

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY
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B I R D B A N D I N G N O T E S .

June 1, 1923.

No. 7.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

Bird Banding Notes goes to all cooperators who hold the special Federal bird banding permit. As stated in the first issue this circular is intended to supply much of the information that might otherwise be included in letters.

We wish at the present time to direct the attention of some co-operators to the fact that no reports have been received from them for long periods, while it is noted that they are still charged with bands. Although the fact is fully understood that it is frequently impossible to foresee necessary changes of plans, it would be appreciated if those who have made no report to the Bureau in the last six months would do so at this time and supply information regarding their probable banding activities for the future. There is no desire to call in bands unless the cooperator is sure that he will be unable to continue his assistance, but there are often many stations where the supply of bands is rapidly depleted, and occasionally the Bureau is unable to relieve the situation because of the shipments that have been made to cooperators who have not used them. When material of this kind is returned to this office, it should be securely packed (not in an envelope) and mailed under frank.

The last two months has been a period of much activity at many stations, almost 6,000 records of new birds banded having been received. Such figures speak well for the industry and enthusiasm of our cooperators and they are also indicative of the wisdom of changing to the card system of reporting. These cards have generally been handled at the different stations in a satisfactory manner although occasionally a few are received that were filled in with lead pencil instead of ink. With a few operators there still seems to be some uncertainty as to the correct manner of reporting repeats for birds whose original record has already been sent in to the Bureau. As stated in Bird Banding Notes No. 5, cards that carry the record of new birds banded "should not be retained longer than one month after banding, but may be forwarded to the Biological Survey more

NOTE: - "Bird Banding Notes" is not a publication in any sense of the word, being issued merely for the information of our cooperators, not for general distribution. However, anyone using in a published paper any of the information contained in this circular will be expected to give full credit to the person named and to the Biological Survey.

frequently." In case any repeats of these birds have been secured before the cards are forwarded, they should be entered in the space designated as "Record of Recovery," below the double line. Repeats of birds previously reported should not be sent in monthly unless there is some particular feature that it seems desirable to bring to the attention of the Bureau. The correct way to handle these data is to preserve them as a daily record of the station and compile them every six months and forward to the Bureau a copy of the compilation. It is expected that each operator will compile these records for his own information, and the advantage to the Bureau of thus handling them is obvious as it eliminates the sorting of a large number of cards each month for the purpose of entering the repeats. The following specimen illustrates a form of report that should be easily compiled by the operator and would, furthermore, be of maximum value to the Bureau:

Trapping Station of John M. Jones.

Located at National Zoological Park, Washington, D. C.

Period covered - October 1, 1922, - April 1, 1923.

Substations: "A", Government Sparrow Trap, at edge of woods, near bison enclosure; dogwood and other shrubs at one side. "B", drop trap, operated back of keeper's house, 40 feet from large trees. "C", group of 4 false-bottom traps, in ornamental shrubbery behind administration building.

Repeats.

90,347, Song Sparrow (banded Sept. 27); Oct. 2, C; 6, C; 13, C; 14, C; 19, C; 30, A (forehead bruised); Nov. 3, A (forehead healed); 4, (2), A; 7, C; 8, C; etc.

90,361, White-throated Sparrow (banded Oct. 1); Oct. 10, B; 15, B; 16, (3), B; 17, (2), B; 18, (4), B; 20, B; 27, C; etc.

90,374, White-throated Sparrow (banded Dec. 19); Dec. 21, C; 23, C; 26, C; Jan. 4, C; 5, C; 6, C; etc.

96,377, Cardinal (banded Feb. 12); Feb. 23, A; 25, A; 28, A; Mar. 6, B; 15, (2), B; 21, A; etc.

Note that the band numbers are given in numerical sequence.

Supplementary notes relative to weather, available natural food supply, relative abundance of the different species, etc., during the period covered, are often of much value both to the Bureau and to the co-operator.

Another "Don't"

Don't send in original records on cards and follow them up with the same information on a schedule. This sometimes causes a waste of both time and material, when the schedule is copied on fresh cards which are later destroyed when it is learned that the records have already been sent in on cards and have been placed in the files.

