

## BANDING PURPLE FINCHES AND EVENING GROSBEAKS IN WISCONSIN

By Edna Koenig

Our serious interest in birds began in 1949 and has increased with each passing year until it now dominates our lives completely. This interest is threefold, namely: feeding, care of patients and banding.

It all began when we developed a full time feeding program which we carry on throughout the year, using about 25 feeders in winter and a reduced number in summer. In February 1959 it was estimated we had about 600 Purple Finches here, and during that winter we fed  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tons of sunflower seeds. The photograph, taken in March 1959, shows a few of the finches.



Sauk City is a town of 2500 or so on the banks of the Wisconsin River about 26 miles northwest of Madison on Highway 12. We live one block from the main business street and the river, on a corner of a 3 lot property 180 by 120 feet. We have large elms on the tree bank on the west side and three huge old pines in the east yard, plus some small ones we've planted. A honeysuckle hedge surrounds the property, and we also have barberries, an old apple tree, mountain ash, highbush cranberries, more honeysuckles and other flowering shrubs. Fortunately there has been no spraying done in our town and I hope there never will be any.

Through the years many injured and orphaned birds (32 species) have been brought to us, and in 1959 I applied for a state and federal permit

to care for them. I didn't know this was required until I wrote an article about our Purple Finch patient for the state magazine, Passenger Pigeon whose editor suggested I apply for the permit before publication.

For years some well known ornithologists from the University at Madison had urged us to apply for a banding permit. We were already so involved with the birds that we thought we hadn't time to go into that. But in July 1961 I made application and received the permit in November. My husband made four traps and by January 1, 1962 we were ready for business.

Two of the traps were automatic and the other needed a string to be pulled to close the door. These traps required constant watching on account of cats and squirrels and were not always satisfactory in cold, wet and snowy weather. Also, it was time consuming always to put on outdoor clothing to attend to them. Therefore my husband converted two of the window sill feeders in the bedroom into traps and we continued the banding season by using them entirely.

The sill feeders or traps are the width of the window, about a foot high and a bit over a foot deep, fitting tightly against the house. The floor and ends are of masonite or transite. The roof, of glass, extends far enough to prevent the snow from falling in. Seeds are put in through the opened window. The feeders were converted to traps by the addition of a plastic curtain which can be raised to close the opening by pulling a string extending from the feeder into the kitchen where one is somewhat unobserved by the birds. As a safety measure my husband fastened a plastic guard in a wooden frame with a small sliding door, to the window sill, through which to extend the hand into the feeder after the window is raised. This is to keep the birds from getting into the room.

Because our introduction to bird banding came the year of the great invasion of Evening Grosbeaks, we got quite a workout. No breakfast or noon meal was eaten in peace or without interruption for we watched the traps through the glass of the kitchen door and when the birds came we caught and banded them immediately. The largest number of Evening Grosbeaks banded in one day was 62 on March 5, 1962. The total of Evening Grosbeaks banded from January to May 9, 1962 was 1,302.

We were fortunate enough to trap 40 "foreign" Evening Grosbeaks which had been banded in several states, as shown in Table I. A foreigner from New Hampshire was banded Feb. 20, 1954 and as far as we know, was the oldest bird of the group. Table I shows 17 of these foreigners, the rest being birds banded in Wisconsin, and neighboring states. At that time the cards we received from the Banding Office mentioned only the state, latitude and longitude where banded, which was disappointing to new banders like ourselves, but the following year this was revised and the desired information was included.

TABLE I.

