

By May of 1972 most of the plaster of Paris was gone so I tried putting small fragments of oyster shells, the kind that are used for hens, in the same place, catching my first two birds on the 14th. I then continued to put out oyster shell fragments in 1973 and 1974.

These swallows were observed eating the shells and also carrying some away. So this fall (1974) I took three nests from a barn nearby and took them apart to see if they used any shells in the construction of their nests. I found only one piece of shell and it apparently had been dropped in the nest. I could find no shells built into any of the nests that I examined.

The only other bird seen at the shells was a female Cowbird (Molothrus ater ater) which was apparently also eating them.

I would be glad to hear if this is a common practice of Barn Swallows as I can find no similar records in my literature.

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#### A TALE OF TWO FINCHES

By Robert P. Yunick

Occasionally the recovery of one's banded birds produces some astounding surprises. Two recent recoveries involving a Purple Finch (Carpodacus purpureus) and an Evening Grosbeak (Hesperiphona vespertina) offered an unusual bit of coincidence that prompts me to relate this tale of two finches.

I banded the Purple Finch, 73-32762, in my yard on April 19, 1968 during a spell of mild weather that brought north into our area the return of the first spring migrants of this species. The following year, I banded the Evening Grosbeak, 70-103504, on May 1 in my yard. It was part of an exceptionally heavy return flight that was not only marked by its magnitude of numbers, but also by the lateness with which the birds were returning to their breeding grounds to the north. At their respective times of banding there was little else that distinguished these birds as individuals. They shared the identity of both being returning winter finches which appeared at a common point along their journey, but otherwise there was no particular reason to associate one with the other.

Thus, it was with considerable surprise that I received simultaneous recovery cards on these two finches and learned that both had been re-trapped on January 25, 1970 in Newport, Tenn. by Mrs. O. H. Williams. Thinking that this was somewhat unusual, and also thinking that Mrs. Williams was a bander, I wrote to her and relayed to her what data I had on the birds and commented generally on the coincidence. Her reply was an even greater surprise!

It appears that Mrs. Williams lives in a veritable winter melting pot for Evening Grosbeaks. Just north of Great Smokey National Park between Knoxville, Tenn. and Asheville, N.C., she has encountered substantial numbers of this species. Though she was not a bander, she became intrigued by the banded birds which she saw at her feeders, and in 1962 she took up the "hobby" of capturing banded birds to learn where they came from! Her letter immediately reminded me of the saga of M. Thomas Brousseau in the Canadian wilds. B.M. Shaub (1960) and Mr. and Mrs. G. Hapgood Parks (1963, 1963, 1964) related the unusual story of this remote woodsman in several issues of EBBA NEWS and BIRD-BANDING 11 to 15 years ago.

Mrs. Williams' letter of October 1972 tells the story of her trapping adventures:

"I was very pleased to have your letter and am sorry that I have no other information on your birds. You see, I am not really a bander, but have been pursuing the fascinating hobby of capturing banded birds and learning when and where banded since 1962.

"The Evening Grosbeaks and Purple Finches appeared in our area in February of 1962. There were from 50-100 grosbeaks with a sprinkling of Purple Finches at my feeders from February until May. They were the first of either I had ever seen. I was fascinated by the gorgeous creatures and watched every minute I could spare. One morning in March I saw a grosbeak with a shiny band - the first band I had ever seen. I began trying to get that number and finally rigged up something like a 'country boy rabbit trap' operated from inside by a fishing line through the window. That year I was able to get 10 band numbers.

"The year I caught your birds was very snowy and I was snowed in for several weeks while they were here. I was able to get 22 grosbeaks and 1 Purple Finch, and when I sent in the numbers for the information the F & W decided I must have some kind of license or permit. Dr. Walter P. Nickell, retired ornithologist at Cranbrook Institute, Bloomfield Hills, Mich., and now living in Clinton, Tenn., had come over and banded some of my birds that spring and he was able to get for me a sub-permit to him as a bander. Dr. Nickell will be interested in the information you sent.

"Over the ten-year period - they have appeared 6 times - I have captured 65 Evening Grosbeaks and 2 Purple Finches. They were banded in Conn., Maine, Maryland, Mass., Minn., Mich., New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Penn., Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and New Brunswick. (The one banded in N.B. in August appeared in my yard in January) Two birds were 10 years old and one was nine, banded in Mass., N.Y. and Maine. One bird I caught 12/08/68 - then in January I moved about 3 miles away and caught the same bird 04/16/69. Another by same bander (Schemnitz) banded 05/12/68 and 04/01/67 and I caught them 02/09/70 and 03/12/70. Still another (M. Wood) banded 01/14/69 and 01/06/64 and I caught them 01/22/70 and 01/23/70 - banded five years apart and I caught them within one day of each other. It gets more fascinating each year.

"We never know whether they will appear or not. Their only 'pattern' is that they have never appeared 3 years in a row or been absent 3 years in a row - that is the pattern since they first appeared in the Great Smokies in 1951.

"Fall is in the air now and we're hoping for this year. Maybe I'll meet more of your birds if they visit us."

Attached to her letter was a listing of all those birds which represented more than a single capture from any one bander. Her list read like an EBBA directory!

Her list impressed me from the standpoint of how numerous the banded birds were at her feeder, and how these birds were drawn from such a large geographic area. It also tickled my imagination to think about what it would be like to be snowed in in the mountains with flocks of grosbeaks at hand. There's something to be said for the remoteness of non-city living.

#### Literature Cited

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#### SONG SPARROW WITH DISAPPEARING TUMOR

By Mrs. Roger W. Foy

During a routine examination of a Song Sparrow (Melospiza melodia) HY-U (band #81-60534) on August 19, 1972, I found a fatty tumor on the left breast. It measured 4 mm x 8 mm and was raised approximately 2.5 mm; it was not granulated or seedy, covered with feathers and a pale yellow in color. It seemed to be, according to feel, a soft solid mass, definitely attached not to the skin but to the surrounding tissue.

On this date the wing was 60 mm; wgt. 19.5 gr. with a fat count of 0 (scale 0-3). The repeats and returns are as follows, with the tumor still in evidence and no visible change in size;

<u>1972</u>	Sept. 17th - wgt. 20.3, fat 0
	Sept. 23rd - wgt. 20.5, fat 0
	Oct. 22nd - wgt. 20.0, fat 0
	Nov. 19th - wgt. 21.8, fat 2
	Dec. 29th - wgt. 25.6, fat 3
<u>1973</u>	April 21st - (Return as SY-U) WGT. 22.3, fat 0