

Three long distance recoveries of banded New Jersey Barn Owls



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Since 1973 I have conducted a study of the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) in Somerset and Hunterdon counties of New Jersey. These two adjacent counties are located in the north-western section of the state, approximately 40° 30' latitude. During the seven years of the study 476 owls have been banded, of which 436 were nestlings. To this date 21 (4.4%) of these banded birds have been recovered. The three recoveries detailed here are noteworthy because of the great distances the birds traveled.

Stewart (Auk 69:227-245, 1952) showed extensive geographic dispersal occurring among the Barn Owls banded in the northern portion of their range, above 35° N. latitude. All of the significant movements involved northern birds moving in a general southward direction, but not confined to that direction only. Banded New Jersey birds have been known to travel to North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Massachusetts.

All three birds described here were banded as nestlings and all were found dead.

Bird #1 was banded on 18 May 1976 (816-14291) in Griggstown, N.J. and was recovered on 6 November 1976 in Alabama Port, Alabama, 1100 statute miles (1800 km) distant.

Bird #2 was banded on 21 June 1975 (816-14233) in Ringoes, N.J. and was recovered on 10 April 1977 in Sanibel, Florida, also a distance of 1100 statute miles (1800 km).

Bird #3 was banded on 29 May 1976 (816-18562) in Hillsborough Twp., N.J. and was recovered on 26 March 1977 in Merritt Island, Florida, 930 statute miles (1500 km) away.

The distances have been computed on straight-line air mileage. If, in fact, birds 2 and 3 flew a land route rather than a water route, the distances traveled by both birds would be increased by a minimum of 50 miles (80 km).

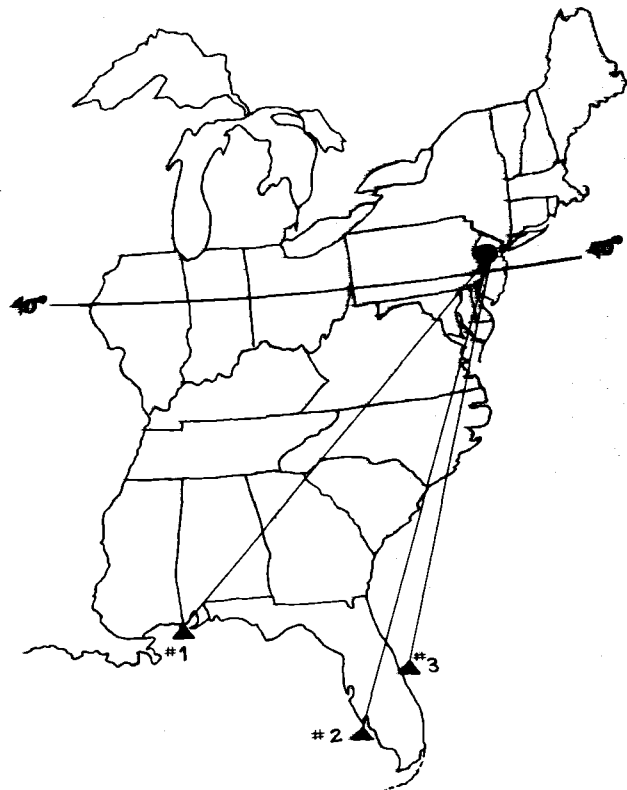


Figure 1. Map showing dispersal of three Barn Owls banded as nestlings. Banding site is indicated by dot (●) and recovery sites by triangles (▲).

I have not found any previously published records of Barn Owls banded as nestlings in New Jersey being recovered in either Alabama or Florida. I believe these recoveries are among the most distant recorded for this species in North America. ☺

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