## EVENING GROSBEEK FOREIGN RETRAPS

<u>Band Number</u>	<u>Banded In:</u>	<u>Date Banded</u>	<u>Date Retrapped</u>
53-137084	New Hampshire	2-20-1954	4-10-1962
50-115981	Ontario	3-30-1956	3-30-1962
55-121131	Vermont	4-13-1956	2- 8-1962
52-193381	Ontario	3-21-1959	3-15-1962
57-191275	Connecticut	2-26-1959	2-17-1962
57-190614	New York	2-22-1959	3-19-1962
57-135220	New York	1-12-1959	3- 5-1952
57-140301	Maine	1-17-1959	3- 4-1962
58-101566	Massachusetts	3-20-1959	2-24-1962
*58-196073	Pennsylvania	12-22-1959	4- 1-1962
58-141925	Massachusetts	2- 4-1960	4-10-1962
59-107649	Pennsylvania	3-17-1960	4-20-1962
59-111077	Pennsylvania	1-26-1960	3-24-1962
61-119921	Minnesota	4- 6-1961	4- 9-1962
602-03274	Minnesota	11- 7-1961	3-11-1962
592-84911	Minnesota	4-17-1961	3-13-1962
59-139771	Virginia	12-28-1961	1-11-1962

\*This bird returned again two years later and by that time the card informed us it had been banded by Dorothy Bordner at State College, Pennsylvania.

We have banded only 16 species and four of them were birds brought as patients. We do practically all our banding in winter since we are most interested in Evening Grosbeaks which first came in November 1951 and Purple Finches which have come regularly since February 1955. On March 27, 1965 we banded 230 Purple Finches and had 135 repeats. That was quite a day!

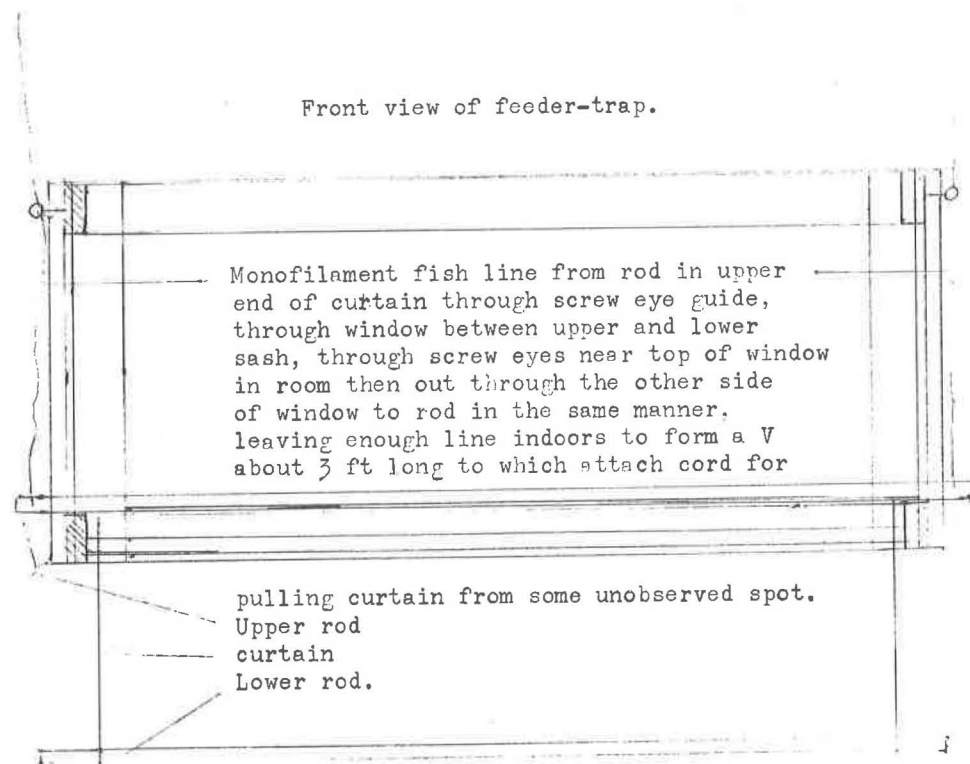
We always have many returns of Purple Finches which is most exciting. The very first migrant to return this fall were all banded and of the first 50 Purple Finches trapped, 25 were returns. Table II is a summary of the banding and returns of the two species.

