

## FIFTY-TWO YEARS OF BANDING BLUE JAYS AT NORRISTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

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Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) are present in southeastern Pennsylvania the entire year, the population varying greatly at certain periods. In the winter months they are common; in late April and early May they become abundant as birds from southern winter quarters pass through. Many small flocks are seen flying north by northeast and many new individuals are trapped from which few if any repeats are taken. This spring migration comes at a time when many of our local birds are already nesting. This species is abundant in summer. Then during late September and October, birds from the north pass through, flocks are always flying south by southwest, and again we have a population increase.

My total banding effort of this species is summarized in Tables 1 and 2. The map (Fig. 1) shows the location of my banding station at Norristown, Pa. and positions of foreign retraps and recoveries.

We use no nets and our birds are all taken in wire cages-potter, chardonneret, drop, our own thrush, and modesto traps are used. Baits include bread, crackers, sunflower seed, corn and water-drips. Our station has been in continuous operation at the same place through the years. My work kept me about home making possible the continuous operation as there are few days in the year when birds are not trapped.

In Table 3 we have not used the 108 birds banded during the first six months of 1973 as these birds have not at this date had the chance to return. The percentages of return of the adults and

TABLE 1.  
Total Blue Jays taken, 1 July 1921-1 July 1973.

Banded .....	2,672
Returns .....	229
Recovered in 11 states .....	57
Foreign retraps .....	4
Repeats .....	1,081

TABLE 2.  
Age groups of Blue Jays.

	adult	immature	age unknown	totals
Banded	1,724	573	375	2,672
Returns	120	86	23	229
Recoveries	26	13	18	57

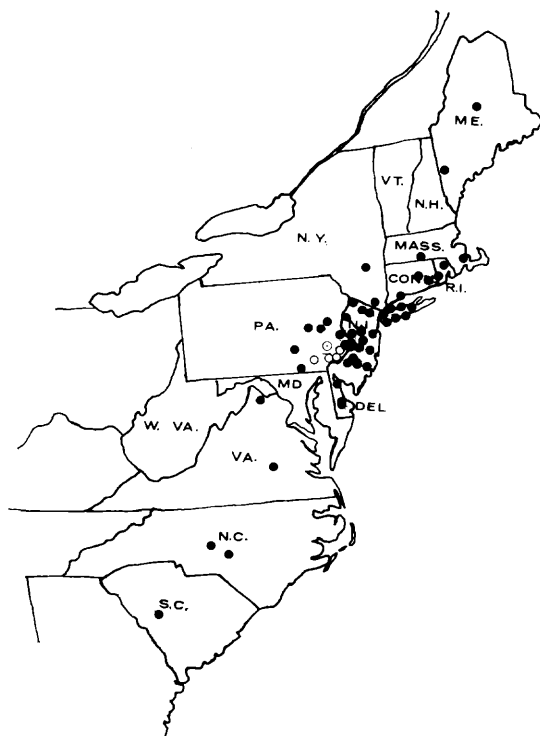


FIGURE 1. Map showing banding station at Norristown, Pa. ○, recovery sites of Blue Jays ●, and banding locations of foreign retraps ○.

immatures needs an explanation because adults nearly always give a higher return ratio than birds-of-the-year. In the above adult numbers are included those migrating individuals taken mostly in May; we get practically no returns from that group yet they must be counted among the adults banded.

Here is a species, though resident throughout the entire year, in which we find many transient individuals banded here and taken from South Carolina to Maine in various months of the year.

TABLE 3.  
Return percentages

	banded	return	percentages
Adults	1,616	120	7.42
Immature	573	86	15.00
Age unknown	375	23	6.1
average of all groups			8.93

Twenty-seven birds have been caught both in summer and winter. No. 543-54682 banded as adult on 04-27-1957 was killed on 06-30-57 as it flew into a car on Mt. Katahdin in Baxter State Park, Maine. No. 813-31413, an adult banded 05-3-66, was found dead 06-4-70 in Fryeberg, Maine. No. 40-362859, banded 10-07-40, was found dead 12-09-46 at Southbridge, Mass., migrating in 1940 and six years later probably wintering in Massachusetts. No. 563-40657, banded 11-12-60, was killed by a cat 07-11-67 at Marion, Mass.

There were two recovered in Rhode Island, one three and one four years after banding. Three birds were found in Connecticut and two in and north of New York City, also six found on Long Island, the oldest being four years after banding. In New Jersey 15 were found, two being found in mid-winter, although migrants when banded, the oldest being taken six years later.

Seven were found south of here, two in Delaware, two in Virginia, two in North Carolina and one in South Carolina in early August after being banded here the previous May.

There were 11 birds recovered in Pennsylvania within 50 miles of the banding station, the oldest being five years later.

The four foreign retraps were all banded within 45 miles of here.

Some of the returns of three years and older are worthy of special mention:

6 were present three consecutive years

4 were present four consecutive years

4 did not return until 3 years after banding

7 did not return until 4 years after banding and then 1 on 5th and 6th and 1 on 6th and 7th.

2 did not return until 5 years after banding

5 did not return until 6 years after banding

3 did not return until 7 years after banding and then 1 on 8th and then 1 on 9th.

No. 543-54804, im. banded 07-24-57, returned	05-21-58
	" 03-28-59
Band changed to 813-31152	" 05-30-63
	" 05-29-64
	" 05-23-65
	" 05-24-66
	" 05-23-67
Band changed to 1003-28462	" 06- 3-69
	" 06-23-70
	" 06- 3-71
	" 12-15-71

Of the 61,266 birds banded of all species in 52 years this was our oldest bird; in 1969 a red color band was placed on its left leg. We have several feeders near our back door that are kept filled with sunflower seed. Blue Jays come often here to feed and with the use

of the color band we discovered that this bird came often and daily to feed, being seen every day from 1969 until last seen on 15 December 1971. We have no way of knowing if this bird was always a permanent resident or not during the earlier years but we do know it was never taken in the traps more than once in any year and was 14 1/2 years of age when last taken. Note this bird was not captured during the years, 1960, '61, '62, and '68.

#### AGE SUMMARY

1 bird lived to be 14 1/2 years of age  
2 birds lived to be 10 years of age  
3 birds lived to be 9 years of age  
5 birds lived to be 8 years of age  
8 birds lived to be 7 years of age  
14 birds lived to be 6 years of age  
13 birds lived to be 5 years of age  
31 birds lived to be 4 years of age  
40 birds lived to be 3 years of age  
85 birds lived to be 2 years of age

We knew adults to be at least one year of age when banded and have thus used this in the above ages; many may have been older. It should be kept in mind that many more returns and age records may be secured during the next few years from birds banded during the last few years before they should be written off the record books as time completes their life cycles.

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