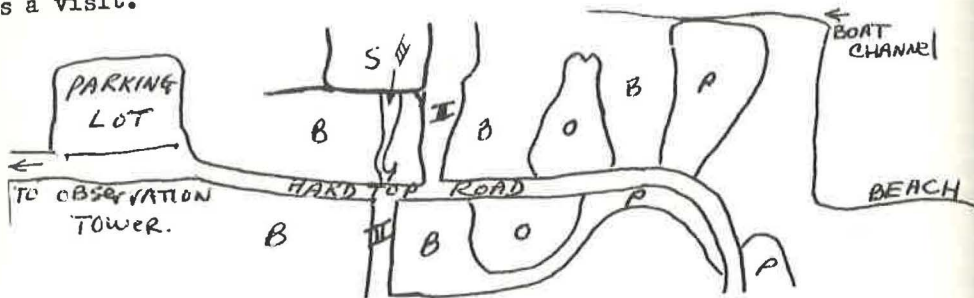


TOBAY OPERATION RECOVERY  
By Frederick S. Schaeffer

Tobay Operation Recovery, or TOBOR as we like to call it, is the newest Operation Recovery station to become established upon Long Island. When I was stationed with the United States Army in Germany, I frequently visited the banding station of the Institute of Applied Ornithology (Institut fuer Angewandte Vogelkunde) in Frankfurt am Main, and also the famous 'finch lanes' (Vinkenbanen) in the Netherlands near Wassenaar (Province of South Holland). After having seen both operations, I decided it would be very nice to have another station on Long Island. Upon my return from Germany, I wrote to Mr. Allen Duvall and Mr. Duvall seemed to favor the idea of having a station about midway between Leroy Wilcox's station at Tiana Beach and EBBA's station area at hand, Long Island's Southern Shore, to find a suitable place. Much to my regret at that time, the Long Island State Park Commission did not seem to favor my desires, and so I decided to check with the Town of Oyster Bay, which owns a considerable piece of land and beach about 4 1/2 miles east of Jones Beach, known as Tobay. It was with the help of John L. Bull, author of the new book "Birds in the New York Area" that I found the right people to approach with my request. After considerable writing and calling on local township officials, the Department of Beaches' Supervisor, Mr. Edward Brickel, granted me permission to band in the John F. Kennedy Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary, which occupies the greater percent of Tobay. The Sanctuary half administered by the Town of Oyster Bay Manager of South Shore Beaches and the Senior Wildlife Biologist, New York State Department of Conservation, is 'one of the most fascinating wildlife areas to be found along the Atlantic Coast' according to a pamphlet issued by the Township. The pamphlet continues: "The area is a typical stretch of sand dunes, salt marshes, mosquito control ditches, impenetrable tangles of bay berry and catbrier all made especially attractive to wildlife through the presence of a not so typical large, shallow brackish pond."

On 5 September, 1964, Thomas Davis without whose help this project could not have turned out to be the success it is, and I set out, to find a pair of suitable net lanes and to start banding. Two ideal net lanes were found. Running perpendicular to the ocean, we found one net lane (Tom's) which runs south of the blacktop Sanctuary Road, is about 300 feet long and about 5 feet wide and bordered on either side with lots of bayberry and poison ivy. On the other side (the north side) of the road I established my net lane which is about 250 feet long, 6 to 7 feet wide (wider at the end), has a sandy bottom unlike Tom's lane and is bordered in the front by bayberry and poison ivy and from its midpoint to the end by High Tide bushes and similar marsh/beach vegetation. At the end it borders an open soil area, where as Tom's lane ends into an open area covered by beach grasses intersected by mosquito control ditches and patches of phragmites. The structure of

the vegetation as described (see illustrations) creates a natural funnel so that most of the birds fly in line with our nets, and since it is the first solid area of bayberry for miles, they almost always seem to pay us a visit.



