

BOOK REVIEW

By Eleanor E. Dater

Bird Doctor, by Katherine Tottenham, 1961. 162 pages, 19 photos, octavo. Thomas Nelson & Sons, New York. \$3.00.

In this small book Mrs. Tottenham has given a humorous and fascinating account of how she has met her repair jobs with birds. Much of her work is with sea birds as her home is in the coastal town of North Devon, England. Here she has acquired valuable experience in caring for the oiled birds. This problem is a difficult one that takes trial and error plus time and patience to achieve satisfactory results.

The deadly enemy of crippled sea birds, according to the author, is pneumonia. Her first aid is therefore to wrap the oil-soaked bird in cotton-wool, place it in a covered basket near heat, and leave it to recover from chill. If the bird needs a stimulant, deluted gin is preferable to rum or whiskey, she believes, arguing that land birds in particular are benefitted by the medicinal properties of juniper berries. Her treatise on oil soaked birds is topped off with "only a bird found soon after it struggles ashore, and treated immediately, has a prospect of recovery."

There are so many tips or hints that banders could tuck into their notebooks that it is difficult to select the best. Some that appeal to me are: A tablet of concentrated yeast is helpful when a bird is suffering from the first sign of insecticide poisoning; a halibut oil capsule for a starved bird; Sluisfood, a Dutch product, is a good basic food for all adult passerines. And who would think of giving bread, milk, and grated cheese to a Widgeon, or sorrel to an ailing Fulmar?

One of her best suggestions, and new to me, is to collect a number of quill feathers dropped by birds of various sizes: "The stems can be cut off and split lengthwise to make very good splints for leg fractures." Such a splint may, or may not, need an assist from Scotch tape. The advantage of the quill is in the lightness and ease of application. "Lice are quickly eradicated with pyrethrum powder which, unlike DDT and other chlorinated hydrocarbon insecticides, is completely harmless to birds."

As I read the book I gained a moving picture of Mrs. Tottenham's home life. The dogs on friendly terms comforting the ailing birds, allowing them to snuggle for warmth. The buzzard that recuperated in the attic; the many cages of various sizes, both in and out of doors; the saga of the albino and fawn mice which ended dramatically with one expectant female in the sink. A dish cloth was arranged as a ladder for the mouse to get out of the sink. "Next morning when I came to retrieve the cloth, it felt abnormally warm and heavy and further investigation revealed a cross-faced mother and a cozy family of naked babies in its fold."

The corsage you might see on Mrs. Tottenham's shoulder is no rare flower or chameleon; it is an ailing swift. As you know, a swift can't perch; it has to cling to something. And what is better than a shoulder?

The final chapter includes the following, which is most timely in this country where Rachel Carson's book, Silent Spring, is a conversation piece: "Further tests have proved that birds in the second generation of exposure to insecticides in their diet invariably become incapable of reproduction."

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading the book and will undoubtedly use many of the suggestions in the care of birds that I handle and care for as a bander.

259 Grove St., Ramsey, N.J.

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OPERATION RECOVERY, MONHEGAN, MAINE

The banding project, "Operation Recovery, Monhegan, Maine," will be continued in 1962. Eva and Albert Schnitzer of 155 Wild Hedge Lane, Mountainside, New Jersey, who initiated the program on the island, again invite banders to join the operation to assist with netting, recording, banding, weighing, measuring and observing, either with the Schnitzers or independently.

Those interested may communicate with the Schnitzers for information on permits, banding locations on the island, transportation, and the costs of lodging, board, etc. It is wise to make reservations for board and lodging as early as possible, especially after Labor Day, since most of the local hostelries close then and accommodations become scarce.

The Schnitzers plan to reach Monhegan in the latter part of September and to remain through early October.

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SQUEEZE KLIPS AVAILABLE

Squeeze Klips, indispensable in building traps (and incidentally practically indispensable for many other jobs around the home) are once more available.

1. Small kit containing the pliers and 2 sets of klips -- \$1.00
2. Strips of 100 klips - size "00" -- 40¢

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