STATIONS.

One of the most satisfactory developments of the last few months is the interest that is being taken in this work by Audubon Societies. Cooperators will be interested to know that the Moose Hill Bird Sanctuary, at Sharon, Mass., is one of the bird refuges of the Massachusetts Audubon Society. The banding work of the superintendent, Harry J. Higbee, was referred to in Bird Banding Notes No. 6. Other Audubon sanctuaries are also giving favorable consideration to the work and we believe that several important stations will be established at such points.

Charles H. Preston reports three substations in operation at his station at Danvers, Mass. "A" is a drop trap baited with "barn sweepings and golden millet"; "B" is a wire cage trap on a roof near his window, baited with sunflower seed and suet; and "C" is another drop trap.

Mrs. Jean E. Carth, of Wellesley, Mass., is operating two wire cage traps on window shelf feeding stations. This station is situated between two large ponds that are no doubt an important factor in attracting birds to the vicinity.

Mrs. Frank D. Hubbard, of New Haven, Conn., is also using a drop trap and is capturing many birds. There are now several active stations in that neighborhood.

C. P. McNeil, of Whiting, Ind., has recently advised the Bureau that he will have charge of the trapping station in Whiting Park for this season. Five Government sparrow traps are used, and as a large number of birds have already been banded in that vicinity we hope that interesting results may be obtained.

Charles O. Handley, of Lexington, Va., is operating his station near the campus of Washington and Lee University. Two home-made sparrow traps are used. His first report brought in data for 65 birds that he had banded.

Another new station is being placed in operation by Miss Helen L. Card, at Woonsocket, R. I. She is using a sparrow trap and a drop trap.

The station at Auburn, Ala., under the direction of Prof. J. M. Robinson, has made a most auspicious start. The first records sent to the Bureau numbered over 500, the birds being principally cowbirds, chipping sparrows, brown thrashers, and pine siskins.

Mr. and Mrs. Geo. F. Fisher, of State Line, Wis., had splendid success with crossbills during February. Their report contained the data for 550 new birds banded, of which 448 were crossbills.

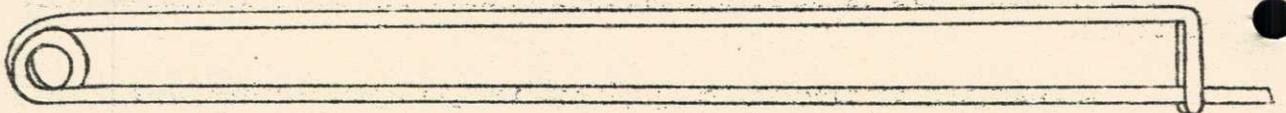
Allen Green, of Oakville, Iowa, was successful in banding a large number of mallards at his station during the latter part of the winter. This is a most unusual duck station, as in midwinter there is little or no open water, except at small holes, principally in the Mississippi River, near by. But through the efforts of Mr. Green and by his generous feeding and strict protection, several thousands of these wild and wary birds now winter regularly on his farm.

All duck stations were unusually successful last season, and at both that of H. S. Osler, at Lake Scugog, Ont., and that of E. A. McIlhenny, at Avery Island, La., several hundred birds were marked. The station at Portage des Sioux, Mo. (operated by John Brocker), captured several of the ducks that had been banded by H. V. Walton at the Cuivre Island, Mo., station, 40 or 50 miles away.

R. J. Middleton, of Jeffersonville, Pa., has had some interesting experiences in trapping "undesirables." His latest capture was an opossum. Previous reports recorded the capture of rats, mice, red squirrels, and one skunk. E. C. Weeks, who has recently established his station at Sanbornton, N. H., reports that on March 15 and 18 his traps secured several flying squirrels that were subsequently presented to the superintendent of the game farm at New Hampton. Johnson A. Neff, of Marionville, Mo., reports an unusual combination in his trap when he secured a yellow-billed cuckoo and a tortoise. Eric J. Kiteley, of Fort Garry, Manitoba, writes that he frequently captures gophers. His sparrow trap is located in a vegetable garden, and is apparently serving a double purpose, obtaining birds for banding, and eliminating a troublesome pest from the garden. Mrs. H. C. Miller, of Racine, Wis., reports the capture of a rabbit with her drop trap. While such subjects can hardly be said to come under banding investigations, they are nevertheless interesting.

