

A BANDER'S VIEW OF THE 1960 REDPOLL-SISKIN INVASION
By Elinor G. McEntee

When huge hordes of Redpolls descended on Bergen County (the county in the northeast corner of New Jersey, northwest of New York City) in March, it led to speculation on how many there actually were, and also how many were being banded. A total of 25,000 was suggested as the possible total bandings for the Northeast, a figure that didn't seem impossible, judging from our numbers here. That this estimate was optimistic quickly showed up in the reports from other localities. Only about 680 bandings have been reported, which include the 3540 in Bergen County. I estimate the total number of Redpolls in the Northeast would require the services of a statistician, but certainly 100,000 would be a conservative guess, and probably several hundred thousand would be more nearly correct.

One big problem was to get the Redpolls into banding stations. Many localities reported hundreds seen, but few banded. This was especially true of the more open country areas. Generally the largest numbers were banded in closely built-up suburban towns. Since in these places there is little natural food, they were probably forced into feeding stations, especially in early March with the heavy snow. Another factor in Redpoll concentrations is undoubtedly the presence of birch trees. The two stations banding the largest numbers (McEntee, Ridgewood, N.J., 1473; and Dietert, Allendale, N.J., 1444) boast numerous birch trees. It might also be mentioned, in fairness, that these two stations, which are roughly five miles apart, did some mighty concentrated banding for six weeks! In fact it practically developed into a friendly contest to see who could band the most, and neither wanted to let up for fear the other would pull to far ahead.

Interestingly enough, though we are not far apart, we exchanged comparatively few birds. Two of theirs traveled south to my station and three of mine north to theirs. Quite a few of theirs turned up at Eleanor Dater's (Ramsey, N.J.), however, two or three miles further north, but only one of mine was trapped there. Eleanor once remarked that if she hadn't gotten so many Dietert birds, her total of 621 would have been much larger!

These Redpolls were the Dieterts' initiation into banding. What a beginning! They also trapped the only Greater Redpoll reported. There were at least two other banders who also got their initiation with Redpolls: Carol Logan, Levittown, Pa. (144) and Stuart Henderson, Ballardville, Mass. (248).

Those who attended the EBBA meeting in Annapolis and saw the map showing the Redpoll banding locations and totals may have noted, as I have, that the pattern of greatest concentration seemed to travel south from the St. Lawrence to Lake Champlain, the Hudson Valley, and south-

westerly across the center of New Jersey to the Delaware, the Philadelphia area, and south into the Chesapeake Bay area in Maryland. There were only two banded in Maryland, both in College Park south of Laurel on March 12th, but a number of sight records were reported. Fairly large bandings, however, were reported also from the New England coastal area, with 248 in Ballardville, Mass., 50 in Castine, Maine, and 136 as far east as Nantucket Island (Edith Andrews). Possibly a coastal route and a Hudson Valley route merge to form the huge concentrations that seem to funnel periodically into northeastern New Jersey. Records show big concentrations there in 1947, 1956, and 1960. Further totals from the New England states might define the picture more clearly.

The Buffalo-Rochester area reported 118 bandings (Csont, 45; and Leubner, 73). Possibly those found in central Pennsylvania (State College, Bordner, 62; Wood, 16; and Trout Run, Bigger, 12) and the Ithaca, New York area came from this group via the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario and thence south.

Redpolls have not provided many recovery records. The Banding Office reports a total of 88, but how many of these were recoveries and how many returns could not be ascertained at the time. Perhaps this year's birds will increase the figure sufficiently to provide some clues as to their north-south routes. If you banders will send me what recovery records you get, they might make an interesting supplement to this article.

In northern New Jersey the Redpolls were first seen as early as December 10th, but then only sporadically until the middle of January. Then the population slowly began its build-up all during February to a climax between March 15th and 30th. They were then last seen about the 20th of April. Many banders reported their last banding around April 12th. After that they seemed to vanish like thieves in the night. The Philadelphia area first reported them on December 24th, while central Pennsylvania gave the first date as January 31st. In the Albany, New York area they were seen between February 18th and April 11th, whereas Jeff Gill on Long Island didn't report them until March 5th.

