



EBBA NEWS

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THE EASTERN BIRD-BANDING ASSOCIATION
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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Although this issue is actually the September-October issue for 1953, it is being prepared on January 9, 1954. Future issues will be forthcoming soon, and it is hoped that we shall be able to get on a current basis. At present, the greatest difficulty we have to face is shortage of material; by the time we get caught up, there will be no material on hand for future issues--unless members get busy and send something to the Editor, so why not try to prepare something which you think may be of interest to EBBA members.

Despite the tardiness of EBBA NEWS due to the inability of the Editor to find sufficient time in which to carry out his duties, members have been very kind in bearing with him in this difficulty, and, in view of this circumstance, the unusually prompt return of dues after the Treasurer's mailing of bills was most gratifying. Likewise, the increase in the number of members who took out sustaining memberships was both surprising and gratifying.

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ABOUT THE ANNUAL MEETING

As you know, the 1954 Annual Meeting of EBBA will be held in Baltimore, Maryland, Saturday and Sunday, April 3 and 4. Details will be announced later. President Raymond J. Middleton has appointed the following as the committee on local arrangements: Orville Crowder, Chairman; Seth H. Low, Chandler Robbins, and Richard Cole.

The program committee has not been announced, but in the meanwhile the Editor would suggest that members think about topics or papers which they might like to present or about symposia which they would think of interest. The Editor is sure that Ray Middleton will welcome any suggestions and that he will pass them on to the appropriate persons.

* * *

CONCERNING BANDS AND BANDERS

In the February issue of EBBA NEWS, pages 3 to 7, appeared a

letter from Seth H. Low, of the Banding Office, concerning the new policy of the Fish and Wildlife Service concerning the use of colored bands and of additional metal bands on the same leg. In addition, comments of other persons were presented.

Immediately upon receipt of the issue in question, Mr. C. Hapgood Parks, 99 Warrenton Avenue, Hartford, Conn., wrote the Editor, and the major portion of his provocative letter is reproduced herewith. Mr. Parks wrote:

"I would like to back you up very emphatically when you say too many banding permits are getting into unqualified hands!!!!!!!!!!!!

"We are trapping altogether too many banded birds with improperly adjusted bands. Some birds, like the Evening Grosbeaks and other strong-billed species, do mutilate some of the bands, of course, but, judging from our own studies of repeats and returns, the percent of bands mutilated by the birds themselves is insignificant. I feel that altogether too much stress is being placed, by the 'hobby' banders, on 'I banded more birds than you did', and in consequence the birds are endangered by too many bands which are poorly adjusted because these banders are not willing to take the greater time that it takes to adjust them properly and safely.

"Your suggestion that regional associations cooperate in the screening of applicants for banding permits is the very best possible. Further than that, I would add the recommendation that those same regional associations cooperate to the extent of examining the work of banders within their respective regions. After all, we are hoping to improve the welfare of the birds, are we not?

"I believe that the use of two metal bands on the same leg is almost certain to be detrimental to the bird if it is unfortunate enough to survive natural hazards over a considerable period. I feel sure that the example which you cited of the 'flange' formation is more typical than exceptional. Since I have handled but two birds so banded, and these for less than a year each, I can not provide factual data. Just tap the edges of these bands repeatedly, though lightly, and see what happens. This is why we prefer plastic bands for local identification purposes. Just why the Banding Office frowns on

plastics I've never discovered.*

"We have had very good luck with plastic bands. Just as in the case of the metal bands, it is a matter of careful fitting and proper sealing. A few seconds used to roll the plastic band after it has been placed around the tarsus fits it snugly and comfortably. A drop of acetone, a few additional seconds of holding the fitted band while the acetone evaporates, and the job is done. We have had at least three instances of Evening Grosbeaks returning to us with their aluminum bands missing but with the identifying plastics intact. And we have proof that this species DOES remove bands from its own legs when the No. 2 size is applied."

* * *

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES?

Dues for 1954 are now payable. If you haven't paid up yet, why not send your check for \$2.00, or more if you wish, to Merrill Wood, Treasurer, 811 N. Allen St., State College, Penna.