SUGGESTIONS FROM COOPERATORS.

Dr. H. H. Hayes, of Hubbard Woods, Ill., in sending the description of his station has also described a convenient band holder that he is using. The contrivance is almost identical with one that Mr. Lyon uses, and for the benefit of other cooperators, a sketch is reproduced herewith.



Galvanized iron wire (about No. 16) is used. This has considerable spring and by bending a coil around a lead pencil or other cylindrical object of similar size, a very satisfactory spring may be made. The holder should be long enough to hold at least 25 bands. The sketch shown is about natural size. A similar device, made to hold stitches when knitting, may be purchased from stores that handle knitting supplies.

Walter B. Savary, of Wareham, Mass., writes that he has found a paper cone, or cornucopia, very useful to confine the head and wings of a bird that is given to excessive straggling.

Walter B. Keighton, of Swarthmore, Pa., had a great deal of trouble with an animal that frequently burrowed into his Government sparrow trap to secure the grain. On April 18, the animal killed a white-throated sparrow in the trap and Mr. Keighton decided it was then time to stop the nuisance. This was accomplished by burying in the ground a board frame, the top of which comes flush with the surface and on which the trap rests. The animal has since burrowed around this frame but has seemed unwilling to dig under the boards that extend into the ground for six inches. Mr. Keighton has suggested that the animal might be a mole but it is the belief of the Biological Survey that it is more probably a brown rat.

TRAPS.

An examination of the station reports of operators shows that the Government sparrow traps and drop traps have been the most popular. This is, of course, in keeping with the recommendations that are made to each new cooperator by the Bureau, but we should be glad to have several stations test also the various traps that are described in Bird Banding Notes. Reports on the general utility of these different traps are desired so that intelligent advice may be given to those who desire it.

Simplicity in trap construction is a feature of much advantage, and frequently it is the case that the more simple the trap, the more successful is its operation. The drop trap is a good example of this. William E. Smith, of South Chatham, Mass., reports that he has caught juncos, tree sparrows, and chickadees in an ordinary wire rat trap of the cage variety.

Mrs. Albert G. Mathers, of Middleboro, Mass., is operating three substations, and we notice that she has taken Mr. Baldwin's advice and used canvas for the sides of her drop traps. The records for 55 newly banded birds were received as her first contribution to the work.

Geo. H. Priest, of Brockton, Mass., also has adopted the canvas sides to his drop traps to guard against injuring birds, while Robert W. Means, of Beverly Farms, Mass., is using heavy felt for the same purpose.

Miss Elizabeth Cassard, of Catham, N. J., has started the operation of a station that she describes as being in the woods. A drop trap is used, the construction being a combination of the one depicted in Bird Banding Notes No. 1 and the one used by Mr. Baldwin at his Thomasville, Ga., station.

