

GENERAL NOTES

Protracted Prebasic Head Molt in the Dark-eyed Junco.—From mid-November, when Dark-eyed Juncos (*Junco hyemalis*) begin to appear at Baltimore in some numbers (Brackbill, *Bird-Banding*, **41**: 131, 1970), until late December, I have trapped individuals with pinfeathers on the head and throat. I have found no mention in the literature of junco molt at this season; it seems probable that it is another example of protracted prebasic molt such as Yunick has reported for the Pine Siskin (*Carduelis pinus*) in New York state (*Bird-Banding*, **47**: 306-309, 1976).

The observed incidence of molt from 1974 through 1976 has been: 18 October to 13 November, none of 8 birds trapped; 15 November to 25 December, 16 of 36 birds (43.4 percent); 31 December to 22 February, 1 (on 27 January) of 9 birds (11.1 percent); 23 February to 13 April, 32 of 57 birds (56.1 percent). One bird that was in molt on 30 November showed no molt the following 7 December.

Presumably the birds were adults. None that I have trapped has been a "return," and so I have no such indication of age; however, most have been very dark-plumaged. Furthermore, Yunick, discussing juncos (op. cit., p. 307) also reports that in New York and New Jersey the prebasic molt of almost all immatures is complete by late September, although extending to mid-October in a few individuals.

Two of my juncos that were in molt on 7 and 10 December were retrapped on the following 1 and 9 March respectively; at that time they were undergoing the prealternate molt of which Dwight (*Annals N. Y. Acad. Sci.*, **13**: 201, 1900) wrote: "A few new feathers are acquired on the chin in early April." At Baltimore, over many years, I have noted prealternate molt on various areas of the head, from 1 March to 13 April.—Hervey Brackbill, *2620 Poplar Drive, Baltimore, Md. 21207*. Received 4 March 1977, accepted 18 September 1977.

Incidence of Oil Contamination on Breeding Common Terns—Although much has been written about the effects of massive oil spills on birds (e.g. Bourne, 1968; Nelson-Smith, 1972: 145) little information exists on the incidence or effects of chronic oil contamination. Since even very small amounts of oil on the plumage of incubating birds may contaminate eggs and reduce their hatchability (Hartung, 1965; Albers, 1977; Szaro and Albers, 1977) knowledge of such chronic situations may be necessary to understand fully the influence of oil on bird populations. In this note I present data on the extent of oil tar contamination on breeding Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) on eastern Long Island Sound from 1973 to 1976.

Adult terns were trapped at the nest and examined for oil contamination during banding. The terns came from a colony, with a 1976 population of 2,300 pairs of Common Terns and 950 pairs of Roseate Terns (*Sterna dougallii*), on Great Gull Island, located at the mouth of Long Island Sound between New York and Connecticut.

Common Terns routinely forage up to 20 km from Great Gull; however much of their feeding is done closer to the colony. In addition they feed more frequently in the relatively clean waters to the south and east than to the north along the moderately polluted Connecticut coast.

TABLE 1.
Incidence of oil contamination on Common Terns.

Year	n	Percent oiled
1973	1,206	0.74%
1974	1,379	1.60%
1975	1,463	0.75%
1976	1,260	0.85%