

WHERE TO MIST NET NEXT FALL

By John V. Dennis

(In two parts - Part I)

More and more banders these days are planning their seashore vacations to take advantage of mist netting opportunities under Operation Recovery. Generally this means a somewhat later vacation than usual - in September or even October. But this is a less crowded and less expensive season at the seashore and, of course, the best time for migrant land birds. I have found much interest in finding new areas in which to band. And many banders do not seem hesitant about going long distances if opportunities sound favorable.

The purpose of this paper will be to list sections of the coast that either have been tried successfully for mist netting or appear to be worthwhile. Only a few sites at present are well covered during Operation Recovery; far more have as yet received inadequate coverage or no coverage at all.

Starting north with Nova Scotia we have a region with a tremendous coastline and numerous offshore islands. Undoubtedly many excellent mist netting sites exist. Very little, however, has been done along this line in what must be a most interesting region for migration. Dr. Harrison F. Lewis, Mr. W. G. Mills, and others have done some very valuable pioneering work at Brier Island which lies at the extreme western corner of Nova Scotia. Good success has been had at mist netting at the northern point of the island where birds concentrate prior to making a northerly departure. A surprising number of rarities have been turned up at Brier Island. Unfortunately not many people are apt to come to this remote spot to band. Those that do are seldom able to stay more than a few days.

Cape Sable Island and Cape Sable at the southwestern extremity of Nova Scotia are potentially good spots to set up operations. Benjamin L. Smith, the lightkeeper at Sable Island, has reported interesting concentrations. On nearby Bon Portage Island Mrs. Evelyn Richardson is much interested in birds and has reported many rarities.

As I know from visiting Nova Scotia the resident ornithologists are most hospitable and encourage outside help in exploring the birdlife of their province. Dr. Harrison F. Lewis, West Middle Sable, Shelbourne County, is a good person to write to.

It might be mentioned that many pitfalls can be avoided by writing to local banders or ornithologists before setting out on a mist netting trip. Such persons can be expected to know the best banding localities, whether or not permission can be obtained to band, what local problems may exist, and so on. Wherever a banding program has already been established the

newcomer should make inquiry before setting up operations. In most cases, it can be expected that an outside bander will be most warmly welcomed. In some instances, however, the type of research being conducted or public relations problems may make it inadvisable for the local bander to accept outside help. Therefore banders should not be affronted if their offers of help are not accepted. The local bander, however, should exercise great care in being polite about his refusal.

Turning to New Brunswick, we have another large region that is almost untouched by mist netters. To be sure, some excellent work has been done on Grand Manan by E. Alexander Bergstrom, and recently Dr. Charles E. Huntington has tried netting at neighboring Kent Island. Otherwise a long coastline northward along the Bay of Fundy and still farther north along the Gulf of St. Lawrence is untouched. Dr. W. Austin Squires at the Saint John Museum tells me that Cape Spencer and Point Lepreau are the two best fall concentration points for land migrants along the Bay of Fundy. He feels that St. Andrews at the mouth of the St. Croix River also has possibilities. On a visit to Point Lepreau well ahead of fall migration I found a number of open places in the spruce woods near the lighthouse that looked good for setting up mist nets. It might be mentioned that William Brewster way back in 1885, between August 13 and September 26, conducted observations from the lighthouse at this locality that antecede our present migration watching by over seventy years (Bird Migration, William Brewster, Memoirs Nuttall Ornith. Club 1: 1-22. 1886.)

Those planning to band in Canada must obtain a permit from the Canadian Wildlife Service, Dept. of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

Interest in coastal mist netting is building up rapidly in Maine. In this past Operation Recovery period stations were located as follows: Milbridge (G. Hapgood Parks), Castine (Lt. and Mrs. M. C. Morse, Jr.), Medomak (J. M. Cadbury), and Webster Corner, Lisbon (D. H. Morse). In addition, other participants were busy as observers. On Deer Isle in Penobscot Bay, for example, Mrs. Margaret H. Hundley was active and Aaron M. Bagg at Christmas Cove. Vast stretches of Maine Coast remain untouched, however. It is probable that some of the best concentration points for fall migrants along the Atlantic coast can be found in Maine. Those interested might get in touch with any one of the following: Christopher M. Packard, Portland Society of Natural History, 22 Elm St., Portland; Mr. Bagg, Farm St., Dover, Mass.; Mrs. Hundley, Box 158, Stonington, Me., or Lt. Morse, Maine Maritime Academy, Castine.

The south Maine coast and New Hampshire coast, to my knowledge, have received no attention from mist netters. The Massachusetts coast, strangely enough, has received nowhere near the attention that might be expected in view of its close proximity to large centers of population and, consequently,

the availability of a fair number of banders. Plum Island near Newburyport and Rockport on Cape Ann have, however, been tried successfully on a few of the OR periods. During the past two seasons Mrs. Chandler Robbins participated at Gloucester on Cape Ann.

Although in past years a relatively large amount of banding was done on Cape Cod, to date no station there has participated in Operation Recovery. Many thickets along the outer Cape between Point Race at the northern tip and Monomoy Point to the south appear exceptionally promising. The few isolated thickets on Monomoy are well known as concentration points but, unfortunately, are hard to get to. Now that the former Austin Ornithological Research Station (presently Wellfleet Bay Sanctuary) is in the hands of the Massachusetts Audubon Society it is to be anticipated that a mist netting program under OR will soon be developed there. Those interested in the Cape should write to Mr. E. Alexander Bergstrom, 37 Old Brook Rd., West Hartford 7, Conn. He and Mrs. Bergstrom are planning to mist net on the outer Cape this coming fall.

Turning to islands of the southeastern coast of Massachusetts, we have in Nantucket a very rich area for mist netting. Dr. Lee Jay Whittles and the writer in August of 1955 commenced a banding program here aimed at covering the entire period of fall migration. This program is now a part of the operation of the Nantucket Ornithological Research Station (commenced under the auspices of the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association in 1958.) Inquiries about Nantucket should be directed to the writer at 17 Liberty St., Nantucket. Extra effort is more urgently needed, however, on the Cape or at neighboring Martha's Vineyard. Those interested in the Vineyard should write to either Mrs. Mabel Gillespie, 313 Sharp Ave., Glenolden, Pa., or Mr. William Pepper, 20 E. Bells Mill Rd., Philadelphia, Pa.

17 Liberty St., Nantucket, Mass.

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if you are among the few who have neglected to send in their dues, you are urged to do so forthwith so that you will appear on the list.

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MIST NETS

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