Legend; S - Spoil Area  
 B - Bayberry  
 O - Open Areas  
 P - Phragmites  
 I - My Lane  
 II - Tom's Lane  
 III - Spare Lane

On that date, the 5th of September, we banded only 30 individuals, in some 73 net hours, and things did not look very optimistic until Tom was fortunate to net a Lark Sparrow (Imm, Sex Unknown; Wing 078, Fat Class 0; Number 22-168506). From that point on our optimism had returned and on October 31st when our project came to an end, we ended up with a total of 2151 individuals of 75 species in 1719 net hours.

Our high counts were: Myrtle Warbler 819; White Throated Sparrow 185; Song Sparrow 173; Slate Colored Junco 170; Hermit Thrush 73; Catbird 66; Palm Warbler 53; Swamp Sparrow 52; Yellow Shafted Flicker 52; Rufous Sided Towhee 50.

Other species of particular note were: Yellow x Red Shafted Flicker 9/26\*; Pigeon Hawk 10/17\*; Saw whet Owl, 1 Ad, 1 Imm, 10/31\*; Common Nighthawk 10/17\*; Ruby Throated Hummingbird 10/03; White Eyed Vireo 9/19; Yellow Throated Vireo 10/18\*; Solitary Vireo two 9/26 & 10/11\*; Philadelphia Vireo 9/27\*, in fact we had all the Vireos occurring here. In Warblers we had 1 Nashville, 3 Parula, 1 Blackburnian; 2 Pine Warblers (9/13). Also the two Hooded Warblers 9/06 and 10/18\*; and the Lark Sparrow, mentioned before, were photographed (asterisk). We also had three Lincoln Sparrows.

Accommodations at Tobay are not available. Thus we slept overnight there right in the net lanes and especially toward the end of October this became a very miserable affair. Often we had extremely high winds to cope with at night, once (only once, thank heavens) it rained, but usually it was extremely cold. Tom slept in his car (where it was just as cold outside), and I slept in a little pup tent, where it was no warmer, but drier--except on the night it rained! Next year I definitely have to invest in a more appropriate shelter.

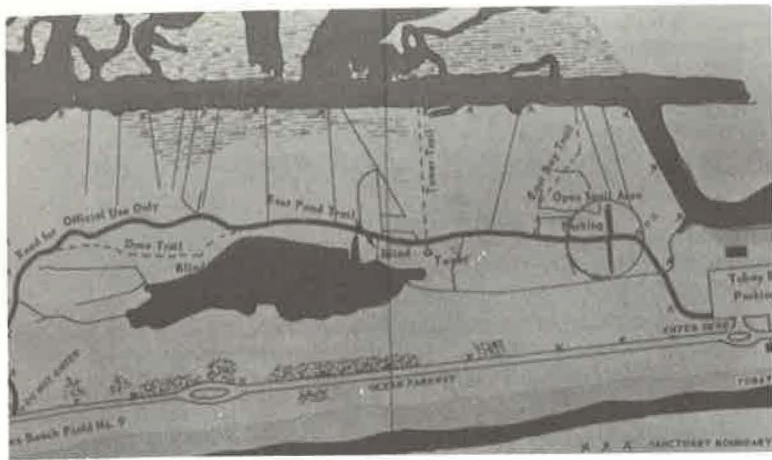
Twice Tom and I were joined by Fred Heath, who does most of his banding in Manhattan, Bronx and Westchester. Further we had great help from Frank Enders who is an expert in chasing birds in the nets, and Mrs. Helen Dumont, who held a subpermit in Jamaica, B. W. I. She is an expert in mist netting, but her greatest asset was that she brought us hot coffee as early as six o'clock in the morning when we were so frozen that we could hardly move our fingers.

Since this was only our first year in operation, there are many irregularities and problems which have to be ironed out before next year. Transportation is one such factor. Tom used his father's car, but we will probably not have it next year. Another factor is the shelter which I mentioned earlier.\* Another aspect to this shelter is that we may be able to weigh birds if we have a windproof area. Most of all, we can use banders, not only for manpower but also to increase our netting. When permission was extended to me to band in the area, it was stipulated that I have to be physically present when other banders wanted to operate there. This factor prevents us from having other banders operate during the week, as I am employed during the business week.

