

I.B.O.R. SIDELIGHTS
By Dorothy Bordner

The statistics of the operation recovery program are always well covered in the summary sheets and flyway reports. However, in any project of this type there are always sidelights, highlights, and frustrations that stick in mind - some of which have nothing to do with the birds banded or for that matter even with birds. My stay of three-plus weeks at Island Beach Operation Recovery in 1969 was no exception.

August 28 was my first day of banding and as usual one Yellowthroat couldn't wait and got tangled while I was putting up the first net on the second pole. This day also produced a Spotted Sandpiper several net lengths away from the bay. It teetered in the gathering cage! On several occasions in the next week a banded spotty was observed on the bay shore, but if it was the same one - as I suspect - it avoided the nets. On the way to headquarters for lunch I passed a Laughing Gull walking down the side of the road toward the pavilion area - facing traffic like any good pedestrian should and striding right along.



The White-eyed Vireo sang in the bushes near the nets almost every day. This is always a treat for me because they do not breed around home. When I answered him on the second morning, he came to a bush about three feet away to look me over, carefully flying over the net. He was already wearing a band. (Possibly he was the foreign bird that I caught later in the week.) Three white-eyes were banded at my net lane this year - two young ones and an adult. Of all the molting birds that I have handled I think the white-eyes have been the most disreputable looking and the adult this year was no exception. The first time that it was caught it didn't have a single full length tail feather or wing feather and the rest of the feathers were either ready to drop out or pinfeathers. When they molt they appear to really get it over with in a hurry! By the time it repeated just before we left for home, it was a good looking bird again.

The vegetation at Island Beach must be especially hard on feathers. The adult birds that we catch, particularly the low nesting species like Yellowthroats and Song Sparrows, show very bad wear on the flight feathers. Some have almost nothing left but the feather shafts.



On August 29, while I was banding in the car, seven Mockingbirds walked past the car. They appeared to be a family group - they were close enough to see the color of their eyes even without binoculars - and were getting insects and grit from the berm of the road. You guessed it - I didn't band one the entire time that I was there! After teasing me for at least

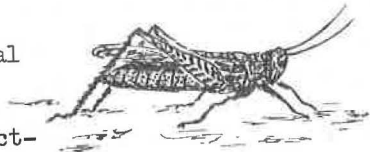
half an hour, four of them joined a Brown Thrasher in heckling a gray squirrel over the dunes across the road.

My bay shore had changed completely with no bar at the end of the lane as there had been in former years. This meant no shorebird netting. At the point a few hundred feet south of the end of the lane there was a small pond in the eelgrass that was really jumping much of the time. Snowy Egrets were there every day in late August and early September. August 30 was the red letter day for the heron family. First, five Snowies, two Great Blues and a Little Blue Heron worked the pond; later a Common Egret came and the Great Blues left; and later yet there were eleven Snowies there. Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, Yellowlegs, Ruddy Turnstones and Semipalmated Sandpipers fed there every day until a Pigeon Hawk appeared in mid-September. I wish I had had time just to sit on the shore and watch the feeding antics. A small flock of Black Ducks used the little pond for a bathtub every afternoon.



The evening net checks were usually accompanied by much leaf rustling along the lane as mice went scurrying for safety. On several occasions I watched them zip back and forth across the path. Some years when we were doing the banding in the net lane they have become accustomed to our presence and have fed so close that I have touched them. The rabbits along the lane would move to the edge of the undergrowth and if I didn't make a sudden move they would sit and watch me pass.

This year for the first time I had several large grasshoppers in the nets. I discovered that they can make just as big a hole as a dragonfly, but I was more successful in extracting them all in one piece.



In September 1968 a swarm of flying ants emerged from the ground in one of the open areas of our net lane and we were fascinated to watch them cut off their wings as soon as they landed from their flight. This year their emergence coincided with a heavy migration of dragonflies and any ant that made it more than six feet from the ground was very lucky. There were literally hundreds of dragonflies circling the clearing snatching the ants out of the air as fast as they could eat them. As I stood there watching - and releasing the dragonflies that hit the net - the mosquitoes came for me and about a dozen dragonflies began to circle me picking them out of the air. I got



no bites. (There were days when I could have used such a crew of hungry helpers all day long. Some of the mosquitoes didn't know that when the sun was hot they should go to bed!)