* * *

BANDING BARN OWLS

by Howard Drinkwater, Old Road, Whitehouse, N.J.

(Editor's Note: The foregoing was mailed by Mr. Drinkwater in August of 1952 and received by the Editor in December 1953. Therefore, in addition to the original article, we have a newer one bringing the project up to date.)

Barn Owls, according to the last release I have from the Fish and Wildlife Service, have not been banded in the numbers that one might expect for a bird of such general distribution.

From Paul M. Stewart's article in THE AUK for July 1952, I find that of the total number of Barn Owls banded (2298), only 336 individuals yielded returns, and of that number only 21 were reported for my own state, New Jersey.

*Perhaps Seth Low will comment on this.-Ed.

Consideration of these facts leads me to believe that my own experience in banding Barn Owls may be of interest to other banders in the eastern area.

It might be well to state at the outset that I am a newcomer in the field, my permit, number 7000, being issued to me in December 1951.

In the spring of 1952 I decided to add to my general operations a special project--locating and banding the Barn Owls in the general area of my station. The results exceeded my expectations.

With the help of a friend who is an experienced climber, a search of all the likely places was started in May. When the silos and local church steeples were found untenanted, we turned our attention to two water tanks along a railroad right of way. Tank A is situated within the village, tank B about a mile distant.

On May 15th we discovered and banded five nestlings in tank A and three in tank B. The nests were on narrow planks a few feet above water, and the birds were in constant danger of falling off and drowning. For that reason, extreme care was used in handling them, and the site was left alone until we were satisfied that the birds had reached maturity.

On July 17th both tanks were again inspected. Tank A appeared to be deserted although, as it later developed, there were young birds in the nest on that date. In tank B we found and banded six new nestlings.

August 11th, we again inspected tank A, and banded the six nestlings that we had overlooked on July 17th. Tank B was not revisited at that time as we were sure that the July birds had not left the nest.

Our total now stands at 20 nestlings banded at the two sites. Periodic inspections will be made through the fall and winter. We hope to extend our activities next spring (1953) and believe that a careful search will result in the discovery of more nesting places.

(The following is the more recent account, telling of work

during 1953 in banding Barn Owls.--Ed.)

Contrary to our expectations, the 1953 season was disappointing. We first checked the nesting sites in early February. In one, we found two downy young and two eggs. In the others, the old birds were in occupancy, but there were neither eggs nor young. The site containing the two young, a water tower, was undergoing repairs, and we feared for the birds. Although the workmen were sympathetic, they had to finish their job. Five days later, with the work completed, we found the site abandoned and the young birds and eggs gone.

The old birds later returned to the tower, and on April 23rd there were eggs in the nest. Three young were hatched, and we banded them on June 5th. On the same day we discovered the eggs in the water tower, we located another roost in a church belfry which contained 6 eggs. They all hatched, and the young were banded June 15.

In 1952, as mentioned above, we banded nine birds in another water tower which we hoped would produce for us again in 1953. Adult birds were there in February, but although we checked the nest frequently, we could find neither eggs nor young. In April, we found the reason when we flushed a full-grown Raccoon from the tower. Despite the fact that the only way he could have got in was up a steel ladder some sixty feet high, the animal must have felt it worth his while to raid the nest. It was impossible to live-trap the animal and illegal to shoot it. It is possible that it returned at frequent intervals. The old birds stayed in the tower all season but produced no young.

We continued to check the nest sites through the summer, but there were no more broods. We did, however, locate a new site in another church belfry. There were two adults there. As they elected to hide themselves in the top of the tall spire, we were able to haul them down and band them. They will, we hope, give us two more broods to work with in 1954.

We are also hopeful that this year we may be able to discover additional nesting places. Unfortunately for us and for the owls, many of the church belfries are lined inside with chicken wire to bar the Starlings and Pigeons. So far we have not been able to convince

any of our church brethren that a family of Barn Owls might keep their buildings clear of the objectionable birds.

* * *

THE 1954 SUSTAINING MEMBERS OF THE EASTERN BIRD-BANDING ASSOCIATION

This list of sustaining members of EBBA for 1954 was reported by Treasurer Merrill Wood as of January 4.

