

BIRD BANDING NEWS

Conducted by Wm. I. Lyon

ACADIANS I HAVE FOUND

BY S. E. PERKINS III

There is in Riverside Park, Indianapolis, bordering the golf course and acting as a natural hazard, a piece of boggy ground about ten feet wide and one thousand feet long in which, during most of the spring, water stands. Cat-tails grow in the center and along its borders tall willow sprouts abound. This makes a rather dense thicket throughout which Red-winged Blackbirds call and chatter all spring and summer.

We were there seeking nests of fledgling Red-winged Blackbirds that we might band them. By June 22 I had banded seven baby red-wings in two nests. The nests we had found up to then had been in the tops of the willows, about eight feet up, mostly in groups of two and three. That day we found a red-wing nest only four feet up with one very young bird and one egg.

We had seen Robins in the elms bordering the boulevard nearby and thrashers and a little Green Heron nesting a short distance away at the bank of the lagoon but in this long strip of willows no bird notes were heard except the red-wings.

Finding the one nest lower than the others inspired us with a hope of finding others. We were thus engaged when we came upon a small beautifully felted nest of fibers, four feet up in the crotch of a willow stalk, so built that a shoot of sycamore sapling with its large leaves came through the same crotch almost completely hiding the nest site. The nest had four creamy eggs, speckled around the larger end with brown. We withdrew to ascertain the owners. Shortly a flycatcher appeared. Was it the Least, Yellow-bellied, or Acadian? All look very much alike as they flit about. They look alike as they sit close down on a nest.

But a little time with the books "makes a whale of a difference" in one's guesses.

The Least Flycatcher was eliminated for its eggs are white without spots. It was not the Yellow-bellied for this species builds on the ground. It did not sing; it only fussed. It was surely the Acadian or Alder. On June 25 the bird was incubating as before. When it left the nest we got photos of the nest and eggs. The measurement of the eggs could not determine which species we were observing. On June 27 the nest was as before and we still saw one bird and heard no song. The visit of June 30 found four very small birds in the nest. No parent bird was about while we made our observations. Natural growth was taking place and was the only thing noted on July 1. On the fifth of July the four fledglings were banded and photographed.

No visits were made again till the tenth when early in the morning I took a drop trap and a gathering cage and spool of string and went again to Riverside.

All four flycatchers were in the nest. While I watched, for the first time both parents came and fed. I observed that one parent went east and the other went west in the willows for food. Many visits of each confirm my idea that each in its direction would fly from the nest some thirty to fifty feet, there find moths or bugs and return by short flights to bring the food. A few times on leaving the nest the birds would come to the edge of the willow thicket opposite

the nest and fly along in the open for a distance then disappear into the brush. The parents fed alternately. Seldom were they at the nest at once.

I placed the drop trap in the open a foot or more from the thicket. Took two fledglings and placed them in the gathering cage and put it under the set drop trap. Ran my string up the hill to the boulevard near my auto. While I waited two boys came by and sat with me. Their interest in my doings was so stimulated that one remembered a nest he had seen in another part of the park and later, when he took me there, we found a quail sitting on sixteen eggs.

Ten minutes after the trap was set I caught the female parent. She was less afraid in her desire to feed her young than was her mate. It was only after I handled her that I was convinced that I had an Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*).

Our captive had its second and fourth primaries of equal length, as were the first and fifth, though shorter. The upper mandible was dark and the lower light. After banding she was photographed. She lay quietly in one's hand with closed eyes as if asleep. The Cardinal, Robin, Blue Jay, Hermit and Wood Thrushes will pose long enough to be photographed, but always with eyes wide open. I never had one of these close its eyes while being held, even for a second.

Another fifteen minutes elapsed while I watched the male Acadian fly about the trap with food. He would alight near and then fly farther away. Would light on top of the trap and try to find a way through the netting, then fly back to the willows. Just twenty minutes after the mate was caught I had the male. Both maintained silence most of the time while in our possession. They gave only a few faint squeals. In all our handling of this adult pair, if held quietly, the birds closed their eyes. A shake would cause either one to open its eyes wide and look about but each seemed at once to be re-assured of its safety and would feign sleep again. Both banded adults were turned on their backs at the same time in the hands of the two boys and the habit of each proved to be to close the eyes for the many seconds required to focus a graflex on them. We repeated five times this same stunt with always the same result. When released they went to a large maple near the swamp.

Next day when I returned both parents were feeding. Two fledglings were still in the nest. The others had taken flight. Some weeks later I gathered the nest and am now eager for another season to roll around that I may try to find these friends again. Will they come mated as they were? Will I find each parent with a new mate? Will the young come to the same locality as the parents? Only time, and in the spring, a lot of patience, can tell. If I find them I'll let you know.

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA.

