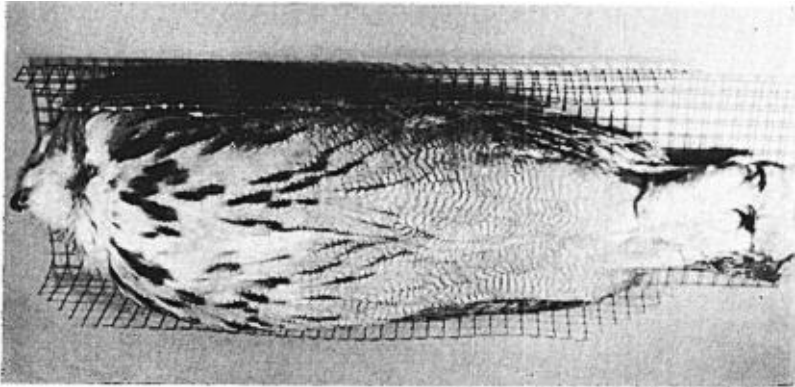


When a large number of study skins are arranged in a museum cabinet drawer, specimens with rounded backs tend to roll in the tray. A further modification suggested is to square up the form slightly so that the bird's back is flatter and so that rolling of the finished skin is prevented.



Drying forms of this sort are a great boon to the travelling field collector. I have used them successfully for drying and transporting such large specimens as *Aquila* spp., *Gypaëus barbatus* and *Bubo bubo*. Field drying forms are equally good on all medium and large birds from Robin size but carrying forms for even smaller specimens is unrewardingly cumbersome (see photographs). The light weight forms may be conveniently stored and transported flat when not in use and bent to shape as needed. They need not necessarily be nailed to a board for pinning the tail flat unless actually travelling when drying. — George E. Watson, Peabody Museum and Department of Zoology, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

A Device for Holding and Spreading Bird Bands.—All bird banders, at one time or another, must have found the opening of bands a time-consuming process, particularly in the field. When bands are opened beforehand and stored in small envelopes or other containers, it is frequently impossible to use the entire lot without getting some bands out of sequence or even losing a few. While banding Starlings and Red-winged Blackbirds as an employee of the Denver Wildlife Research Center, the author constructed a device which overcomes these difficulties. It was designed for use with standard size 2 bird bands, but could easily be modified to work effectively on several other sizes of bands.

The device consists of a smooth cone of brass 3 inches long, tapering from 1/8-inch to 3/16-inch in diameter. First, a hole is drilled through the axis of the cone to accommodate a standard bicycle spoke. An 11-inch spoke will hold 36 size 2 bands, and a 10-inch spoke will hold 30 bands. The knurled head of the spoke is seated against the basal end of the cone. The other end of the spoke, the nipple or fitting, is attached to a short length of metal rod which serves as a handle, or to a ring which can be attached to a belt snap or clip. (Figure 1)

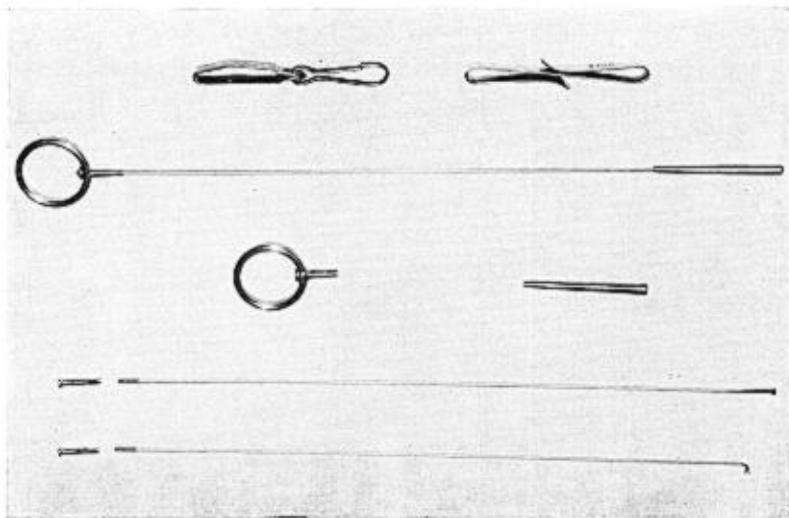


Fig. 1. Device for holding and spreading bird bands.

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|-----------|--|
| 1st line: | Belt snap and clip. |
| 2nd line: | Completed device. |
| 3rd line: | Ring and nipple. The completed brass cone. |
| 4th line: | Bicycle spoke straightened. |
| 5th line: | Bicycle spoke, normal, as purchased. |

Without removing the bands from the wire upon which they are threaded, the spoke, with its handle or ring detached, is slipped through as many bands as possible. The handle or ring then is screwed on and the original wire withdrawn. The bands now are in proper sequence and cannot be lost. As needed, a band is forced manually down over the cone, which opens it just enough so that it can be placed over the bird's leg.

Brass was used for the original cone because it is easy to machine, but stainless steel or some other hard metal capable of a high polish would be better. The smoother the cone, the easier it is to remove the bands; a little graphite sprinkled on the bands and holder will help in this operation. — Albert W. Spencer, Wildlife Research Center, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Denver, Colo. (presently, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colo.)

Wing Length of Slate-colored Junco.—The Slate-colored Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) has always been a perplexing species. The plumage appears to show no clear distinctions of age or sex. The gray color varies from rather pale to very dark. The amount of brown varies roughly inversely with depth of the gray. The extent of the white in the outer rectrices shows great variation. The variation in these characters appears to be regular and continuous from one extreme to the other. The only character on which reliance may be placed for age determination is iris color. This varies in immatures from gray through gray-brown and brown to the distinctly reddish-brown of the adult. However, the sequence of changes is essentially complete by 1 December of the year of hatching and often earlier as shown by the fact that only a few birds show clearly immature iris colors after the end of October.

From my rather extensive banding of this species I have selected five samples of individuals for a detailed statistical examination. The entities are shown in Table 1. "Immatures" are birds banded at Lincoln, Mass. whose eye color was clearly not that of adults. Since the remaining samples are all from Hillsboro, N. C., it would have been desirable to have had the immature sample from the latter place. Very few juncos arrive there before the last week in October so almost none show immature iris color. "Returning birds at banding" comprises birds which reappeared