

BANDING INFORMATION ... A MISCELLANY

Questions by Leslie A. Gray

Answers by Allen J. Duvall

New bander and EBBA member, Leslie A. Gray, 14 Cottrill St., Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, writes: "Hamilton has a population of about 250,000 and although we have an active Nature Club here, I am the only one to date who has taken up banding; a sad state of affairs since Hamilton is one of the best spots in Ontario for bird migration.

"This lack of banding company poses a problem since I have no one to compare notes with. The Ontario Bird Banders Association being newly formed, is not much help. As a result, I am practically bursting with queries on banding for which I can find no answers.

"Our libraries here have Lincoln's works and I have Hickey's 'Guide to Bird Watching' with its excellent chapter on banding, but all this literature is 15 to 20 years old. Surely the picture must have changed considerably since the war."

Mr. Gray then asked a number of questions which were forwarded to Mr. Duvall of the Bird Banding Office. The questions, and Mr. Duvall's informative and authoritative replies follow:

The Questions:

A. With the greater number of people banding now and with the upswing of interest in bird watching generally, what are now the recovery percentages away from trapping statios for:

- a. Warblers and vireos
- b. Sparrows
- c. Robins
- d. Shorebirds
- e. Redwings

B. What are good trapping techniques for ducks?

C. Have the percentage returns from South America improved or is this still pretty much a lost cause?

D. On what families of birds have the fewest banding projects been initiated?

E. How many banders are in existence in North America now?

F. What is America's most commonly banded bird?

The Answers:

The questions posed by Leslie A. Gray are good ones but some are difficult to answer.

A.--Recovery percentages (excluding station returns) are extremely small. For the 5 groups (Warblers & Vireos, Sparrows, Robins, Shorebirds, and Redwings), the rate is less than 1%. For Warblers and Vireos it is only about one-tenth of 1%!

No doubt there are many reasons for this low recovery rate, and some of these are:

- a. small birds are overlooked.
- b. people dislike handling dead things.
- c. band is overlooked because of its small size.
- d. people uninformed south of border as to what to do with small bands (more so than in U. S.).
- e. lack of interest by some to report band.
- f. small birds, especially, eaten by predators even though dead thru natural causes.

Of course, if we were to consider station returns (90 days or more after last capture) the percentage for some would greatly increase particularly for the Robin and certain species of sparrow although it would not materially change for Warblers and Vireos.

B.--It takes a book length manual to describe waterfowl trapping and related matters, and there is great diversity in techniques depending upon the species involved. Authorization to trap and band waterfowl in the United States is usually restricted to State and Federal personnel actively engaged in waterfowl studies. In September 1956, "Guide to Waterfowl Banding" was issued and distributed to all banders authorized to band ducks, geese, and Coots. The Guide contains about 175 pages (loose-leaf) with a large section devoted to Traps and Trapping Techniques.

C.--I would say that for certain species recovery percentages, from areas south of the border, compare favorably with those in the United States. This is particularly true for the Blue-winged Teal and Mourning Dove, both game species. If there is any appreciable difference among the non-game species I have not been aware of this, and any significant difference would be difficult to detect because the "normal" rate for many species and groups is very minute--even in the U. S. However, for certain non-game birds, the response is gratifying beyond our continental limit, particularly for such as the gulls and terns, and the Osprey.

I think the variation or low recovery rate is somewhat related to some of the reasons given in "B". In addition, there is a language barrier since the small bands do not contain the Spanish (or French) inscription *Avise*. Then, too, some do not report bands because no reward has been offered. And, of course, the "remoteness" of many of the areas south of the border, lack of communications, and even the relative "costliness" of postage may be deterrents. However, I have never believed that the situation is a "lost cause".

D.--Much could be written on the families of birds having the least number banded. The same could be said for many species although certain species within the family have been banded in large--very large numbers. For example, the White-throated Sparrow ranks among the top six species for bandings (over 300,000) whereas Brewer's Sparrow totals about 500 or less.

Although not all inclusive, the following families have about 1,000 or less individuals banded:

Podicipedidae	Phalaropodidae
Gaviidae	Recurvirostridae
Stercorariidae	Haematopodidae
Procellariidae	Motacillidae
Phaethontidae	Cinclidae
Fregatidae	Aramidae
Threskiornithidae	Jacanidae
Phoenicopteridae	Caprimulgidae
Gruidae	Trochilidae
Ciconiidae	

E.--Approximately 2,200 banders are licensed in North America. However, this does not include individuals considered as sub-permittees, nor the many persons given special short term authority for the banding of Mourning Doves during the nesting season.

F.--The following six species have been banded in greatest numbers and are based on figures compiled through 4/30/54:

Mallard (almost 700,000)	Juncos (over 400,000)
Chimney Swift (over 500,000)	Pintail (over 300,000)
Common Tern (almost 500,000)	White-th. Sparrow (over 300,000)

Some species over the 100,000 mark are: Robin, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Starling, Purple Grackle, Black Duck, and Herring Gull.
