

adult male, one adult female and 12 juvenals (seven males and five females). A total of 16 juvenals in 1955 compared with 65 juvenals banded in 1954.

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BANDING BLACKBIRDS IN A RICE FIELD RESERVOIR ROOST

By Brooke Meanley

In a recent paper by Neff and Meanley (Experiences in Banding Blackbirds in Eastern Arkansas, 1952, *Bird-Banding*, **23**:154-157) methods of obtaining blackbirds in roosts for banding purposes were described in some detail.

During the winter of 1953-1954 the night banding of blackbirds in the Arkansas rice fields area was continued by Mr. and Mrs. Meanley, but local conditions at the roost necessitated a somewhat different method for obtaining birds. Blackbirds that had been roosting in a small canebreak (*Arundinaria gigantea*) two miles north of Stuttgart in early February 1954 moved, as the roosting population increased in size, from the canebreak to willows (*Salix nigra*) and buttonbushes (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) in a near-by 20-acre reservoir. Such impoundments are one of several methods of furnishing water for the irrigation of rice fields.

The birds were totally inaccessible to a man on foot, so the idea of going into the reservoir to band birds from a rowboat was conceived.

The blackbirds were roosting from the water's surface to the tops of trees and bushes, which seldom exceeded 20 feet in height. Birds roosting in the lower branches frequently weighted the limbs down into the water and were themselves often standing in the water, sometimes with their underparts and tails beneath the surface. Those found to be roosting closest to and actually in the water generally were female redwings (*Agelaius phoeniceus*).

Frequently the roosting birds were so concentrated that it was possible to drift quietly among them and band in one position for several minutes. Four thousand birds were banded in 10 nights in late February and early March; and on the night of February 23, 925 male redwings were banded between 7:30 p.m. and 1 a.m. Males were selected for banding because their conspicuous plumage makes them better "risks" for band returns than the drab females. The accompanying photograph by Garner Allen, Stuttgart, Arkansas, newspaperman, illustrates the procedure.

When approached by headlight those birds which were disturbed would fly toward the light in utter confusion, into the bander's face, against his body (often with considerable force), and all over the boat, perching wherever they made contact. The bander frequently had as many as 10 or 15 birds clinging to him at one time.

On dark cloudy nights roosting birds were aroused from their perches only when a limb broke from their weight or when some unusual noise



was made such as an accidental tapping of a paddle on the side of the boat. However, on bright moonlight nights the birds were quite restless throughout the roost.

In order of relative abundance, blackbirds occupying the roost were the redwing, bronzed grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*), cowbird (*Molothrus ater*), and rusty blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*). Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) also were present. Brewer's blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*), a common winter resident in the area, roosted in rice stubbles out on the open prairie.

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DIFFERENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF YEAR CLASSES

By Charles H. Blake

It has long been known that, among certain marine fishes, those individuals hatched in certain years dominate the age structure of the population for a period. Those hatched in a given year constitute the