WINTER NOTES ON THE BLUE JAYS. Thirty Blue Jays, more or less, have used this station during the past winter mostly to maintain their own storage supplies in tall oak trees nearby. Cats and squirrels are kept away from these trees and from the traps by the jays. From January 1 to February 15, 1925, no jays were banded, the jays already banded keeping other jays strictly away. On February 15 in an effort to get new jays to come to the traps, a week's supply of food was provided. Inside of two hours this was stored up as a reserve supply in their own feeding stations, but meanwhile two new jays had gained access

to the station. These birds were brightly colored, being very different in appearance from the sooty birds who had spent the winter in this suburb of industrial Cleveland. One newcomer was given No. 315526. On March 16 one each of two pairs of Blue Jays took food from the traps to their mates waiting in the tree above. One of these was given band No. 315529. The number of the other bird was not determined as it was warned by its mate when the trap was about to be dropped.

On returning to the station, after an absence of several hours and while yet about five hundred feet away, the writer was met by a banded jay who flew down to a tree ten feet distant. This bird, though it had food in its bill, called in the same way, two rather low "jay jay" notes, as two jays have lately called for their breakfast. On arriving at the traps the day's supply of food was found entirely gone.

From March 8 to March 25 Crows up to four hundred in a flock, have been moving east along the lake shore. Two of the crows, observing the jays in the tree tops, stopped to investigate. While one crow acted as a sentinel in the usual crow fashion, the other made a deliberate and successful search for the jay's hidden supplies. Inside of five minutes sufficient reinforcements had arrived for the jays and their uninvited visitors were speedily routed, being escorted beyond vision over the tree tops by a dozen of the jays. The next morning, however, increased numbers of the crows were in complete possession; but they did not come closer than fifty yards of the traps. Noticing this the jays have since hidden their reserve rations only by burying them within the limits the crows set for themselves.

Frequently during the winter when numbers of other birds started feeding at the traps the jays would scatter them by dashing down with imitations of various hawk cries. Usually ascribed to mischief, these imitations are used at this station only for the practical purpose of protecting their food supplies. The only effect on Starlings, however, is to make them imitate the usual jay calls. There was no real conflict between Starlings and jays as to food at the traps, the only food eaten by both being suet.

Screech Owls which live high on numerous English Sparrows attracted to the feeding station, are not given any especial attention by the jays; except when summoned by an alarm call from the flickers between whom and the owls there seems to be a dispute as to the occupancy of a certain hollow tree. Thirty-seven Blue Jays were banded between October, 1924, and March, 1925.—E. C. HOFFMAN. *Cleveland, Ohio.*

THE BRONZED GRACKLES AT LAKEWOOD, OHIO, IN 1925.—The Bronzed Grackles spending the spring and summer along the south shore of Lake Erie began to arrive at Lakewood, Ohio, in increasing numbers during the first week in June, the first bird being banded June 9. Their arrival coincided with increased numbers of gnats and mayflies. Of these spring and summer birds eighty-nine were banded. These birds, estimated to number eight hundred, left Lakewood about October 4.

About five hundred grackles appeared here October 5 and remained until October 25. These birds appeared to be entire strangers to traps and feeding stations and kept strictly to themselves. None were banded.

About four hundred Bronzed Grackles came to Lakewood October 27 and gradually moved eastward along the lake and along the boulevards running par-

allel with the lake, through the city, leaving November 6. These birds took several days to become acquainted with the traps and feeding stations. Three were banded.

The lowest average temperature for any October shown on the records of the Cleveland weather bureau undoubtedly influenced the above migration dates.

Returns from the ninety-two birds mentioned may indicate whether these grackles are divided into permanent groups, as their behavior seems to show.

Although some of these grackles presumably nest in this locality, the adult birds having often been observed flying off with food, no nests have been found, and returns should determine the nesting site and also their winter home.—JOHN A. BRADY AND E. C. HOFFMAN, *Lakewood, Ohio*.

The Biology Department of Milton College, under the leadership of Professor F. G. Hall, is doing an excellent work in bird banding as a part of the study course. It has been the privilege of the president of the Inland Bird Banding Association to read the thesis of Miss Beulah Margaret Lewis, for graduation in 1925 at Milton College, Milton, Wisconsin.

The thesis is in bound form of more than a hundred typewritten pages, with numerous photos for illustrations. It is a delightful book to read and shows a great amount of study, with many new and original ideas. To any one interested in bird banding, it is an excellent instruction book. We were particularly taken with the opening statement which is as follows: "What could be more absorbing for a thesis than bird banding? It draws one out of doors in the spring when the call of nature is strongest, and it furnishes pleasure the year round. Then each day brings the possibility of a rare species or the return of banded individuals. The attractiveness of bird banding is drawing the attention of large numbers of bird students, many of whom are aiding the government by means of ornithological research. Care is exercised to make it of the greatest scientific knowledge and to insure the safety and well being of the birds."

The approval and commendation of the Inland Association is being sent to Miss Lewis, also to Professor Hall to whom we believe a great deal of credit is due for the excellent assistance he is giving banding in his district.—W. I. L.

We have received "News from the Bird Banders (of the) Western Bird Banding Association, Volume I, Number 1, January, 1926." This is a mimeographed circular of ten pages on heavy, perforated paper, which records and the minutes and miscellaneous information of interest to the bird banders on the Pacific Coast. In form and contents it is a splendid suggestion for a method of preserving matter which otherwise might not become available to all of the members, and others, who may be interested in it. It is also another indication of the enthusiastic activity of those who are engaged in the bird banding work.