

BIRD BANDING NOTES

ISSUED BY THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FOR THE INFORMATION OF BIRD-BANDING COOPERATORS

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Watch series designations on bands.--The series designation is an important part of the band number and must be used on all schedules and return cards. Example: 36-427369; 39-12645; 139-12645. Note that the series may be represented by a number of two or three figures. Watch for this!! Note also the hyphen between the series designation and the band number.

GENERAL INFORMATION TO COOPERATORS

Lost bands.--Who had bands Nos. 40-740001 to 40-740100? They were issued in 1940 to K. E. Bartel, who returned them, but we have no record of the return or reissue. Bands No. 42-57951 through 42-58000, probably issued in 1942 are missing.

During the war the issuance of Bird Banding Notes was impracticable, so the present number covers the period since July 1941.

During the summer of 1942, in accordance with the President's decentralization order, the main offices of the Fish and Wildlife Service were moved to Chicago, and a small Liaison Office set up in Washington. At the same time the bird-banding and distribution files, together with the staff members who work with these files, were moved to the Patuxent Research Refuge, near Bowie, Md., where space in one of the laboratory buildings was available. It is hoped that before many months the Service will again be together in Washington.

The address for all correspondence regarding banding and distribution continues to be "Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington 25, D. C. (Note the zone number).

War conditions caused the loss of many employees, and the banding work has had to be carried on with less than half the normal staff. The tolerance and cooperation of banders during this emergency is appreciated.

During recent years the amount of banding work done has dropped a great deal. Many cooperators served in the armed forces and others were obliged to reduce or discontinue work because of the war. Also, because of the difficulty of procuring bands, the Service found it necessary to curtail work among colonial species (gulls, cormorants, herons, etc.), and the wholesale banding of chimney swifts. Bands can now be manufactured again, and we hope to be able in the future to supply all requests. Until sufficient appropriations become available so that an adequate staff can be maintained, it still will be necessary to curtail the issuing of new permits.

Because it is so long since we have discussed the work with our banding cooperators and since many who have been inactive during the war will be resuming work, it seems desirable to bring several matters to the attention of all. The compliance of most cooperators with requests contained in previous numbers of Bird Banding Notes is greatly appreciated, but there are still a few who fail to observe the rules. It is, therefore, hoped that all cooperators, old-timers as well as those who have recently begun work, will **READ AND HEED** the suggestions here given.

Addresses.--Do not forget to notify the Service of any change of address. In several cases cooperators have been dropped from the rolls because mail was returned unclaimed. A cooperator moving to a different State, and intending to continue banding work, should be sure that his permit is extended to include his new residence.

Reports.--Reports of birds banded are required to be submitted at least once a year. Usually it is convenient to break this down to two semiannual reports on a seasonal basis: summer birds reported during the fall or winter and winter birds in the summer. Species of which less than 60 individuals have been banded would be reported once a year. Fully filled sheets may be sent at any time, but it is preferable to limit reports (except of ducks banded during the hunting season) to four times a year. A few persons send their reports on the "installment plan", a few sheets every few days. When acknowledgments are being sent nearly every day, such practice makes considerable extra work.

The fiscal year ends June 30, and all reports are made as of that date. Naturally, cooperators like to have as full reports as possible, but it would help the office force if they would aim to get reports in the mail by the middle of June.

Bands.--Cooperators are requested to check the numbers of the bands on every string before using them and, if a duplicate number is found, to destroy the extra band. The numbering machine occasionally sticks and two or more bands get the same number. A check is made for this when the bands are issued, but some may be missed. Do not band two birds with the same number, even though they are of the same species.

Do not fail to notify the Service of any transfer of bands. Unless informed to the contrary, we continue to charge bands to the cooperator to whom they were originally issued. It is probable that some of the incomplete returns on hand, for which the banding data have not been found, are of bands that have been transferred. Do not put such information on schedules under "Remarks", as it may be overlooked.

Band no bird the identity of which is not certainly known. Many banded birds are found and reported by persons who do not know the species, so the responsibility for the identification rests with the bander. If he has been uncertain, the record is useless.

