

HEAVY TICK POPULATION ON BIRDS
 AT ISLAND BEACH STATE PARK BIRD-BANDING STATION
 By Robert Snetsinger and Dorothy Bordner¹

Clifford et. al. (1961) provided keys and illustrations that have made possible the identification of larval ticks of the eastern United States. Until this publication, there was only limited awareness among acarologists as to the diversity of hosts and the maintenance and transmission of tick-borne diseases by larval ticks. Many species of ticks in the adult stage are associated with only one or a relatively few species of mammals; however, Clifford et. al. found that some tick species in the larval stage have hosts quite different than those they have as adults.

The present authors collected ticks from 92 birds belonging to 15 species from 24 August to 21 September 1965. The collections were made at Island Beach State Park, Ocean County, New Jersey. The birds were collected in mist nets and represent a modest sampling of birds taken during the Island Beach State Park bird-banding project.

The species of birds from which the ticks were collected were the Yellow-shafted Flicker (AOU 412), Catbird (704), Brown Thrasher (705), Wood Thrush (755), Swainson's Thrush (758), Veery (756), Cape May Warbler (650), Black-throated Blue Warbler (654), Ovenbird (674), Northern Water-thrush (675), Yellow-throat (681), Yellow-breasted Chat (683), Rufous-sided Towhee (587), Slate-colored Junco (567), and Song Sparrow (581). No relationship between the species of birds and the abundance of ticks was established.

A total of 1,323 ticks were collected, an average of 14.8 ticks per bird. Of this total all but one specimen were Haemaphysalis leporispalustris (Packard, 1869). The remaining specimen was a larval Ixodes dentatus Marx, 1899, and it was collected from a Yellow-breasted Chat. Of the 1,322 H. leporispalustris, 564 were unfed larvae, 723 were engorged larvae; 13 were unfed nymphs; and 22 were engorged nymphs. One bird had an infestation of 65 ticks, which was the record number for this study.

Sonenshine et al. (1966) reported on ticks collected at bird banding stations located in Maryland at Kent Point (Chesapeake Bay) and Ocean City, and at the Patuxent Wildlife Refuge. These workers noted that H. leporispalustris was the most abundant species on migrants examined in early September. The present observation closely agrees with that of Sonenshine and his workers.

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It is interesting to speculate on the locale where the birds at Island Beach State Park became infested with ticks. Gregson (1956) has reported H. leporispalustris from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and New Brunswick. This indicates that the birds may have carried the ticks southward while migrating; however, the high percentage of unfed ticks may indicate a local source of infestation. It is apparent, on the other hand, that the habitat of the bird species overlaps that of rabbits, which are the normal host associated with adults of H. leporispalustris and I. dentatus.

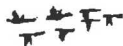
References

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1951	March 31	Baltimore, Md.	229	88
1952	" 29 & 30	New York, N.Y.	219	92
1953	" 21	Philadelphia, Pa.	239	88
1954	April 3	Baltimore, Md.	255	72
1955	" 16 & 17	Hawk Mountain, Pa.	262	86
1956	" 21 & 22	Washington Crossing, Pa.	276	86
1957	" 6 & 7	Philadelphia, Pa.	302	102
1958	" 12 & 13	Ramsey, N.J.	329	110
1959	" 11 & 12	State College, Pa.	402	128
1960	" 22-24	Annapolis, Md.	437	140
1961	" 21-23	East Stroudsburg, Pa.	453	180
1962	" 27-29	Cape May, N.J.	542	236
1963	" 19-21	East Stroudsburg, Pa.	616	264
1964	June 5-7	New Brunswick, N.J.	683	288
1965	April 23-25	Ocean City, Md.	669	308
1966	" 15-17	Schwenksville, Pa.		