



The National Museum of Canada published in 1960 "Methods of Collecting and Preserving Vertebrate Animals" by Rudolph Martin Anderson. This is the third edition revised, No. 18 in its Biological Series. EBBA president Dr. Yunick loaned his copy for review.

This paperback publication, like "Biological Techniques" which was noted in the current March-April issue of EBBA News, will not be of present interest to many banders, but because of its potential value it seems worthy of mention. The chapters on collecting and skinning mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fishes need not concern us in this survey.

It is the chapter on collecting and skinning birds that may be of interest and value to the bander. It must be remembered, however, that no one can legally prepare bird skins without a permit (to possess protected species), not even if the bird conveniently dies on his doorstep. Yet, since many banders are interested in educating the public, there are instances where it can seem worthwhile to make use of the skins of birds found dead for class or museum use. Such banders may not feel competent to prepare skins even though they are able to acquire permits. This chapter explains every step of the process so clearly that the beginner need not hesitate.

Of course the professional collector shoots his specimens for the most part and the paragraphs devoted to advice along this line might well be skimmed over, except that there is a very nice paragraph on methods of finding different species. We all know the trick of squeaking up birds. "The writer has seen an Eskimo call back a flock of Whistling Swans, which has passed half a mile beyond, by a skillful imitation of the swans' notes. With the small woodland birds, the lure generally appears to be curiosity about any unusual bird-like sound, or the sound of a bird in distress. In British Columbia it is said that no bird collector can be really successful without imitating the note of the Pygmy Owl, as most of the small birds in the vicinity will rally at the sound of their favorite enemy. Other observers have drawn small birds around by setting a mounted Screech Owl in an exposed place and letting nature take its course."

The author lays great stress on the importance of taking full and adequate notes on specimens, particularly of color which tends to fade after a bird is dead. He recommends using and possessing if possible Ridgway's "Colour Standards". Since this book must be a collector's item by this time, one may wish that some enterprising publisher would issue an inexpensive edition of the colors.

Short sections deal with "External and Internal Parasites" and "Directions for Collecting Animal Parasites". Some banders do make a practice of collecting avian parasites to send to experts for study. Here are explicit directions for collecting and storing.

The author notes that the collecting of birds' nests and eggs has fallen into disrepute, but states that "although many oologists are not very 'scientific', ...they have learned that it is necessary to watch and study the habits of birds in life before the nests may be found and frequently know more about the real life history of the bird than the skin collector who shoots his specimen at sight... Much more remains to be done in studying the periods of incubation, study of embryo chicks, feeding and growth of young birds, and photographing nesting sites and the parent birds near the nest."

Mention is made of determining age by ossification of skulls, concluding with the pertinent remark: "The science of ornithology is becoming more exact and technical every year." How true!

A final chapter on "Collecting Skeletons" goes into detail as to their preparation. This is followed by an adequate bibliography.

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Recently I came across a book called "Birds of the World in Color" written by Hans Hvas and illustrated by Wilhelm Eigener. It is translated by Gwinne Vevers and published by E.P. Dutton & Co. It is about the size of a Peterson Field Guide and sells for \$4.95.

Naturally at this low price one can't expect too much of the illustrations, particularly when over 1,100 birds are pictured in full color. Yet for the most part the illustrations are reasonably good. I noted that the picture of the Mockingbird is terrible and the pictures of the Black & White Warbler, Yellowthroat and Tufted Titmouse are poor, and unfamiliarity with many of the foreign birds makes it impossible to pass judgment on accuracy of color. But in general it seems that the pictures would be as helpful as were those in the old Chester Reed bird guides which old timers in bird watching once used, even though these pictures are much smaller.

Almost all the species of European birds are included, special attention is given to North American birds, and all the characteristic species of tropical birds are shown. There is a consideration of rarities and the special characteristics of species.

Fifty-six families of Passerines are included. Along with cranes are bustards, limpkins, trumpeters, caryamas, sun bitterns and kagus; belonging to closely related families. There is the boobook owl found in

mountain forests of New Guinea up to 3500 feet, and the mesites found in Madagascar forests.

It would seem as if this small volume would be an ideal travelling companion for the bird watcher abroad.

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WHAT GOES DOWN A CHIMNEY?

By Merrill Wood

To find what fell down a chimney used 80 years only for ventilating, a fan was removed at the bottom and nearly 20 quarts of debris were collected. This chimney on the Walker Laboratory (an old chemistry-physics building) on the campus of the Pennsylvania State University, was known to have been used as a roosting place by migrating Chimney Swifts, and thought to be a possible source of bands, if swifts died there. In a careful search through the accumulated debris, the following skeletons and other items were found:

Rock Dove 10, Chimney Swift 6 (5 adults, 1 young), Starling 2 (spotting on feathers indicate one died in autumn and one in winter), House Sparrow 3, parts of two or more Chimney Swift nests, fragments of Chimney Swift eggs, and bird droppings.

Many larval skins of the Black Carpet Beetle (*Atlagenus piceus* Oliver), which apparently consumed most of the eatable parts of the birds; cockroaches which probably entered through the fan; a bumblebee which supposedly fell in; and one live spider beetle (*Mexium affine* Boieldieu).

Skulls or jaws of one shrew and seven mice from pellets regurgitated by owls perching on the chimney. No evidence of bats was found. Also, there were numerous seeds, and bits of bricks and mortar.

Bird bands: One (562-92943), placed on an adult male Starling on March 21, 1961 by Dorothy L. Bordner at her banding station one mile distant. The band shows considerable wearing.

This material was secured on June 19, 1969 through the kindness of Mr. William Daup, and the insects were identified by Dr. Robert J. Snet-singer.

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