It has come to our attention that some persons still think that they can close the bands with their fingers. Again it is repeated, it cannot be done; pliers must be used to close the band. It is impossible to close a band perfectly with the fingers, and an imperfectly closed band is a hazard to the bird and injury may result. Failure to adjust bands properly is sufficient reason for revoking a banding permit.

When a bird is found dead a few days after banding and before the banding record has been reported, the band may be retrieved and used again, provided that the original record of use be destroyed. This is the only case in which it is allowable to use a band a second time. Never use a band again after the banding record has been reported to Washington.

New band size.--Another size of band has been added to the series. It is known as 1B, and is used especially on chimney swifts. It is recommended for use also on some other birds for which size 1 band is too small and 1A is too large.

Cooperators should keep a record of all bands issued to them. Occasionally it happens that an issue slip gets lost and the only means of finding out who had the bands is to advertise in Bird Banding Notes or in the regional publications and hope that the person who had them will notify us.

Cooperators are cautioned to make sure that the records of ALL bands used are kept and that copies of all data are sent to Washington. There are now on hand nearly one thousand recovery records for which the banders cannot furnish the original banding records. Some cooperators seem to be rather careless in keeping their records of banding, for frequently we can find the records for the numbers on both sides of the one wanted. This cannot always be laid to the misreading of the number by the person who found the bird, because often the band has been sent so that there is no question of the band having been misread. Sometimes we find whole series (50 to 100 or more numbers) missing from the banding records, but recovery records received indicate that at least some of these bands were used; yet the bander has no record of them. Of course, such incomplete returns are useless, but if completed might be very interesting.

Bird-banding cooperators should remember that this is a scientific study and that their own pleasure in the work is incidental. As in all scientific work, exact and complete records are absolutely necessary.

Cooperators should keep on file the data for all birds banded by them. When a banded bird is trapped, the operator should check these carefully before sending the record to Washington. Many "foreign" returns are sent in every year that prove to be "station" returns.

SCHEDULES

Failure to fill out schedules in the proper manner probably causes more wasted effort on the part of the depleted Washington staff than any other single item. A surprisingly large number of the cooperators submit schedules improperly filled out. Of 60 reports received during a recent checking period, 27 had to be corrected in the office or returned to the sender for correction.

The cooperator's name should be on every sheet, and the total number of new birds recorded on that sheet should be entered in the space provided. If the banding locality is in a different town from the home address, this should be noted on every sheet to which it applies. Otherwise, when the records are filed such information may be lost; except for the sheet on which this occurs it will be taken for granted that all other banding was done at the home station. If only a few birds are banded away from home, the locality may be noted after the number and date. Do not list localities under "Remarks".

If scientific names are used, care must be taken that they refer to the species for which they are used. Of the above 60 reports, 7 contained wrong scientific names for the species to which they referred. Example: Geothlypis trichas, Yellowthroated Warbler. Such errors require that the sheets be returned for correction.

Band numbers should be recorded as far as possible in serial number, even if not used consecutively. Recovery records must be looked up by number and it is much easier to find them in a consecutive series than in a jumble of numbers. Dates should be recorded in the space provided for them.

Record of banding.--When a new band replaces an old one, the record of the new band should be in place on the schedule, with date of banding and the notation that it replaces Band No. -----, and the date of first banding, if known. This does not count as a new bird banded.

Cooperators are warned to check carefully the numbers of their banding records before submitting them. Schedules have been noticed which indicated that the wrong size of band had been used, but a closer check showed this to be apparently a typographical error. Especial care must be taken if the series designation changes in the middle of a page, or when two lots of bands have similar numbers but are of different series. Some persons seem to use two or more sets of bands simultaneously, with a resulting confusion in the records that causes plenty of trouble. When the file of records of a single station gets to be 2 to 4 inches thick, hunting through it for a number becomes a serious matter.

Report only one species to a sheet. Several species recorded on the same sheet makes trouble for everyone. The records can neither be counted by species nor filed in that form, and must be returned to the sender for copying or be copied in the office where there is no time for such work. Compliance with instructions will save time, temper, and paper.

