

BANDING CATBIRDS AT NORRISTOWN

BY RAYMOND J. MIDDLETON

Catbirds (*Dumetella carolinensis*) are abundant summer residents of southeastern Pennsylvania. In the last forty-five years we have one record of an individual wintering during 1955-56. This species arrives in this area the last few days of April and becomes common by the first or second day of May.

An abundance of shrubbery suitable for nesting sites surrounds our home; beyond this, many tartarian honeysuckle bushes were planted. Wild thickets have grown up between the yard and a small deciduous woods 250 feet to the north. On the southwest side of this woods is an evergreen planting of about an acre, mostly consisting of white pines planted in 1927. Just in front of the pines is an immense blackberry thicket, and many mulberry and wild cherry trees grow to the south of our home. It seems as though this area of some four to five acres was especially made for Catbirds as they are the most abundant of any species during the summer season.

The nesting period is well under way late in May and the first young are out of the nests and into the traps the last five days of June. The earliest capture was June 17th and the latest date for the first young to enter the traps was in 1950 on July 14th. This species is easily captured, readily going in Modesto or Chardonneret traps with bread or soda crackers as bait. We also use 10 thrush traps, 5 of which have the same bait while 5 have water drips. The thrush traps catch the majority of the young; in many instances 3 or 4 are taken at one time (we believe these groups are out of the same nests).

During late June, July and August, at least 75% of the young taken are caught quickly after leaving the nests, many being barely able to fly. It is difficult to believe that so many come from nests on the grounds, yet we know they could not have flown any distance when first taken.

July is the best month for taking young of the year. During early August there is a slight letup until the second broods are out; if the second nesting is good then the last half of August and the first week in September bring many new young into the traps. In the last half of September their number slow down. Now when the molt is completed it is difficult and often impossible to separate the adults from the young of the year. By the first of October many have departed for the wintering grounds; the population now dwindles rapidly and few are seen after the 15th.

We began banding in July of 1921. For the next seven years we had one sparrow trap in use and 14 of this species were taken with no returns. From 1928 on many new traps were built, mostly much more suitable for taking this species. Table 1 shows the total captures to January 1st, 1958.

TABLE 1

| | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Number banded | 3,993 |
| Number of repeats | 2,159 |
| Number returned | 213 |
| Recovered elsewhere | 12 |

TABLE 2 shows the division of the age groups.

TABLE 2

| | Adult | Immature | Age Unknown | Totals |
|------------|-------|----------|----------------|--------|
| Banded | 890 | 2,963 | 140 | 3,993 |
| Repeats | 659 | 1,495 | 5 | 2,159 |
| Returns | 105 | 106 | 2 | 213 |
| Recoveries | 1 | 10 | 1 | 12 |

In Table 3 we have listed the percentages of the returns. All captures of new birds for 1957 have not been included as of April 1st they have not had the opportunity to return.

TABLE 3

| | Banded | Returns | Percentage |
|-----------------------|--------|---------|------------|
| Adults | 845 | 105 | 12.4 |
| Immatures | 2,834 | 106 | 3.8 |
| Age unknown | 135 | 2 | 1.5 |
| Average of all groups | | | 5.6 |

In Table 4 we have listed all captures of the different groups for each of the years 1943 to 1957 inclusive. By adding the returned birds and the adults banded we have the total adult birds known to be present each year; it is interesting to compare this with the total young taken each year.

TABLE 4

| | Returns | Adult | Immature | Age Unknown | Annual Totals |
|------|---------|-------|----------|----------------|------------------|
| 1943 | 5 | 43 | 135 | 5 | 183 |
| 1944 | 3 | 27 | 124 | 8 | 159 |
| 1945 | 5 | 11 | 79 | 3 | 93 |
| 1946 | 10 | 15 | 97 | 5 | 117 |
| 1947 | 10 | 31 | 134 | 3 | 168 |
| 1948 | 6 | 26 | 62 | 6 | 94 |
| 1949 | 8 | 30 | 96 | 14 | 140 |
| 1950 | 6 | 40 | 101 | 6 | 147 |
| 1951 | 5 | 45 | 176 | 10 | 231 |
| 1952 | 9 | 46 | 176 | 9 | 231 |
| 1953 | 12 | 27 | 101 | 1 | 129 |
| 1954 | 7 | 64 | 155 | 6 | 225 |
| 1955 | 7 | 27 | 156 | 8 | 191 |
| 1956 | 11 | 48 | 146 | 4 | 198 |
| 1957 | 17 | 45 | 129 | 5 | 179 |

THE RECOVERIES

For this group we have included all individuals recovered more than two miles from place of banding. Seven of the 12 are worthy of special mention.

One adult, No. 50-231492 banded on July 25, 1952, was found dead the following June 15th, 6 miles east of here; apparently this was a change in nesting territory.

One, age unknown, No. 36-229697 banded on September 14, 1937, was found dead June 2, 1939, 20 miles west of us.

One immature, No. 48-287152 banded on July 24, 1951, was killed by a cat on June 10, 1952, 5 miles southeast of us.

One immature, No. 34-204329 banded August 27, 1934, was found 4 miles north of here on May 27, 1935.

One immature, No. 34-249275 banded on July 19, 1935, was found 15 miles east of here on May 11, 1936.

One immature, No. 42-214699 banded August 17, 1943, was found dead near Litchfield, Connecticut, on February 9, 1947.

