

its authenticity), but since it was really here and flying around a farm yard, it was included. It was observed by 3 persons besides myself - John Morgan, who banded for a month at our OR Station on top of the Allegheny Mountains in West Virginia this fall; Wesley Knisley (who makes the Bluebird boxes for our Bluebird project); and Arthur Biddle (owner of the large dairy farm where the Barn Swallow was discovered). John, Wesley and I were checking the large flock of over 1000 Cowbirds (for Redwings and Rustys) on the Biddle farm when we noticed a bird flying toward us with the rhythmic beat of a Barn Swallow, and I could hardly believe my eyes to see the distinctive forked tail as it flew over our heads about 10 feet away. It seemed very alert as it flew about catching insects (probably cattle flies) disturbed by the huge flock of Cowbirds among the dairy cattle. We watched it for perhaps 10 minutes as it would take short rests on the wire fence near us, circle over the cows, then up to the pond and back.

I realize the Barn Swallow is not supposed to even winter in the United States (although 4 counts in Florida recorded 8 on the 1964 count), but one can hardly mistake a bird that nests on his farm (ave. about 15 pairs) every summer for 20 years (and banded over 6500 of them). Without the mild weather this fall it would have been impossible for the Barn Swallow to have survived. A week of cold rainy weather in the spring will cause most of our Barn Swallows (and Martins too) to die from lack of food, but this has been a very mild fall, with no prolonged cold spells and very little rain. Many days in December found the temperature in the 50's or even higher. I checked the farm for the Barn Swallow on Dec. 31 but could not find it and only one Cowbird. The farm owner reported the Cowbirds soon left his farm. It is possible the Barn Swallow (considering its flocking tendencies in the fall) could have been staying with the Cowbirds and even roosting with them each night.

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TWO SIMPLE AIDS IN REMOVAL
OF LARGE BIRDS FROM NETS
By T. A. Beckett, III

It is strange indeed how simple some of the common aids in our banding work can be, once they are thought of. This is also true in many of our everyday life.

After several years of rather painful removal of Terns from nets, more recently Gulls from cannon nets, the writer used his head instead of feeding patches of skin and flesh to his netted feather friends. It is rather odd how a Gull will peck at a wound on the bander's hands, each time enlarging and making more painful that certain spot or spots. Since

the use of gloves in handling netted birds is almost impossible by the writer, I had come to accept the fact that from the first series of birds I cannot netted until the last of the season the sores on my hand were an accepted mark of my hobby.

This has ceased to be simply through the use of plain rubber bands placed around the bills of the birds before removal from the net. If several are within peck range of the bird being removed, all have the rubber bands applied immediately. If the rubber bands are small they are simply slipped over the upper and lower mandibles. If large, several loops are necessary.

Should a Gull escape with a band on its bill, for one reason or another, no harm is done. The Gull simply rubs it off and this I have checked on closely. I cannot be sure the same is true in the Terns for the bill is shaped differently.

The second aid is an exceedingly simple process for the removal of large, long winged birds from large mesh nets. Usually 3 to 4 inch mesh is used for cannon nets, and the same mesh in the 2 shelf mist net.

I have watched experienced "mist netters" fumble for several minutes over these large birds simply because the netting has slid half way down the primary wing feathers and cannot be forced back to the joint because the large major and secondary wing coverts will not bend and give as in the small passerines. Any shore bird netter knows of which I write.

If the netter will simply forget what he has been taught regarding the removal of small birds and proceed as follows he will find that the large birds are even easier to remove from nets -- remember, there are exceptions to all rules, especially if the bird has become twisted in the net on the ground.

First, grasp the bird by the bill, or head, and place the rubber band around the bill. Second, grasp the portion of the wing extending through the net and pull the hand, or manus, on through the mesh of the net. This will leave the mesh around the ulna or the humerus with all flight feathers free for withdrawal. In the projected net the head is usually next with the feet last. In the mist net the feet would usually be next with the head last. In all cases the wings will slip out freely.

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