

TABLE 1

Age as Indicated by Recoveries

| <u>Number Recovered</u> | <u>Cowbird</u> | <u>Grackle</u> | <u>Red-wing</u> | <u>Starling</u> |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Total | 317 | 404 | 254 | 980 |
| Less than 2 years | 274 | 303 | 176 | 738 |
| 2 years | 27 | 55 | 36 | 127 |
| 3 years | 11 | 24 | 22 | 58 |
| 4 years | 1 | 15 | 14 | 37 |
| 5 years | 4 | 5 | 6 | 16 |
| 6 years | | 2 | | 3 |
| 7 years | | | | 1 |
| 2 or more years | 43 | 101 | 78 | 242 |
| 4 or more years | 5 | 22 | 20 | 57 |

TABLE 2

Percents in Age Categories

| | <u>Cowbird</u> | <u>Grackle</u> | <u>Red-wing</u> | <u>Starling</u> |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Less than 2 years | 86 | 75 | 69 | 75 |
| 2 or more years | 14 | 25 | 31 | 25 |
| 4 or more years | 1.6 | 5.5 | 7.9 | 5.8 |

--Dept. of Psychology and Dept. of Zoology The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

EXPERIENCES WITH BANDED COWBIRDS

By Mrs. John A. Gillespie

During the older years when my husband and I banded, we hardly ever saw a cowbird during the winter. In the spring the Brown-headed Cowbird male sat on a favorite perch and called "whis - key." The female was probably finding apt nests where she could lay her eggs.

We lived ten miles from the center of Philadelphia in a borough called Glenolden, about two miles from the Delaware River. We also spent vacations with my parents on Martha's Vineyard, an island south of Cape Cod.

Once I was thoroughly fooled by cowbirds. In July I banded two fledglings in a song sparrow nest in our Vineyard garden. Then I banded three babies in a chipping sparrow's nest. Later one after another of the five was trapped, and all of them were young cowbirds.

We tried experiments by taking the juveniles a mile or more away in various directions, but within a few hours we would find them back again in our traps. Yet, during 40 cowbirds banded on the Vineyard, and repeated in traps during a season, not one was trapped as a return.

Only ten cowbirds were formerly trapped in Glenolden. During one season a cowbird would readily come to a trap, but none was caught a second season. We tried experiments to test homing instinct of cowbirds during one season, and they would come back.

There was an adult female cowbird which was particularly trap-happy. She was banded in Glenolden on May fifth, and thereafter entered one trap or another several times a day. Since she had no parental responsibilities further than finding nests in which to lay her eggs, we felt no compunction in deporting her. On May 28 she was taken to Sharon Hill, a couple of miles to the northeast, and released from a suburban train platform at 8:15 in the morning. For a few days thereafter the traps were not in operation. Then, on June 2nd, she was caught at nine in the morning. Another day she was taken to Essington, three miles southeast, and was released at ten o'clock. Three hours later, at 1:05 p.m., she was back in a trap.

By this time the bird was so tame that she showed no concern at being trapped, and would allow us to remove her from a trap without any struggle. She had so definitely acquired the "trap habit" that we felt sure she would enter a trap soon after her return from any imposed journey. On June 3rd she was in a trap at 7:30 in the morning. At 8:30 she was liberated in City Hall Square, in the city of Philadelphia. She came back ten miles and entered a trap at 12:30, and was nonchalantly feeding. She again entered a trap at 2:30, two hours later.

Next morning she was conveniently caught at 7:00 a.m., and was taken to Wilmington, Delaware, 17 miles southwest. At 12:30 p.m. she was back in a trap, and caught again at 3:30.

By this time we had laid elaborate plans for the lady's further travels. A journey to Baltimore, Maryland, 90 miles southwest, was to be followed by one to Martha's Vineyard, nearly 400 miles northeast. But she suddenly disappeared. It was impossible to believe that she had voluntarily left the vicinity after her persistent returns while the season was not at the end. She had possibly become too tame for her own good, and there was a nuisance cat in the neighborhood. Other banders, however, have tried experiments with cowbirds that have returned hundreds of miles.

During the past 15 years large battalions of cowbirds began to descend on us in Glenolden in the winters. In 12 years I banded 1,320 cowbirds in Glenolden. That number could have been doubled, perhaps quadrupled, had I banded regularly week after week during the winter months.

Cowbirds are amazingly easy to trap. Yet in spite of this, the winter cowbirds were almost never caught a second time. As I watched flocks about the house, I never saw a cowbird wearing a band. A neighbor across the street, who maintained a feeding station for birds, reported that she never saw a cowbird with a band. Surely these cowbirds were not upset by the experience of being captured, but it seems that the flocks were here today and gone tomorrow.