Save paper.--Some cooperators have not yet learned to save paper and they start a new sheet for a new calendar year, for any change of locality, or even for each day. The year can readily be added to the date of banding (this is really an advantage when writing return cards), and different localities can be indicated either following the date or in the space provided for substations. Reporting two birds of one species on separate sheets sent together is an extravagant waste of paper, and yet it sometimes happens. One report received recently contained 34 extra sheets. Not only is this a waste of paper, but it crowds the files and eventually these records will have to be condensed by copying onto other sheets in order to keep the files within reasonable size. Unfortunately, even space for filing cases is limited. If only one or two made these mistakes, it might not be too troublesome, but when about half the number of banders do so, it becomes a serious matter. Also, a few people seem not to have learned that the back of the sheet is to be used as well as the face.

REPORTING RETURNS

Return records should be reported on the cards furnished for that purpose and not on the schedules, which are for original banding records only. When return records are found on schedules it becomes necessary to check the returns received, to see whether these records are included. If cards are not found, the records must be copied onto cards, all of which should not be demanded of the office force. If the cooperator sends the cards later, they are then duplicates.

Read numbers carefully.--Great care must be taken in reading the numbers on bands of retrapped birds, especially the small-sized bands. Many retrapped chimney swifts have been reported as carrying numbers that had been placed on other species. Such records, of course, are useless, though they might have proved quite interesting if the records could have been completed. Sometimes it seems probable that the difficulty was from misreading the series designation, especially since some years have had two or three series. It has been reported that pliers sometimes make a mark on the band that can easily be mistaken for a 1, changing 39 into 139, for example. With the series designation always above or to the right there would seem to be little danger of reading the number upside down, but some digits can be read either way. On some bands the 3's and 8's seem to be readily confused. A reading glass is helpful in reading numbers.

Cooperators are urged to keep in touch with the banders in their respective localities. Where two or more banding stations are near each other, the operators are likely to trap each other's birds. When the banders of the neighborhood are known to one another, the record of a retrapped bird can often be quickly located, and what at first appeared to be a "foreign return" may prove to be a "repeat".

It has been necessary to make a somewhat arbitrary distinction between a return and a repeat. To be a return the bird must either have traveled at least 5 miles in an airline, or have been absent from the traps at least 3 months. Frequently return cards are received for birds that prove to have been banded only a short time before by someone in the same town. Lacking any evidence to the contrary, such a record appears to be a repeat rather than a return, and as such is destroyed.

When neighboring cooperators keep in touch with one another, records of repeats will not be sent to the office, and returns can frequently be completed before mailing. Thus, both cooperators will have all the information about the retrapped bird immediately, and the Service personnel will be saved the task of looking up the record and of notifying both cooperators.

Too frequently cooperators send cards for "foreign" returns that prove to be retraps of their own birds.

Return cards.--These cards must be handled with care since any "burring" of the edges or bending may prevent their going through the punch or sorting machines. Do not use paper clips or staples on them for the same reason. Do not fasten a band to a return card with adhesive or scotch tape, for it usually causes injury to the card so that it has to be rewritten.

Age records.--Many banders have about their stations "permanent residents", such as woodpeckers and nuthatches, that are seldom absent long enough to furnish "return" records. Nevertheless, such birds may furnish very interesting longevity data, and we would appreciate any such records when they are completed by the disappearance of the birds.

It seems necessary to repeat some instructions regarding the proper preparation of return cards. The double line separates the records of banding and recovery. "Age" means age when banded (juv., im., ad.), not age at the time the bird returned. Some banders still insist on telling us in this space how old the bird was when recaptured, in which case it becomes necessary to look up the banding record before the card is punched for filing. If age and / or / sex are not known, a dash will indicate that these items were not overlooked. The matter of age at the time of banding is becoming increasingly important in studies being made or planned.

In the case of a bird retrapped at the station where it was originally banded, the word "same" may take the place of the name and address of the bander on the return section of the card. When filling in the cards, do not omit the post-office address, including the State, on all return cards. A street address is not sufficient, and is seldom necessary, but it is helpful to have the complete mailing address on the envelope.

A list of the code numbers used for punching "how obtained" on return cards was published in a previous number of Bird Banding Notes. A few cooperators have used these on return cards instead of explaining in words. Several new symbols have been added since the list was published, and there seem to be differences in interpretation. Therefore, it is suggested that in the future the only code numbers used by cooperators should be: 01 (shot), and 99 (trapped and released at banding station). All other entries in the "how obtained" space, including sight records of color-banded birds, should be in words.

