

A Bird Bander's Diary

By Ralph K Bell

July-August



June 18 ... The former lumbering town of Cass was also in the Foray area, and most campers took advantage of the chance to ride up the mountain inside in the train that formerly hauled logs to the mill. A spokesman on the train gave a very interesting history of the train as we moved up the mountain. He pointed out the mountain nearby which contained the 145 foot waterfall mentioned in the June '64 issue of the National Geographic magazine. Campers at the Foray came from as far away as Florida, and each had a chance to learn more about many subjects. There was an opportunity to study Birds, Flowers, Trees, Shrubs, Mosses, Ferns, Fungi, Reptiles, Mammals, Insects, Butterflies, Nature Photography and Astronomy. The year before there was a field trip taken for the sole purpose of studying rocks and their formation. All the information gathered at each Foray is compiled and published at a later date. This report is very much in demand and it is truly remarkable that so much can be found out about a region in only a week's time.

Things to remember ... the wonderful campfire programs and sings each evening -- Chet Shaffer's stories about 'Spit' and 'Little Arlie' -- the small fry and their snakes -- the question about the black object that was bigger than a Robin and smaller than a bear -- Dr. Burt's talk (and charts) showing the relationship between Bird and Hog Calling (this was really hilarious) -- the huge numbers of wild strawberries and the two ladies that took 12-quart buckets to pick them -- the true birders that rose before dawn to get to the study areas -- the early morning bird walks -- the singing of the Veeries that were everywhere -- the song of the Winter Wren on Gaudineer in the mist of early dawn -- the Tree Swallows that watched the big flies (stones) go by -- the deer that was frightened by Gladys Cole and George Ballentine and then almost ran through the nets and over Ann Shreve -- the pleasant cooks -- the excellent food -- the singing prayer before each meal -- the chance to visit with different campers at every meal -- the 100 Red Crossbills on Spruce Knob and the magnificent view from this high point. All this and much more as it wasn't possible to be in on all the happenings. EBBA members present at the 1964 Foray were: Mrs. George Ballentine, Dr. R. K. Burns, Dr. Harold Burt, Gladys Cole, Art Dunnell, Carol Hand, Connie Katholi, Maxine Kiff, John Linehan, Clark Miller and Anne Shreve.

July 16 ... The Republicans have picked Goldwater as their presidential nominee. It seems strange that the people of western United States have an entirely different outlook on things than their eastern counterpart. But when things are analyzed, it becomes evident that the reason is due to the

fact that the west is still young and patriotism is much more evident. The people of eastern U.S. are growing complacent and more dependent on Washington. Here is something taken from the S.A.R. (Sons of the American Revolution) publication that aptly explains the situation ... Let us, as Americans, never forget that the average age of the world's great civilizations has been 200 years. These nations progressed through this sequence:

From bondage to spiritual faith.
From spiritual faith to great courage.
From courage to liberty.
From liberty to abundance.
From abundance to selfishness.
From selfishness to complacency.
From complacency to apathy.
From apathy to dependence.
From dependence back again to bondage.

Time will tell whether our great country will continue to drift toward bondage.

August 9 Our Purple Martins have been staying around this Fall more than usual. At least 80 were on our TV aerial today and some have been sleeping in the 10-room box. Usually the fifth of August is the last day for sleeping in the boxes here.

August 13 Decided to do some checking on the Purple Martins that are still here. Yesterday, I put up a ladder to their roosting box and last night climbed up and placed bricks in front of their entrances. This morning brought the big surprise. Instead of the 16 Purple Martins that I had estimated were in the box, there was a total of 36. One compartment had 12 Martins and they were actually 3 deep. Other compartments held 11, 8, 4 and 1. Five compartments were empty. The Martins may have roosted together for warmth as there was a cold spell and the temperature went down to 50 degrees during the night. One need for warmth may have been due to the stage of their molt and low fat rating. All were given a rating of zero (for fat). Barn Swallows caught the same day rated 1 or better. Of those captured, 8 carried bands. One was an adult male banded on April 29, 1959, in the same box. The other 7 banded birds were immatures, 6 being banded as nestlings in the box and the other one caught in a net on August 1st. Of the 28 unbanded ones, 9 were adult females and the rest immatures. All 9 adult females were in heavy molt. Five immatures were in heavy molt (at least 2 of these were older as there was not much yellow mouth color). Two immatures were in slight molt, and one of these was beginning to molt the secondaries. At least 14 immatures had not yet begun to molt.

In the next issue, there will be some of the highlights of our Operation Recovery Station on top of the Alleghany Front Mountains in the heart of West Virginia at an elevation of about 4000 feet.