

BANK SWALLOW BANDING

By Leslie E. Bemont

My Bank Swallow total looks good compared to those you reported for the previous year. But compared to Nodecker's efforts (Ebba News, 20:49) it's just peanuts. I used mist nets in the way he described a couple of times in the latter part of the Bank Swallow nesting season, and for banding sheer numbers it's excellent. I would be a little afraid to try it at the height of the nesting season for fear of being swamped, especially with two nets, but then I was working alone. At any rate this method doesn't give much information on the individual birds.

To match each bird with its mate, parents, etc., without damaging the burrows by reaching in, I use ladies' nylon hair nets mounted on frames made of coat hanger wire. I form a circle of the wire about 6 inches across on which the net is mounted, and leave a handle, like a tennis racket handle, of about a foot. About half of this handle is bent to form a 90° angle with the rest, so that it is perpendicular to the hoop, or at least the plane of the hoop.

I park my car about 20 feet from the colony so I can use it as a blind. I sit there watching the colony until I see a bird go into a hole within reach. Then I dash from the car and fasten one of my nets over the burrow entrance by pushing the end of the handle into the dirt above the hole. I then return to the car and wait for the bird or birds to come out and get caught. Using 6 or 7 hair nets it took me about 5 hours to band 50 swallows in this way one day last spring.

710 University Ave., Endwell, N.Y.

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CONSERVATION IS A CONCEPT

Many persons have struggled to adequately define the word, "conservation". About the best anyone has been able to do is to say it means "wise use".

Defining the word is difficult because, in reality, conservation is a concept.

From the practical point of view, the conservation concept asks that topsoil be held in place, where it is most productive, by living plants. It sees a forest as something more than a wood factory -- a storage reservoir for rainwater held in the ground by millions of small roots. It regards surface streams and lakes as arteries of life-sustaining water, of immense value to municipalities and industries and agriculture, rather than just waste disposal systems.

From the aesthetic viewpoint, the conservation concept has an appreciation for beauties of nature, large and small. It recognizes the complicated interrelationship of living creatures to the soil and water and to each other. It values hunting and fishing as recreations more than activities just to produce wild meat.

Conservation means more than "conserving" or "saving" or "protecting". It means more than "wise use". Actually, conservation is a philosophy of -- or an approach to -- life, one recognizing the place of all in the Divine Order of things.

The foregoing may bear resemblance to a sermon and it was so intended, because true conservation cannot be anything but closely allied to religion. -- Louis S. Clapper, in Tennessee Game and Fish Commission press release. ★ ★ ★

NEWS

IN

BRIEF

The Wilson Ornithological Society will hold its annual meeting at Oglebay Park, Wheeling, West Virginia, during April 24 to 27 ★ ★ ★ A Baltimore Oriole banded by Mrs. E. R. Selnes on Eagle Point, Glenwood, Minnesota, May 16, 1955, was reported shot on October 2, 1957, by Mrs. Jesus Alcor of Choloma, D.L., Departmente de Cortez, Honduras, Central America ★ ★ ★ Gail C. Cannon, of Rockaway, N.J., has a particularly interesting foreign retrap -- a Dickcissel female banded by James Baird at the Norman Bird Sanctuary, Middletown, Rhode Island. It is believed that this is the first recovery of a Dickcissel in the East ★ ★ ★ Ed Noll, who has moved from Hatboro, Pa., to Oley, Pa., writes "I am now building feeders and traps like made hoping to begin program early in the spring. It has been a bitter winter and wildlife hard pressed. There is a six foot snowbank in front of my garage this morning. (Feb 16) We are feeding the birds on the garage roof from an upstairs window. We had a few hundred crows visit us this morning in addition to the regular gang. See you at the convention!" ★ ★ ★ Dorothy Bordner of State College, Pa. writes: "We have banded 720 Evening Grosbeaks (in the five weeks) since January 1, and over 550 of those have been since January 20. Our biggest day was January 27 when we banded 137 and had 67 repeats. I guess it was a good thing it was vacation. All three of us were busy that day. Today it was very windy and the herd hasn't come yet. My mistake -- I hear them fighting! ★ ★ ★ Rev. Garrett S. Detwiler has been called to the superintendency of the Baptist Home for the Aged in Newark, N.J. and moved there from Salem on March 17. The cowbirds and grackles of Salem will miss him! He thinks that "folk should watch out while feeding this commercially prepared 'Wild Bird Food'. I have had several Cowbirds strangle," he says, "while they are in my hands or still in the trap. It appears as though they fill their mouths so full of the little round seeds that they inhale them and in about 8-10 seconds they are dead. . . . I am going back to commercially prepared chick feed, even though the Cowbirds don't seem to care too much for the ground wheat that this preparation contains." ★ ★ ★