

OUR NATURAL WONDERS
Rev. Roch Raible

My relationship with the evening grosbeaks has suddenly changed. Instead of just feeding and observing them, I have become the hunter and they the hunted.

It came about rather accidentally. People kept coaxing me to try banding the flock, but I never fully made up my mind to capture them for banding. My second thoughts were that I did not want to frighten them away.

I kept opening my window a little bit more each day, and they accepted this without fear. Finally I decided to lure them into my room for clearer observation, so I started putting some of the sunflower seeds on the inside sill. When the supply outside was exhausted, one by one, the birds stepped across the no-man's-land into my room. They looked quizzically at me at first, then decided I meant no harm and began eating. The racket of cracking seeds was great, and I was enjoying every minute of it.

Then one bird decided to leave and made the mistake of flying upward. Of course he missed the slit of the open window and started fluttering against the glass pane. This alarmed the rest, and they took to the maple. I hurried to grab the bird for banding.

Carefully I held that head between my fingers, for I wanted no snap of that powerful bill. The only bird that has ever drawn blood on me while banding was a cardinal, and the grosbeak's beak looked half again as large. Without mishap, I squeezed the band closed and released the bird.

The first two grosbeaks were either adult females or immatures of either sex. The third bird was a brilliant adult male. Just as I closed the band, he let out that pitiful distress call that flocking birds use as a last warning. I watched in dismay as the whole flock immediately flew away as though sprayed with shotgun pellets.

But the hunger drive overcame their fear, and within an hour they were back feeding again. But would the banded birds risk the ordeal? I peeped through the drapes and watched the legs intently. Finally a bird arrived with a shiny aluminum band, and I knew it was one that I had just banded. The next morning I had a grosbeak back in the hand after just banding it an hour before. It seemed less disturbed, as though it already knew it would be released unharmed.

Now that I have 22 of the birds banded, I notice a few astonishing facts. As I watch them feeding, I see that only one out of five or six are banded. That would put the number of the flock much higher than I had originally estimated. If the proportion runs true, the feeding grosbeaks are well over a hundred. I think now that not all the birds come at once; there is a shuttling back and forth that you really do not notice.

Only two of the 22 banded are adult males. This again is a surprising proportion, for I would expect a one-to-four ratio. Maybe the males are more wary, or maybe I am banding mostly immatures who have not yet learned the pitfalls of life. --St. Fidelis College, Herman, Pennsylvania 16039.

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Another book review.....

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON

By Alice Ford

University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma. 1964. Pp. 488. \$7.95

This biography of the great artist was published after ten years of careful research which included numerous trips to France to study letters and papers pertaining to the Audubon family. The author studied the papers of the Bakewell family also and letters from Charles Lucien Bonaparte.

Prior to this publication, most biographical accounts relied largely upon the partly fictitious memoirs of John James Audubon which were edited and amended by his widow and granddaughter. Another source of more reliability is Francis Hobart Herrick's Audubon the Naturalist.

Miss Ford's book is a must for all serious students of John James Audubon as it offers new insight and inspiration in the life of one of the world's great artist-naturalists. It contains relatively few errors which reflects the author's intense and commendable efforts to seek the truth.

--Reviewed by Raymond J. Middleton

NEW MEMBERS WELCOMED!

The following new members have joined our ranks since the beginning of the year:

Acquisition Dept., Mitchell Memorial Library of the Mississippi State University

Mrs. Robert L. Ganter (Maryland)
Shawn F. Knickerbocker (N.Carolina)
Joseph D. MacDonald (Massachusetts)
Ulf Widemo (Sweden)
Lance W. Morrow (Virginia)
Davis Field Station, Bureau of Sport
Fisheries & Wildlife, Davis, Calif
Mr. Harris Gibson (Ontario)
Robert Gochfeld (New York)
Allen E. Valentine (Michigan)
Katherine von Schmidt (Florida)
Joseph Rieffenberger (W. Virginia)
Mr. Geyrl Gardner (Maryland)
Elizabeth L. Walters (Iowa)

Dr. Charles F. Leck (New Jersey)
Librarian, CSIRO, Australia
Mrs. Janice Musser (West Virginia)
William C. MacBride III (Penna.)
James D. Bryce (Wisconsin)
Wildlife Research Ctr, Bureau of
Sport Fisheries & W., Denver, Co.
Mrs. Edward S. Buckler III (Va.)
Mrs. Constance Sundquist (Minn.)
Eugene Kirch (New York)
Mr. Lawrence Duckwall (New York)
Jesse Grantham III (Pennsylvania)
John T. Linehan (Newark, Del.)
Mrs. John R. Miller (Alabama)

EBBA NEWS is spreading....; in the next issue we hope to do the entire membership list. New members (and full addresses) will be printed up in all issues thereafter, thanks to our efficient Treasurer!