



O. R. CORNER

Edited by: Robert P. Yunick



OPERATION RECOVERY 1968 REPORTS The coming of November brings welcomed relief from the flood of weekend-generated O.R. paperwork. Typically I have been able to complete each weekend's work by the end of the weekend in question, or at latest by Monday. This year's tremendous success in capturing and processing more birds than in any previous year has sometimes generated paperwork that did not get completed until Thursday, and then on Friday or Saturday the whole thing started over again.

Due to the time needed to analyze these records, and the press of other business as well, it will be very difficult to make an appeal for reports from station leader by individual letter, as was done last year. Therefore, I am taking advantage of this space to appeal to station leaders to submit reports of their 1968 O.R. activities.

I hope to follow the same format as last year. Material from stations in New England and New York will be needed by December 15 in order to be included in the Jan.-Feb. issue. Material from all other stations should be submitted by January 15 to insure the necessary time for preparation for subsequent issues.

Reports should be limited to no more than 500-750 words. (We would be delighted to have longer articles, however, for publication after the briefer report for this column. -Ed.) Please try to make use of numerical data for the purpose of comparison with previous years. In particular, point out peak flight days and how they compared to one another; and alterations in species abundance. Comments on the influence of habitat, weather conditions, type of coverage (weekend vs. daily) would be appropriate, as would be a general analysis of the season compared to previous years. What rarities were captured? What unusual experiences were noted? Who were the people who assisted? What was the final tally of species, net hours and total individuals?

Last year's reports were greatly appreciated, and I hope that this year's coverage will be even greater. Please submit your report as soon as possible while the details of the operation are still vivid.

DAILY SUMMARIES Since some station leaders compile daily summary sheets which are available for distribution, and which are of considerable interest, their availability should be known. Therefore, if you have such a summary available and wish to offer it, please drop me a line before December 15 giving the name of the station and the name and

address of the person from whom it is available. Also state whether it is available on an exchange basis with other stations free of charge, or whether there is a charge for postage and duplication, or whether it is available on a general basis free of charge. The list of available summaries will be published in the next issue.

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This year I was fortunate to make two visits to Island Beach O.R. The first was in mid-September. I was fantastically lucky with this and with my visit in October, for out of a total of six banding days, I had four flight days. Three of these flights yielded over 400 birds each and one yielded 505 for a six-day total of 1,964 (more birds than 12 weekends of effort at Vischer Ferry). What really impressed me was how serendipity played a part in that success. Yes Mabel, some of us do believe in serendipity.

The first big flight hit on Friday the 13th. It was a respectable flight that kept me busy. By 1700 I was tired, hungry and trying diligently to straighten out a daily tally that did not add up correctly. I already had 394 birds and was trying for 400 to outdo my previous high of 397 for one day. My nets were set in a driveway leading to a clearing and in the clearing, where a house stood a number of years ago. The nets in the clearing were easily scanned from where I sat in the shade of the only tree in the clearing.

Because nets surrounded the clearing, all the released birds had to be properly aimed to escape repeat capture. Occasionally, a bird refused to go forth as pointed and in trying to negotiate the clearing, it would get caught. Such was the case with a stubborn repeat Brown Thrasher at about 1530. It decided to take the driveway out and got caught.

Lazily and slowly I ambled down the driveway to release this individualist. By the time I arrived, it had escaped in its inimitable way and so the labored journey was for naught. What a waste of steps, so I thought. Since I was there, I decided to go a few steps further to view the end of the net string around a curve in the driveway. As I peered round the shrubs, behold! an ubiquitous, banded Towhee being eyed by a Pigeon Hawk in the shelf above it!

Now any merlin banders knows that a merlin in the hand is worth two in the net, especially when the mesh size is $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. They are not noted for staying long in mist nets. A quick duck under the net put me on the same side of the net as the merlin and about 50 feet away. Despite my earlier lethargy, the distance between the bird and me was covered in great haste, and this thrashing raptor was mine. What had started out as a nuisance trip to free a just-released Thrasher became the highlight of the day - quite unexpectedly.

The second case occurred on Sunday the 15th. It was a slow morning and as soon as the activity turned off, I was going to pack for home. As I worked along, about 0830, processing a cage of birds, I released a just-banded Yellowthroat and it too, like the Thrasher, refused to leave as directed. Into a net along the north edge of the clearing it went. My immediate thought was to go release the bird, but since another Yellowthroat had darted out at it from the shrubbery as I passed, I decided to leave the bird in the net hoping to decoy the second Yellowthroat so that it could be captured.

In a minute or so, I looked up to see that the second Yellowthroat had fallen for the ruse, as it was now in the net near the repeat. Two or three minutes later I looked up from the banding just in time to catch sight of a merlin coming in low from over the brush from the south. What ensued was one of the most gratifying sights that a bander can ever experience - the actual, inevitable capture of a rare or highly desired bird. Packed into those rare few seconds immediately prior to capture were years of subsequent memory. The merlin made a direct line for the Yellowthroats and hit the net, drawing out the bag to a good three or four feet, in the shelf over them. The glide, the contact, the extension of the bag and the sealing of the bag on this regal master of the air were magnificent.

What had started out as a simple Yellowthroat decoying experiment led to bigger game.

Then there was the telephone call that came today from Chan Robbins inquiring about a band issued to me and found on a Great Crested Flycatcher at Ocean City, Md., on September 27. The band did not appear on my Vischer Ferry O.R. sheets, so Chan wanted to know whether it was mine and had been used, or had the number been misread? Indeed it was mine, placed on the flycatcher at 1050 on September 14th. All in all, that September trip to IBOR was most interesting.

1527 Myron St., Schenectady, N.Y. 12309