William O. Astle	Malcolm J. Lerch
Mrs. John E. Bacon	Leonard M. Llewellyn
E. Alexander Bergstrom	Seth H. Low
Beecher S. Bowdish	Mrs. A. P. Maness
Mrs. Herbert E. Carnes	Bennett K. Matlack
Albert E. Clattenburg, Jr.	H. Elliott McClure
Albert E. Conway	John T. Nichols
Mrs. Albert E. Conway	G. Hapgood Parks
Mrs. John Y. Dater, Jr.	The Reverend Walden Pell, II
Dr. Ralph R. DeLury	William Pepper
Rodolphe M. deSchauensee	James N. Rice
John Dornan	Chandler S. Robbins
Howard Drinkwater	William E. Schantz
Arthur H. Fast	Mrs. Irene E. Sick
Frank P. Frazier	Roy H. Smith
Waldemar H. Fries	Mrs. Leslie A. Stauber
Geoffrey Gill	Charles A. Stratton
John A. Gillespie	Mrs. Ernest E. Wanek
Christian J. Goetz	Olin P. Wearn
Henry O. Havemeyer	Dr. Carnes Weeks
Dr. Carlton M. Herman	Charles S. Weiser
Joseph A. Jacobs	Dr. Harold B. Wood
Howard A. W. Kates	Mrs. Harold B. Wood

* * *

ANOTHER EBBA EXCLUSIVE

On April 19, 1952, E. Alexander Bergstrom, banded a Slate-colored Junco at his home in East Hartford, Connecticut; on October 29, 1953, E. Earl Rider trapped it (No. 51-20380) at Easton, Penna., while operating as a sub-permittee under his daughter, Mrs. Albert E. Conway.

A SCREECH OWL ADVENTURE

At the suggestion of Mr. Charles K. Nichols, the following letter was sent to the Editor by Mrs. Ethel Wolfenden whose son, Glen Wolfenden, was, when the letter was received, a senior studying ornithology at Cornell University. The letter bears no date, so the exact dates of the various events are not available, but the action occurred in the summer of 1952. Extracts from her letter follow:

"Thirteen weeks ago, I was given a baby Screech Owl (gray phase) as The Trailside Museum had no facilities for more, so we've banded 'Hootie', and for the past $4\frac{1}{2}$ weeks now, he has been given freedom at night. I leave the screen door on our porch open, and he goes all over the neighborhood, returning at daybreak, coming in through the door and up into a little trap door in the roof over the porch ceiling where he sleeps all day.

Saturday evening, last, I heard a thud out there, and, always alert for his safety, I ran out. There sat two owls, my 'Hootie' and a gorgeous red phase owl. They were very friendly and slept all that night and next day up in the rafters. Well, I called Mr. Nichols as I was very much puzzled as to what I should do. I didn't want our owl driven away or hurt, although there were definitely no signs of hostility.

I secured a band from Ed Stearns in Plainfield, and banded the red owl. Tonight, I will release them both at dark, hoping they will continue to come in each morning. There are more Screech Owls nearby as my neighbors tell me they hear them before my birds are out.

* * *

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* * *

CONCERNING GRACKLES

Mrs. Christella Butler, of Parkland, Bucks County, Penna., writes as follows concerning Purple Grackles:

"I have banded more Purple Grackles than any other bird. Last year I started taking notes on these birds with the following results. The young birds have no iridescent coloring, their eyes are dark and change gradually to the yellow of the adult birds. Also, the inside of their mouths are pink while those of the adults are black. They vary greatly in size and weight, although I have not used a scale. Some young birds are very heavy and some are very light. I believe the large ones are males, but I have no proof of this. (Who does?--Ed.)

"The grackles seldom repeat. In the spring I see many banded grackles feeding before I have banded any for the year but few of them enter the traps. They soon learn to remove the food without being caught. I band mostly young grackles. The adult birds raise the feathers on their heads when they are angry. They harbor bird flies (Hippoboscidae) which burrow down under the feathers and are hard to dislodge.

"One thing which I have noted is that I have more birds in my traps on a Sunday morning than any other day. This has held true over a period of years, and I wonder why. There is no change in my set-up in any way, yet the birds, especially the grackles, congregate at my traps on Sunday."

