

HIGHLIGHTS OF 20 YEARS BANDING ON BELL HILL  
(BEDFORD, N.H.)  
*Continued*

By John H. Kennard

Winter Finches

Evening Grosbeak

Evening Grosbeaks (*Hesperiphonia vespertina*) have in the past half century extended their range eastward. This has been documented by many who know more about them than I. Most of my data have been included in previous studies by Mr. and Mrs. B. N. Shaub, in "Evening Grosbeak News" published in the 1950's and 60's. I can only document certain data from my own local area.

Evening Grosbeaks were irregular and not usually common in this area until 1953, when I banded 7, 3 of which were later heard from. In 1954 they were irregular in my feeders and I banded 90. In 1955 I had a flock of 30-50 in my feeders daily, and in spite of banding 417, I never succeeded in getting half of the visible birds banded. My data since then are summarized in Table 1, showing incursions in 1958, 1959, 1963 and 1964.

In the 1950's, in Bedford there were only 3-5 other "bird watchers" feeding sunflower seeds through the winter, but more recently, Bedford has become a suburban "bedroom town" and now there are dozens of homes with feeders. In the 50's the Grosbeaks circulated between the few feeding stations, but in the 70's I see Grosbeaks all over town, in many feeders, they do not concentrate in the few feeders, and I am sure that I do not band nearly as large a proportion of the local birds.

In the 50's I suspect the same conditions were true throughout the country, as the proportion of "foreign returns" was relatively large. Of 200 bands placed in 1954-55, I had 38 returns, and of a total of 2,024 birds handled, I have had 64 birds banded elsewhere, and 119 of my birds reported from elsewhere. These are summarized in Table 2.

One may conclude from these data that the Evening Grosbeak is a very irregular bird, occurring locally in numbers at times, probably according to the population and food supply to the north; that Bedford is en route from winter areas in New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey to the breeding areas in the maritime provinces; that they may migrate east and west, as well as north and south.

TABLE 1. Summary of Banding Data

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1953	7	1963	252
1954	90	1964	101
1955	417	1965	29
1956	93	1966	17
1957	94	1967	-
1958	247	1968	21
1959	394	1969	37
1960	75	1970	1
1961	3	1971	1
1962	41	1972	-
<u>TOTAL: 1,960</u>			

TABLE 2. Recoveries

<u>State (Province)</u>	<u>TO</u>	<u>FROM</u>
Maine	4	10
New Hampshire	24	16
Vermont	2	2
Massachusetts	26	19
Rhode Island	1	
Connecticut	12	2
New York	9	7
Pennsylvania	13	5
New Jersey	1	
Virginia	2	
North Carolina	1	
Wisconsin	1	
New Brunswick	5	
Nova Scotia	4	
Quebec	9	1
Ontario	5	
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>119</u>	<u>64</u>

Pine Siskins

Pine Siskins (*Spinus pinus*) are very irregular winter visitors in this area, but when they come they are apt to come in large quantities. They are not trap shy, and will come into my traps 15-25 at a time. They have come to my feeders in only four years, and I have banded them in numbers as follows:

1960:16, 1963:162, 1970:233, and 1972: 460

These birds repeat frequently, but the composition of the

flock apparently of 50-60 changes constantly, apparently as birds pass through. However, in both 1970 and 1972 some of the birds which arrived in January remained with me and were the last to leave in June. In 1970 we saw juveniles, and banded one so suppose they bred locally, but they disappeared soon after the young were fledged.

I had two birds documented in migration: #105-79192, banded by Mrs. Elizabeth Garry, 14 April 1963, in Waban, Massachusetts and recorded by me here on 9 May 1963; and #123-95499, banded here on 21 February 1972, and retrapped by Mrs. Glenn Metcalf in Plainfield, Vermont on 22 April 1972. Both of these birds were obviously headed north. I have had none return to my traps in a different year.

#### Redpolls

Redpolls (*Acanthus flammea*) are another species that are very irregular winter visitors in this area. Their season is much shorter than the siskins, as they are apt to appear about the middle of February, and disappear about the middle of April. They have come to my traps and been banded in six years in the following quantities:

1956:53, 1960:296, 1962:35, 1969:1, 1970:195 and 1972:266

These birds are fun to band, again coming into the traps in groups of 10-25, and repeating frequently, but so far I have not heard of one of mine reported from elsewhere, and none have returned in a different year.

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Kennard's first paper appeared in EBBA News November 1972 issue, Vol. 35, page 263-267)

#### A FEEDER TIP

By Robert P. Yunick

This past winter a friend introduced me to the use of Niger thistle seed as bird food. It worked so outstandingly that I thought other banders who are not familiar with it would be interested to know about it. It is a tiny black seed somewhat resembling grass seed in size and shape. Birds such as goldfinches, siskins and redpolls which have a difficult time with sunflower seeds are attracted to this seed in great number. The seed is very manageable in size for them and they appear to relish it, and definitely favor it over sunflower seed. My experience with Purple Finches, which are alleged to like this seed, has indicated that they almost always take sunflower seed in preference to thistle.

The seed is available in most feed stores in bulk on special request. Years ago it was a fairly common item, but fell into disrepute because of its tendency to sprout on lawns. Some stores carry it regularly in three-pound polyethylene bags at the rather dear price of \$1.69. By buying it in a 50-pound bag, it is available locally for 30¢ per pound. One pound goes a long way. During this past winter I used a little over 100 pounds and feel that this seed contributed substantially to the banding of over 2400 redpolls and siskins.

In the spring the season's spillage sprouted, but it did not create any real problem. The lawn mower controlled it, and I am told by a nurseryman that because the plant is tropical in origin, it will not winter over. Mine never got that far, for after about the third or fourth cutting, the sprouts disappeared. Give it a try and I think you will be pleased with the results.

#### A CHICKADEE FEEDER

Robert P. Yunick

At most banding stations where banders rely on the attraction of birds to feeders, attention is usually focused on attracting large numbers of birds to facilitate trapping. Only occasionally does one desire to exclude one or more species in order to concentrate on a selected species for study. I was confronted with this situation this past winter when it became apparent that I would have to take action against the all-too-common Evening Grosbeak in order to have Black-capped Chickadees to band. The following is a description of the problem and how it was solved successfully by the design of a special feeder. Since I have heard several feeder operators mention how they wish that they could limit grosbeak activity at their feeders, I thought that other banders might have a similar interest