

WHO IS BANDING THE MOST OF WHAT -- PRO
By Elise Dickerson and Walter Bigger

From the minutes of the Council meeting of the Eastern Bird Banding Association on April 22, 1960 we read, "It was suggested that the section 'Who Is Banding the Most of What' be discontinued unless more members participate. At present only about 15% are submitting their totals."

The storm of protest that has reached us regarding this matter has caused us to reverse our attitude concerning the column and has prompted us to ask EBBA NEWS readers to please send their opinions and ideas to either Mrs. Cardinali or to our Editor.

From the small beginning in the July-August EBBA NEWS (Vol. 19, No. 4, p. 53) we have doubted the efficacy of encouraging competition and the subsequent rivalry between banders. It has seemed to us that banders could do something more worthwhile than to hunt up their names in a "banded the most of" column. In the belief that an editor should be left strictly alone to run his paper, we did not have too much to say concerning our doubts about the constructive value nor our feeling that it was perhaps a waste of paper. However, from letters received, comments, and discussion with others, we are prepared to state our views on the "Pro" side.

First, what is wrong with competition and rivalry if accompanied by careful recording and use of the material recorded? In a recent article in THE RING by Albert Schnitzer, the benefits of mass banding are most ably set forth. (Vol. II, No. 23, p. 221.)

Second, both IBBA and WBBA devote entire issues annually to a report of their members' banding totals and we thoroughly enjoy reading them. With our large membership (453 at present writing) we could publish a very interesting report if we could only find some means of persuading our members to send in a carbon copy of the annual report that accompanies their schedules.

Third, the column has definitely added to our knowledge of where to look for certain species. One bander who needed help from the member who had banded the most Common Terns wrote to Mrs. Cardinali who sent the required information by return mail and our bander was immediately put in touch with the bander who could most help him (Leroy Wilcox of Long I.)

Fourth, there is a factor that could similarly be of help to our Editor. It frequently happens that someone writes to EBBA NEWS wanting detailed information concerning a certain species. The Editor will know exactly where to go for an article that will add to the general knowledge of many as against a letter which would answer only one bander's problems.

Fifth, banders will know precisely where to find out the most efficient method, trap, net-setting and bait to use to capture particular birds.

When Ralph Bell stated at the EBBA meeting in 1956 that he had banded 534 Robins in a year, there were many cries from the floor, "How did you do it?"

Sixth, and perhaps foremost, is the fact that entirely too little is known about almost any species, which fact can be partially amended by large scale banding. If the unwanted "spirit of competition and rivalry" does nothing else but to spur all banders on to greater efforts, then we feel that the column WHO IS BANDING THE MOST OF WHAT? has served a good purpose. We hope that all members will express their own views in this controversy, but most of all we hope that they will send those little carbons to Mrs. Cardinali.

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WHO IS BANDING THE MOST OF WHAT -- CON
By Joseph R. Jehl, Jr. and Bertram G. Murray, Jr.

We have been asked to state the negative side of the controversy over the continuance or discontinuance of the column "Who Banded the Most of What?"

Let us look at what we learn from the column "Who Banded the Most of What?" That is it exactly, who banded the most of what, nothing more, except, perhaps, who spent the most time banding, or who had the most subcommittees. We learn nothing about movements, migration, daily, seasonal, or annual weight changes, or breeding densities, which are among the objectives of banding. We do not even learn when and where the birds were banded. In short, "Who Is Banding the Most of What?" offers nothing of value and little of interest.

We must emphasize that we have no quarrel with mass banding as long as the objectives of banding are not obscured by the volume of records. Also, we have no quarrel with "friendly" competition among banders as long as the placing of a band on a bird's leg remains a "means" of scientific research and does not become an "end" in itself. Bird banding is a form of scientific research, not a displacement activity for frustrated individuals. Since it is research, complete data is necessary - to merely place a band on a bird's leg without recording certain minimal data is not enough.

We feel that the space taken up by the column could be used more profitably. Some ideas which come to mind are:

1. The multitudes of birds banded must produce a number of recoveries, which are of greater importance and interest than numbers of birds banded. Perhaps the most interesting recoveries could be published, as is done by British Birds for Great Britain.