TABLE II.

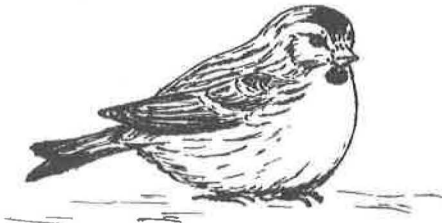
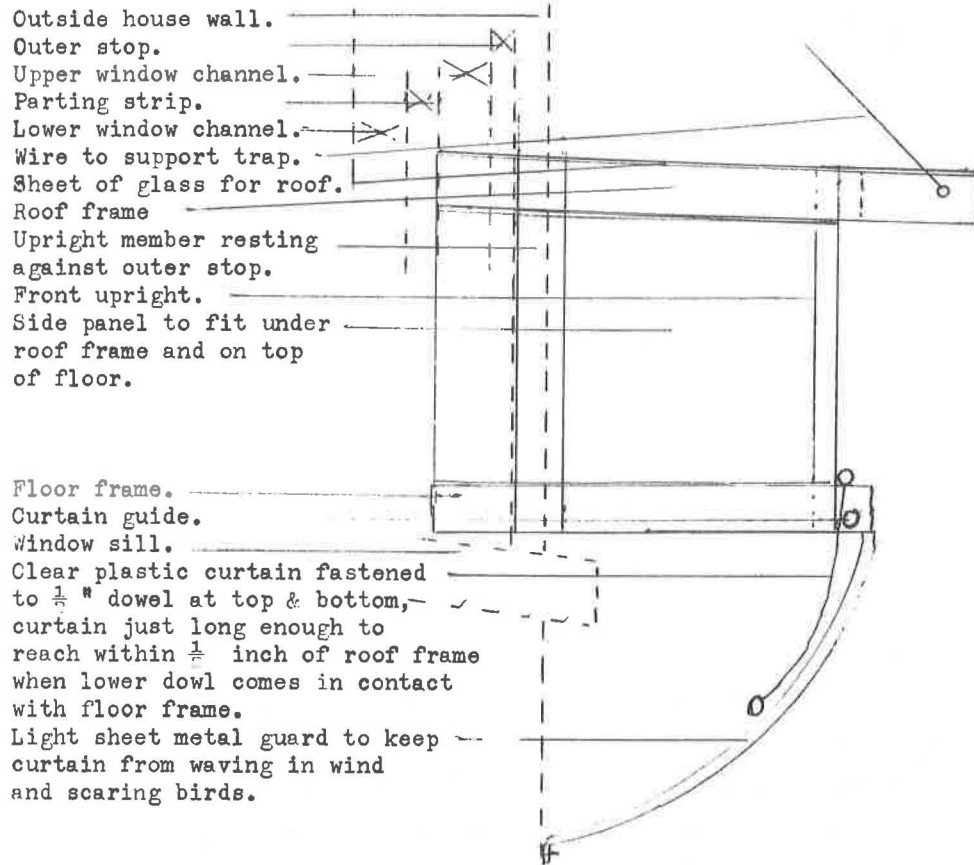
	<u>1962</u>	<u>1963</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>Total</u>
Purple Finches banded	382	1704	789	2010	454	5339
Returns (mostly males)		26	25	39	50	140
Evening Grosbeaks banded	1302	65	115	4	83	1569
Returns			2		1	3

The above totals may not be impressive in comparison with some banders' records and yet they may be unusual since we live on a rather busy street in the very heart of Sauk City and we daily feed in all of the 25 feeders even when banding.

215 Jackson St., Sauk City, Wisconsin 53583



Side view of feeder-trap.



Combination window sill feeder &amp; trap.

Scale -- 1/5 inch per inch.

All framing is 13/16 X 1 1/2 inch redwood.

