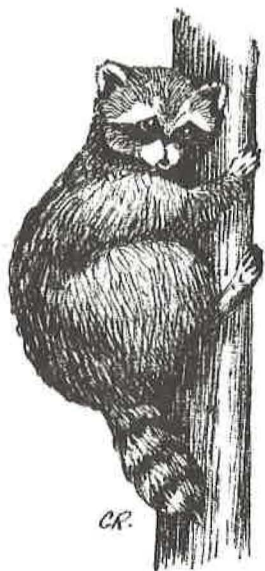


A Bird Bander's Diary

by
Ralph K. Bell



June ~ July

June 1, 1971....All spring I had anticipated a big year with our Purple Martin colony as we had 60 to 70 pair around. There had been no severe cold waves and therefore no mortality from starvation. Spring cold spells are sometimes a major problem and can keep Martin populations at a low level.

But this morning my wife noticed Purple Martin wings in our driveway and it was soon evident that tragedy had struck our Martin colony. It is 18 feet from the ground to our 30-room Martin box but a Raccoon had somehow managed to climb the painted 5 inch diameter iron pipe and then enjoyed a bountiful meal of not only eggs and tiny young but adults as well. The paw of the racoon is shaped much like that of the human hand and it is a very simple matter for them to clean out the nests of many hole nesting species. One should not blame the Raccoon for eating the Purple Martins because down through the ages nature has provided a system of checks and balances with snakes and racoons being especially adapted to prey on hole nesting species.

Evidently, adult Purple Martins are reluctant to leave the nest at night since so many were caught and eaten. With plenty of food available, the Raccoon would often bite off the heads and wings and cast them off as useless. The top of the box was used as a table and several

MOURNING DOVE WITH ABNORMALLY WORN BEAK AND TOE NAILS

By Kenneth W. Prescott

On 13 May 1968 I banded a Mourning Dove (Zenaidura carolinensis) at my Pennington, N.J., Banding Station, #883-63250, AHY-M. It appeared "normal" in all respects when banded and on 14 July of that year when it returned. I did not again capture the bird until 27 December 1970 when I was astonished to see that it had practically no beak at all. Both the upper and lower mandibles were worn smoothly all the way back to the still intact nostril openings. The stubs of the mandibles were rounded, not fractured, and there was no appearance of sores or other possible infections. All toe nails were gone from the left foot with only a suggestion of horny tissue remaining. Three of the four nails on the right foot were so worn that only slight nail stubs remained. The bird was molting on the abdominal tracts, neck but not head, back, upper tail coverts, and secondaries. The dove, which showed no traces of subcutaneous fat and weighed 120.1 grams, appeared healthy. When released, it flew strongly, ascending rapidly to a branch in a deciduous tree where it was immediately joined by another Mourning Dove.

-- 15 Timberlane Drive, Pennington, N.J. 08534



AGE RECORD OF RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

By Charles H. Blake

Juvenile female - banded: 20 August 1966 - Hillsborough, N. C.
return: 24 June 1971 - Hillsborough, N. C.

Although 262 Ruby throats were banded at Hillsborough before the present bird, an unknown, but certainly large, fraction of these were transmigrants which were unlikely to be retaken. Hence, no useful estimate of average longevity can be derived from this recapture.

--Box 613, Hillsborough, N. C. 27278

