

GENERAL NOTES

Winter Returns of American Kestrels.—During the winter months of 1976–1977, 1977–1978, 1978–1979, we captured and banded 47 (34 female, 11 male, 2 unidentified) American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) at the Rob and Bessie Welder Wildlife Foundation in San Patricio County, Texas. Kestrels were trapped with bal-chattris baited with House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*), harvest mice (*Reithrodontomys fulvescens*), and house mice (*Mus musculus*). Each bird was banded with a standard U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service leg band and released where captured. In 1977–1978, trapped kestrels were also marked with patagial tags (Mills, 1975). The habitat at the Welder Wildlife Foundation is diverse and includes riparian woodlands, grasslands and chaparral that can be generally classified as a mesquite-grassland dominated by mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) and a complex of grasses (*Stipa*, *Panicum*, *Eragrostis* and many others). Jones (1975) and Drawe et al. (1978) have more fully described the regional and local vegetation.

Eight of 47 (17%) banded kestrels were recaptured or observed in subsequent winters through the fall of 1979 for an overall return rate much higher than the 2% (17 of 842) reported by Tabb (1977). Return rates for kestrels banded at the Welder Foundation for each year were 27% (3 of 11), 5.8% (1 of 17), and 21% (4 of 19). Similarly, Mills (1975) noted the inconsistency of kestrels returning to their wintering areas; in one season 3 of 7 (43%) returned to his study site whereas only 1 of 14 (7%) returned the next winter. Of the eight birds returning to the Welder Foundation, all but one was female. Females made up 72.3% of the birds banded and 87.5% of those that returned. In all cases, the returning birds were observed or recaptured within 50 m of the original trap site. Tabb (1977) found the same type of winter site fidelity in kestrels he retrapped in Florida.

Our measure of winter kestrel returns (17%) should be tempered with the consideration of natural or enhanced mortality. Roest (1957) stated that the mortality rate for kestrels was 57% but did not differentiate between adults and juveniles. However, Henny (1972) stated that the juvenile mortality rate was 69% and the adult rate was 47%. If a minimum annual mortality rate of 50% is assumed for the kestrel population (Brown and Amadon, 1968), the adjusted return rate in our study increases to 34%. Our adjusted return rate is probably conservative for two reasons: (a) marking kestrels with patagial tags possibly may have increased mortality thus further reducing the original banded population still alive and available for recapture the next year and (b) some of the kestrels we banded were undoubtedly still in transit when originally trapped, and, therefore, were not a part of the population actually over-wintering in our study area.

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Reaction of Brown-capped Rosy Finches to Banded Nestlings.—While conducting studies of the Brown-capped Rosy Finch (*Leucosticte australis*) on Mt. Audubon, Boulder Co., Colorado, I observed an unusual behavioral response by a pair of parent birds to aluminum leg bands placed on their 6-day-old offspring.

At 1400 on 31 July 1978, I banded the four nestlings in the brood. Much of the day (1400–1912) the adults were not in attendance, making trips to the nest to feed the young and to remove fecal sacs, although the female usually brooded after a bout of feeding and nest sanitation. Duration of brooding bouts ($n = 5$) was 19–32 min. During the 5 hr of observation the female fed the nestlings 8 times, the male fed them 5 times. The typical routine was for the adult to bring food to the nest rim, call softly, and feed the gaping young, each nestling receiving food several times. The adult then stood on the nest rim and watched the nest contents intently for several seconds. When a nestling backed to the edge of the nest and voided, the adult picked up the fecal sac and carried it off immediately. On 4 occasions (3 by the male, 1 by the female), I saw the adult peer intently into the nest following feeding, put its head down in the nest under the young, and rise up pulling on the leg band of one of the nestlings. Sometimes the adult pulled with great exertion, the nestling's leg being pulled over its head and twisted to its side. One time the adult persisted in pulling on the band for 2 min before it carried off a fecal sac produced by one of the other nestlings. The next day (1 August) during 3 hr of observations (0812–1125) this behavior was not observed, nor was it noted again through fledging of the brood on 9 August.

Similar responses by adults to their recently banded nestlings have been reported by Lovell (*Bird-Banding*, **16**: 144–145, 1945) for Song Sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*), by Berger (*Bird-Banding*, **24**: 19–20, 1953) for Prairie Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*) and by Brackbill (*Bird-Banding*, **25**: 61, 1954) for a Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*). In each of these cases the parents removed one or more of the young from the nest in their efforts to dispose of the bands. When Lovell (op. cit.) removed the bands from his birds the efforts to remove the young from the nest ceased.

Lovell (op. cit.) considered the parents' reaction to the banded nestlings an instinctive attempt to remove feces, shell fragments, or similar materials from the nest. Experiments conducted by Rand (*Auk*, **59**: 404–409, 1942) concur with this hypothesis. Thus it appears that these reactions to bands can be attributed to a generalized nest sanitation instinct. It is interesting to note that, in some cases at least, this instinct supersedes the actual welfare of the nestlings.

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Clapper Rail Kills Birds in a Net.—On 29 August 1975, we observed a Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris*) attack a Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*) hanging in a mist net at the Island Beach State Park Bird Banding Station, Ocean Co., New Jersey. The flycatcher was about 1 m off the ground. The rail jumped up, flapping its wings, and pecked at the flycatcher at least three times before it was frightened off by our approach. The flycatcher died within a few minutes. An immature Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) found dead in the same net 15 min earlier was presumably killed by the rail because it showed similar wounds on the head and neck.

Bent (1926) and Oney (1954) report a wide variety of food items for both Clapper and King rails (*R. elegans*). Meanley (1956, 1969) found feathers and vertebrae of a female