One immature, No. 44-212778 banded August 1, 1947, was killed as it flew into a door during a storm at Miami, Florida, on November 11, 1947. This bird had repeated in the traps on August 3rd, so was recovered 100 days after being known to be present in banding area.

THE RETURNS

Of the adults that returned we find the following:

| | | | | | | |
|----|-----|------|---------|-------|---|-------|
| | 11 | were | present | for | 3 | years |
| | 4 | " | " | " | 4 | " |
| | 1 | was | " | " | 5 | " |
| | 1 | " | " | " | 6 | years |
| | 1 | " | " | " | 7 | " |
| 16 | did | not | return | until | 2 | years |
| 3 | " | " | " | " | 3 | " |
| 1 | " | " | " | " | 4 | " |

Of the birds banded as immatures, we find that—

| | | | | | | |
|----|-----|------|---------|-------|---|---------|
| | 8 | were | present | for | 3 | summers |
| | 3 | " | " | " | 4 | " |
| | 1 | was | " | " | 6 | " |
| | 1 | " | " | " | 7 | " |
| 16 | did | not | return | until | 2 | years |
| 5 | " | " | " | " | 3 | " |
| 1 | " | " | " | " | 4 | " |

Among the returns we find 3 banded as immatures and 4 as adults that deserve listing their complete records separately, as follows:

| | | | | |
|------------------------|--------|-----------|-----|--------------------|
| Adult No. 41-225076 | banded | May | 19, | 1942 |
| | Return | 1 | May | 17, 1943 |
| | | " | 2 | May 5, 1947 |
| Adult No. 42-230728 | banded | September | 6, | 1943 |
| | Return | 1 | May | 6, 1945 |
| | | " | 2 | May 5, 1946 |
| | | " | 3 | May 16, 1947 |
| | Return | 4 | on | April 30, 1948 |
| | | " | 5 | on May 5, 1949 |
| Adult No. 42-214598 | banded | June | 19, | 1943 |
| | Return | 1 | on | May 4, 1944 |
| | | " | 2 | on May 9, 1945 |
| | | " | 3 | on June 29, 1946 |
| | | " | 4 | on May 12, 1947 |
| | | " | 5 | on May 8, 1948 |
| | | " | 6 | on May 27, 1949 |
| Immature No. 42-237601 | banded | July | 24, | 1945 |
| | Return | 1 | on | June 24, 1946 |
| | | " | 2 | on May 21, 1950 |
| Adult No. 38-237201 | banded | June | 23, | 1938 |
| | Return | 1 | on | May 13, 1939 |
| | | " | 2 | on May 29, 1940 |
| | | " | 3 | on May 10, 1941 |
| | | " | 4 | on May 8, 1942 |
| | | " | 5 | on August 19, 1943 |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|--------|--------|-------|----------|
| Immature No. B231682 | banded | August | 6, | 1933 |
| | Return | 1 on | May | 8, 1934 |
| | " | 2 on | May | 1, 1935 |
| | " | 3 on | April | 30, 1936 |
| | " | 4 on | June | 27, 1937 |

This bird was killed May 2, 1938, as it flew into a windowpane during severe electrical storm at night, a quarter mile southwest of banding station, almost back home but not quite all the way.

| | | | | |
|------------------------|--------|------|-------|----------|
| Immature No. 47-209742 | banded | July | 16, | 1948 |
| | Return | 1 on | April | 30, 1950 |
| | " | 2 on | May | 11, 1951 |
| | " | 3 on | May | 5, 1952 |
| | " | 4 on | April | 27, 1953 |
| | " | 5 on | June | 9, 1954 |
| | " | 6 on | May | 8, 1956 |

Note that this bird was not taken during two years, 1949 and 1955; if it was present and not captured then it spent nine summers here.

AGE SUMMARY

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----|-----------|-------------|---|-------|-----|-----|
| 105 Adults and . . . | 38 | Immatures | lived to be | 2 | years | of | age |
| 34 " " | 18 | " " | " " " " | 3 | " " | " " | " " |
| 14 " " | 9 | " " | " " " " | 4 | " " | " " | " " |
| 8 " " | 3 | " " | " " " " | 5 | " " | " " | " " |
| 5 " " | 1 | " " | " " " " | 6 | " " | " " | " " |
| 1 " " | 1 | " " | " " " " | 7 | " " | " " | " " |
| | 1 | " " | " " " " | 8 | " " | " " | " " |

We knew adults to be at least one year of age when banded and have so listed them in all of the records. It should be noted that many may have been older than this.

It should be kept in mind that many more returns and age records may be secured in the next few years before birds banded prior to the year 1957 will be written off the record books as time completes their life cycles.

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NEW DESCRIPTIONS OF NATAL PTERYLOSIS OF VARIOUS BIRD SPECIES

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The descriptions of natal down distribution presented in this paper supplement those compiled previously (Wetherbee, *Clark University Bull.*, **24**: 34.35, 1952; and *Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. His.*, **113**: 339-436, 1957). These new descriptions were made from ideal material, artificially incubated, spontaneously hatched chicks. The data show that the previous descriptions, cited above, made with some misgivings from nestlings in nature were surprisingly representative—natural abrasion of neossoptiles in early postnatal life is negligible, even in the remarkable study skin preparations of natal passerines in the Royal