglings. Twelve of the adults were captured in wren-boxes with pull-string shutters. Two of the others were taken in government funnel traps. The third ran under a drop trap while we were standing near by. Mr. Gillespie ran quickly to the trap and dropped the open side before the bird escaped. This was one of the most unexpected captures we ever made.

Four of the Carolina Wrens were banded as fledglings just after they left the nest. The other eleven were adults, and eight of these have repeated several times. A pair came together into the porch through the same hole in the screening that lured the Winter Wren. A third Carolina Wren