Duplicate records.--Cooperators are requested to take care not to send in duplicate records. It should not be necessary to check reports for duplicates, yet that has been the case with several reports received in recent years. One report contained more than 100 duplicate records of 13 species. This was not discovered until the sheets were being filed, after all figures had been recorded. It was, therefore, necessary to change the figures for all the species and the total on the cooperator's record for the year.

Office care of records.--After a banding report has been acknowledged, it must be "counted" before it can be filed. First, the sheets are arranged in order for filing, and at the same time are checked to make sure that all necessary data, such as name of species, dates, and name and address of bander, are on every sheet. Each sheet should be totaled by the cooperator. The total number of banded birds recorded on the report is then obtained and a temporary entry made, to be copied later on the cooperator's card. The total number of birds of each species reported is then entered in a species record book. These species counts are the basis of the species totals in the annual report. [At the end of the year the total for each species is entered on cards so that we know how many birds of each species have been banded.] Reports are then checked against the "species index file", so that we will know who has banded any unusual species. No attempt is made to keep track of who bands the common species, such as swifts, juncos, etc. The report is then ready for permanent filing. In the individual folders for each station, sheets are filed in the species order of the 1910 A. O. U. Check-list, and by years under each species.

Recoveries.--When a report of the finding of a banded bird is received, the "band issue" file is first consulted to learn to whom the band had been sent. On these cards, filed in numerical order, are recorded the inclusive numbers of each string of bands issued with the name and address of the cooperator, the date of issue, and the size and number of the bands. The folder of the person who had the band is then consulted for the banding record. As usually only the number and not the species is reported, it can readily be seen that if the numbers have been recorded in haphazard order, this task is made harder and takes more time. When many recoveries are received at a time, as during the hunting season, when 100 or more letters are frequently received in a single day, the loss of time is very appreciable.

Illegible bands.--Illegible bands may be sent to the Service, where they will be subjected to a chemical etching process, which usually brings out the number. Do not expect a prompt reply, for it is customary to allow such bands to accumulate until there are a number on hand, and a slackening of other work allows time for the job. Bands sent in letters should be opened flat, since a ring band is likely to work through the envelope and be lost. Be sure that all known information is included with the band so that the record can be completed when the band has been read.

AGE DESIGNATION

Recently there has been considerable discussion about the use of terms denoting the age of birds at the time of banding. Writers have explained the use of terms so variously that it becomes necessary to define a standard for banders. Unless there is uniformity in the use of terms, all designations of age below adult become useless. The subject of the age of birds at banding is becoming increasingly important, since the volume of returns has become sufficient to allow serious longevity studies. Also studies regarding the return of birds to their birthplace can be made only when the birds are known to have been banded as juveniles as here defined.

Cooperators are, therefore, requested to conform to the following definitions:

Juvenile (abbreviation, juv.).--A young bird not yet independent of its parents. This may be broken down into:

Nestling (nsth.).--A bird still in the nest.

Fledgling (fldg.).--A bird out of the nest but still cared for by its parents and with its plumage still definitely juvenile.

For precocial species that have no nest life, downy young (dy. yg.) should be used instead of nestling.

Immature (im.).--From the time the young bird becomes independent until the end of the season in which it is hatched, or until it assumes adult plumage in the post-juvinal molt. Sometimes it is possible even then to distinguish birds of the year, in which case they should be labeled im. Some birds will be caught in the fall and early winter that the bander may conclude to call prob. im., or leave blank or (?).

In the case of birds that do not acquire fully adult plumage until more than a year old (e.g., redstart, orchard oriole, gulls, etc.), the age should be given in years as nearly as possible. For a bird a year old that will not assume fully adult plumage until its second autumnal molt, the term sub-adult has been suggested but has not yet been generally adopted.

WORK DURING THE WAR

Wartime requirements have had to take precedence over any previously arranged program of work, and some of our bird-distribution projects had to be curtailed. On the whole, the basic work has been maintained, however. It is hoped that before long we will be able to resume with renewed vigor scheduled work that had to be dropped, and that we will have a staff sufficient not only to handle routine work, but to work up for publication special reports based on the accumulated records. During the war a few biologists have worked with the banding data at the Patuxent Research Refuge, and several papers based on these studies have appeared. Meanwhile, the especially interesting records disclosed by banding have been published regularly by Miss May T. Cooke. It was during this period that the most interesting discovery ever made through the medium of banding was reported by Mr. Lincoln--the winter home of the chimney swift.

