

## OPERATION RECOVERY - ISLAND BEACH, N.J. 1962

Sand, Mosquitoes, Birds, and Banders

By Frank P. Frazier

Photos (mostly) by Charles Lincoln



Banding birds can be a pretty lonely occupation - rewarding though it is in so many different ways. That's one of the reasons why, perhaps, I get such huge enjoyment out of Operation Recovery - Island Beach each autumn. For here, in this joint venture, there is always the give and take of "What do you call this?" (the bird being partially concealed in a fellow bander's hand), or the excitement of discussing a new theory on migration routes, or a new way of setting up nets or keeping records -- or almost anything else.

And the bander checking his net lane, especially on a slack day when the mosquitoes outnumber the birds by many thousands to one, might expect to find -- perhaps a rarity from the south or west -- or perhaps a shell or a piece of driftwood placed there by another idle bander. (Would the initials of such a prankster be JCS, or BM, or ML, or even FPF?)



Some 21,179 birds of 132 species were banded during the Island Beach, New Jersey, Operation Recovery Bird Banding Project, August 25 to October 29, 1961, under the joint leadership of Elise Dickerson and Mabel Warburton.

A Cassins Sparrow and a Painted Bunting headed the list of rare and common birds banded, weighed, measured, recorded and released. As might be expected, more Juncos (2790) were taken than any other species. Other totals included 1639 Catbirds, 1147 Brown Creepers, 1078 Myrtle Warblers, 936 Golden-crowned Kinglets, 857 Swainson's Thrushes, 800 American Redstarts, 623 Red-eyed Vireos, 581 Yellowthroats, 528 Rufous-sided Towhees, 505 Red-breasted Nuthatches, and 490 Song Sparrows.

More than 40 persons participated as netters and banders, recorders and assistants, observers and photographers. (The complete day by day statistical list may be obtained from either of the co-directors, Elise Dickerson or Mabel Warburton, by sending 25¢ and your name and address.)

But these statistics can tell only part of the story. More information on the whole Atlantic Coastal Netting Project is contained in the article appearing in Bird-Banding, Vol. XXIX, No. 3, pages 137-168, by Baird, Robbins, Bagg and Dennis, and in Stanley S. Dickerson's article on the Island Beach, N.J. Operation Recovery activities in EBBA NEWS, Vol. 21, No. 3, pages 47-51. Other articles on various aspects of OR either have already been printed, or will be in the near future.



Above: Island Beach net lane  
Left: Mabel Warburton at her nets

Top left: Elise Dickerson  
weighing a bird

Below: Typical picture of  
John Schmid - but wife Mary  
also bands birds. . .



The daily life of an I.B.O.R. participant is something that statistics cannot tell. On one big day, for instance, Frank and I stumbled out of bed before dawn, drank a cup of hot coffee while dressing, loaded ourselves and gear into our small Fiat, and raced to the "Magazine", IBOR headquarters. There we exchanged hasty banter with Mike Logue or Walter Bigger, Elise or Mabel or any others as sleepy and hurrying as we, took up our gathering cages and hurried to our net lane a mile or so away.



Mosquitoes would be there before us -- but on a big day, with the nets loading up, there was little time even for careful application of repellent. First things first -- so out of the nets and into the gathering cages we handled the most vulnerable birds: the Empidonax Flycatchers, Brown Creepers, Warblers, and (surprisingly to me) Purple Finches. After these we took out the Swainson's Thrushes, Catbirds, Towhees, etc, then back to the Magazine to weigh, measure, record and band.

Occasionally, even, there would be too many birds in the nets to be handled in this way. So we'd move banding equipment to the net lane and band there -- one of us wielding the pliers and the recording pencil, while the other emptied the nets and even rolled some of them up in order to be able to keep abreast of the waves of migrants.

On a day such as this, food was strictly secondary. And a most welcome visitor, just when one was quite faint with hunger, might be Charl Warburton with breakfast buns and coffee -- she having taken time off from her recording duties to minister to harassed and exhausted net tenders.



As this story is being printed, IBOR - 1962 is getting under way. Once again Elise Dickerson and Mabel Warburton will direct the energies and activities of dozens of banders, observers and recorders. Once again Charl and Ben Warburton will be official score-keepers, Francis Hornick and John Schmid will be official photographers, Walter Bigger, Bill Pepper (with wife and daughter, I hope), Stanley Dickerson, Mary Schmid, Joe Jehl, Charles Lincoln, and many other old and new IBOR companions will be there for long or short stays between August 24 and October 31.

And there'll be more than enough wind, sand, hot sun and mosquitoes -- less than enough time for sleeping and eating. But birds will be netted, banded, weighed, measured, aged, sexed and released. And each bander will learn a little more -- and add a little more to the science of understanding birds and their ways -- and vastly increase his enjoyment of life.



Above: Bill Pepper

Below: Walter Bigger



Top: A bander's gear

Center: Charl Warburton

Below: Joe Jehl, Bert Murray,  
and observer

