

between Ashbridge's Bay and the Exhibition Grounds near Toronto on August 30; the Pectoral and Baird's Sandpipers on September 1; the White-rumped Sandpiper on September 30; the Osprey flying over the Exhibition Grounds near Toronto on August 30; the Rusty Blackbird between Galt and Dundas on September 27 and near Kitchener several times subsequently, and the Snow Bunting at the outskirts of Kitchener on November 3.—G. W. KNECHTEL, *Kitchener, Ont.*

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## BIRD BANDING NEWS

Conducted by Wm. I. Lyon

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### Some Experiences in Bird Banding

By Mrs. Marie Dales

I have often been asked how I came to take up bird banding. When we moved to our present home, I found so many birds already there, that I determined to try to keep them and attract others. The Western Meadowlark sang all fall while we were building. In the spring I found a pair of Cedar Waxwings nesting in a cottonwood tree just below our house.

I soon discovered that I would have to employ some means of ridding the place of English Sparrows; they came in hordes and ate the food provided for the other birds. So, in the first part of July, 1923, I invested in a sparrow trap. In exactly two months I had trapped one thousand English Sparrows. The catch for the entire season was 1,125. Last year we caught only 878. And even with this reduction of these birds we have been compelled to keep up a constant warfare on them all spring. I have torn their nests out of our nest boxes, only to find them building again the next morning. We simply cannot have sparrows and song birds together.

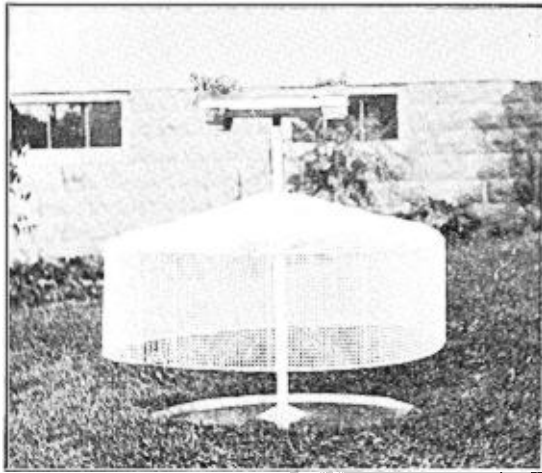
Besides sparrows, other birds frequently came into our trap. The thought came to me that these birds could be banded before they were released. And as I thought more about the wonderful possibilities in thus identifying these migrant visitors, I decided to undertake it. By the time I had received my federal permit it was rather late in the season, and still later when I received my supply of bands. But the following spring found me prepared. With the Brown Thrashers predominating the year before, I felt quite certain that the first bird to wear one of my bands would be a thrasher; and it was.

One of the interesting phases of this work is the opportunity to study the differences in the ways birds react to the trapping and handling process. Of course, we are not surprised to find birds of different species behaving differently; but there are also differences in behavior in birds of the same species. This is probably an indication of temperament in birds. Some birds are more nervous than others. The first Robin to be trapped was a male, and he yelled so lustily for help that several other Robins came to his assistance; one of these was a female which entered the trap, and this led me to think that she must be his mate. Later observations proved that this was not the case, however. Some birds are very docile, while others will struggle and bite. The Cowbird nearly always bites. Only once did a Bluebird show fight. Most Catbirds are timid and nervous, and seldom bite. Harris's Sparrow rarely shows any nervousness, and I have never had one bite me. I have had Brown Thrashers, Catbirds, Harris's

Sparrows, and Robins remain in my open hand for some little time. One Robin remained in that position until I counted fifty, then he hopped to the ground and leisurely walked away.

To trap the Bluebirds and wrens I had to devise some other method, as they would not go into the sparrow trap. I made a landing net by lacing some mosquito netting over an embroidery hoop. Watching my opportunity I would slip up and place the net over the hole of the nest box. The male will leave the box at the slightest disturbance, while the female will remain with the young.

