

BANDING LEAST BITTERNS
AT TINICUM WILDLIFE PRESERVE

By John C. Miller

The Tinicum Wildlife Preserve is located in South West Philadelphia. It consists of 205 acres of which three-fourths are marsh. So far this year I have found twenty-two nests of the Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis exilis*). These were located from May to August. Most of the nests were found in Great Bur-reed (*Spartanium eurycarpum*) and a few in Narrow-leaved Cat-tails (*Typha angustifolia*). No nest contained more than five eggs, but a few held only four. The average, however, was five. The incubation period was from sixteen to twenty days. A few of the birds seemed to be raising two broods this year.

So far this year I have banded twenty-four young Least Bitterns and one adult. The latter I caught while it was feigning injury after I flushed it off its nest. I did not band birds from every nest I found, as some were empty when I returned to check on them. I still have three nests to revisit within the next few days. The young in these nests should bring my total for the year up to about thirty-five.

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HINTS
FOR
BEGINNERS

As Raymond Middleton points out elsewhere in this issue in his article "How to Determine Young from Adults in Fall Migrating Thrushes" it is important for banders to separate young from adults whenever possible. Following are a few hints that will aid

beginners to make this separation:

Blue Jay: The inside of the beak in the fledgling is white. As it matures, black splotches appear but the inside of the beak does not become completely black for months.

Downy Woodpecker: Young males have the red patch on top rather than on back of head.

Catbirds: The under tail-coverts are wispy and have very little of the rufous of the adult.

Brown Thrasher, Junco, Rufous-sided Towhee: Immatures have grey eyes. By checking repeats (as also with the species described above) it is interesting to note the changes as the birds mature.

In general: In most young birds the gape is yellow. ★ ★ ★

NOTES ON GOLDFINCH BANDING
By Mrs. Elizabeth F. Romaine

From November 21, 1957 to May 12, 1958 I banded 172 Goldfinches. I'll wager that better than 75% were caught on the ground. Actually, the only traps I caught them in off the ground were two of Geoffrey Gill's 3-cell Potters that I used all winter on an iron garden table, on which we have been feeding for years. And these were baited entirely with sunflower, as I was primarily using them for Evening Grosbeaks, setting them as "heavy" as I could, so that I would not get Goldfinches and Chickadees, and repeats and repeats.

I rigged a drop-front, hand-release trap, at Jim Baird's suggestion, which I operated from my seat at the kitchen window, and this was most successful, both for Goldfinches and Evening Grosbeaks. If I caught any great number at one time, I would immediately go out and throw a blanket over the trap, to stop the fluttering, and then take them out one by one into a gathering cage. This trap was on a stone-paved terrace.

Outside of the one hand-release trap, my other ground traps were also Mr. Gill's 3-cell Potters, which I use in pairs - back to back. The Goldfinches go into these very readily, I can certainly testify. At one time I became alarmed because I had found several birds with their heads under the doors. None was ever hurt apparently, and then I found out why. I had happened to look specifically at one bird, in the trap, so I knew he was not caught under the door. But by the time I got out to collect him, he was. They apparently try to burrow out and there is just enough space between the door and "threshold" so that with perhaps a little motion of the door, they can get their heads under, but cannot extricate themselves. Afterward, I had this happen several times and, as I had made notes of it, when they repeated I knew they were not injured. So far as I can remember, I have not had this happen with any other species.

In addition to my 172 banded, I had 110 of them repeat a total of 604 times, an average of about 5.5 per bird that repeated, or 3.5 per bird banded. They became a nuisance, as did the Chickadees, because I was trying to get the Evening Grosbeaks, of which I finally banded a total of 509 by May 10, when I banded the last one.

Weathercock House, Middleboro, Mass. ★ ★ ★

BIRDS Latest EBBA author is Merrill Wood, Associate Professor of Central of Zoology at the Pennsylvania State University, former PENNSYLVANIA treasurer of EBBA. His "Birds of Central Pennsylvania" was issued in June as Bulletin 632 by the University's College of Agriculture. The publication is illustrated by a map of the area and color pictures of 45 of the birds described. ★ ★ ★