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AGE CLASSES OF BIRDS MIGRATING SOUTHWARD
THROUGH CENTRAL NEW JERSEY - AUTUMN 1970

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The examination of age classes of birds migrating southward during autumn has become popular among bird banders in eastern North America as commented upon recently by Barry (1971), Leberman and Clench (1969, 1970), Marsi (1972) and Murray (1966). In brief, it is commonly reported that banding stations located well inland from the Atlantic Coast record considerably larger numbers of adult birds in proportion to birds of the year of most species than do coastal stations. This paper analyses data concerned with the 1,117 birds banded and aged by standard skulling and/or other characteristics by a group of volunteers over a period of 105 days between 2 July and 5 December 1970 on the New Land Research Reserve located about 1.5 miles south of Hopewell, Mercer County, New Jersey. This station is inland about 48 air miles northwest of Island Beach State Park, New Jersey, and about ten miles east of the Delaware River [Figure One].

Description of the Reserve and its birdlife, and a summary of the age, sex and wing lengths of the migrants banded there during the autumn of 1970, have appeared elsewhere (Heintzelman, 1971a, 1971b), but these papers made no attempt to calculate the percentages of Hatching Year (HY) and After Hatching Year (AHY) birds, or to compare this information with various other nearby coastal and inland stations. These are the purposes of this paper. Only species for which ten or more individuals were banded are considered in Table One. Table Two summarizes by families the sample of 1,117 birds reported in Table One. With all 30 species [Table One] considered collectively, approximately one-third were AHY birds whereas about two-thirds were HY individuals. Compared on a species to species basis, the proportion of AHY birds ranged from one percent (in five species) to 100 percent.

Discussion

Considered at face value, the figures in the tables may be somewhat misleading unless qualified. In point of fact, several different populations of birds are represented in the data. Included are migrants (birds not breeding in our region but passing through enroute from their breeding grounds to their wintering grounds), permanent residents (both migratory individuals and local, non-migratory birds), winter residents (some individuals remain in our area throughout winter, but others continue to move further south), and summer residents (birds which leave our area after the completion of the nesting season and return again the following spring).