In the case of the first pair of House Wrens which I banded, the male left home never to return—not even to help feed the young. He began to build in



THE DROP BATH TRAP DESIGNED AND USED BY MRS. DALES.

a box in a nearby tree, while the female remained with the young until they left the nest. Then she went to the new home her mate was building. She stayed there only a few days, and then I did not see her again; just what happened I do not know. The male built and sang, but remained mateless for the rest of the season.

The second pair of wrens nested in a box on a window casing. I had no trouble in getting the male in the net, but the female was too wily for the mosquito netting. I finally resorted to a hair net and got her, but she lost her tail in the operation. It may have been the mortification of losing her tail that prompted her to remain away all afternoon. At dusk she came shame-facedly creeping back, to be soundly berated by an irate mate left alone to feed the family all that time.

The trapping and banding of birds presents an opportunity for the study of abnormal conditions. Among the Catbirds there was one who was unable to close his beak for a long time. His voice was squeaky, and remained so all summer. Another Catbird had lost the right foot. Later I trapped him and examined him carefully. The first joints of both inner and outer toes of the left foot were also missing. I believe this condition had been brought about by disease rather than by banding. I banded him on the left leg.

Late in the fall I trapped a Robin with the lower mandible broken and bent back to the chin. Two weeks later I saw him in Grandview Park busily pecking away with his upper mandible. His plumage was ill-kept. Three days later I saw him again in my back yard. He then seemed quite fit and able to survive.

The banding of nestlings is very unsatisfactory and unproductive of results. The mortality is too great. Sooner or later the trapper is sure to have some fatalities. I have had two. A Brown Thrasher and a Chipping Sparrow were caught under the drop trap before they were fully inside.

As the work progresses one is constantly on the alert for new trapping methods and new baits, which will entice new kinds of birds to the traps. For bait I use bread, fruit, grapenuts, cottage cheese, and table scraps of many kinds. Later in the season I have found that dogwood berries (*Cornus asperifolia*) are a splendid bait for Bluebirds, Robins, and Flickers. The Flickers came all winter for the berries.

Birds are a little like people—they learn to like some things. At first the Bluebirds paid no attention to the food tray. Before the season was over I frequently saw them partaking of bread and cheese. One day the male Bluebird, apparently tired of feeding the youngsters, brought them to the food tray and left them to help themselves.

The total number of birds trapped and banded from May 2 to November 7 was 170. They were caught in various traps, as follows:

Bath trap .....	64
Drop trap .....	44
Sparrow trap .....	33
On nest .....	15
Gathering cage .....	9
Landing net .....	5

The sparrow trap was operated through the entire season; the drop trap from June 24 to October 1; and the bath trap from October 1 to November 7.

It may be a matter of interest to some readers to know the species banded, and the number of each, which is here given: Robin, 33; Harris's Sparrow, 28; Catbird, 27; Brown Thrasher, 24; Chipping Sparrow, 16; Bluebird, 14; House Wren, 9; Cowbird, 5; Slate-colored Junco, 4; Mourning Dove, 2; Myrtle Warbler, 2; Flicker, Goldfinch, Orchard Oriole, Pine Siskin, White-crowned Sparrow, and Bronzed Grackle, one each.

A Bluebird and Harris's Sparrow each repeated once; two Harris's Sparrows each repeated twice; one Harris's Sparrow and a Brown Thrasher each repeated three times.

I use a card index system in keeping my records. I enter the number corresponding to the number of the band, the name of the bird, sex if possible, and any unusual features about the bird. This card is practically a duplicate of the one which is sent to the Bureau of Biological Survey at Washington.

STIOUX CITY, IOWA.

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#### UNOFFICIAL BIRD BANDING

BY T. C. S.

A good deal of unofficial bird tagging is going on from time to time, which is heard of only through the newspapers. The latest to reach our attention is the

case of a Crow which was tagged about four miles north of Pilger, Nebraska, on January 4, 1925, by George and Ted Foote. The boys wired two pool chips to the body of the bird, but to what part of the bird's body is not clear from the newspaper account. The Crow was recovered nine miles out of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, on July 31, 1925, by Ed. Graham, who returned one of the chips, thus completing the chain of facts. The distance between the two points is approximately 1,000 miles in direct line, but perhaps more as the Crow flies.

