

# BIRD BANDING DEPARTMENT

Under the Direction of Wm. I. Lyon, Waukegan, Ill.

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## AN APPEAL TO BIRD BANDERS

In order to make this section of the Bulletin more interesting it is necessary that the readers send in general reports of the work at their Banding Stations, giving us monthly or quarterly, the totals of each kind of birds banded, repeats, returns, and any special interesting facts. When you discover a successful bait or a new form of trap, be generous enough to send us pictures and descriptions so that we may pass along the good word to the other Banders so they may profit by your success. Do your bit by sending in something to help us make this a real live Bird Banding News Department, send in your general report from January first to August of this year promptly so we may use it in next issue.

We have been writing all over the world trying to find out the best methods and means for catching birds. We have imported some Clap Nets, Half Overs and Bat Nets, which seem to be successfully used in catching birds in Europe. We hope to have them tried out very soon so we may give the readers of this department the benefit of the results.

From all appearances, a small Half Over net with a trip line that can be carried in your pocket and the two stakes that are about the size of a cane, should be a winner for those who have to trap away from home. If we find it successful we will make arrangements with a net firm to have these manufactured so we can distribute them to anyone wishing the same.

Baby chick feed has proved itself the best general bait for Finches and Sparrows. A good addition is a small percentage of hemp, canary and sunflower seed. We like a few cranberries during the season that they are available; if the birds do not eat them they at least add to the color scheme and possibly may be attractive in that way. They look good to us in the trap, so we believe they must tempt the birds. This year we found that cut apples will tempt many kinds of birds that we were unable to trap before, and advise that you try this.

At this time of the year you should consider your fall and winter trapping. We have found that the Finch and Sparrow family stay close to the bushes so that they may dodge through them in case of emergency. If you have no shrubs or bushes, this is the time to plant them, using those that bear fruit to attract birds. We have found a good method to use in the fall of the year was simply to gather brush and stick it into the ground surrounding a trap, adding some stalks of sunflower, golden glow, and other seed-producing varieties to tempt the birds. In this way you can build a natural bird cover around your trap station which will last all winter. Do not forget to use up your Christmas tree in this manner. The surroundings are very important to your trapping station and

you should study the locations where you see the most birds feeding, as a matter of future reference for your own trapping station.

We had one winter boarder at the Waukegan station during the past season,—a White-throated Sparrow seemed to feel that the feed in the traps made an easy living and he staid on through December and January and was last trapped about the middle of February. He became so trap-wise it was very hard to adjust the wires on the throat of the trap to catch him, as he knew just exactly the spot to escape.

The Tree Sparrows proved themselves to be good returners, and we again wish to state that we believe there should be a united effort to trap these birds so that we could get a better line on their travels.

A year ago the Bohemian Wax-wings came into our yard and we tried every bait that we could possibly think of. We watched them carefully and everything that we saw them feed upon we used in the trap, but were unsuccessful in catching them.

The past winter season the Cedar Wax-wings came in December, and again we tried everything we could think of to trap them. Finally we discovered that cut apples apparently would tempt them. Then came the successful night, when we found we had six birds in the trap. The next night nineteen were trapped, with twenty-nine for the next evening, and finally fifty-one were banded in one day. At the end of about three weeks we had placed an even two hundred bands on Cedar Wax-wings. We counted the number of wax tips on their wings and found the average to be seven on each side. There were many irregularities to this rule. A few we found had as high as nine on each side. Some of them had one or two extra large ones, with the remainder being quite small. There seemed to be much variation in these wax appendages.

You can imagine our surprise and pleasure at receiving a letter from Mrs. H. C. Miller of Racine, Wis., stating she had trapped the Cedar Wax-wing No. 66322 and inquiring if that could possibly be our bird. We hastened to write that we had placed that band on the bird just twelve days before she trapped it, twenty-five miles further north. Mrs. Miller had also discovered that apples were the attractive bait. We believe if you cut apples you will find this will make a good addition to the bait for most any birds.

