

A SERIES OF PROFILES Since the experiences, findings, and philosophies of our most experienced banders would be both interesting and profitable for all of us, a series of profiles are being prepared and will appear in EBBA news from time to time.

These brief banding biographies are intended to serve as an inspiration to all. They will be written on the premise that banding, to be of real value, must always be considered as a means to an end, and never as an end in itself.

The first of the series, a profile of Dr. Harold B. Wood, a former president of the Eastern Bird Banding Association, follows.

HAROLD B. WOOD, M.D.

Dr. Wood is one of our senior banders of whom it is true that he excels not because of the numbers banded but for what he has done about the birds banded. He is a grand exponent of "banding with a purpose."

His banding, for Dr. Wood, began in July, 1927, when he was issued Permit #3588. Since that time he has banded about 6,500 birds of 89 species. His yearly banding average is 250, with 400 banded in 1940 and only 170 in 1954. Purple Grackles are the species of which he has banded the greatest number (1,327).

His banding has been conducted mainly at his residence in Harrisburg, Pa., where he has been practicing as a physician, and at his former summer cottage at Jamestown, R.I. These banding areas have enabled him to band birds of a variety of sizes from Hummingbirds to Turkey Vultures, Canada Loon and a few ducks.

Many special studies have occupied his time and attention, of which the homing instincts of female Cowbirds produced an interesting return from a distance of 100 miles in four days, studies of Barn and Bank Swallows, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Black-crowned Night Herons. Studies of plumage have led him to conclude that the white spots in the tails of Robins do not change with growth, while, on the other hand, the white areas in the tails of Juncos do change with their growth.

As would be expected, banding over so long a period produced some very interesting recoveries. Two Black-crowned Night Herons, banded the same day but of different nests, were found dead in Cuba six years apart. A Robin banded in Harrisburg was caught in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

"I have never caught a bird banded elsewhere," he states, "although I am located directly south of Ithaca, N.Y. This shows that northern migrants from there do as the hawks do, follow the mountain ridges and cross far to the west of here. . .I selected a group of banders within a hundred mile circle and wrote each one of them to see if they had a similar experience in an inland district; but not one of the bunch replied to my letter. Even a stamped envelope does not always get an answer."

Dr. Wood has had the unique experience of observing an adult Cowbird feeding a young Cowbird. He has located only two other people (in California and Massachusetts) who have also witnessed this behavior.

Dr. Wood's banding activities and studies have been very productive and he has communicated his findings to others through the many articles he has had published in such publications as the AUK (8 formal papers and 12 notes), the WILSON BULLETIN (1 paper), BIRD BANDING (9 papers and notes), EBBA NEWS (numerous papers and notes), other publications (9 papers), and a HISTORY OF BIRD BANDING.

"Bird banding," says Dr. Wood, "should not comprise only tagging and looking for tagged birds. There are numerous other studies which may be done depending upon local conditions. . .Another point I have stressed is for visiting other banders when opportunity and time permit . . .These are only a few suggestions to get banders away from the mere statistical enumeration."

The true student can be plainly seen in these two quotes from his letter: "I wanted to find out if a Bank Swallow would know her own eggs. I placed six outside eggs in another nest and by frequent watches saw the number of eggs there gradually decreased to six, but I saw that I had neglected to mark one of these sets with a brush and ink. I made plans for another trial but a sudden arrival of a sign of progress came and scooped the entire bank away." I watched a nest of Barn Swallows on my windowsill and saw that the adults would gather the insects for the babies within a fifty foot square area where I could not see a single insect flying. With a pencil I traced the paths of the feeding parents on paper."

-- Dr. Wood's profile, the first of the series,
was prepared for EBBA NEWS by

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