This case recalls a couple of instances where hawks were marked in one way or another, with returns. In the case of hawks the identifications by newspapers or untrained persons must be taken for what they are worth. The first instance is as follows: Mr. Ed. Hotchkiss on August 19, 1916, marked a "hawk" at Red Lodge, Montana. On October 29, 1916, the bird was captured on Bogota Plain, about nine miles north of Bogota, Columbia, South America. Thus the bird traveled approximately 3,700 miles in seventy-one days. The following letter addressed to me by Mr. Hotchkiss in answer to an inquiry may be of interest:

"Red Lodge, Montana, Aug. 29, 1917.

Dear sir:

Your letter of August 24 is now at hand concerning the bird or rather the chicken hawk which I caught last year. I shall gladly answer your question. Yes, the bird was marked August 19, 1916. It was marked on a small piece of paper which was put in a bottle and fastened with a copper wire around the bird's neck. The note contained the following message:

Whoever finds this bird please write and tell me when and where  
and upon what date; please send me your address.

Yours truly,

Mr. Eddie Hotchkiss,

Red Lodge, Montana. Box 426.

No the bird was not killed October 29, 1916, but was injured and captured on Bogota Plain, Colombia, on this date. The bird was an adult. It was a regular chicken hawk.

Yours truly,

Mr. Ed. Hotchkiss, Red Lodge, Mont."

The species of hawk may not be ornithologically identified, but the evidence is good that "a chicken hawk" made that long flight in a definite time. According to newspaper accounts the bird was captured by Luis elipe Rulda, of Bogota.

Another hawk was tagged in 1916, at White Lake, South Dakota, by Mr. P. G. Tripp. It was recovered late in November of the same year at Denton, Texas. The following letter to me gives details:

"White Lake, S. Dak., December 8, 1916.

Dear Sir:

Replying to your inquiry regarding the young hawk. About the middle of June I found the nest containing the four young hawks. Curious to know the result I caught three of them—the fourth made his escape, as he could fly some—and these I labeled with aluminum chicken markers with my name and address. The nest was built in a marsh where the water was about fourteen inches deep. These birds were Marsh Hawks and not Sparrow Hawks as the papers have it. They must have flown away from here the latter part of July for I did not see

them later than that. The one which created all of the excitement was shot near Denton, Texas, by Ruel J. Brek. Hoping that I have made it all clear to you, I remain,

Sincerely yours, P. G. Tripp."

While on this subject it may be worth while to reprint from the magazine *American Ornithology* (Worcester, Mass.), Vol. I, page 194, 1901, the following account of an early effort at bird banding, which may be of interest to present-day banders:

"Wedded for Life. Just beneath the diamond shaped opening in the hay loft of my father's carriage house was placed the rustic summer home of a pair of swifts. I remember my father telling me that this nest had been there to his knowledge for fourteen years; and well I recall when a boy of ten climbing to the nest to look at the five white eggs. I used often to catch the birds as they clung to the side of the loft, and to show my playmates the spikes in their tails. This was during the season of '80. The following Spring, acting on the advice of my father, I made two bracelets of coiled hair wire, and catching the birds, fastened one about the leg of each. For the following five years the same pair of swifts occupied the nest.

"About this time business took me to New York, and I have only occasionally visited the old haunts. The summer of '90 I climbed into the old loft, and to all appearances the same old nest, and upon catching the old birds, found that one still had the copper wire upon its leg. Whether the other bird was a new mate or had lost the wire, I cannot state. Two interesting facts were however demonstrated; first, that the swift at least remains mated for life, and second, that they are a long-lived bird. I cannot of course state whether this pair were the same ones first observed by my father fourteen years before my observations commenced, but 'my birds' nested 'on the old camp ground' from '80 to '90, a period of ten years, and the nest to my knowledge has been there over thirty years.—Howard L. Wood, M. D., Groton, Ct."