In looking up the Wax-wing we found some authorities claim that the red tips sometimes came on the tail, but by careful examination with a glass we were unable to find any trace of red on the tails of any of the two hundred examined.

The Song Sparrow was the first return migrant to be trapped this season and appeared about the middle of February. In fact we had trapped four or five Song Sparrows before we had any other return migrants.

The new tree trap proved successful with Woodpeckers. It was made by tacking a piece of wire netting about six inches wide around the tree, letting it slant gradually upward to where both ends came together at a point, covering this over on the outside, so as to make a trap pocket

similar to the funnel method of Sparrow type trap. With this type of trap we caught

- 10 Downy Woodpeckers
- 2 Hairy Woodpeckers
- 6 Yellow-bellied Sap-suckers
- 33 Brown Creepers
- 6 Black and White Creeping Warblers

Our surprise came with the Brown Creepers. We found them quicker than any other bird to spy an opening. The next shock came when we saw them deliberately crawl through our  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch mesh netting. Then the No. 1 band was too large and we had to shorten it in order to make it fit them. The old bands were softer so we took a sharp-pointed scissors and cut out a part but have had to lap the new bands.

We believe this type of trap will be a successful one for anyone to add to their collection. The only objection is that it must be nailed to the tree and cannot be made portable.

Red-headed Woodpeckers came to the traps on the ground for the apple bait. We had a pleasant surprise one morning at finding five male Red-headed Woodpeckers in one trap. One of them, however, had forced his head through the wire and choked himself, so all we could save was his skin. The Catbirds came to us in a quantity on May 14, three being caught in one trap at a time and one of the three was the return bird from 1922. Another Catbird proved to be back for the third time, being first banded in 1920; then appeared last year about two blocks from our place and had a nest within two feet of a kitchen window. These people watched it and became very interested and requested us to come over and band the young birds. Upon arrival we noticed the old bird with a band, and with our glasses could see that it was a band a year or more old so we brought over a trap and instructed them how to use it. In a short time they called us up, stating that they had caught the bird and gave us the band number, which proved to be the bird banded in 1920. Now it appears again in our yard in 1923. One other Catbird banded in 1920, on the same day as our much returned bird, returned this year, but where it was in the intervening three years is still a mystery.

Towhees seem to be more numerous this year. At least we have trapped more than usual. In the past they have been very shy birds, seldom repeating, but one particular pair has acquired the trap habit. The female will call to us before we arrive at the trap and if we keep answering she will call back to us many times after she has been released.

One American Crossbill strayed into our yard and was banded, but that was the only one we saw there. There were many others in the evergreens on the Dead River flats, but no other reports of their coming into the city.

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#### A PERSONAL TRIBUTE

Walter Bradford Barrows, B.S., who had been Professor of Zoölogy and Physiology and Curator of the General Museum of the Michigan Agricultural College since February, 1894, died suddenly at East Lansing, Mich., on February 26, 1923.

Bird banding has suffered a great loss in the passing of Professor Barrows. He had an unusual personality, with his broad knowledge of bird life, he was quiet and unassuming, a man of rare mentality and deep sincerity. An hour spent with him convinced one of how much his sympathy and interest would mean to a work such as our Bird Banding. At the close of the American Ornithologists' Union convention in Chicago last fall, Professor Barrows made a trip to Waukegan, Ill., to study traps and methods of banding birds. He discussed the possible benefits of a Bird Banding Department in the Michigan Agricultural College as a means of interesting the students in the work, so that in turn they might carry on the work after leaving the college, also hoping in this way to stimulate the interests of other colleges and universities. Traps were made for Professor Barrows and he had just finished placing them.

It is to be hoped that the college will recognize the worth of the work and have it continued as a tribute to Professor Barrows.

WM. I. LYON.

