

## A BIRD BANDING CLASS IN TOWSON, MARYLAND

By Janet E. Ganter

In the spring of 1972 the new Program Chairman of the Maryland Ornithological Society pondered the problem of what should be included in the activities for the coming year. In talking with various members about suggestions or ideas, one request was often repeated; that some arrangement be made to help people desiring to learn about banding in greater depth, or to learn to become banders.

It was pretty general knowledge that many respected banders were unable or just plain unwilling to take on the responsibility of a single student, let alone a group! But eager hearts and willing hands are not easily suppressed. A supply of competent licensed banders, as well as experienced helpers and record keepers are essential in a state like Maryland. Although small in size, its Ornithological Society with chapters in every county owns two sanctuaries and maintains two more in different biotic areas of the state. Banding programs are carried on at the sanctuaries, but for lack of good helpers have often faltered sadly.

The Fall of 1972 found the bander in charge of Fall Migration at Irish Grove (the newest and largest Sanctuary of 1400 acres of tidal marsh on the Chesapeake), clearing the nets and letting hundreds of birds go unbanded; she just did not have help.

There was no doubt that a need existed. How to deal with it was the problem. Luckily Mrs. Gladys Cole, a Baltimore bander with many years of experience, but a hard gal to catch up with listened and offered to help. When the MOS Program went to press in July, it contained the following announcement: Wednesdays throughout the year as weather permits - banding classes.

The announcement attracted many people who had been birding for years; they wanted to get a more intimate view of birds. Several teachers came eager for a chance to see and learn in the few hours of daylight left after school closed. Several new banders came to learn and to share with the others the knowledge they could offer.

At the very generous invitation of Mrs. Cole, it was agreed that classes could be held at her home near Towson. It was a perfect location with 1 and 1/10th acres of trees and shrubs, planted just for the birds, ample open space and water available too. Saw-whets had been banded there in 1963, and the garage had been a nursery for over a hundred young Barn Swallows the summer of 1972. For 15 years the birds had been coming, and

(inspite of shopping centers creeping in on two sides) the birds showed up for the new Banding Class and willing students of all ages, began to learn.

Some classes were busy ones, with plenty of chance to get experience removing birds from mist nets. Some students kept records, while others did research to identify a new bird. Still others measured and checked the birds for fat. On other days, with fewer birds, time was spent becoming acquainted with the anatomy and physiology of the bird. Several times bad weather forced the group indoors, where the banding discussion went on and on. For the first time many people learned about and made use of the extensive library of *EBBA News*, *Bird-Banding*, *Wilson Bulletin*, and a vast assortment of related books and magazines. Occasionally neighbors or members of a local Garden Club came and the students then became the teachers on those days.

The classes were never dismissed until record keeping chores were done. A brief summary of each day's banding activity, as well as a list of birds seen and heard was included. When a string of bands was finished the students helped prepare the schedules for the banding laboratory. It was fun, but it was work!

As November moved in with shorter days, colder weather, and fewer birds, the banding students needed a break. There was still plenty of learning to be done and skills to be practiced, but now was a time to relax, read banding publications and look forward to Spring Migration, a short time away. They knew from reading past records that Spring could bring any number of surprises. May 18, 1972 had been a record breaker, with 63 birds banded of 13 species.

Perhaps other banders will be inspired by this attempt and will be willing to try a similar class. A word of caution: always bring lunch, and be honest; tell them they'll never learn it all in one day-or one year- or even in a lifetime.

--301 Oakdale Road, Baltimore, Md. 21210

(EDITOR'S NOTE: We published this note with mixed feelings; each time similar stories are printed, we suddenly find such classes taught by inexperienced banders. Classes on banding techniques should be left to those of us who are known to be experienced in these matters. Mrs. Gladys Cole is such a person, as well as Mrs. Betty Knorr of New Shrewsbury, N.J., who sent us the following account, backed up by newspaper clippings): (dtd December 11, 72)

Dear Fred,

Recently got to thinking about EBBA NEWS from a different angle. Since my actual banding has been very limited the past

(Letter from Mrs. Knorr, Continued)

three years, I haven't sent much in for EBBA NEWS. Nevertheless, banding is still very much a part of my life!

