

Homestead, Florida

By: Erma J. Fisk

Banding was done from September 23 through November 6 with five days of absence. Unfortunately these included the cold wave of October 17-18 that gave the peak migration flight all down the Atlantic Coast. All birds were wing-measured, weighed, aged and sexed. White eyed Vireos and many of the Yellowthroats were carefully studied, the former for the Water Reed Virus Laboratory. Detailed data were taken on all empidonax.

Eleven species were lacking from previous years, five new ones were added. 1734 birds of 70 species were newly banded. There were 94 returns to an area of one and one-half acres. There were 5191 net-hours in 39 days. The nets were closed only one day by rain, but furred irregularly at midday due to the hot sun.

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I thank coordinator Donald F. Clark for his Region VI report, as well as all the station leaders for their contributions thereto. Editor.

"WHEN IN DOUBT, CHECK IT OUT:" - A REQUEST FOR BANDERS  
TO LOOK BEFORE THEY LEAP, OR PUBLISH AND PERHAPS PERISH

By Brian Sharp

In EBBA News, Vol. 31, No. 2, p. 84, Hapgood Parks published three erroneous recovery records, two of which have since been cited. Although Hap twice submitted articles to EBBA pointing out the errors, neither was published and records have stood unretracted for over two years. More recently, (EBBA News, 34(3)) Leroy Wilcox mentioned the "interesting" recovery in California of a herring gull he banded in New York. It is the purpose of this article to set the record straight, before further mis-citations occur.

Hap's two "Purple Finches" (band numbers 57-40730 and 57-40886) and his "Black-capped Chickadee" (band number 101-39499) actually turned out to be two Canada Geese and a Slate-colored Junco, respectively. The hunter's letter indicated that Leroy's "Herring Gull" was a "duck." The band numbers reported to the Banding Laboratory in those cases were incomplete (missing a digit of the prefix), misread, or not entirely legible. It should be mentioned that the Banding Lab was already aware that two of Hap's recoveries were erroneous before the bander's cards were sent to him by mistake.

The implication of two "Purple Finches" trapped within a day or two of each other in Connecticut and re-trapped, still together eight years later in Illinois, was perhaps too much of a temptation. After

all, "flock cohesion" is heady stuff! And a transcontinental movement by a herring gull would have been no mean feat.

"If it looks interesting, it's wrong" is admittedly a rather plebeian attitude, but in my view, there's no choice: the chain of misrepresentation begins innocently enough, with an erroneous number reported to the Banding Laboratory, or with a finger placed on the wrong button of a key-punch machine. In 1970 the Banding Laboratory processed 99,070 returns, recoveries, and foreign re-traps, among which were a number of birds suffering from that dread disease - metamorphosis. Many of these cases are caught, as(k)eptically treated, and cured in the Banding Lab, but some still go unrecognized today, roaming about the banding-society-at-large. Be on the alert for the first symptom of the malady - enthusiasm in the patient, and be careful - it's contagious. However, the sooner it is caught, the better.

If you have a recovery which is worthy of a note, it should be verified first with either the Banding Laboratory, where all recovery letters are kept on file, or with the person who found the band. Often the band will have been sent to the Banding Laboratory with the original report, or additional circumstantial information is often mentioned in the letter which may tend to corroborate a particular recovery. If not, we may have written to the finder for such information or for the band itself. If you do request verification, please provide us with the "Batch Number" (for file reference), and we will be glad to check it out.

--Bird Banding Laboratory, Migratory Bird Populations Station, Laurel, Maryland 20810

Recovery Report and Foreign Retrap Exchange

We agree 100% with Brian that the condition he points out in his article, above, is very serious. We feel however, that it is the responsibility of the bander to carefully evaluate any records he sends to us for publication. Once we receive these records, it becomes our responsibility. We've challenged some records but apparently not enough, and by the same token, we have overlooked some rather obvious mistakes.

The Editors of this publication, as well as the Bird Banding Laboratory staff have no objections to publication of such records. After all, part of the fun of banding is to recover birds and part of our satisfaction is gained by telling our colleagues about the recovery. To continue publication of such data, we have set up a relatively simple verification check system with Brian Sharp. Now we realize that not all recovery data can be checked, in which case it will be stated that the printed material has not been verified.

New policy....for submission of records for publication in EBBA News....

- (1) EITHER send us a Xerox Copy of the Report to the Bander/or Certif., of Appreciation, OR, send all pertinent data including BATCH or FILE REFERENCE number to us.
- (2) Mail all recoveries (even if to be published in separate article-) to Mr. Harvey Farber, Co-Editor, 112-50 78th Avenue, Forest Hills, New York 11375.