

## ISLAND BEACH BIRD BANDING STATION - By Katherine G. Price

It is a honor and a privilege to bring you news of the Island Beach Bird Banding Station at Island Beach State Park, New Jersey. This park, ten miles long, is one of the few, natural, sand barrier beaches remaining along the eastern coast of the North American continent. It is covered with vegetation little disturbed since the original land grant, of which this area is a part, was given to Lord Sterling in 1650. It is treasured by scientists and nature lovers as an outdoor textbook. There is a recreational section, a botanical zone, and a wildlife sanctuary. As the park brochure so able states: "They are designed to preserve and protect the natural resources and to have recreational facilities for the public to use, yet conserve the resources for the future generations to also enjoy."

At Island Beach, during the spring and autumn seasons, there is one of the largest concentrations of birds in our country with various "flights" of migrating birds stopping to feed and rest.

It is noteworthy that the State of New Jersey has wildlife refuges in the park: for migrants, the winter visitors, the breeders and the wanderers. This was the first plan formulated for the park before it was opened to the public in 1959. We are proud that the State of New Jersey has had such a fine plan functioning for the park since its beginning and we are glad that our governor, the Hon. William T. Cahill; Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection, Richard J. Sullivan and Director of Parks and Forests, Joseph J. Truncer plans to continue this well-balanced use of the park. This includes recreation, nature education, scientific research, wildlife protection and preserving the natural vegetation of this, one of our last barrier beaches.

With the small acreage of the park compared to the heavy concentration of birds, during the two months of spring migration, the four months of autumn migration, and the heavy breeding bird population, the State of New Jersey needs to keep the use of the park well proportioned. Then we can continue saying that while so many people are only talking about environmental protection here, at Island Beach State Park, there is a living example of how people and nature can "live and grow" together.

It was here in 1956 that one of the first Operation Recovery stations was started, so ably, by Mrs. Elise Dickerson, now deceased, and was run in its entirety by a volunteer group of banders. Other fine directors and co-directors include Mr. and Mrs. Albert Schnitzer, Miss Dorothy L. Bordner, Dr. Bertram Murray and the director or co-director for nine years, Mrs. Mabel Warburton.

All of the thirty-some Operation Recovery stations contributed to the over-all picture. Each station, no matter how large or small, played its important part. The Island Beach station, which was the largest, in birds banded, contributed its share in helping to set the pace for many

of the subsequent developments in banding and environmental protection.

Autumn 1969 was the last year of Operation Recovery. While the hope, that many birds banded at one station would be recovered at others, was not realized, the overall results were very valuable.

Chandler S. Robbins, Chief of the Migratory Non-Game Studies Section, stated in his letter to O.R. cooperators, dated 30 July, 1969: "It would be premature to attempt to summarize here the many benefits that have been derived from the Operation Recovery program. Suffice it to say that it has:

1. Greatly raised the standard of song-bird banding in America by providing initiative and experience in routine ageing and sexing of birds and in stimulating banders to standardize their activities by keeping a record of the number of net hours of operation.
2. Provided daily quantitative data on song-bird migration never before available on this continent in anything approaching this scale either geographically or in continuity over a period of years.
3. Yielded new concepts of migratory movement based on the preponderance of immature birds at coastal stations and the routine appearance of Yellow breasted Chats and other southern "strays" at coastal points north of their breeding range.
4. Stimulated banders to abandon the old "ring and fling" procedure in favor of taking notes (weight, measurements, molt, parasites, etc.) on each bird handled and to work together toward common goals."

With this valuable guide and the termination of the Operation Recovery program, it was a good time for our banders to re-evaluate their thoughts concerning our bird banding activities in the park. We concluded that it would be worthwhile to continue, with permission from the State of New Jersey in using the area and upon advise and counseling from Earl Baysinger, former Chief of the Bird Banding Laboratory.

The station had fifteen years of records to compare with each subsequent year of banding operation and it would continue to provide records of migratory birds to compare with other areas both coastal and inland. In addition, we would work with breeding birds, winter visitors and wanderers to our station. Each year we have exchanged reports with other stations, our data have been used, and conclusions drawn and published. We continued to prepare articles, based on our work at Island Beach, to submit for publication.

Additional reasons for desiring to continue our Island Beach Bird Banding Station with our present group are:

1. It is a natural trap for migratory birds and thus affords our banders an opportunity to work on many individual and group projects.

2. It is a good place for banders to work, share and learn together thru exchanging ideas and information, in person, and to discuss field and book research while having many of the actual birds in hand.

3. It affords a natural place for public relations work, and short banding demonstrations correlating with nature, conservation, and ecology, with needed emphasis on environmental protection, in cooperation with the park naturalists.

4. It makes available, in this area, a place for potential banders to train because of the availability of birds, personnel, and banding headquarters. We have college ornithology students, sub-permittees of master banders, and others who come to receive banding, and/or mist net training.

None of these thoughts are new but have been the fine underlying principles of this station since its beginning. Some of the personnel changes from year to year. This is truly a cooperative station and the heart of it is the banders.

In autumn 1970, we again tested our aims and objectives and found them still to be firm. I felt a need for an advisory committee and asked and received acceptances from Dorothy and Roger Foy, Margaret and William Pepper, and Mabel Warburton. We try to use the good ideas from all our banders.

In March 1971, we received permission, from the State of New Jersey, for our present group to continue our bird banding, bird observations, scientific research, training of banders and bird banding demonstrations at Island Beach State Park, New Jersey, year around on a long-range program. The "year-round/long range" permission needed to be arranged before we could commence some of our research. We work with the park superintendent on necessary arrangements, that will allow us to do our work efficiently while we fully cooperate with him as he coordinates numerous functions of this great park.

Our station personnel will continue, as in the past, to gather data that we hope will be meaningful and to publish articles on the information collected. We will encourage banders, working on individual projects, to publish their findings and try to give them any help they request. We welcome any bander and his assistants who will comply with the rules of the park and our banding station. This includes working congenially with the coordinator, advisory committee and all banders. We aim for positive thinking and using our time and energies in a constructive manner. Also due to the fact that Island Beach is one of the areas that is unique in having very, very heavy flights of birds at times, we must be sure that new banders to our station have had experience and training and be fully competent before they run their own net lane. These thoughts are mine as coordinator and those of the advisory committee and project the thinking of the active banders in our present group.

(Continued on page 264)