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# EBBA NEWS

A FRIENDLY REPORT ISSUED MONTHLY TO THE MEMBERS OF THE EASTERN BIRD BANDING ASSN.

"Let Us Band Together" 

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 Reaching Over 385 Banders Every Month

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## THAT GUY NAMED "JOE".

This fellow, J. J. Hickey of Ann Arbor, Michigan who still likes to be called just "Joe", disturbs "Ye Ed's" hair-do. He pops up in the most unexpected places, at the most unexpected times. The trouble is that every time he says something, it seems so true. Usually it is much in agreement with the thoughts of "Ye Ed" has tried to express without success. The fact that "Joe" succeeds with a phrase or two is exasperating.

In a very informative discourse by James E. Young of Louisville, Ky., on the differences, particularly in the feet and legs of Black-poll and Bay-breasted Warblers, printed in the recent winter issue of the "Kentucky Warbler" it is noted that a quote from "Joe" is incorporated. The discussion swings around to the fact, that on occasion and in some places, both these species inter-breed. Friend Hickey drops this statement into the discussion: "If the birds themselves refuse to recognize the difference, not too much should be expected of the ornithologist."

This recalls the fuss about Bronze and Purple Grackles. "Ye Ed" has banded some 1700 of these "black biters", many of them birds of the year but as far as he was concerned they were all Purples. However, some have been recovered to the south and turned out to be Bronze. Embarrassing to a degree but the record is the thing.

Now a report comes floating in on the fall meeting of the Michigan Bird Banding group. Since a copy of this fine report is being sent to all banders, according to Harold F. Wing, the President, we won't quote from the report. However, we would like to call attention to this chap, J. J. Hickey again. "He raised the question as to the value of banding large numbers of migratory small birds, citing various low percentages of return, 1% and lower, as contrasted with over 15% return of trapping winter (and summer too) residents."

It is fully admitted that there is much to be said as to the values of both intensive and extensive banding. The fact that most banders can band, with ease, one or two broods of nestling House Wrens on their own station grounds is a temptation. Yet, in most cases, their own records will show that such banding is a waste of time and bands. In the matter of selective banding, it is a problem of discretion and judgment, complicated by the judgment of various banders which it is feared would seldom be the same. This is further complicated by the fact that banders are spread so thinly over such a large area, that any plan to alter the "catch-as-can" present method would need a great deal of study. On the other hand, banding methods can be greatly improved and as the farmer's wife said, as she shoveled her way to the pump, "A mite of them there improvements will always be welcome."

EBBA is happy to welcome 14 new members to our group since the first of the year and note that all but 10% of our members have renewed their membership for 1945.

## HENRY P. BAILY

Members of our banding association will be grieved to learn of the death of Henry P. Baily, who passed away on February 21st at his home in Overbrook, near Philadelphia. Mr. Baily was 76.

Mr. Baily began banding birds in 1928 and for a long time had been a member of E.B.B.A. He was a very ardent bander who banded on an average at least 1,000 birds a year. He was very generous to our association, both from a financial viewpoint and in advice and comment. A communication written just 3 weeks before his death, advises of his banding activities and recent captures. He was instrumental in introducing several members to our group.

Born on September 3, 1865, he graduated from Haverford College in 1890. He was a member of Joshua L. Baily & Co., cotton mill agents and was one of Philadelphia's best known old time cricket players. He was a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, the Zoological Society and was a former president of the Photographic Society of Philadelphia, being interested in photographing birds.

### RECOVERIES OF BIRDS BANDED IN MARYLAND

As promised in the February issue of EBBA NEWS, we want to comment on a number of recoveries reported in the 1944 banding results submitted by Albert E. Clattenburg, Jr. of Chevy Chase, Md. Among these recoveries there are two Cardinals. One banded May 14, 1943 was found dead nearby a month and a half later. The other banded August 20, 1943 was found dead at Ronks, Lancaster Co., Penna. on November 2, 1943. Note that this is north in the fall. It probably followed the Susquehanna, and was a bird of the year.

"Ye Ed" is located north of the usual range of this species and has noticed in the last several years that Cardinals are only reported here in the winter. Last Fall a pair visited his station but were not caught. Another one was reported as a constant boarder at a feeding tray nearby throughout this past winter. None are seen or reported during the breeding season.

However to follow the Susquehanna River further north in Pennsylvania, Dr. H. B. Wood of Harrisburg, reports that he has banded 67 of this species. "I have had only 4 found dead nearby. (one banded April 24, 1939, returned April 22, 1941 and April 18, 1943 and was finally found dead 600 ft. from the banding station on January 7, 1945. It is odd that this bird appeared every other year.) Only 5 birds were trap returns; 10 repeated in the same season as banded, which included 2 which later returned. The notable part is the arrangement of repeats and returns, (and those found dead nearby) which show the migration of these birds and the fact that winter birds do not nest here at any time."

