GENERAL NOTES

Dickcissels in Trinidad.—In January, 1959, Richard and Margaret ffrench began trapping some of the vast wintering flock of Dickcissels *(Spiza americana)* in the south of Trinidad, West Indies. By mid-April, when the flock began to leave the island, 436 individuals had been banded.

When large numbers appeared in the same area in January, 1960, trapping was resumed, with a catch of over 500 birds through early March. On February 20th, an individual banded on March 8, 1959 was retaken.

The birds are all taken in mist nets as they fly in to roost bewteen 5 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. in a large canefield. The numbers are impossible to estimate accurately, but run into many thousands. As the migrating habits of this species are somewhat obscure, banders are asked to keep a special lookout for Dickcissels. Any relevant information, apart from details of recovery, would be welcomed by us.—Richard ffrench, St. Peter's School, Texaco Trinidad, Inc., Pointe a Pierre, Trinidad, W.I.

Predation on a Diseased Mourning Dove.—In view of the scarcity of records on the removal of sick animals from a population by predation, the following observation is recorded.

On March 28, 1955, a female sparrow hawk, *Falco sparverius*, was observed struggling with prey on a ditch bank that bisects a crop field on the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. The hawk was watched through 8 x 30 glasses from about 200 feet. She was seen to cover her prey and heard to "mew," as a male sparrow hawk dropped to the ground beside her. This "covering" action apparently was due to the presence of the male, which tried to reach for the prey with his bill. The prey struggled a little and was still.

The prey was found to be a female mourning dove, *Zenaidura macroura*. The dove's throat was clogged with a white, cheese-like material. The cause was diagnosed as trichomoniasis by Archibald B. Cowan, then on the disease investigation staff at Patuxent.

This observation shows the possibility of the spread of trichomonads from prey to predator. Stabler and Shelanski (1936) reported that one of Stabler's sparrow hawks died from an accidental trichomonad infection. Stabler (1941) examined 41 raptorial birds of 13 species for trichomoniasis, ". . . of which only two—a pair of nestling Duck Hawks—were found naturally infected with T. gallinae."

REFERENCES

STABLER, ROBERT M., and HERMAN A. SHELANSKI. 1936. Trichomonas columbae as a cause of death in the hawk. *J. Parasit.*, **22:** 339-540.

STABLER, ROBERT M. 1941. Further studies on trichomoniasis in birds. *Auk*, **58:** 558-562.—Frederick C. Schmid, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, Maryland.

Some Mourning Dove Banding Results—A limited study of the movements of mourning doves *(Zenaidura macroura)* was made on a 10 mile section of State Highway #95 between Shiner and Moulton, Lavaca County, Texas in 1950. As part of a highway beautification program, liveoak trees *(Quercus virginiana)* had been planted along the highway right-of-way. A large number of mourning doves were raised in these trees each year. Fifty nestling birds were banded. Many more were successfully raised in the trees but I was not able to make regular visits to the area to band all of the birds.

The land resource area is the Blackland prairie. General agriculture of the area is small family farms. Cotton, corn and grain sorghum are the principal field crops. Crop residues and field weeds produce large amounts of dove food. Pastures are small, with buffalo and Bermuda grass the principal forage grasses.

Results and Movement

All birds were banded as nestlings between 7 and 12 days old. Of the fifty birds banded, five, or ten percent, were returned. Three were returned in the same year as banded, none the next year, and two the second year.

The general feeling of people in the area is that in the autumn all locally raised mourning doves move to southern Texas and Mexico and are replaced by

northern birds. My limited data indicate that birds raised in this part of Texas spend their lives within a restricted area. The two birds returned as two year old adults were killed in the same general area as they were banded. The dove with band No. 45503 was taken on November 9, 1952 only 3.3 miles south southwest of where it was banded over 2½ years previously on May 2, 1950. The dove with band No. 45543 was taken on October 19, 1952—8 miles southwest of where it was banded just over 2 years previously, on August 1, 1950.

The other three birds were killed the same year that they were banded. The bird bearing band No. 45517 was taken on October 23, 1950 2 miles east of where it was banded on June 19, 1950. The bird bearing band No. 45535 was taken on October 20, 1950 approximately 50 miles due south of where it was banded 2 months earlier, on July 21, 1950. The dove with band No. 45536 was taken on December 3, 1950 approximately 20 miles west of where it was banded on July 21, 1950.

Conclusions

Two young mourning doves of the year were killed at distances of 50 and 25 miles respectively from the banding area. The other young bird was taken 2 miles from the spot where it was banded. The 2 birds over 2 years old were taken within 3 and 8 miles of where they were banded.

Although the mourning dove in Texas is considered to be a highly mobile species, this limited study would indicate them to be birds that spend their life in or near the localities in which they were produced.—Olan W. Dillon, Jr., Biologist, Soil Conservation Service, Ithaca, N. Y.

Homing by a Female Cowbird.—I have previously described *(Bird-Banding,* **30:** 228) the remarkable feats of a female Brown-headed Cowbird (band number 55-187923) in returning here from distances up to 265 miles. This bird returned to my station here on April 26, 1960. I hope to find someone who will take her to a distance of at least 500 miles, and give her a chance once again to show her keen attachment to this little spot.—William P. Wharton, Groton, Mass.

Southern Recoveries of Massachusetts Robins.—Some of the Robins *(Turdus migratorius)* banded at our station in Groton and recovered elsewhere have been described in earlier issues of *Bird-Banding* (**24:** 5-6; **28:** 99; **30:** 121). On October 4, 1955, I banded an immature Robin with band 522-63715. This bird was "found dead" at Port Allen, Louisiana, in mid-December, 1959. On October 10, 1956, another immature Robin got band 532-12767. This was reported "killed" at Frisco City, Alabama, in early February, 1960. These records raise the total of my Robins reported from west of Georgia to five.—William P. Wharton, Groton, Mass.

A Bird Holding Cage.—During the course of collecting large numbers of birds (*e. g.* from mist nets or from roosts) a problem arises of freeing one's hands as rapidly as possible to be able to capture the next. A common method of holding birds has been to place them in cages or in burlap sacks. Much time is so consumed and the possibility of escape is high. A simple and effective holding cage with a rubber snap-shut door has been found to be very useful when large numbers of birds have to be handled.

The essential feature of this cage is the snap-shut door which is constructed from an automobile inner tube and serves as one side of the cage. Construction of the door is as follows: 1. Slit the tube lengthwise to produce a long strip of rubber; 2. then cut into two pieces each large enough to cover ½ of one side of the cage; 3. each piece is then tacked along three edges on one side of the cage leaving a free edge in the center (doubling over the free edge of the upper piece of rubber permits easier access). Due to the nature of the inner tube folds appear in each piece but they have not been found to cause any inconvenience. The "snap-shut door" permits placement of a bird in the cage and withdrawal of one's hand without having birds escape.

The species to be handled and the situation will determine the dimensions of the cage and the size of the wire. A cage 20″ x 28″ and 18″ deep with one inch wire mesh has been found suitable for starlings and will hold about 80 birds for two hours with negligible mortality.—John G. Vandenbergh, Department