

SOMETIMES EXPERIMENTS PAY OFF

A. Ogden Ramsay

In 1971, I had a paper published in the *Z für Tierpsychologie* entitled "Sensitive age parameters and other factors involved in conditioning to a danger call in Mallard Ducklings (28 164-174, with Eckhard H. Hess)." Here we found that the sensitive period for the learning of the danger call (and presumably environmental imprinting) lies between 36 and 60 hours. We also found that the danger call must be a monosyllable and the approach call to parent-surrogate a polysyllable and, if the learning was to be retained, the two calls must also differ in tonal quality.

In my banding operation I specialize in releasing hand-raised birds. In the past three years I have raised and released the following: Robins, Catbirds, Mockingbirds, Grackles, Starlings and Blue Jays. Of these species, only the Blue Jay has shown any noticeable lasting effects of the experience (imprinting). When given its liberty this Blue Jay's whereabouts could easily be followed by the peculiar call notes it had acquired in captivity. Three days and one storm later this Jay made its way into my barn. Here it allowed me to pick it up. Returned to its flight cage and to the diet to which it was accustomed, it regained its health and normal vocal activities after two days.

Ten of the Robins involved were removed from their nest at ages varying from 5 days upward. (I succeeded in hatching an additional bird in the incubator, but lost it when it was 5 days old.) A second group of Robins were removed from the nest, one at a time when they were about 6 days old. These were hand-fed for two days and successfully returned to the nest. All the Robins in the first group came to me for food until they learned to feed by themselves. None of the Robins in the second group came to me for food though one allowed me to feed it, though it followed only its mother.

In the spring of 1972 I took three Starlings from their nest when they were three days old. One day when I went to feed them - as I did every hour - I found that a large Pilot Black

Snake had lifted the lid over their box and two of the starlings were eaten by the snake. Of all the species raised, only the starling showed an antipathy toward me at this early age. By the time it was fully feathered and capable of flight, it would take food from me but each time it would also take a stab at the hand that fed it.

--R.D. 1 Hanover, Pa. 17331

BIRD TRAPPING WITH A TAPE RECORDER

By Robert Dewire

During the periods when my mist netting station is in operation at the Wadsworth Wildlife Sanctuary in Westport, Conn. I have found a method by which migrants can be lured to the netting area and subsequently caught in the nets. What I used is a small cassette tape recorder on which I have recorded the calls of the Screech Owl (*Otus asio*). As most birders and banders are aware, songbirds regularly mob owls when they discover them, and it seems that the mere calling of an owl will bring the birds to the source looking for the owl to mob.

I use a small inexpensive Panasonic recorder and got the calls of the Screech Owl on tape by merely recording it from the record of bird calls put out to supplement the Peterson field guide. I recorded the calls over and over until I had an unbroken string of about 15 playings of the record. This allows you to play the tape and not have to stop and keep backing up.

Having done this all I do to make it work is go to one of my lanes and go down to one end of the nets (usually the lane has two or three nets together). The tape is then played at a high volume to attract birds from a distance. Even when no birds are heard when I first arrive, they seem to materialize out of nowhere to hunt for the source of the call. Chickadees and titmice seem to come the quickest, but as they do so often,

warblers and other birds are with them. The chickadees usually begin scolding and other birds such as Redstarts and Myrtle Warblers begin chipping loudly and this coupled with the continuing calls of the owl bring even more birds. As soon as the first bird hits the net and begins to struggle the other birds around quickly get caught as they come in to observe what has happened to the netted bird. Other birds that respond quickly to the owl call are the White-throated Sparrow and Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

The system seems to work much better in the fall than in the spring, and I have found that it is most effective in the morning although I have had birds drawn in at all times.

In addition to the banding success one has, it gives one an excellent opportunity to observe the birds as they are being caught. They pay virtually no attention to me as I stand at the end of the net and I have experienced all ranges of emotion as I watch a rare bird get caught, fly just over the net, hit the net only to get out through an unrepaired hole, or just watch several birds all hit the net at once. If you have never attempted this method of getting birds to your lanes, it might be well worth a try.

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Would those EBBA members who joined late in the year [1973] for calendar year 1973, please let the EDITOR know if you're missing any copies of EBBA NEWS? Of course, this does not apply to persons who joined us for 1974 but who paid in 1973. Thank You.

Attention Coordinators of Atlantic Flyway Review: regardless of the deadlines given you in the Supplement issue, please try to have your material in much earlier. If you would mark your calendar for as much as ONE MONTH ahead of the deadline, things could work out just great. Editor.

A NOTE ABOUT PINE SISKINS

By Dorothy Briggs

Pine Siskin #115-30432 appeared in one of my three-cell Potter traps on 03-13-72. I banded this bird on 01-20-70. This is the first time that I have had a siskin return after a migratory period. At time of banding the wing measured 70 mm., and upon return measured 72 mm. This bird was aged at banding as SY as it had buffy wing bars. Upon return it had white wing bars. The plumage was apparently much the same at both banding and return. I noted that it had extensive yellow at both times. The crown was noticeably darker than the rest of the head on the March return.

Pine Siskins did not appear in my traps here in Middleboro until 02-01-69, although I have banded at this same station since 1963. Since then I have had only four siskins return after a three month period in the same winter through spring period, but this is the first to make "history!" I have only banded 334 siskins in all, although my traps are open most of the time, and I have nets up in good weather. I use sunflower and thistle seeds all the time, and have just added rape seed.

--11 Carpenter St., Middleboro, Mass.

A CURIOUS OBSERVATION

By Charles H. Blake

Recently I caught on separate days, two juvenile Tufted Titmice (Parus bicolor). On each occasion I noted while taking the bird from the net that the bare edge of the eyelids (forming the rima oculi) was pinkish. In both cases when the bird was brought indoors for banding the lids were the expected light, somewhat greenish gray. The first instance was considered an error of observation. The second instance suggested a need for more careful examination. It is well known that the behavior