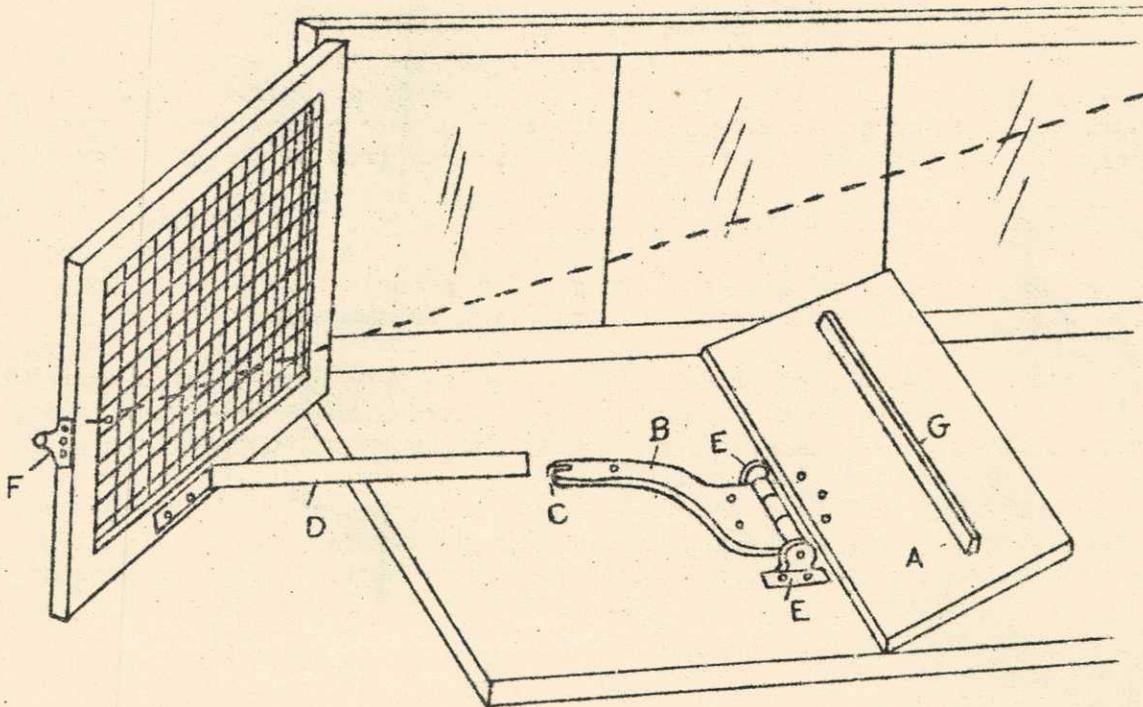
Leon Murbach, of Poultney, Vt., has recently placed his station in operation, using an automatic trap that is sprung by means of a "four-inch ring perch."

Herbert Parker, of Boston, Mass., has supplied the Bureau with an account of a net trap that he has been using successfully. It consists of a rectangular iron frame 6 feet by 3, covered loosely with fine seine netting. This is set over the bait and operated in a manner identical with the drop trap. He says that almost never does the net fall so that the iron frame strikes a bird. He has banded over 300 birds in the last year and his casualty list is negligible.

The trap that we are describing in this issue was designed by Frank L. Bishof, of Rockport, Mo. It will be noted that Mr. Bishof describes his trap as made of glass and it is, of course, obvious that it could also be made of wire netting with the same operating device. However, we will quote Mr. Bishof as much as possible as it appears that there may be important reasons for the glass walls.

Mr. Bishof says, in part, "My idea of a glass trap was that it appears more open to the various birds, and they are therefore not so timid. Also, when a bird alights near the trap its image is reflected in the cage by the glass sides (thus acting as a decoy). The trap is always visible from our living room, so that as soon as a bird is trapped it is noticed at once. It is not so large that a bird will get a flying start and injure itself against the glass, and all that I have caught have fluttered against the glass, remaining there when I went to secure them. None have been injured.

"The trap costs very little as I use old 8 by 10 photographic negatives, removing the emulsion with hot water."



The figure shows a section of the trap compartment with the top and one side omitted, the better to illustrate the trigger platform A. This is made of a light board to which is secured a small gate hinge B, the two wings being soldered rigidly at an angle, so that the platform will be tilted upward. The free end of the hinge is bent to extend parallel with the bottom of the trap and a slot C is cut in the end to engage with the strip of brass D, that is attached to the door. The platform is pivoted on two curtain hangers E. Several light rubber bands are fastened together, and one end is then secured to the door, the other end being carried diagonally through the trap and fastened to the opposite side in the back of the compartment. This is indicated by the dotted line.

By engaging the strip D in the slot C, the trigger board is held in position by the pull of the rubber bands. The platform should then be pressed down until the connection between D and C is so light that the weight of the smallest bird on the platform will disengage them, allowing the rubber bands to close the door, which is held shut by the catch F. Food is maintained on the platform by the strip G.

BAIT.

T. Donald Carter, of Boonton, N. J., reports using cherries as bait for catbirds; and Miss Ada B. Copeland, of Grand Junction, Colo., has used this same bait for robins. Several of the small fruits might be used for this purpose, particularly in summer. It should be remembered that even seed-eating birds do not eat much grain in summer. Insects and fruit are preferred by many birds at this season.