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#### INLAND BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATION COUNCIL MEET IN CHICAGO

At the call of the President, the Councilors gathered for a meeting in Chicago on May 19 at a dinner in the Chicago City Club. After dinner was over they adjourned to the comfortable parlors of President Baldwin, in the Blackstone Hotel. Those present were: S. Prentiss Baldwin, President; Dr. Leon J. Cole, Vice-President; Wm. I. Lyon, Secretary; Percival Brooks Coffin, Mrs. H. C. Miller, Dr. F. C. Test, Councilors; also Mr. Ruthven Dean, representing the Chicago Ornithological Society, and Mr. O. M. Schantz, representing the Illinois Audubon Society, were present.

The Secretary's report was read, showing the activities as follows: Personal letters written covering organization and development of membership 500, newspaper reprints distributed 3000, circular letters and application, magazine reproductions sent out 7000, publicity by the Secretary consisting of articles on Bird Banding in newspapers of Chicago and other nearby cities totaling about 100 articles and covering a circulation of about one million; Bird Banding talks given by the Secretary in 24 nearby cities to audiences totaling about 4000, also two talks from prominent radio broadcasting stations. The Secretary's expense account, covering books, stationery, stamps, circulars and mailing, amounted to \$119.71, which was allowed.

Mr. Herbert L. Stoddard, Treasurer, was unable to attend, but sent in a report as follows: Memberships received to date 65; total of receipts, \$195.00; expenditures, \$3.00, which was accepted and allowed. The 65 members cover nearly all of the states in the Inland territory.

Mr. Dean was asked to act as committee on resolutions; Mr. Samuel E. Perkins of Indianapolis, and Albert F. Ganier of Nashville, Tenn., and Professor J. M. Robinson of Alabama Polytechnic Institute, Auburn, Ala., were elected as Councilors.

A motion sent in by Mr. Stoddard to change the rules to read: that an organization may become a sustaining member was passed.

General discussion on all important subjects followed. It was decided to meet in Chicago again in the fall.

The reports show that the Association was progressing very rapidly and that although the membership was not large, it was made up almost entirely of active workers.

It was voted to have Field Secretaries to aid in the promotion work, and T. E. Musselman of Quincy, Ill., was elected.

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Mr. S. Prentiss Baldwin reports that Mr. T. E. Musselman, who had charge of Mr. Baldwin's trapping station in Thomasville, Ga., in February and March, in the forty days of trapping took over 4,000 birds from the traps, banded more than 600 new birds and took 73 birds, returns from previous years. Mr. Musselman, not having previously been engaged in Bird Banding, can now surely qualify as an expert; and he returns to his home in Quincy, Ill., with many an interesting story, and a fine collection of pictures and lantern slides, so that he can now give a series of attractive popular lectures on Bird Banding through the area of the Inland Association.

Mr. Baldwin spent three weeks of March at Thomasville and tells of the mornings with Mr. Musselman in taking birds to the studio of the town photographer, who was kept busy with the new kind of sitters, live wild birds, in many positions and various conditions.

Mr. Musselman's story of his experience will appear in the Auk, July number; this will be followed later by an article on the diseased condition of the feet of Chipping Sparrows. Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Talbot have called attention to the very great proportion of Chipping Sparrows, having diseased feet, at his station, and Mr. Musselman has given this subject much careful observation this year so we hope for some interesting information on the subject.

Samuel E. Perkins, Indianapolis, Ind., reports:

Twenty bands placed on birds in the first quarter of the year. We have noticed that there has been a number of permits issued to Indianapolis lately, and know that they will have an interesting time in watching the repeats of each other's birds at their own stations.

Other Banders should try to get neighbors that are along the same line of flight, a short distance away, interested in the work so they could compare how far birds will range from feeding stations.