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#### Miscellaneous Notes

Bird banding is proving that the Harris's Sparrow is gradually extending its range eastward. Though not many of these are trapped and banded, they have consistently appeared east of the Mississippi River each spring and fall in recent seasons; and from these facts we may conclude that the species is becoming a regular migrant as far east as the Great Lakes, even though the numbers may be small at present. We have trapped not less than one of these birds during each spring and fall for the last three years; and one more was trapped in the spring of this year.

On May 18, 1925, Harold C. Wolson trapped and banded a Harris's Sparrow at Madison, Wisconsin. Mrs. P. B. Coffin, of Chicago, observed two Harris's Sparrows at their farm, sixty miles east of Indianapolis and about fifteen miles from the Ohio line. They first appeared on May 12 in the garden near the house, and were seen again on May 14, 15, and 16. Wing Brothers have reported that they banded a Harris's Sparrow at Jackson, Michigan, in May, 1925.

Edward S. Thomas, Columbus, Ohio, recently made a trip to the Indiana Dunes, near Whiting, and was successful in banding three Black Terns, one Killdeer, and one Wilson's Phalarope, all immature birds.

Rev. George W. Luther, Old Fort Drummond, Detour, Mich., which is on the north side of Lake Huron, has observed a Baltimore Oriole and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at that place; both are rather unusual records for that region, and perhaps the record of the oriole is one of the farthest north that has been made. Rev. Luther also reports that a Herring Gull banded by him on July 4, 1924, was killed by an Indian near the mouth of the Great Whale River on Hudson Bay. It is quite singular that a young gull, which had not been flying all told for more than four months, should thus migrate north and east for a distance of six hundred and fifty miles from the place where it was hatched.

Prof. J. W. Stack, Michigan State College, East Lansing, says that some of the professors are joining with him in bird banding work, all being located within a few miles of each other. They expect to be able to secure some facts concerning the distance birds travel from their nests in securing food.

Prof. William Rowan, University of Alberta, Edmonton, reports that he banded twenty-five Franklin's Gulls on July 9, at Beaver Hill Lake, Alberta. He had only twenty-five bands, of the proper size, with him, or he would have banded many more. He estimates that there were 25,000 adults in the colonies, and that the marsh was "crawling" with the young. He banded only the largest, and did not cover over fifty yards. Next year he expects to be prepared to work on a larger scale.

A Northern Flicker banded by Wm. I. Lyon at Waukegan, Ill., on June 21, 1918, was killed at Monroe, La., on July 27, 1925. Thus the bird had lived over seven years at the time of its death.

A most valuable piece of bird banding work has just been reported by Robert B. Glover, of Ft. Atkinson, Wis. While at Milton College, in Wisconsin, he trapped and banded 549 Chimney Swifts, 272 in one chimney and 277 in another. He made a trap of small mesh poultry netting, with a single funnel at the bottom; this was placed over the chimney top.

J. A. Laughlin, Marshall, Mo., writes to us of two Chimney Swift returns. We hope that we may be able to publish in the near future a Chimney Swift return from South America.

E. C. Hoffman, Cleveland, Ohio, claims that a pair of Kingbirds protected the immediate vicinity of his banding station from the Sparrow Hawks, which nested not far away.

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## NOTES HERE AND THERE

### Conducted by the Secretary

Mrs. Merit O'Neal, historian of the Kentucky Ornithological Society, writes as follows to the Secretary, under date of May 19, 1925: "On a recent visit to my mother's home in Lexington I went on an early-morning bird hike with the Lexington Bird Club. On the farm of Mr. Jake Gray, at Pine Grove, we saw a flock of ten or more Starlings. A young one was caught and brought to Major Victor Dodge, of the University of Kentucky, who positively identified it."

The *University of Iowa Service Bulletin* for June 13, 1925, is taken up with an article by Professor Dayton Stoner on the "Summer Birds of Iowa". Professor