

THE ANNUAL MEETING

Please remember the next Annual Meeting to be held at Baltimore, Md., on March 31, 1951. The secretary has not yet received a single title for a paper to be given at this meeting. Even though it may seem early, please plan your papers and send the title and an estimate of the time required to the secretary. Mr. Orville Crowder is chairman of the committee on local arrangements and promises us a fine time, with a visit to the Patuxcot Refuge tentatively scheduled for Sunday, April 1, 1951. Don't wait until the last minute to make your plans.

AVIAN DISEASES

Mr. E. A. Bergstrom of West Hartford, Conn. writes as follows:

"During the past three winters, we trapped fair numbers (about 140 last season) of tree sparrows at our former location in West Hartford. We ran the traps quite steadily, mostly large masons, either on a sheltered porch or on sites in the open. The sites did not change during the winter, and by March there were quite a few individual tree sparrows that had been taken 50 to 100 times since November.

"We were disturbed to note 5 to 10 birds with signs of foot disease, toes swelling up with white pus, tending to lose the nail. Our treatment was metaphen applied to the swollen portion, and this did seem to at least retard the disease. It did not become evident until March, mostly the latter half, and seemed to involve birds that had been the most frequent repeaters. It seemed possible the disease was spread either by infected trap sites or infected gathering cages.

"After writing to Mr. E. A. Mason at Arcadia Sanctuary, he comments, "Epithelioma contagiosum is sometimes given the foot disease of birds. Whether it is a sound name, I am not too sure; I think the authorities differ. Extreme moisture conditions seem to bring about infections. I don't recall seeing the disease active in New England in the wintertime. We used mercurachrome in the South ... I suppose trap site sanitation is sound, although in the South we moved so often it could hardly have been a factor."

"It is possible that some solutions to this problem have been published, but I don't seem to find anything specific. Perhaps some member of the E.B.B.A. can point out where this has been published; if the solution has not been found, perhaps we can pool our experience and arrive at one.

"Our banding sites are of course entirely different now, but in many cases it is not feasible to shift them. This is particularly true of feeding shelves (involving non-banders as well, of course). I wonder whether anyone else has noticed the disease becoming prevalent under similar conditions. We have used boiling water to try to disinfect the gathering cages, and this might help on trap sites in many cases, but there may be a better disinfectant. Our cages have mesh bottoms, and if there is anything to the idea the cages may spread the disease, cages with solid bottoms would tend to do so more quickly. If by chance the disease is highly infectious, it might be spread by the fingers of the bander (I finally washed with soap and water after handling each sick bird). Is there a better remedy than metaphen?"

Mrs. Christella Butler of Parkland, Bucks County, Pa. , encountered an unusual mourning Dove, of which she writes:

"A mourning dove I banded last year was found dead in the yard next door this month. I noticed the bird the day before as it sat by the traps listlessly eating grain. Later in the day I trapped it and examined it and found it had a lump in the throat. When the bird was brought to me, I did an autopsy and found a tumor in the throat. She (it was a female) evidently died of starvation as she had but one grain of wheat and a few grains of sand in her gizzard. Her gizzard was coated with green. However, her chest cavity was filled with grain and I counted 325 grains of mostly wheat and millet. No doubt the tumor had closed off the alimentary canal and forced the food into the chest cavity."

And Mrs. Marie Dumont had this puzzling experience:

"Late yesterday I had delivered to me a dead immature brown thrasher, which the party informed me is one of some dozen of these that she and her neighbors have picked up on their premises. This is about half a mile from this Station.

"I examined the body carefully and found no marks of it having been attacked by a cat or dog, etc. Noted no signs of diarrhea, or emaciation of the body and the donor informs me she looked over several of the others and it didn't seem as though they had been attacked by an animal. She claims they were all brown thrashers, and apparently not full grown. One of the neighbors told her a rather young bird seemed to have trouble moving about on her lawn and she tried to catch it but it lost itself in thick undergrowth, but was later found dead.

They claim no other species have been found dead - only brown thrashers. I would have mailed this particular bird somewhere for an autopsy but off-hand didn't know where to send it and, furthermore, it had been dead some 24 hours and was already covered in 2 spots with fly eggs. She has promised to be on the lookout for any more dead birds and will bring them over immediately.

"Spray poisoning seems to be ruled out if she is correct in saying they are all brown thrashers. They live rather close to the Pequannock River and should have quite a number of nesting species in that section. Wondered if any other bander has had a similar experience."

All of which points up the value of the pathological studies which were being undertaken some years ago by EBBA members and cooperating pathologists. A recent note in the News asking if anyone knew of competent pathologists willing to examine injured or dead specimens along the line of the earlier study has not brought any response.

Your Editor suggests that any member having experience with the foot disease referred to by Bergstrom summarize his findings for presentation in the News.

AGE DETERMINATION

Several recent notes on the determination of sex, age, and identification of captured birds brought the following note from Mr. Charles H. Blake:

"The suggestion in the June 1950 Ebba News (p.5) that banders accumulate data useful in telling the age of trapped birds is excellent. I have quite a little which is not yet ready for publication, but can make a few suggestions on items to look at. Colors of the soft parts: iris, bare margin of eyelids, skin at angle of the mouth, mouth lining, are particularly important. Notice the shape of the tips of the tail feathers, rather pointed in the young of thrushes and some other passerines. A curious point is the delay in growing most of the underwing coverts, leaving a bare area from axilla to wrist between the reversed coverts and Lowe's pteryla patagii corridori. Question: to what age does each of these characters hold good?"

Mr. Blake has been asked to expand on several of these points for a future issue. A good study project for banders is also suggested for those able to raise young birds.