

All banding was done by Frank Fish and myself, with assistance from Mildred Fish.

We thank Valerie M. Freer for her excellent report and appreciate that she was willing to take over Region II, beside her many duties as Third Vice-President of EBBA.

F.S. Schaeffer, Ed.

ATTRACTING BIRDS WITH TAPED CALLS IN THE RAMAPOS
By Frederick S. Schaeffer

In my last three years of bird banding, mainly at Cannonball Trail Station, I've been experimenting with various methods to lure elusive birds into my nets and traps.

THE STATION

Cannonball Trail Station is situated near Lake Vreeland on Fox Brook, at Camp Glen Gray (Boy Scouts of America) in the Ramapo Mountains of New Jersey, about halfway between the towns of Oakland and Darlington (near the Bergen-Passaic County line).

Ecologically it is a unique area. Climax forest, virtually untouched for hundreds of years, make up this vast area. Going north from the point where Skyline Drive (near Oakland) parallels the Ramapo River, to an undetermined point just south of the New Jersey/New York State Line, near Hillburn, N.Y., the entire area is forested and about 75% of it is part of the three Boy Scout Reservations. Nearest Oakland is Camp Tamarack, followed to the north by Camp Glen Gray, topped off by Camp Yaw Paw. The area is rocky and hilly (to @1200 ft.) and supports varied species of wildlife. Birdwise, the area supports an undetermined number of breeding birds. Many more man-hours and breeding seasons are needed to determine just how many and what species. Thusfar the most elusive bird was heard (not seen) on 28 June: Yellow-throated Vireo. There are a few nesting Louisiana Waterthrushes and I've banded many of them using taped calls to attract them to my netting area.

There are also quite a few snakes on the property, some of which are poisonous. Quite a bit of care has to be taken when checking the nets because snakes have been spotted in the netting area. I've seen Copperhead, Black Snake, and I've heard of Black Racers and possibly a Rattler or two might be in the area as well.

The Banding Station is mainly there to support lecturing. Scouts in the formative years of 11-16 need to be introduced to the wonders of nature, if they will retain a healthy respect for nature when they become adults. I'm also studying the Tufted Titmouse, Louisiana Waterthrush and the long-term effects of some foresting in the area, on wildlife.

THE EQUIPMENT

To lure birds into an area is easy in winter with the help of liberally filled feeders. In winter there is no competition from high trees and their fruits. However, during other seasons, it is not so easy. It is then that we use taped calls and with quite a bit of success.

Basically one needs a recorder (cassette or reel-to-reel), an extension speaker, a parabolic reflector and a suitable microphone. Professional ornithologists use sophisticated equipment that far surpasses my budget (i.e. Nagra or Uher recorders), so it should be noted that equipment described here was bought often for other reasons and with a limited budget.

1) The recorder. Any cassette recorder or 5-inch reel-to-reel portable recorder of good quality will do. The recorder should have a high output (for instance 850 MW, minimum) and if one enjoys a permanent station location with electricity, more money will buy better equipment. As it stands, I make my field recordings, re-record them at home through more professional equipment (with Dolby Noise Reduction units) to gain a virtually hiss-free end result. In the field, I use an auxilliary amplifier to boost the signal.

2) Auxilliary Amplifier. I use a 25 watt output (IHF) amplifier between the recorder and the speaker, because the speaker is some 1500 feet removed from the banding location. This is necessary, because the recorder does not put out sufficient signal for this long wire. Much fidelity is lost over such a distance. The signal is transmitted through Army surplus TW-2 telephone cable which is strong enough to withstand the elements.

3) Speaker. I successfully use an "Ultra-thin" polystyrene plastic speaker which is not only moisture-proof but can be operated in temperatures from -20°F to +175°F. The power capacity is 40 watts peak with a frequency range of 30Hz-20kHz (only 13-14 kHz needed for bird calls) and a sensitivity of 85 dB/M for 1 watt of electrical input. It measures 1-7/16"W x 11-3/4"D x 14-11/16"L. The input impedance is 8 ohms.

4) Microphone. To record bird calls in the field, a parabola is a must! I use an 18 inch model (@ 6" F.L.) parabola sold by Sonic Instruments LTD, England. This, next to the recorder was the most expensive item, with the microphone running second to that. I'm using an omnidirectional dynamic mike, but I'm about to begin experimentation with a uni-directional electret-condenser microphone. It should be noted that the mikes that come with inexpensive recorders are often not suitable for use with a parabolic reflector, and that the impedance must be low (to allow use of long cables) and must, of course, match the input of the recorder. It is also important to install a switch between the mike and the recorder (the switch, if any, on the mike cannot be effectively used with the parabola because it creates too much noise). Further, it is desirable to use a headphone to monitor incoming signals.

SCOUTING AND BANDING

I started banding many years ago in 1964 and before that in Europe. I've worked various stations on Long Island, N.Y., in New Jersey and one in Virginia (the annual trip to Kiptopeke). Many of the stations are open to the public and the public relations aspect has sometimes been less than ideal. They tend to be in the way when one is doing serious research and it takes considerable tact to deal with them, particularly when operating in a public area (City/Town/County/State owned land).

Giving impromptu lectures to Scouts, on the other hand, is pure enjoyment for the listener and bander/teacher alike. All are enthusiastic, considerate and polite (qualities not always found in adults!). As a result of this spontaneous enthusiasm and other considerations I joined the Scouting effort last year in June, not only to use their beautiful property but to become active in their programs. It has given rise to considerable personal satisfaction on my part and I exhort other banders to look into this prospect also.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Camp Glen Gray is operated and administrated by Eagle Rock Council, B.S.A. (Montclair, N.J.) and the banding program is authorized by the Council's Camping Committee, chaired by Mr. Jim Hayes. I owe him thanks. Further, I am grateful to Edward O. Helwig, Scout Executive and the other men on the executive staff. I especially thank Jim Bishop, Camp Ranger of the Reservation as my banding subpermittee (9144E); Chris Rose (Eagle Rock Council Member) and Ted Pettit (Conservation Chairman, B.S.A.), both banders, for their technical and enthusiastic support of this venture. Lastly, I thank the many young scouts who through their troops donated several hundreds of pounds of sunflower and other seed mixtures last winter, to the station.

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NEWS FROM THE BANDING LAB.

Ed. Note: In each issue, we'll have a number of news items from the Banding Laboratory. Appropriate items will be quoted directly from letters received from George M. Jonkel, for this express purpose.

"As you know, we have been working on repunching the 1960 through 1966 banding files. Last year we completed size 3 bands and larger. This year we have been working on the smaller bands and have 1, 200, 000 records repunched to date." (6/6/75)

"Besides still having many banding schedules for biological editing, Jay Sheppard also worked with Rosemary O'Loughlin, Supervisory Clerk of CCU, on computerizing the auxiliary marking file for easier access by us and for distribution of information to waterfowl coordinators, and others." (6/6/75)

(More notes appear on other pages in this issue)