* * *

MORE ABOUT BAND SIZES

On pages 6 and 7 of the May-June issue, Dr. Charles C. Blake made various suggestions concerning the use of bands of sizes other than those recommended or suggested in Bird Banding Notes. Under dates of October 17 and 24, 1953, C. Hapgood Parks sent the following comments concerning the size changes suggested by Dr. Blake:

"I must take exception to one band size which is included in Dr. Blake's list as published in the current EBBA NEWS. He recommends Size 1 for Slate-colored Juncos. I used to use that size but changed to Size 0 when the #1 size seemed loose. I have used the Size 0 on 111 members of this species without finding a single case in which it was too snug. In fact, I can not imagine a more perfect fit.

"When I sent you a card recently re Size 0 bands for Slate-colored Juncos in preference to the #1's as recommended by Dr. Blake, I overlooked his suggestion of #1B bands for Eastern Song Sparrow.

"I have found considerable variation in size of tarsi among Eastern Song Sparrows, but I have used #1 bands on all of this species (29 individuals) banded during the past four years without finding a single instance in which the number 1 band was too snug.

"A study of our foreign retraps (or recoveries--Ed.) indicates that too many banders use too large bands on too many species. I believe that it is a serious menace to the birds."

* * *

NEW MEMBERS

We are happy to welcome the following persons who have joined EBBA during the last few months. Of these, Mr. Schaub is a former member whose rejoining has not heretofore been given official recognition. The list follows:

Aharrah, Ernest C., 16 North Mann St., Yeagertown, Penna.
 Crenshaw, Dr. Fred, Batty State Hospital, Rome, Georgia
 Davis, Dr. David E., 615 N. Wolfe St., Baltimore 5, Maryland
 Field, Marshall, R. R. No. 2, St. Thomas, Ontario
 Pittman, Miss Jeanne, 73 N. Union St., Lambertville, New Jersey
 Schaub, J. Benton, 1040 Isabella St., Wilmette, Illinois

* * *

A COMMUNICATION FROM A NEWER MEMBER

Mrs. John E. Bacon, 74 Taylor Road, Hamburg, New York, a newer bander and EBBA member writes the following enthusiastic letter:

"How can you know how happy I am to receive your publication if I never tell you so! I read every line in every issue, and then put it away with all the others to refer to often.

"I do not have any large banding record or any startling returns or results, but I have been banding not quite two years yet, so I can't expect too much. I have learned a lot and had many things happen that seem thrilling to me.

"In the fall of 1952, the only Catbird I caught hopped into a trap to avoid a Robin that was chasing it, and I pulled the string. It was in a very ragged condition from moulting and jumped around so much that it hurt the base of its bill. That was August 9, 1952.

"You can imagine how happy I was to catch the same bird on May 31, 1953, and find it in perfect health. And we think it was the bird which built its nest just outside our kitchen window and we banded her four young."

* * *

ADDRESS CHANGES

Since the printing of the Membership List in the April issue, the following persons have reported changes of address. The current address is given in each case:

DeVel, Dr. Leon, 739 Plymouth Blvd., S.E., Grand Rapids, 6, Michigan
 Easton, Mrs. Emily, 41 Owenoke Way, Riverside, Conn.
 Eshelman, David, Messiah College, Grantham, Pa.
 Falcs, Mrs. Harold A., 399 Fairview Ave., Orange, New Jersey
 Farrand, H.F., 7 Guest Lane, Wilmington 3, Delaware
 Heimerdinger, Mary Ann, 370 Temple St., New Haven, Conn.
 Hight, Gordon L., Jr., P.O. Box 1626, Rome, Georgia
 Low, Seth H., Route 2, Gaithersburg, Maryland
 Meng, Dr. Heinz, State Teachers College, New Paltz, New York
 Stoddard, Herbert L., Sherwood Plantations, Route 1,
 Tallahassee, Florida
 Wildman, Dr. Edward E., 409 East Second St., Moorstown, New Jersey

* * *

PLEASE, send the Editor some material for EBBA NEWS!

Mrs. Dayton Stoner
399 State Street
Albany 10, New York

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