M. J. Magee, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., reports:

For the information of those interested, I had a small flock of Evening Grosbeaks at my feeding station all winter. Within the last month two larger flocks have joined them and I have now over one hundred Grosbeaks feeding. I have thus far banded thirty-one. Expect to band more. The weather has been very bad. We still have two or three feet of snow on the level and at my house the piles at the sides of the walks are seven to nine feet high today. We have had a great deal of wind, consequently the traps drift full of snow. The Grosbeaks are also very scrappy and you do not dare allow more than two or three in a trap at a time or they will do themselves serious injury. Consequently, I have only been able to have the trap out now and then as I happen to be able to watch it, and that was only three times. I expect the weather will be getting better now and I think I will be able to band more of the flock.

My Purple Finch record now stands:

|   | 1921 | 1922 | 1923 to May 8 inc. |           |
|---|------|------|--------------------|-----------|
| Banded  | 9    | 248  | 235                | Total 492 |
| "Returns" reported to May 1..... 3                        |      |      |                    |           |
| #30642 Adult Male trapped May 2, 4:15 P. M.               |      |      |                    |           |
| Banded July 17, 1922, 7:15 A. M., as young Male or Female |      |      |                    |           |
| #30637 Adult Male trapped May 5, 3:30 P. M.               |      |      |                    |           |
| Banded July 14, 1922, 7:00 P. M.                          |      |      |                    |           |
| #30650 Adult Male trapped May 5, 3:45 P. M.               |      |      |                    |           |
| Banded July 18, 1922, 7:15 P. M.                          | 3    |      |                    |           |
|   |      |      |                    | —         |
| Total returns.....  |      |      |                    | 6         |

Last year I commented on the fact that the first Purple Finches to come in moved on and were not the ones that were around all summer and nested. Results this year so far confirm this, of all the Finches banded this year to date I have had but two "Repeats."

A letter from a friend at State Line, Wis., states that he believes that Mr. and Mrs. George Fisher have banded every Crossbill in the country. We hope he is right and that they may continue to be successful.

NOTE.—It gives this department much pleasure to include the following report in its columns, as we believe it is the beginning of this kind of work in colleges and other institutions:

AUBURN BIRD BANDING STATION  
 ALABAMA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE  
 COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE  
 DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY AND ENTOMOLOGY

January 29th, 1923, saw the beginning of a Course in Economic Ornithology in our institution. Twelve men registered for the course. The members of the department have obtained official bird banding permits from the Bureau of Biological Survey at Washington, D. C., and from

the office of the State Department of Conservation, Mr. I. T. Quinn, Commissioner, Montgomery, Alabama.

The department was also able to obtain a bird banding permit from the State Commissioners' office for Graduate Senior Students in Ornithology, each member of the class receiving a permit from the Bureau of Survey at Washington.

We have spent part of the laboratory periods constructing cages of different types. On the 11th of February a Cowbird was found in an insect cage tray, our first catch, 70205. Since then, at various intervals, we have caught 35 Cowbirds.

Mr. A. L. Hamner discovered on the 26th of February that there were a lot of small birds feeding on some hickory nut kernels. We proceeded with a No. 4 trigger trap to catch the BIRDS. We caught them. They were Pine Siskin. Next day many repeated and more new ones came. This was in a path just in front of the green house header, where the students and help were passing many times every hour. Mr. Hamner took time off and built a larger trap with a funnel on each of three sides. Hickory nut kernels were used and the siskin came into the cage in numbers. A small box was placed on the fourth side of the cage with a lighter funnel and this has served as the collecting box for the catch. This trap has been so successful that we have banded 99 siskin. More have come to the trap but our supply of bands of this size is exhausted at present. Forty-eight have repeated and one has repeated five times.

Summary of banding at Auburn Station, March 7, 1923, 9:30 A. M.:

|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| Pine Siskin .....        | 99 |
| Cowbirds . . . . .       | 35 |
| Brown Thrasher . . . . . | 3  |
| Song Sparrow . . . . .   | 1  |

Total.....138

We have as our goal for each student to band fifty birds. We feel that would make us a good beginning as a new station, which we trust will become permanent and be a factor in stimulating interest throughout the country in observing and banding birds instead of shooting birds.

