

BANDING AT CAPE MAY, SPRING 1960

By William E. Savell

A week of banding activities was undertaken at Cape May, N.J., May 2 through May 8, 1960 under the direction of Bennett K. Matlack. Because the first week in May coincided with the Annual Spring Nature Week-end of the Audubon Society of South Jersey, the above dates were selected. The purpose was twofold: first to obtain comparative data between fall and spring movements at this point, and second to promote good public relations for the banding program by demonstrating to the visitors, the techniques of netting and banding.

Twenty-one nets were placed in the usual "Operation Recovery" lane in Weatherby's Woods at Cape May Point. The party consisted of Bessie and Bennett Matlack, Ruth and Ed Merrigan, George Rogers, and India and Bill Savell. The nets were attended daily from before dawn until dark from Tuesday through Saturday. Monday, the first day, from 4:00 pm until dark, and Sunday, the last day, from before dawn until 1:00 pm. Weather conditions were ideal with gentle breezes and bright sunshine, except the last day when occasional light showers occurred but didn't stop operations.

Although much speculation took place prior to the undertaking, and much optimism prevailed, the concensus was that the number of birds passing through Cape May during the northward migration would be only a fraction of the autumn movement. This was subsequently borne out when tabulations at the end of the week showed only 65 new birds of 22 species were banded, or about ten percent. Among the interesting results, however, were thirteem returns of six species banded by others at Cape May; two banded in 1956, eight in 1958 and five in 1959, with one foreign re-trap, banded in 1955 at Ocean City, Md. Our most unusual catch was a small brown bat; and one joy not experienced in the fall was the absence of biting insects. The thrill and inspiration of listening to the call of the Whip-poor-will as the nets were readied each morning, followed by the awakening of the forest as the dawn painted the morning sky a beautifully changing variety of colors, and finally watching the sun rise majestically out of the Atlantic, was an unforgettable experience.

Photo shows Bill Savell (with cap) and Seth Low at this same spot during Operation Recovery, autumn 1960. (Photo by F.P.F)



An estimated 200 persons participating in the early morning bird walks of the society had the occasion of listening to Bennett lecture interestingly about the banding program and to see birds being banded. For many this was their first opportunity to inspect a Japanese mist net and to photograph a bird at close range. As a result, much favorable interest was created and many new people will be inspecting legs of dead and injured birds for bands.

The following is a list of species and totals in the order in which they were banded:

1 - Catbird -----	10	12 - Carolina Chickadee -----	1
2 - Towhee -----	11	13 - Yellow Warbler -----	1
3 - Crested Flycatcher -----	1	14 - Yellow-breasted Chat -----	2
4 - White-throated Sparrow ---	3	15 - Ovenbird -----	8
5 - Brown Thrasher -----	7	16 - Veery -----	1
6 - Redwinged Blackbird -----	3	17 - Parula Warbler -----	2
7 - White-eyed Vireo -----	3	18 - Blue-winged Warbler -----	1
8 - Cowbird -----	3	19 - Wood Pewee -----	1
9 - Cardinal -----	1	20 - Robin -----	1
10 - House Wren -----	1	21 - Yellowthroat -----	1
11 - Blue Jay -----	1	22 - Swamp Sparrow -----	1

Pleasantville, N.J.



Seth Low, former EBBA president, keeping up with his records during Op. Recov. at Cape May, Sept. 1960 - and at right, showing off a banded bird to Mrs. Frank P. Frazier and bird watchers. Photos by FPF.