Perhaps other banders who may not be currently active for one reason or another, could get involved the way I have.

Although I have been giving line bird programs and banding demonstrations for Scouts for many years, it wasn't until this year that the general public found out about it.

It started when I was asked to be the guest speaker at Union College, Cranford, N.J., for the dedication of the David Fables Wildlife Sanctuary. My speech that day generated a lot of favorable newspaper publicity.

The Asbury Park Press read those clippings and asked to do a feature article on me (Copy enclosed). After that article appeared in their Sunday edition I was swamped with requests to give lectures. So now I am very involved in lecturing about bird banding to Garden Clubs, Women's Clubs, D.A.R., etc.

The question and answer period that I conduct at the end of these lectures has proved to me that the general public really is interested in banding!

Last week I set up an extensive exhibit on banding as part of a two day Flower Show in Asbury Park (A number of mounted birds placed against appropriate background, bird houses, feeders, nets and much info on banding). I spoke to hundreds of visitors at the exhibit and they were all enthusiastic. Most were amazed to learn that Hawks and Owls eat rats and mice. I had a Bal Chatri trap on exhibit baited with a toy wind-up mouse. The response was amazing!....

.....Perhaps other banders could do the same in their own areas.....

*(The letter goes on into greater detail, but with space at a premium, the above excerpt surely gets the message accross! I feel that the EBBA Education Committee should take this method of public relations as well as banding classes, under study, to find a way to establish satellite groups in the various outlying areas that could meet in similar educational efforts. The nearby locations are already served in this way by the banders at Island Beach State Park, Tobay Sanctuary, Fire Island Research Station, Kiptopeke Banding Station and all those that draw many visitors during the Fall banding operations. F.S.Schaeffer, Ed)*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Birds which weigh too much to be measured on any single available Pesola, can often be coped with by using two (or any number of) Pesolas used in parallel (not, repeat not, in series!). Simply suspend the bird (in tube or bag) from two or more balances simultaneously; read off the weights and add them together. It is often convenient to hold the two Pesolas in different hands, and to raise or lower one hand to get an exact reading on one balance (e.g. 100 gm.), then to add to that value the reading then showing on the other balance. (From C. Thorne, Cambridge, England in BTO Ringers' Bulletin)

When we saw a tabulation in an American journal of the numbers of ringed birds in the USA and Canada, we could not keep from making a comparison:

	Number of Banders	Total individuals Banded in 1971	Total per Bander
U.S.A. + Canada	@ 2030	± 1.300.000	± 640
Netherlands	@ 290	± 200.000	± 690

Possibly our Dutch colleagues are the hardest working banders in the world, however, they've got more time to give to banding when one considers that most Dutchmen enjoy 4-5 weeks vacation per year, against the average of 2-3 weeks Americans do. Nevertheless, congratulations are in order for this dubious distinction (Data obtained from "OP HET VINKENTOUW", organ of the Dutch Bird-Ringing Centre in Arnhem, Holland).

We hear that our Kit Price (Mrs. Francis S. Price) of Island Beach Banding Station, the site of the 1973 EBBA Annual Meeting, has stepped down from the post of Director of that station as of 1 May 1973. The station's leadership will be taken up by Herman "Bud" Cooper, park naturalist at IBSP. Kit has to be complimented on a job well done, a job which is very difficult at best. She'll continue to band at IB but on a less frequent basis. Her contribution to EBBA has been invaluable. We wish Bud good luck.

It is with great sadness that we learned of the passing of a great bander. Alex Bergstrom, Vice President of the North-Eastern Bird Banding Association, departed from our mids on March 21, 1973. Alex was best known to all of us as Editor of Bird-Banding for 21 years during which time he also managed the sale of mistnets for the association.

While we realize that the above note has no place in "News in Brief", we received this notification shortly before bringing this issue to the printer. This was the only place left in the magazine where this item could be placed on short notice. Editor.