BANDS.

Occasionally there reaches the Biological Survey a complaint that a supply of bands has not been received for two weeks or more. Part of such trouble is due to the fact that package mail travels much more slowly than letter mail. The Bureau dispatches bands to new and old cooperators with all possible promptness and welcomes notice of such non-receipt of same, as it is the means of possibly tracing lost shipments and of keeping cooperators supplied. Form Bi-646 (Transmission of Bird Bands) is always sent to notify the cooperator that bands are en route. This travels as letter mail and if after its receipt, and the lapse of a proper length of time, the bands have not arrived, the Bureau should be notified.

Next year's supply of No. 1 bands will probably start a new series, most likely designated by a letter. This seems necessary because it is impossible to use numbers of more than five figures on these small bands. Care must be used to watch for the distinguishing character. Further notice of this will be made in a future number of Bird Banding Notes.

RETURNS.

Operators of stations will be interested to learn of some of the returns from banded ducks and other waterfowl received during the season.

A black duck, banded at Lake Scugog, Ont., October 3, 1921, by H. S. Osler, was killed near Henderson, Tex., during the past winter.

A mallard banded by F. C. Lincoln, near Browning, Ill., March 11, 1922, was killed by a dog near Buchanan, Saskatchewan, April 22, 1923. Another banded at the same place on March 5, 1922, was killed five miles north of Gainesville, Fla., November 19, 1922. A third mallard from the Illinois station was killed in Burke County, Ga.

A mallard banded January 30, 1922, at Joseph Pulitzer's station, at Cuivre Island, Mo. (operated by L. V. Walton), was recovered, April 19, 1923, at Wordsworth, Sask. Another, banded March 19, 1923, was killed by an Indian on the Summerberry River near Moose Lake, Manitoba, May 4, 1923. A mallard from the Portage des Sioux, Mo., station, banded by John Broeker on January 24, 1923, was caught in a muskrat trap near The Pas, Manitoba, May 1, 1923.

A ring-necked duck, banded at Avery Island, La., by E. A. McIlhenny, February 21, 1922, was recovered in April, 1923, near Benson, Minn.

Three herring gulls banded by W. S. McCrea in northern Lake Michigan on July 16, 1922, have been recovered, one near Wickliffe, Ky., January 18, 1923; the second near Ennis, Tex., November 30, 1922, and the third was found wounded near Brunswick, Ga., January 12, 1923.

A white pelican banded in Yellowstone Park by Dr. H. V. Ward on July 26, 1922, was killed in the State of Vera Cruz, Mexico, February 26, 1923.

Several stations have reported returns from birds banded in previous years, among which may be mentioned catbird 16352, banded by B. S. Bowdish, at Demarest, N. J., June 26, 1922, and recaptured May 9, 1923. Mr. Bowdish banded the entire family of 16352 in 1922, but no other member has yet been reported for this season.

Frank Novak, of Fairfield, Conn., reports capturing purple finch 36603 on March 6, 1923. This bird was banded by Mrs. W. K. Harrington, at Norwalk, Conn., January 16, 1923.

B. S. Bowdish, of Demarest, N. J., captured purple finch 66146 on March 12, 1923. It had been banded by Frank Novak, at Fairfield, Conn., January 22, 1923.

Mourning dove 10119, banded by S. E. Perkins III, at Indianapolis, Ind., June 19, 1922, was killed about November 25, 1922, near Marion, Ala. (Return only recently reported.)

INTERESTING NOTES AND INVESTIGATIONS.

The acquisition of full adult color by young birds and the transition from winter to summer plumage presents an interesting problem to bird banders. Valuable data bearing on this subject have been secured by M. J. Magee, of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. Mr. Magee has also secured information indicating that the first purple finches to arrive are not the ones that nest in his vicinity. Instead, they appear to move on, their places being taken by later arrivals.

The capture and banding of shorebirds has been one of the problems that it was believed should present features of much interest. Special traps were thought to be necessary because of the known aversion of these birds to pass under an obstruction. It is therefore interesting to learn that Clarence S. Jung, of Milwaukee, Wis., has captured both spotted and semipalmated sandpipers in a sparrow trap.

