

A very informative and interesting letter from Doris Huestis Speirs, Cobble Hill, R. R. No. 2, Pickering, Ontario, reads as follows:

"A popular belief, disseminated by noted bird authorities, is that the sexes of the Evening Grosbeak are similar in juvenal plumage and resemble the adult female. Commencing with Dr. Dwight's well-known work on the "Sequences of Plumages and Moults of Passerine Birds" (1900), on through Ridgway (1901), Forbush (1929), the National Geographic Society's "Book of Birds" (1937), etc. the fancy has persisted. In the April 1952 issue of EBBA NEWS again this belief is printed.

"In THE WILSON BULLETIN in 1926 Mr. M. J. Magee of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, called attention to the difference in the plumage of juvenal male and female Evening Grosbeak, and in the BULLETIN OF THE NORTH-EASTERN BIRD-BANDING ASSOCIATION in 1929 the plumages are described. He banded great numbers of this species in the same locality in which the Chippewa Indian boy shot the "Paushcundamc" in 1823; and among the birds banded by Mr. Magee were a few young Evening Grosbeaks.

"In looking over these young birds,' he writes, 'I made notes that some looked like young males and some like young females.'" Because Jcrathan Dwight had stated in his paper that the sexes were similar in juvenal plumage 'For this reason,' wrote Mr. Magee 'I thought the difference was more imaginary than real ...'" "Two juvenal females banded were recorded simply as "young." 'However, he writes, 'when I got the young male on July 29th, I saw at once that the juvenal plumages of the sexes were very different, as noted below' and then follows the first published description of the juvenal plumage of male and female Evening Grosbeak of the Eastern race, Hesperiphona vespertina vespertina. That was in 1929.

"The original fancy persisted however, and was quoted in various publications. And so another voice was heard and the facts presented -- this time from the west. In THE AUK of April, 1939, Major Allan Brooks describes the juvenal plumage of the male Evening Grosbeak from specimens of the Western race, Hesperiphona

vespertina brooksi, comparing the male with the female. Juvenal birds of the eastern and western races are very similar, and so the clear description given by Brooks might be of help to bird banders:

"The body plumage is more richly colored than that of the juvenal female, more suffused with olive or yellow and generally darker and less gray; there is usually a more pronounced dark malar stripe. But the main difference is in the wing which follows the pattern of the adult male and not that of the female. The wing is black, without the three series of white markings that are found on the primaries and secondaries of females of all ages. But the tertials and outermost secondaries are white as in the adult male, forming a conspicuous patch; the tertials are more or less tinged with brown as in most second-plumaged males and usually have a narrow black inner border; all the feathers of this white patch are narrowly edged with primrose yellow. The tail in most individuals is solid black like the adult males, but some show faint white tips to the inner webs of the outermost rectrices; these do not take the form of the large white spots found in females of all ages. The rump is dull buffy olive and the upper tail-coverts are black, sometimes with black tips.

"It will be seen that the wings and tail are essentially colored as in the adult male, the five innermost secondary coverts are pale yellow or white, narrowly edged with primrose yellow, forming a patch confluent with that on the tertials and secondaries just as in the adult male and very conspicuous in flight. The bill is dusky olive."

"I have seen young birds of the eastern race being fed by their parents in Ontario, and even at that age the two sexes are readily distinguishable. Bird banders need have no fear that they might be sexing the grosbeaks incorrectly. Those birds that look like males are males and Evening Grosbeaks that look like females, are females.

References

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1937 The Book of Birds.

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A correction - - - In order that banding records may be kept straight we wish to correct an error made in the April issue of EBBA NEWS. On page 4 we gave an address as follows: Mrs. Patience Larlee, Plaster Rock, New Brunswick, N. J. This should read "New Brunswick, Canada."

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We quote the following letter received from Mr. G. Hapgood Parks, Hartford, Conn. - "On December 16, 1951 we trapped an olivaceous Purple Finch and banded it with No. 50-64757.

"On December 23 this bird repeated twice, and again on December 31.

"Upon the occasion of each of these captures the bird flew away normally when released, but on February 22, the next time it repeated, it fell to the ground from my hand and made no attempt at all to fly.

"From February 22 until March 7 the bird was kept in captivity. During this time it ate normally and was quite tame. On March 7 it was released.* It flew first to a hedge and then, with some difficulty, into a tree and disappeared.