Another of Mr. Clattenburg's recoveries was a Grackle banded April 2, 1944 found dead June 30, 1944 at Hedgesville, West Virginia. This bird travelled west and probably followed the Potomac River Valley. He reports 5 Starling recoveries, mostly in Washington, D. C. nearby and all found dead in the winter months of 1944. The remarkable thing about these is the fact that 4 of them were 1941 birds and only one was a 1942 banded bird. His previous average on Starlings has been about two found dead each year. Of the 1,000 and odd birds banded from December, 1940 to September, 1942, only 2 or 3 miles from his present station none have appeared at his new station.

Like many other stations in March, 1944, Mr. Clattenburg banded an unusual large run of Fox Sparrows during the snowstorm late in the month.

STRANGE HOOTS I HAVE HEARD or HOW I BAND THE BIRD  
(Being an extemporaneous narrative on the banding of some owls)  
by Richard B. Fischer

The author, a resident of Flushing, L. I., N. Y., needs no introduction to our many readers. Armed with flashlight and butterfly net, his daring and dashing skill as he swings with breath-taking ease from beam to beam pursuing swallows and swifts in the dark depths of strange barns in lower New York State is already an epoch. Naturally a nocturnal bander of such ability who has traveled so widely would be greeted with a hoot on occasion. Never knowing of a time when he passed up a chance to band a bird, "Ye Ed" queried him about owls. We learned he had banded 18, (2 Barn, 14 Screech and 2 Saw-whet Owls) so we hammered on his natural reticence and got him to confess how he does it. Here is the story in his own words.

"A friend once said I'm attuned to owls and their notes. If that is so, it's because I've cultivated an interest and, what is probably more important, an awareness of them.

"Screech Owls are very fond of sitting in the entrance of their roosting holes, often with their entire bodies exposed to view, basking in the warm sun. The trick is to distinguish the bird from the bark of the tree. One thing that helps is to memorize the location and normal appearance of every hole capable of harboring the little fellows. Every time such a hole or bird box is passed, it is examined to see if its "tenant" is, like you, keeping an eye on things.

"An easy way to locate a bird -- it usually turns out to be a pair, is to visit any and all woods and orchards which look as though they could support an owl. Go there at dusk or better yet, at dawn, in the early spring or early fall, and listen for their distinctive, easily heard call. When I visit a likely-looking place and the owls are not very "talkative", then I "talk" to them. The birds are encouragingly responsive to a reasonable imitation. I have coaxed replies from Screech, Barn Barred and Long-eared Owls with some pretty sad imitations, so anyone who tries is practically assured success!

"When the owl's general area is known, you've got to locate the bird's roosting place. Simply stated, the problem is to examine every hole or bird box the same day. If this is done, the owl will be found. I must admit that this is the hardest part of the job.

"A really easy way to find a Screech Owl is to let the inquisitive Blue Jays find him for you. Offhand, I can think of at least 3 roosting holes and their occupants which were revealed to me by the din of Blue Jay profanity. After all the Jays have all day to look for owls, so why shouldn't they know where they stay? Whenever I think there's an owl hole in a tree, I examine the ground around it for pellets or weathered rodent bones. If it is an owl's tree, the pellets are almost always there.

"Adult Screech Owls are generally sedentary, hence if a bird or a pair is located, look for their nest early in May. Usually it is in a large cavity not very high. Some owls are violently resentful of human visitors at night, -- so it is best to be careful.

"Contrary to popular belief, I have never trapped an owl. I've tried without success. Once I set 2 of George Dock's Sokri traps in a field between two "owl trees". The traps were baited with attractive live bait, but no owl.

"On January 28, as I returned home, I caught sight of a squirrel-sized object silhouetted against the fading light of the setting sun. When I walked over

to the thing, I was delighted to see that it was a fine Screech Owl. It seemed to me that it was too early in the evening for the owl to be abroad, and that the bird had probably emerged from a hole in the tree. Next day I examined the tree. Not only did I locate the hole, but the bird was sitting right there in it. I kept seeing the bird almost every day for the next few weeks. On February 19, there were no people around to ask annoying questions and the owl was sitting there in the hole. All I did was get a ladder and climb up. When the bird saw me coming, he dropped down into the darkness. The good part came when I drew him out. It was one of my own birds. I banded him at my station, about a block away on Feb. 20, 1941. I caught this bird in '42, and in '43 on his nest. One of his young of 1943 was captured in Alpine, N. J. with a broken wing on April 10, 1944.

"An afterthought. - - Twice I have bumped into owls far away from my base of operations. Now I carry a No. 5 band on my key ring. It also comes in handy when I want to explain bird-banding to someone."

"P. S. "Joe" Hickey caught and brought to me one of the adult Saw-whet Owls that I banded."

#### NEWS FOR THE BIRD BANDERS

The Youth's magazine section of the Sunday Hartford, (Conn.) Courant for Feb. 25th, carried a fine banding story written by Prof. G. Hapgood Parks. The article was illustrated by an unknown artist of whom Prof. Parks writes, "Wish I could claim credit for the artist's contribution. Such an envious expression on the unbanded humming bird's face! I've often noticed just such an expression on the faces of unbanded birds. Haven't you? Our artist must be a bander at heart even if he doesn't know it. Just thought you'd like to see the "torture" with which your publication's suggestion is infecting our reading public."

