

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PROJECT FOR STUDYING
DISEASES OF BIRDS

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IN a paper published last year (Worth. 1937. *Bird-Banding* 8: 109-113) a problem and a plan relative to the study of bird diseases was proposed to bird banders. The propositions set forth have met with such excellent coöperation from both bird banders and pathologists that it seems timely to publish a progress report at this time.

Up to the present all the specimens sent in for examination have been inspected by Drs. Fox, Ratcliffe and Worth in the Philadelphia region. The following people have generously contributed specimens for pathological study:

M. V. Beals, Elmhurst, Long Island.....	{	2 Robins
	{	1 Myrtle Warbler
	{	1 Fox Sparrow
	{	1 Tree Sparrow
H. McCann, Paoli, Pa.....	{	1 Fox Sparrow
J. M. Cadbury, Germantown, Pa.....	{	4 English Sparrows
J. A. Gillespie, Glenolden, Pa.....	{	1 Fox Sparrow
B. S. Bowdish, Demarest, N. J.....	{	1 Carolina Chickadee
Albert Conway, West Chester, Pa.....	{	1 Cardinal
	{	1 Crow
Alva Nye, Univ. of Penna., Philadelphia, Pa.....	{	1 Duck Hawk
Conrad Roland, Philadelphia, Pa.....	{	1 Love Bird
	{	1 Fox Sparrow
R. M. Stabler, Wallingford, Pa.....	{	1 Snowy Owl
Trudy Enders, Swarthmore, Pa.....	{	1 Brown Creeper
Frederick Schmid, Philadelphia, Pa.....	{	1 Red-shouldered Hawk
R. J. Sim, New Jersey.....	{	1 Red-tailed Hawk
Robert L. Haines, Merchantville, N. J.....	{	1 Red-shouldered Hawk
Richard F. Miller, Philadelphia, Pa.....	{	1 Hairy Woodpecker

Among the twenty-three specimens thus far examined, the viscera were frequently well enough preserved to provide a reasonable post-mortem diagnosis. Various intestinal worms, moulds, and specifically pathogenic bacteria were found even in several cases in which advanced decomposition of the internal organs had already taken place. Birds which were apparently healthy and which had met with accidental deaths were not common, but even so they were instructive in providing a picture of normality upon which to judge the abnormal.

This is an example of the material secured in one region and it is hoped that as the coöperation of pathologists in other regions is secured, the project will progress favorably.

The purpose of this project is to obtain data on the causes of birds' deaths. This may eventually yield information concerning periodic population cycles and fluctuations as well as causes of avian mortality. The procedure at present is as follows:

Each coöperating bird bander should send all dead birds coming

into his possession to the nearest regional pathologist for examination. These birds should be shipped as quickly as possible. The following pathologists have thus far expressed a willingness to examine specimens sent to them:

- Dr. Herbert Fox, Penrose Research Laboratory, The Zoological Garden, 34th St. and Girard Ave., Philadelphia, Pa.
- Dr. Herbert L. Ratcliffe, also at Philadelphia Zoological Garden.
- Dr. C. Brooke Worth, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.
- Dr. F. R. Beaudette, New Brunswick, N. J.
- Dr. J. E. Shillinger, Biological Survey, Washington, D. C.
- Dr. Donald C. Boughton, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga.

It is hoped that additional names will be added to this list as time goes on. These will be published periodically in *Bird-Banding*. Mr. Edwin A. Mason, of Groton, Mass., is inaugurating a study of the immediate causes of birds' deaths (autos, light-houses, bridges, etc.) and will instruct his coöperators to ship their specimens to a pathologist, but as yet no student of avian diseases in the New England region has been secured.

The pathologists will make as complete an autopsy as the condition of the specimens may warrant. Skin, skeleton, various organs and tissues and both internal and external parasites are being preserved for study. A brief report will be sent to the bander submitting the specimen, and a duplicate report will be filed in the office of the Section of Disease Control, Bureau of Biological Survey in Washington D. C.

In concluding this report, it is urged that all bird banders send any dead birds whatsoever to their nearest regional pathologist. Bird-banding was originally taken over by the Biological Survey not simply for its intrinsic interest, but for any possible contributions to the welfare of birds and man which might result from that activity. Bird banders therefore exist mainly as a body organized for the promotion of the welfare of birds. In assisting with the discovery of the causes and courses of disease among birds, bird banders will materially further avian welfare.

GENERAL NOTES

Albinistic Herring Gulls.—Last summer (1937), we made our annual banding expedition to Round Island, in the upper part of Green Bay, known as the Big Bay de Noch. On arriving there, a young coast guard said "see this white one", so I examined the bird carefully. The bird was half grown but still in the downy plumage, which was practically all pure white, with a few very light-colored, brown spots on its crown. Its eyes were entirely pink. I had a plan to keep the bird and raise it, but conditions made this plan impossible. One of the oldest guards told me that he had seen some old Herring Gulls like this one (albinistic) on his boat's bow early in the spring, near where I found the young bird above described—two birds with pink eyes. From the stories of these men and from my own observations, I believe it desirable to investigate further the possible occurrence of a strain of albinism in this district.—WILLIAM I. LYON.