

President

Dr. PAUL H. FLUCK, Washington Crossing Park, Pa.

Secretary

Rev. GARRETT S. DETWILER
194 Seventh St.
Salem, New Jersey

Treasurer

Mrs. STANLEY S. DICKERSON
222 DeVoe Ave.
Spotswood, New Jersey

Editor -- Frank P. Frazier, 424 Highland Ave., Upper Montclair, N.J.

EBBA'S PRESIDENT SAYS: How much does it cost to band a bird?

This is strictly a rhetorical question. As far as this bander knows, no cost analysis of strictly amateur bird banding has ever been made, or contemplated. When such data are available, however, quite a few banders are going to be surprised to learn that banding isn't the inexpensive hobby they thought it was. You may not realize it, but there is a cost tag on every bird you hold in your hand. And the cost is going up!

Gone are the days when a bander could drive over to the city dump, poke around for half an hour and come home with enough wire to build a couple of bird traps. Gone are the days when all you needed to catch birds was the stale bread left over from breakfast and from yesterday's lunch. The annual budget of an up-to-date amateur bird banding station must cover the cost of wire, traps, mist nets, suet, winter feed, rubber bands, record books, filing cards, typewriter ribbons, postage, EBBA dues, subscriptions to other banding periodicals, costs of attending banding meetings, costs of entertaining visiting banders, travel costs to and from substations, tools, plantings for birds, feeders, bird houses, bird books, and a lot more. If all this sounds like pennies-a-day start keeping some accurate expense records for yourself.

Most banding stations, like Topsy, just grow up. They begin with a one cell trap on a feeder, and a pull string trap under a bush. More traps are added then mist nets, a substation or two, and finally crow traps, environmental traps, and filing cabinets. No business-like effort to plan ahead, or to keep track of expenses is ever made. Because banding is just a hobby, most banders spurn formalities of any kind. Which may be one reason why the Banding Office has so much trouble at schedule-time.

When a loaf of bread costs 25 cents, a pound of sunflower seed costs 40 cents, and a roll of wire costs \$50.00, bird banding has become a luxury sport. Some banders can afford this kind of banding, but a

great many others can not. Sooner or later the household budget becomes waterlogged, and somebody sits down with a pencil to figure a few banding costs. Then pliers and bands are slipped into a closet and the door is closed. The 1957 turnover in EBBA membership tells this story better than words. While our membership stands at an all time high, there are less sustaining memberships, and more banders are giving up banding than ever before. Most of these folks will tell you quite frankly, at today's prices they simply can't afford it.

Is there a solution? Is there a way to cut banding costs? This bander thinks there is.

The way to cut banding costs is to plan ahead. At least one banding station -- the Washington Crossing Park Station -- has its own bank account. Set aside what you think you can afford to spend on banding, and spend no more. Keep accurate records of banding expenses, travel mileage, and other costs. Use natural food plantings to help with winter feeding costs, and buy your feed in 100 pound lots. Avoid over-feeding. Live-trap your squirrels and dead-trap your mice and rats during the summer. And don't fall into the pitfall of being oversold on mist netting. One welded wire trap will last for ten or fifteen years. A mist net though less costly is an ephemeral thing that a buck deer, or a dog, or a falling limb can destroy in a second. Limit yourself to whatever number of mist nets your banding budget can afford annually.

While a bander works for free there's a cost tag on every bird in his hand. It's up to you to decide how many birds you can afford this year. Many of the best things in life are free no longer. And banding is one of them.

BANK SWALLOW BANDING In a period from June 14th through July 8th I, with the very able assistance of my wife, banded a total of 450 Bank Swallows plus 12 Rough-Wings. That in spite of the fact that during that time I held down two jobs totalling 65 hours per week.

We used two mist nets and would set them up about four feet in front of, and slightly below the nest openings. We learned that the old birds would freely enter the nests with food for the young, and in departing would drop just enough to become caught. At no time did we net long enough or late enough to cause undue hardship to the young birds.

I've been banding for 23 months, and my total is now a flat 1600 birds of 69 species. I've been using mist nets since May 8th and my total on that date was 940 birds, so I've added 660 in a bit over two months. Actually 51 birds by traps, etc., and 609 by mist nets.
