

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.

ED, Spotswood, N.J. and WB, Trout Run, Pa.

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 subpermittees. 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.

2. Those banders who have developed efficient methods for capturing large numbers of hard-to-trap species might be prevailed upon to publish their techniques. These might be incorporated into the forthcoming banding manual.

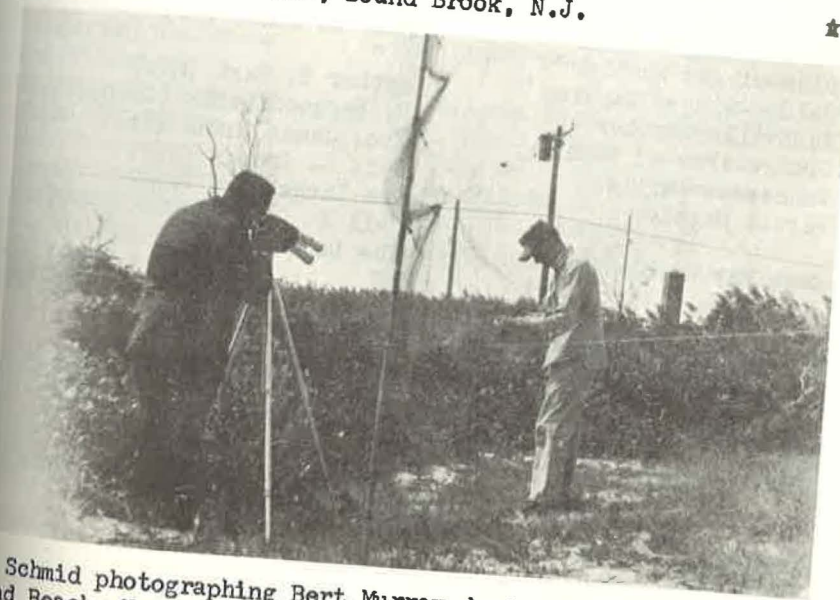
3. Banders with good recovery, repeat and return data could publish analyses of the data for a particular species. Cooperative studies among several banders would be welcomed.

4. Banders are in the enviable position among bird students of being able to observe influxes and, to some extent, emigrations of certain species, such as Song Sparrow, Junco, and White-throated Sparrow, which are impossible for the "binocular" bird student to observe. Of great importance are "hard weather" movements during the winter, which are almost unstudied on this side of the Atlantic Ocean. Regardless of the numbers banded, all banders could take part in this sort of research.

5. The space could be used as a "Question and Answer" column.

The Editor is calling us "idealists" - we are. Our suggestion of replacing "Who Is Banding the Most of What?" by other articles is contingent upon the submission of articles to the Editor. We feel that the Editor should receive such a large volume of material that he not only can, but must, reject material of lesser calibre, interest, and importance. Among the first to go should be "Who Is Banding the Most of What?"

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John Schmid photographing Bert Murray during Operation Recovery at Island Beach, N.J., September, 1960. Photo by Frank P. Frazier.