

Letter to the Editor:  
(See Mr. Parks' reply  
on facing page)

West Virginia University  
MORGANTOWN, W. VA.  
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

January 10, 1964

Mr. Frank P. Frazier  
Editor, EBBA NEWS  
Upper Montclair, New Jersey

Dear Sir:

I wish to register a vigorous protest against the article published in the November-December, 1963 issue of EBBA NEWS by G. Hapgood Parks entitled "Effect of Sprayed Pesticide on Evening Grosbeak Nesting Area". I feel that Mr. Parks has done the cause of good conservation a profound disservice by writing this unscientific article and I feel that EBBA NEWS has compounded this disservice by publishing it. Certainly any scientific reputation that EBBA NEWS may have had has taken a downward drop by printing, what I can only call an ill-advised, and poorly reasoned piece of propaganda.

There is absolutely nothing in the article by Parks that proves anything one way or another about the effect of pesticides on Grosbeak populations, despite his emotional writing. All the article proves is that he was able to band fewer birds in 1963 than in 1962. We are not even told the elementary fact as to whether he saw more birds in 1962 or not. Until far more is known about the summer habits of this bird no one can fairly equate lack of banding success with population elimination. Insecticide spraying, may indeed, have had something to do with this difference, but a multitude of other factors may also have had a part, and indeed probably did.

The problem of the effect of pesticides upon animals (and upon man) is an important one, and one that deserves careful study. So far much of the literature published on both sides is characterized by scientific inaccuracy, and downright innuendo. This problem is not going to be solved by emotionalism, by name calling, or by distorted publication.

The chemical industry in acting in defense of pesticides had been quick to label most anti-pesticide literature as "unscientific" and hence unfounded. The book "Silent Spring" was widely criticized on these grounds. The general attitude seems to be that if they can show the public enough examples of poorly conceived, unscientific, emotional anti-pesticide propaganda they can then ridicule all such propaganda or articles as being the inconsequential ravings of a bunch of "nature lovers".

Certainly in writing his unsound, and fallacious article Parks has played into their hands. Propagandists for the Chemical Industry could have a field day with the unfounded, and irresponsible conclusions drawn by Parks.

The publication of this article has then made the acceptance of sound and carefully backed evidence of pesticide mortality in birds all the more difficult. Both Parks and EBBA NEWS have thus done the disservice to conservation that I mentioned above.

Sincerely yours

*George A. Hall*  
George A. Hall

REPLY BY G. HAPGOOD PARKS  
(see preceding page)

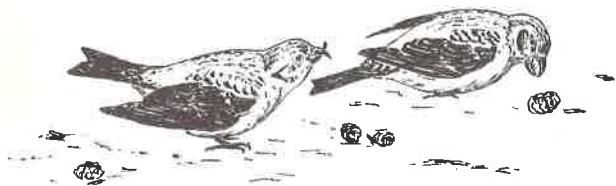
I feel that there is no need to justify my story on the "Effect of Sprayed Pesticide on Evening Grosbeak Nesting Area," but since you have requested an answer, here it is:

1. The article in question was not written as a complete report on a scientific study. Rather, it was offered to a group of readers most of whom were already acquainted with the study, as a summary of the comparative results obtained by our extension of that same study into a second season. My notebooks hold adequate observations to have filled that entire issue of EBBA NEWS, but publishing them would not have altered even one of the facts in the summary.

2. Although our critic does not express himself in the manner of a person who would care to be convinced, I wish that he could know that the experience we had with the effect of spraying in Quebec is not an isolated one. In fact, I have just completed my share of a joint report in conjunction with Dr. J. Robert Blais, forest entomologist for the Quebec Department of Forestry. Dr. Blais was in charge of the forest survey which culminated in the spraying episode about which I have written. Our joint paper, entitled "Interaction of Evening Grosbeak and Spruce Budworm in a Localized Budworm Outbreak Treated with DDT in Quebec," will be submitted for publication in the "Canadian Journal of Zoology." Interestingly enough, it was the report which has agitated Mr. Hall so greatly that inspired Dr. Blais to suggest that he and I combine our observations in this joint paper. Dr. Blais has been actively associated with the study and control of the spruce budworm for more than ten years. Whereas he finds that controlled spraying is essential in the control of epidemic infestations, he credits natural control factors, including birds, for final eradication of this destructive pest. In correspondence prior to our 1963 return to 39-mile Camp, Dr. Blais predicted a reduction in the sprayed area's Evening Grosbeak population, so our report was no surprise to him. In our joint paper he describes a similar situation which he observed near the Rimouski River where spraying was done during 1961, as follows: "In 1960 and 1961 large flocks of evening grosbeaks were seen almost each day in the latter part of June and early July pecking the earth outside a cookery. In those years budworm populations were high in the immediate vicinity of the Depot Camp. In 1962 the budworm had returned to endemic conditions in the surrounding area of the Depot Camp and not one evening grosbeak was seen near the camp." Allow me to add just this: I feel that only those persons who visited the Patapedia river area during June and July of the springs prior to 1963 can even dream of the almost unbelievable concentration of Evening Grosbeaks in that wilderness. (Ben and Mary Shaub, as well as Mrs. Parks and I were there briefly, without banding equipment, in 1961.) Had we possessed adequate bands in 1962 our banding total could certainly have become at least 1000. We went back with 1000 bands in 1963, but we returned 995 of them to the

Canadian Wildlife Service, unused. THE BIRDS JUST WERE NOT THERE -- and neither were the spruce budworms which the Evening Grosbeaks had sought as food for themselves and for their young.

99 Warrenton Avenue, Hartford 5, Connecticut



#### CORRECTIONS

A typographical error crept into Joseph J. Mahoney Jr.'s article, "Millet Food Patch Attracts Bobolinks." The last sentence of paragraph 2, page 232, Nov-Dec. issue, should have read: "Over 90% of the birds netted and aged proved to be immature. . ." -- not 20%.

And two persons noted that we had called Bob McCullough's interesting picture of a hawk "a Pigeon Hawk". It is a Sharpie. Our face is red. . .



#### PICTURE CONTEST AWARD

James Richardson is the Picture Contest Award winner this issue for his fine photographs illustrating his article, "A Tern Banding Project at the Dry Tortugas," which begins on page 5 of this issue.