

NOTES ON EVENING GROSBEAKS BANDED IN 1968-1969

By Dorothy W. Briggs

Many banders, like myself, I am sure have enjoyed having the 'beaks here again. They first came into my traps here in Middleboro, Massachusetts (Plymouth county) on November 21, 1968. I banded 185 through December 31, 1968. 81% of these were HY birds. Based on both skulling and plumage characteristics I came up with the following:

	<u>HY</u>	<u>AHY</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>Total</u>
Males	71	5	19	95
Females	80	4	6	<u>90</u>
				185

It became very apparent that the HY birds must have been hatched at different periods, as there was considerable difference in the progress of the plumage toward the adult from the juvenal, and the length of the wings varied greatly. Birds with similar plumage and similar wing length tended to enter the traps together. Perhaps these were family groups migrating together? If only we could tell. Wing lengths of females varied from 102 to 111 mm., and of males from 106 to 110 mm. on the HY birds. On November 26 I caught five males and one female, which I believe were the youngest of all. Their tails measured from 53 to 55 mm. only.

The HY male plumage showed much yellow in the wing patch, and dusky inner webs of the tertiaries. The crown appeared mottled black and yellow. This was because there was black at the tip of the feathers of the crown for a depth of 2 mm. and yellow for a depth of approximately 2mm. below the black. The rest of the feathers were a dark gray. Many of the young males exhibited female characteristics in having white or yellow spots in the tail. There was a great difference in the intensity of the yellow of the undertail coverts, and some birds had black spots of different sizes and shapes on the undertail coverts, and a few had them on the rump. The primaries varied from rusty black to shiny black, and several of these HY males retained the white or gray on the inner edges of the primaries, and a few had small white tips on the sixth to tenth (outer) primaries. This wing and tail plumage is the same as described by B.M. and Mary S. Shaub (1953).

The HY females showed much buff in the body plumage, but as the season advanced these birds showed gray and often a great deal of white through the back and rump, and bright yellow and then white below, and in the latter part of January and February they started to have the white throat as in the adult female. In the fall the lines on either side of their then buffy throats were dusky gray. These were darker after the first of the year. The crowns of these HY females in November and December were never plain buff. In all instances they appeared mottled with

various amounts of different shades of gray and yellow. These did not differ noticeably until February when the crowns were grayer. This post-juvinal progression of molt is mentioned by Thomas S. Roberts who in turn quotes M.J. Magee of Sault Ste. Marie.

Both sexes had dusky bills when they appeared in the fall. These soon turned greenish or pale yellow. The last part of the bill to lighten was the cutting edge.

The underwings of many of the Grosbeaks of this HY class lacked many feathers, so much so that many appeared quite naked. There was a great difference in the color of the underwings, but the males all displayed a great deal of yellow, very bright, especially in the axilla. The females had more or less of yellow in the axilla, but never as much as did the males. Both sexes had gray under-greater coverts with or without white tips, and those above the secondaries were usually sparse or lacking.

From January 1 to February 11, 1969, I was able to trap and band the following:

	<u>SY</u>	<u>AHY</u>	<u>Total</u>
Males	16	8	24
Females	20	10	<u>30</u>
			54

These birds were aged by plumage alone. By the latter part of December it was very difficult to skull the birds, and after the first of the year, impossible. For skulling I use a 10X loupe.

Another interesting factor was that the birds coming in at different periods were either very fat or extremely thin. The latter were ravenous, wild, and in several instances badly bruised, apparently from pecking each other. The fat ones were very fat, and I found fat deposits around the neck which measured up to one inch long and protruded as much as 3/4 inch.

Nineteen of these birds repeated. Five repeated within a few days, but the other 14 repeated from two weeks to sixty days from the date of banding. Seventeen repeated once, and two twice. Nine of these repeats were males, and ten females. Thirteen were known to have hatched in 1968.

I also caught two foreign retraps: 65-103562 on Nov. 22, 1968, and 50-126945 on Jan. 13, 1969 (both females). At the time of writing, I do not know who banded these birds.

In the six years that I have been banding, I have not had an Evening Grosbeak return after a migratory period. I have had just three birds return after three months from fall or winter banding to spring.

For my banding this season, I used two three-cell Potter traps, and three one-cell Potter traps. One trap was placed on the ground, and the others on a picnic table about ten feet from a free feeder. The traps were open from 9 am. to 1 pm. five days a week, and the rest of the time they were pinned open and used like feeders. I am sure that I could have caught more grosbeaks but for the fact that I had so many Goldfinches here.

There was a female Evening Grosbeak with unusual plumage which I saw but did not trap. This bird had the entire body just off-white, including the crown, except for a bright yellow necklace approximately one-half inch wide. The tail and the wings appeared to be like a HY female. The eye was black, as was the case with the 29 aberrants mentioned by Mary S. Shaub.

Bibliography:

Shaub, B.M. and Mary S. Shaub, 1953. Adult and Young Evening Grosbeaks at Saranac Lake, New York: Summer of 1952. Bird Banding: 24(4), pp. 135-141 (Oct. 1953).

Roberts, Thomas S. "A Manual for the Identification of the Birds of Minnesota and Surrounding States" Univ. of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Shaub, Mary S., 1960. Unusual Plumage Variations of the Eastern Evening Grosbeak. The Passenger Pigeon, Spring Issue, 1960.

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PORTABLE Three years ago I received detailed information from the Hol-
NET BASE laender Mfg. Co., as mentioned by Frank Frazier Sr. in EBBA News
Vol. 27, No. 6, November-December 1964. I decided to use a different fitting from among their products: the Rackmaster #104, S.O. Cross, 3/4" x 3/4". This type makes it possible to use two pieces of dowel (or pipe, which is what I am currently using) instead of four. The difference in height is negligible, and can be overcome by blocking up, or bending the pipe.

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