Of course, since a Sanctuary is primarily intended to be visited by birders, hikers, etc., we had quite a problem in keeping these people at a distance. Most people obeyed the F & W posters and our posters asking them to stay out of the lanes. Those who did not, promptly got their coatbuttons stuck in the nets and created a difficulty for the birds in the net. In fact several casualties have resulted from too many people in the lanes. I cannot tell those people to go since the park belongs to the town of Oyster Bay and many taxpayers of the town have raised objections to the Department of Conservation. I will have to compromise with this situation next year, and I hope that our 'public relations' will result in respect toward banding and a true understanding of the subject by the general public.

Finally, I must agree with Dorothy Bordner in her article in EBBA News, Vol. 27, No. 3, page 106, that we have caught the banding fever, that we both have a very acute case and that I suspect others will share the same feeling once they have been out to band at Tobay.

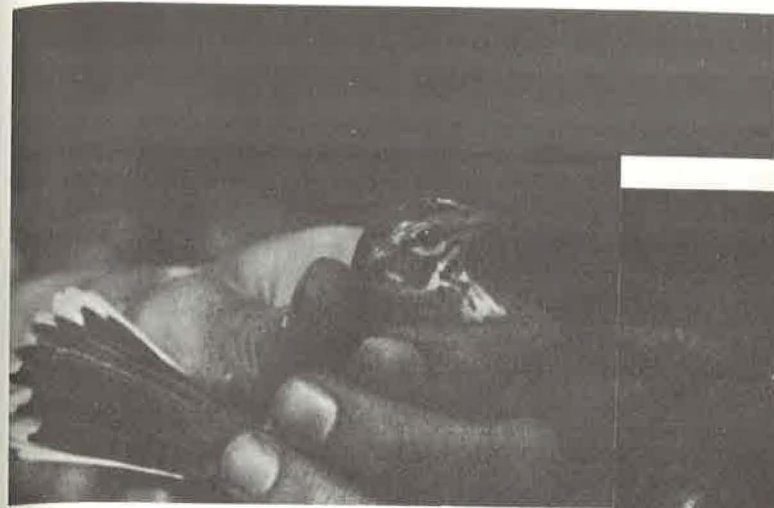
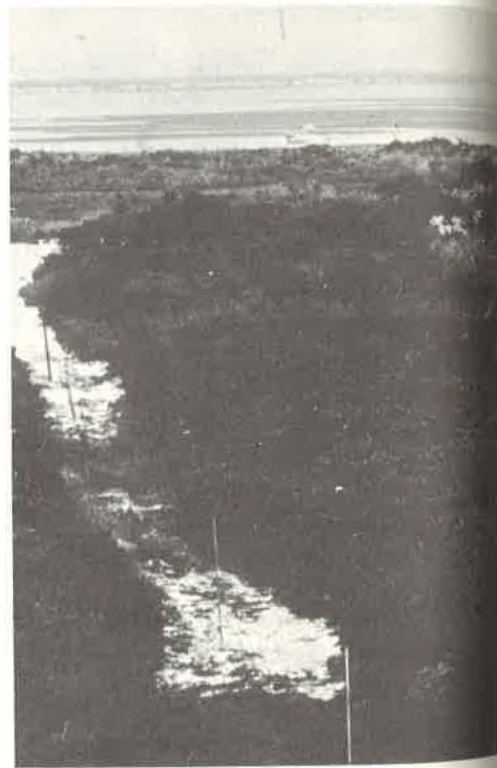
\*The Conservation Department is going to clear some more net lanes for me and also a place for a "CP" tent.



At top - Map of Tobay O.R. banding area. Net lanes are in the circle.

Middle - Tom Davis' net lane.

At right - Fred Schaeffer's net lane.



Top left - Lark Sparrow.

Above - Fred Schaeffer in his net lane.

At left - Tom Davis banding in the net lane.