Bird investigations.--A major administrative change has been the transfer of all bird-study projects, together with staff members assigned to them, from the Section of Biological Surveys to the Section of Distribution and Migration of Birds. This has increased the scope and responsibilities of the latter section to include more regional and population investigations. Staff changes resulting from this move were the transfer of Dr. John W. Aldrich, Thomas D. Burleigh, and Allen J. Duvall to the Section of Distribution and Migration of Birds. Frederick C. Lincoln, with headquarters in Washington, D. C., continues in charge of this section, and Dr. John W. Aldrich is now assistant in charge.

Allen J. Duvall, stationed for the greater part of the time at the United States National Museum, studies the distribution of North American birds through the medium of museum specimens. He also carries on population studies in the field.

Thomas D. Burleigh's headquarters are at Atlanta, and his chief responsibility is the preparation of a comprehensive report on the birds of Georgia. He is also collaborating with Harold S. Peters in a study of the birds of Newfoundland.

Because of their importance in the formulation of hunting regulations the waterfowl investigations have not been allowed to drop, though there have been some changes in personnel and program of the flyway biologists.

Harold S. Peters, of the Atlantic Flyway, has continued investigations of the waterfowl of the Maritime Provinces of Canada and Newfoundland. A comprehensive report on the birds of Newfoundland is a primary objective.

Robert H. Smith has been transferred from the Division of Refuges, as biologist of the Mississippi Flyway, to replace Charles E. Gillham, who resigned. His headquarters are at Winona, Minnesota. Mr. Smith has continued investigations of summer waterfowl conditions in the Prairie Provinces of Canada, and the west coast of James Bay, and winter conditions in the lower Mississippi Valley. While in the north he obtained many interesting records of banded birds.

George B. Saunders, of the Central Flyway, has been completing his study of the white-winged dove, and has assisted in work under the Coordinator of Fisheries. His studies have taken him into Mexico and Central America.

In the Pacific Flyway, Luther J. Goldman has retired and Stanley G. Jewett was transferred from the Section of Biological Surveys to take his place. Mr. Jewett's studies have been confined chiefly to the Pacific coast region of the United States, with special reference to the State of Washington. A book on the birds of this State is one of his chief objectives.

BANDING WORK DONE 1942-1945

Unfortunately it is not possible at this time to include the detailed reports of the birds banded or that of the work done at the banding stations.

Arrangements were made in 1942 with the editor of the periodical Bird-Banding to publish the reports of work done at the stations. The report for the fiscal year 1941 was published in Bird-Banding, Vol. 13, July, 1942, pp. 134-141; for the fiscal year 1942, Vol. 14, July, 1943, pp. 94-99; for the fiscal year 1944, Vol. 16, Oct., 1945, pp. 156-159.

In spite of the long list of species that have been banded no year seems to fail to add at least one new species. Those added in the last four years are:

- 1942, Trumpeter Swan, Elf Owl, Black-chinned Hummingbird.
- 1943, New Mexican Duck, Zone-tailed Hawk, Rock Ptarmigan.
- 1944, Plain-breasted Ground Dove, Painted Redstart, McKay's Snow Bunting.
- 1945. Mountain Dove (Virgin Islands).

In Table I is shown the numbers of birds banded, returns received, and the grand totals. The sudden drop in the number of returns between 1943 and 1944 is probably due in large measure to the lack of Chimney Swift trapping and the shortage of gasoline and ammunition, which limited the kill of ducks.

TABLE I. BANDING WORK DONE 1941-1945

	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Banded birds reported	357,174	280,741	178,213	162,418	142,569
Number of species banded:	431	433	374	349	332
Returns received	32,737	25,846	22,774	15,195	14,757
Grand total banded - 1920-1945	4,069,501	4,350,242	4,528,455	4,690,873	4,833,442
Grand total returns - 1920-1945	267,665	293,511	316,285	331,480	346,237