It is true that the experimental cowbird kept coming back and entering a trap. But that incident occurred during the nesting season, and even though there was no nest to be cared for, there was apparently a sense of mating locality.

Of the 1,320 cowbirds banded, there were 19 recovery reports, not quite $1\frac{1}{2}$ percent. But what the reports lacked in number, they made up for in interest. One was reported from Tinicum, only a few miles distant, after ten months. One was reported from Swarthmore, less than ten miles away, 14 months later. One had reached Line Lexington, Pennsylvania, some 40 miles north, five months after it was banded.

Three were reported from Newark, Delaware, where Jack Linehan operates a banding station. Newark is about 30 miles southwest of Glenolden. One of the three was caught ten months after its banded date. The other two, a male and a female, were both banded on the same date, and both were trapped by Jack on the same date ten months later.

Two of my banded cowbirds were reported from Greenville, Delaware, 17 miles southwest, one four months later and one 14 months later. One, which I banded in April, was in Kirkwood, Delaware, over 30 miles southwest during the following August. One was reported from New Castle, Delaware, 22 miles distant, 14 months after being banded. One turned up in Fort Republic, New Jersey, nearly 50 miles a bit south of east from Glenolden.

Four cowbirds went to Maine. One reached Damariscotta in five months, one got to Jackman in six months, and one to Enfield in a year and eight months. One reached Patten in six days, about 600 miles away. The record seemed so incredible that I had it checked for accuracy.

Finally there were three individuals reported from Canadian provinces. One turned up in Bathurst, New Brunswick, in April, five months after it was banded. One was in Val D'Espoir, Quebec, in September, nine months after banding. The third reached South Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, in May, a month or less after banding.

There were six cowbirds that I caught which had been banded by others. Three had been banded by Jack Linehan in Newark, Delaware. One of these was captured in Glenolden 13 days after he banded it, another arrived ten days after being banded, and the third came 11 months after it got its band.

One cowbird, banded in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, eight miles to the north, visited me four days after it got its band. One banded in Cheesequake, near South Amboy, New Jersey, was in Glenolden two days later, having travelled 90 miles westward. One banded in Fairfield, Connecticut, in October, was in Glenolden the following April.

Of the more than a thousand cowbirds banded in Glenolden, only three returned after a possible migration interval; two returning after a year, and the third returning after 16 months. Compare this record with that of White-throated Sparrows. 365 were banded in Glenolden during the same 12-year interval. 34 were taken as returns after migration intervals, and some of them returned during a few more successive seasons. That is well over nine per cent. The percentage of returning cowbirds was less than a quarter of one per cent.

The accumulated data support the already suggested theory that cowbirds are restless creatures during the non-breeding season, constantly moving hither and yon. I would surely have caught many more cowbirds had I banded week by week, or day by day. In the case of White-throated Sparrows, such a flock was used to settling down for a considerable period, if not for the entire winter season. A month or more might pass with no banding, but the number of the species might not change meanwhile appreciably.

Have other banders noticed similar itineraries of cowbirds?

--P.O. Box 575, Oak Bluffs, Mass. 02557

COMMON GRACKLE RECOVERIES: BIRDS BANDED AT WOODHAVEN
BIRD BANDING STATION, MORRISVILLE, PENNA.

By Mabel Warburton

- 563-05822 Banded: 06-22-1956; Age: Imm.
RECOVERED: 05-15-1966 at Yardley, Pa.
STATUS: Dead (9 yrs., 11 mos. old)
- 563-05856 Banded: 10-19-1956; Age: Adult
RECOVERED: 01-08-1958 at King George Court House, Virginia
STATUS: Dead
- 563-05899 Banded: 04-22-1957; Age: Adult
RECOVERED: 03-15-1959 at Lumberton Twp., Mount Holly, N.J.
STATUS: Dead
- 563-06237 Banded: 06-10-1955; Age: Adult
RECOVERED: 05-03-1959 at Yardley, Penna.
STATUS: Dead
- 563-06280 Banded: 10-02-1955; Age: Adult
RECOVERED: 05-12-1958 at Langhorne, Penna.
STATUS: Dead
- 583-20532 Banded: 05-21-1956; Age: Imm.
RECOVERED: 07-19-1956 at Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge,
Leipsic, Delaware
STATUS: Trapped and released by Yuill
- 583-20545 Banded: 05-24-1956; Age: Adult
RECOVERED: 04-23-1961 at Yardley, Penna.
STATUS: Found dead
- 583-96759 Banded: 05-03-1957; Age: Adult
RECOVERED: 12-13-1958 at Hobbsville, North Carolina
STATUS: Killed
- 623-59739 Banded: 08-09-1960; Age: Adult
RECOVERED: 06-21-1971 at Yardley, Penna.
STATUS: Dead (over 10 yrs. 10 mos. old)