The tendency of many birds to remain motionless on the outstretched hand has provoked much discussion as to the probable cause. Explanations have ranged from loss of fear to mesmerism. Rev. George Roberts, of Lake Forest, Ill., reports that on May 10, 1922, he banded a blue jay, holding it right side up on the palm of his hand. Although entirely without restraint of any kind, it remained quiet for three minutes and five seconds, when Mr. Roberts was obliged to lower his tired arm. During this period a dog not 20 feet away barked and was spoken to harshly by Mr. Roberts, but the jay seemed entirely unalarmed, looking at its captor or elsewhere, while the beating of its heart, as felt against the palm of Mr. Roberts' hand, was perfectly normal.

Philip F. Foran, of Ottawa, Ont., banded a large number of bank swallows last season. Here is an opportunity for a special investigation if some ingenious operator can devise a method of capturing these birds in large numbers.

Another investigation that appears to bear the promise of interesting results is the banding of the nearly grown young in colonies of gulls and terns. Gilbert R. Rossignol, of Savannah, Ga., marked 30 least terns last season, and W. S. McCrea, of Chicago, Ill., banded a large number of herring gulls and Caspian terns in northern Lake Michigan. Roy J. McGee, of Biloxi, Miss., is planning similar activities this season and we hope others will have like opportunities.

The growth of new feathers should receive attention from bird banders, as there is much to be learned regarding rate of growth, etc. Mrs. Amelia S. Allen, of Berkeley, Calif., reported that on March 22 she accidentally pulled the tail of a California towhee. Twenty-one days later the new tail was one-fourth out and it was not fully grown until May 4, a period of about 44 days.

A. F. Satterthwait, of Webster Groves, Mo., has had the unique experience of having a blue jay sing while held in his hand.

Walter G. Gerth, of Wolsey, S. Dak., rescued a number of Lapland longspurs during a severe storm in January. The birds were cared for until the weather moderated and bands could be secured, when they were marked and released.

A disease affecting the feet of some species of birds is attracting the notice of cooperators. It has been suggested that this matter should receive the careful attention of a pathologist, with the view to finding a remedy that might be applied at trapping stations. T. E. Musselman made close examinations of the disease as affecting the feet of chipping sparrows, while operating Mr. Baldwin's station at Thomasville, Ga. Chipping sparrows do not appear to be the only species affected, as Mrs. E. Louise Hathaway, of West Bridgewater, Mass., and Mrs. Elsie V. Perkins, of Topsfield, Mass., have reported similar conditions with juncos.

BIRD BANDING ASSOCIATIONS.

A special meeting of the Linnaean Society of New York, called for the purpose of coordinating the work in the Middle Atlantic States, met at the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, on April 24. The committee appointed by president John T. Nichols was composed of R. H. Howland (chairman), M. S. Crosby, and B. S. Bowdish. The New England Association was represented by Dr. C. W. Townsend, A. C. Bent, C. L. Whittle, and L. B. Fletcher. The Inland Association was represented by S. Prentiss Baldwin, who was also the principal speaker. F. C. Lincoln represented the Biological Survey and gave a short talk. As a result of this meeting it is hoped that another regional association will be formed that will be able to coordinate the activities of cooperators on the Atlantic seaboard south of Long Island, and including the State of New York and the Province of Ontario.

The banding chapter of the Cooper Ornithological Club is developing a most gratifying activity under the direction of its chairman, J. Eugene Law. The ornithological problems of the Pacific Coast are so different from those of the Eastern United States that we may expect results of unusual interest when the banding method has been extensively applied to the birds of that region.

Members of the New England Bird Banding Association have probably received a description of the new collapsible trap developed by some of the officers. This appears to be a most satisfactory form of the drop trap and we hope to be able to reproduce a description in a future issue.

T. E. Musselman, of Quincy, Ill., has completed his bird banding work at Mr. Baldwin's station, at Thomasville, Ga. We understand that he is now preparing an interesting and well illustrated lecture to be given to bird clubs, Audubon Societies, and other organizations in the interest of the Inland Bird Banding Association.