
Bander's Forum

IS IT ADVISABLE TO CONDUCT STANDARDIZED BANDING IN WOODED HABITATS DURING THE BREEDING SEASON?

If bird banding is to contribute in a meaningful way to a database for analyses of bird population trends, standardized operations are indispensable. One has to welcome, therefore, the MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) program initiated by DeSante (*N. Am. Bird Bander* 14:124) which seeks to coordinate standardized banding activities nationwide. DeSante's own success with the proposed methodology (DeSante and Geupel, *Condor* 89:636) is encouraging testimony for its potential in spite of some inadequate sampling of certain forest bird species because of their unfavorable vertical distribution.

One aspect not discussed satisfactorily, however, is the possibility that mist netting during the breeding season may have detrimental consequences on the birds. I became aware of such consequences during late summer (end of July/August) banding activities in a wooded area of southern Quebec. Here I learned to pay special attention to the occasional appearance of fledgling birds which were still being cared for by an adult. I recall two instances involving a Magnolia Warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*) and a Black-throated Blue Warbler (*D. caerulescens*) when one of two fledglings was caught in a mist net. During the short time it took me to free the bird and band it, the adult female had already moved more than 50 m with the other fledgling. In each case I released the banded young bird near its parent, but I could not be certain that they managed to be reunited high up in the foliage of the trees.

Considering the precarious state of song bird populations everywhere, we may have to ask ourselves whether such risks can be justified with the benefits of standardized banding operations. Even an

uninterrupted observation of a net will not guarantee that situations as described above will not occur. In each case, I actually was aware that the adult female with her young had moved toward the net, and the parent was still in the immediate vicinity when I freed the young.

Peter H. Homann
117 Ridgeland Road
Tallahassee, FL 32312

