

THE FUTURE OF BIRD BANDING IN THE AMERICAS

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AT the request of the Editor, the Biological Survey is glad to inform the readers of *Bird-Banding* of its hopes and plans for the continued development of bird banding. The word "hopes" is used advisedly, as all plans are contingent upon the provision of adequate annual funds for investigation under the appropriation to carry out the provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. As is well known to every station operator, the banding method—while easily the most valuable means for the study of living birds in a state of nature—is expensive, and this applies not only to the individual stations but also to the administrative agency.

The value of the work is, however, so obvious that the Survey feels confident that ultimately funds will be available, although they may not come as rapidly as is desirable. The system that has been developed is proving highly efficient, so expansion can be made an orderly and progressive procedure.

As is well known to all coöperators, it has been necessary during recent years to restrict drastically the number of new banding permits. This has meant the rejection of literally hundreds of unsolicited applications. Exceptions have been made when it appeared that the prospective station would fit in well with those already in operation or when the permit applicant had in mind some particular piece of research that seemed desirable.

The number of applications received has, however, resulted in the belief by the Bureau that it would be possible to place in operation 5,000 stations, which is the number estimated for our ultimate growth. According to present plans, these stations will be scattered throughout the entire Western Hemisphere. At the present time there are about 2,000. Naturally, these stations always will be concentrated in the United States and southern Canada, but there is every reason to believe that many important banding points can be established at various places in the Arctic regions of Canada, Alaska, Newfoundland, and Greenland. Ever since the banding work was taken over by the Survey there has been the closest co-operation between it and the National Parks of Canada Branch and the Bureau's relationship with other Governmental agencies, both at home and in foreign countries, is equally cordial.

In the establishment of banding stations in South and Central America and in the Caribbean region, some details must necessarily be worked out with the various officers of the different countries. These will center chiefly around the birds to be banded as, obviously, the only species that could be marked with bands of the present series are those that at one time or another are found in North

America. In this connection it should be remembered that there are some North American species that in winter travel south to Patagonia. Probably in every one of these countries there are Americans, there resident, who are more or less interested in bird-life. This has frequently been brought out by the receipt from such persons of information relative to the capture of a banded bird. Contact with these can be established through the consular service of the State Department. In addition, there will be many native citizens who will be interested. Here the Pan-American Union will be of assistance and informal conversations already held with Dr. L. S. Rowe, the Director-General, assure us of the active coöperation of that organization. Publicity concerning the work is already a matter of frequent note in clippings from Latin-American newspapers, and the January number of "Revista Rotaria" (the Spanish edition of "The Rotarian") carried an excellent illustrated article on the banding work, entitled "Adon de Van las Aves Emigradores" by Wm. I. Lyon, President of the Inland Bird-Banding Association. A somewhat similar paper was prepared by the author and published two years ago in a journal in the Dominican Republic. During the North American Wildlife Conference in Washington (February 3 to 7 1936) opportunity was presented for a discussion of this subject with Señor Juan Zinser, Chief of the Wildlife Division, Department of Forests, Game, and Fish, of the Republic of Mexico, as a result of which, it is expected that within the year stations for the banding of migratory waterfowl will be established at strategic points in that country. The bands to be used will be furnished by the Survey. This is merely the start of banding work in Mexico, as under the New Migratory Bird Treaty there will be much closer coöperation between the bird students and wildlife officials of the two countries.

Station to station returns of banded birds always have been decidedly rare and recoveries south of the United States, particularly of the smaller species, have been almost curiosities. If, however, a few active stations can be located on important wintering grounds, and the number of stations in the United States and Canada materially increased, it would seem that data of the utmost value should result through the retrapping in the North of birds banded in the South.

In outlining this plan no attempt has been made to discuss the investigational work that will be possible. This field is almost unlimited and it is the opinion of the Survey that we have only scratched the surface of the many studies that can be carried on by means of the banding method.

To put this more or less Utopian plan into effect will cost money but the Survey is prepared to handle the details of administration whenever the necessary funds are made available.

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