Probably one of the most frustrating banding experiences is to have a rare bird and no one to show it to. On the morning after Labor Day when I was running the only open net lane in the park, I found a Blue Grosbeak in the net and there wasn't even a birder around. After banding, examining and photographing the bird, I held it in a gathering cage for half an hour hoping that someone would come. Less than an hour after I released it, Dr. Prescott and Trudy appeared!

One early morning net check a Tennessee Warbler looked as if he didn't feel well. He tried to cuddle up to a Philadelphia Vireo in the gathering cage, but it jumped around too much so he fluffed his feathers and went to sleep in a corner. After I removed the vireo to give him a chance for a nap he began to hop around the cage and pick at the dirt on the floor. I dropped a fly into the cage and he snapped it up immediately. This precipitated a search of the car for other flies - not a difficult task on any normal day, but first thing that morning I had killed all the flies sitting around the inside of the car and had thrown them out the window. Luckily, the warbler would take either live or dead flies and much searching (including the sand outside of the car) produced twenty-some flies and one live mosquito. By the time he had eaten these the bird was very perky and I banded and released him. I weighed him (with flies) and he weighed 7.0 grams - less than any other Tennessee Warbler that I had weighed. I wished that I had weighed him before his meal, but I would have been afraid to handle him that much. We decided that he must have just arrived and was exhausted and nearly starved.

September 22 we planned to band until nearly noon and then pack up and leave the park. About nine o'clock Mother came rushing to the car from a check down the net lane in a great state of excitement and said, "shut the windows! I have a prize! I don't know what it is! We can't take a chance on having it get away!" I took one look in the cage and finished rolling up the windows post haste. Next came, "where's the bird book? It must be a western species." Our first suspicion proved correct and the bird checked out as an HY-M Black-throated Gray Warbler. It was the second record for this species at IBOR and the first that we had seen in the hand - although we had both seen it in the field in Arizona.

Again there was only one birder in the park to show it to, but the Peppers were expected later in the morning, so after processing and photographing we held him in a gathering cage for them to see. (He, too, ate a few flies.) He appeared to be a healthy bird with no signs of present or past injury. He was alert and active when caught and when released. To really add the frosting to the cake, all the pictures came out sharp

in every feather except one with slight wing motion - which is unusual for warblers.

The result of this excitement was that we decided to band until late afternoon and get up at 5:00 am. to drive home the next morning for me to get to the office in the afternoon. I guess it really wouldn't be IBOR for us without such a finish - every year the good birds or the big flights come the last possible day.

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TWO SPECIAL REQUESTS

The New Jersey State Museum plans to publish a book dealing with the birds of Island Beach State Park, New Jersey. We would therefore appreciate receiving any records (qualitative and quantitative) of birds observed and/or banded on the island. Winter and summer records are especially needed.

In addition, ornithologists at the New Jersey State Museum are rapidly expanding their research program. One of our most pressing needs, however, is the development of a comprehensive ornithology (as well as mammalogy and ecology) research library. The Museum would welcome any donations of books or periodicals, including technical journals, dealing with birds, mammals and ecology. Periodicals which are especially needed are the following:-

American Midland Naturalist	Frontiers
Atlantic Naturalist	Journal of Mammalogy
Audubon	Journal of Wildlife Management
Audubon Field Notes	Kingbird
The Auk	Living Bird
Bird Banding	Maryland Birdlife
Bird-Lore	Natural History
Cassinia	National Wildlife
Condor	New Jersey Nature News
Ecology	Wildlife Abstracts
Ecological Monographs	Wildlife Review
EBBA News	Wilson Bulletin

Donations of copies of any of these periodicals, or others, would be of great value to us and would be put to use not only by Museum ornithologists but also by teachers in the Museum's Bureau of Education.

Please send all information or journals to: Donald S. Heintzelman, Bureau of Research, New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, N.J. 08625.