Raymond J. Fleetwood of Round Oak, Ga. would like to buy a lantern-slide projector at reasonable cost. If any member knows where such equipment can be obtained please write to Mr. Fleetwood.

William Pepper, Jr. of Philadelphia, Pa. who started active banding again on Feb. 13 reported 74 birds banded by the end of the first month. As February is a "slow" month at many stations, this total seems like a fine start. He writes that his father, Dr. William Pepper plans to visit Avery Island, La. He will be the guest of Edward A. McIlhenny and hopes to be able to band some of the odd birds in that section. Members will be interested to know that EBBA NEWS was in a small way instrumental in bringing these two experienced banders together.

Mrs. Herbert E. Carnes of Tenafly, N. J. has been using a mixture of lard and flour worked into a good stiff dough as bird food and bait with great success. This bait was first mentioned in EBBA NEWS in Aug. '42 as used by Mrs. H. D. Crockford of Chapel Hill, N. C. who also got fine results with it. Mrs. Carnes writes that she got the idea for this bait from reading over old copies of the NEWS. This proves to the many members who keep a file of our issues from year to year, that an occasional glance through them may suggest an idea or two that will work for them. Mrs. Carnes also writes that she would like to purchase Bent's "Birds of Prey", Part 1 and 2. Any member who knows where these two books can be found is asked to notify Mrs. Carnes.

Members should remember that accidentally killed birds, very common in spring, are a good source of data for those banders looking for points in sex determination, measurements, plumage, etc. Such material often brought to many of us should not be wasted. Full notes should be taken.

## BIRD BANDING THIRTY YEARS AGO

In June, 1914, I began banding birds and I am still doing so. At that time I hunted for nests and banded the nestlings. During that year I banded in Pennsylvania and also in Maine and reached a total of 105 birds of 18 species. None of these banded birds were ever heard from again. I still have four of the bands similar to the ones I used at that time. These bands are stamped, "AM. M.N.H.N.Y." Few people finding them on a bird understood that this meant American Museum of Natural History, New York.

In 1915, I obtained a Government Sparrow trap and during that year I banded a total of 237 birds of 31 varieties. A White-breasted Nuthatch trapped and banded in January, 1915 returned the following winter and was my first return. Only about ten of the above total were trapped birds. In July, 1915, a young Herring Gull was banded and was reported from Connecticut in 1920.

In 1916 I banded a total of 214 birds of 27 species, but only about 15 of these birds were trapped. A nestling Red-wing Blackbird banded near Philadelphia was shot in North Carolina in January, 1917. A young Common Tern banded in Maine was shot a month about 20 miles from the place of banding.

In 1917, only 54 birds were banded. One, an adult Catbird trapped in May returned in 1918 and again in 1919. In 1918, 125 birds were banded, one, a nestling Catbird, banded near Philadelphia, was shot a year later at Ft. Lee, N.Y.

To sum up the results of my banding in the first 5 years, 735 birds were banded of 46 varieties and of these only six were heard from later. The great majority of these birds were young birds, very few being trapped adults. Gradually as more traps were used, returns occurred and reports came in. As I look back on those early days I am surprised that these first five years did not discourage me.

----Dr. William Pepper, 1112 Prospect St., Melrose Park, Phila. Pa.

(Editor's Note: We are happy to know that these sparse returns and recoveries didn't discourage Dr. Pepper, for since the above years he has banded thousands of birds and collected some very fine data. The second bird he banded at his present station at Melrose Park was a Robin on April 1, 1924. This bird returned on March 27, 1925, April 15, 1926 and again on March 24, 1927. The third bird banded at this station was a Junco banded April 1, 1924. This bird returned of February 20, 1927 and again on December 4, 1929.)

FLASH!! (A bulletin just handed me from Dr. Pepper.) "I note on Page 4 of the February issue of EBBA NEWS that Harold S. Peters of Charleston, S.C., Atlantic Flyway Biologist, states that he banded some terns and gulls in Newfoundland in 1944. He further states that these are the very first birds ever to be banded in Newfoundland, except for a single Canada Goose banded in September, 1935 by Mrs. Victor Campbell at St. Georges, Nfld. On the River of Ponds, Newfoundland, I banded the following birds in 1919. On July 23rd, a Black-poll Warbler, July 26, 2 Canada Jays and 2 more on the next day. On August 3, an Olive-back Thrush; On the 6th another Jay; on the 8th 3 Water Thrush and another Jay and on the 10th another Water Thrush. In 1920 at the same place on July 28, I banded another Black-poll Warbler. I used salmon as bait for the Jays and insects attracted by the fish attracted the Olive-back and Water Thrush."

----Dr. William Pepper.

W. J. Brown of Henderson, N. C. shot a banded goose at Naktanuskeet Lake in January. The Jack Miner Organization wrote him that the goose was banded in the spring of 1930. (That would make this bird fourteen years old).



Sec. 562 P. L. & R.



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