The Redpoll banders did not reveal much information about their trapping methods, but judging from my experience it would be safe to say that well-baited traps produced more Redpolls than nets. Being a gregarious species they follow one another into traps like cows into pasture. It was not at all unusual to take 8 or 10 from a small maze trap at a time. Also, the closer together the traps were, the more productive they seemed to be. One Middleton thrush trap was placed on a table and two Modesto traps on the ground immediately beside the table and these three traps caught 60 to 70 percent of my birds, the nets 20 percent, and other miscellaneous traps the rest. At the other extreme, Martin Brech reports from Mahopac, New York, that his 790 Redpolls were all taken in one 4-cell

and one single cell Potter type traps. All of which may prove that trapping equipment is not nearly as important as location. If you want to band hordes of Redpolls, move to the lower Hudson Valley "Redpoll Funnel".

Apparently the Pine Siskins, though not in large numbers, spread further south and west than usual this year, but strangely enough less than half of those who banded Redpolls also banded Siskins. The largest number, 125, was banded by Leroy Wilcox on Long Island. The Siskin bandings were scattered, but again, with the exception of Nantucket Island, the Long Island-Northern New Jersey area had the most. Dorothy Bordner in State College, Pa., banded 9 and Gladys Cole banded 35 near Baltimore. The northernmost reports came from Tom Morse in Castine, Maine, and from Eleanor Washbourne near Plattsburgh, N.Y.

Following is a list of banders and their Redpoll and Siskin totals. The first figure represents Redpolls, the second, Siskins.

NEW JERSEY: Sister Jane Patricia, Mendham, 30-1; Bertram Murray, Bound Brook, 1-9; Marie Dumont, Pequannock, 51-0; Ray Jones, Allendale, 92-0; Roy Dietert, Allendale, 1444-19; Eleanor Dater, Ramsey, 621-0; Frank Frazier, Montclair, 59-55; John McDermott, Art Barber, Englewood, 2-0; Helen Bliss, Pompton Plains, 0-25; Elinor McEntee, Ridgewood, 1473-45.

NEW YORK: Mrs. Elek Csont, Athol Springs, 45-0; Jeff Gill, Huntington, 378-24; Eleanor Radke, East Chatham, 104-3; Mrs. C.W. Turner, Nassau, 15-0; Leroy Wilcox, Eastport, 160-125; Gerhard Leubner, Rochester, 73-0; John Given, Peeskill, 50-0; Grace Meleney, White Plains, 40-0; Martin Brech, Mahopac, 790-0; John Taylor, Syosset, 1-0; Eleanor Washbourne, Peru, 56-0.

VERMONT: Bruce Adams, Burlington, 25-0; Betty Downs, Londonderry, 16-0.

MAINE: Lt. Tom Morse, Castine, 50-0.

PENNSYLVANIA: John Kimmich, Haverford, 10-0; Carol Logan, Levittown, 1-0; Raymond Bubb, Hellam Township, 15-0; Walter Bigger, Trout Run, 12-0; Raymond Middleton, Norristown, 60-4; Bill Pepper, Phila., 170-6; Merrill Wood, State College, 16-0; Dorothy Bordner, State College, 62-9; E. Wayne Mars, Ardmore, 187-12.

MARYLAND: David Bridge, Donald Feller, College Park, 1-0 each; Gladys G. Towson, 0-35.

MASSACHUSETTS: Edith Andrews, Nantucket, 136-51; Stuart Henderson, Ballardville, 248-0; Frances Brierley, Adams, 92-21.

CONNECTICUT: Barbara Norton, Cos Cob, 10-21; Bruce Adams, Riverside, 1-0.

RHODE ISLAND: Merrill Slate, Block Island, 1-0.

I would like to express my thanks to all of these banders for their fine cooperation in sending their reports to me.

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