The class roll in Economic Ornithology at our institution is as follows:

|                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Bridges, J. E.  | Pritchett, W. P.   |
| Cladwell, E. G. | Ruffin, W. A.      |
| Davis, P. N.    | Russell, R. O.     |
| Hamner, A. L.   | Satterfield, R. M. |
| Jones, J. M.    | Savage, Cole       |
| Pistole, W. M.  | Tatum, C. D.       |

J. M. ROBINSON,  
Associate Professor, Zoölogy and Entomology.

Walter G. Gerth, Wolsey, S. Dak., reports:

In the night of January 19th to 20th we had a snow storm which, however, was nothing unusual. The next morning one of my pupils

brought a Lapland Longspur to me. It was somewhat crippled. Soon another one came with one that was half frozen. These I quickly took into my house and administered first aid. Thereupon I instructed the boys to find all they could. That afternoon they came with a considerable number of the birds. Many were already frozen, but still others could be helped. Well, that day my house was turned into a bird hospital.

The live specimens I had numbered 22. However, some of these were in such condition that they did not survive, in spite of the care I tried to give them. Nevertheless, 18 of them recuperated. Having a fair sized screen porch I made hasty arrangements to place them there until favorable weather conditions may permit their departure. Needless to say, these birds brought me much entertainment, for they were a merry sort. Some of the males were rather restless at times and preferred to have their freedom. A few would bite at times when I would handle them, but the majority were well behaved. Soon they forgot their shyness, for they quickly learned that they received their feed quite regularly.

At feeding time they would first flit away, but no sooner would I make a break to go to the door, then would quickly come back to feed. As long as I had access I fed them millet tops. These they seemed to like the best. I also tried bread crumbs with lard poured over them, also an occasional piece of suet. At times I would coax them to take food from my hands. On one occasion I succeeded. I suppose they would have done this oftener had I kept it up, but time did not always permit me to tarry long.

Sometimes I would change the place where I put the feed and it was then interesting to see them look for it. They expected food every-time I came out to them. Now if (a few could) they could not see it at once, a few would go on the search. Having found the treasure in some corner or box they would utter their melodious call and soon they would all be enjoying a hearty feast. If the box would be six or eight inches high I would lean a light board against the side. Soon the little fellows would find the reason for the "gangplank" to the mess hall.

It was during this time that I thought of banding them before setting them free. After much inquiry I finally was directed to the Agricultural Department for a license and bands. During the course of time some of the birds were seeking freedom and flew away through a hole in the screen which I had not detected before. Thus fourteen remained to be banded. One of these died from some unknown cause, so lucky thirteen were still there awaiting the bands. Of these I was able to band ten. They being banded, I opened the door to their freedom. Eight of them left the same day; the other five remained, but I kept the door open every day. However, they seemed to prefer their present location to freedom, for even though I left the door open every day, they would still be there in the evening.

On Tuesday we got two of them to fly out, but they seemed as though they felt they were driven away from home. Three times the two circled the house before they perched on one of the limbs of a nearby tree, where they remained for some time uttering their plaintive call. I thought they would be back the next morning, but they were off.



Now my bird family is reduced to three. They have perfect freedom to go when they choose, but I guess they are well pleased where they are. The large door is open daily, and to induce them to fly away I set their feed just before the open screen door. And what do you think? The other day one of them hopped down on the front stairway to peck at something. Then, hearing a sound, instead of flying away, no, she politely flies back where she came from, just like a child that quickly runs into the house when it fears something outside.

Thus, Mr. Lyon, I have had both profit and pleasure from having these little feathered friends with me. Next winter I will be prepared to take care of more of them in case they should be overcome by a storm. Guess then I'll have to hire a nurse to care for my patients while I tend to my regular duties.

WALTER G. GERTH.

Wolsey, S. Dak.