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FINAL REPORT OF THE CONNECTICUT VALLEY EVENING GROSBEAK SURVEY FOR THE WINTERS OF 1948-49 AND 1949-50¹

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The Connecticut Valley Evening Grosbeak Survey² was initiated by the senior author in May 1946 when five Evening Grosbeaks (*Hesperiphona v. vespertina*) were color banded. With the reappearance of the grosbeaks at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary December 14, 1946 the original project was expanded to include other banding stations in the Connecticut Valley, so that the wintering Evening Grosbeak population in that area could be studied as a whole. During the succeeding months the following banding stations, listed from north to south, cooperated in color-banding the grosbeaks as follows:

WHITE: Alfred R. Tobey, Eaglebrook School, Old Deerfield, Mass.

GREEN: Frederick A. Saunders, South Hadley, Mass.

ORANGE: Lester R. Marland, Ware, Mass.

RED LEFT: B. M. & M. S. Shaub, Northampton, Mass.

RED RIGHT: E. A. Mason, Arcadia Sanctuary, Northampton, Mass.

BLUE: G. Hapgood Parks, Hartford, Conn.

From January to May 1947 at the above stations, 924 Evening Grosbeaks were marked with color bands as well as with the regular numbered aluminum bands, and 192 birds were banded with aluminum only. Seventy-five observers reported feeding station data which indicated that the Evening Grosbeaks usually stayed in the general vicinity of the station at which they were banded; but individuals or small segments did break away from their original flock to appear later at considerable distances, in some cases, from their point of origin. Between May 1-10 most of the birds departed from the Connecticut Valley.

In the winter of 1947-48 the grosbeaks failed to appear in appreciable numbers and few were banded.

In 1948-49 the birds returned in moderate numbers and the same banding stations were assigned their distinctive colors with the addition of a brown plastic band to indicate the year. However, banding of grosbeaks was carried on only by the Shaubs and Parks, who banded 288 and 112 respectively during the season. Because of the presence of noticeably fewer birds than were apparent in 1946-47, the number of observer reports greatly declined. Only 32 observers in the whole region of the grosbeak invasion reported to the Survey. Among the most interesting were records of 1947 birds at Bedford, Sharon and

(1) Research Contribution No. 2, Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Northampton, Mass.

(2) Mason, Edwin A., and Shaub, Mary S., "Report on Connecticut River Valley Co-operative Evening Grosbeak Survey," *Bird-Banding*, 20: 169-179, Oct. 1949.

Amesbury, Mass.; Ticonderoga, N. Y., and Hanover, N. H. An average of less than seven reports per observer was received during the entire season. A few observations of native foods taken by the grosbeaks included: the seeds of mountain ash and box elder; the fruits of hackberry; and the buds of apples and maples.

In the winter of 1949-50 bander interest in the Survey increased to the point where colors had to be shared by stations within a five-mile radius of the original stations. These stations and colors remained the same with the exception of Tobey, who was succeeded by Edward Norman, Old Deerfield, who used white as did also Mrs. Cristabel Rockwood, Conway, Mass., a little over five air miles northwest. Mrs. H. A. Drew's station at Barre, Vermont was added to the Survey and given the color black. Other new banding stations were the Alexander Bergstroms, West Hartford, Conn., who were assigned blue; Miss Elizabeth Boyd, South Hadley, Mass., green; and Miss Dorothy Driscoll, Westhampton, Mass., red. During the 1949-50 season, to indicate the year of banding, a pink band was also applied. Because of the large numbers of grosbeaks in upstate New York, Stephen C. Fordham, Jr. was assigned a combination of red and green bands for this area. A pink band alone was used by Mrs. T. B. Rhines at Glastonbury, Conn., brown alone by George G. Loring at Prides Crossing, Mass., red over green and pink over green by G. G. Ommanney, Hudson Heights, Que. Bills of grosbeaks were red lacquered by Stephen C. Fordham, Jr. at Storrs, Conn., and orange lacquered by the same bander at Delmar, N. Y. During the winter of 1949-50 banding results were as follows:

	Total	Alum. Only	Color	
			Bands	Bills
E. A. Bergstrom, S. Windsor, Conn.	60	33		
E. A. Bergstrom, W. Hartford, Conn.	108	103		
E. A. Carrier, Hartford, Conn.	74		74	
John Conkey, Ware, Mass.	40	40		
Mrs. H. A. Drew, Barre, Vermont	323	78	245	
Miss Dorothy Driscoll, Westhampton, Mass.	93		93	
S. C. Fordham, Jr., Delmar, N. Y.	211			211
S. C. Fordham, Jr., Storrs, Conn.	270			270
S. C. Fordham, Jr., Schenectady, N. Y.	79			79
S. C. Fordham, Jr., Ballston Lake, N. Y.	39			39
S. C. Fordham, Jr., Saranac Lake, N. Y.	132		132	
Mrs. Leonard French, W. Hartford, Conn.	10	10		
George G. Loring, Prides Crossing, Mass.	19		19	
L. R. Marland, Ware, Mass.	176	176		
E. A. Mason, Northampton, Mass.	139		139	
Edward Norman, Old Deerfield, Mass.	290	290	some	
G. G. Ommanney, Hudson Heights, Que.	59	29	30	
G. H. Parks, Hartford, Conn.	988		988	
Mrs. T. B. Rhines, Glastonbury, Conn.	409	95	314	
Mrs. Cristabel S. Rockwood, Conway, Mass.	104	93	6	
F. A. Saunders & E. Boyd, S. Hadley, Mass.	300	39	261	
B. M. & M. S. Shaub, Northampton, Mass.	452		452	
	4353	1001	2871	481

During the winter the large number of Evening Grosbeaks present in the Valley brought several hundred reports from 89 observers. Despite the fact that printed return postcards were supplied, the observing and recording were not consistently carried out through the season by the majority of observers. In many cases the brevity of the reports was unavoidable; however, all data were studied carefully. Of the 39 persons reporting, 43 had only one to 5 observations, 16 sent in 6 to 10 records, and 7 made 11 to 20 observations. Twenty-three cooperators listed over 20 records.

The number and variety of color bands observed were not proportional to observation intensity as indicated especially in the detailed reports of Bunn (Burlington, Conn.), Crain (Franklin, Mass., and Norwich, Conn.), Crowell (Franklin, Mass.) and Fordham (Delmar, N. Y.) which showed no color-banded birds at all. In several other reports which reflected persistent observing and the presence of uniformly large flocks very few color-banded birds were seen. This may indicate that in these areas the flocks were more cohesive than in other parts of the region or color bands present may not have been seen if the birds fed at a distance from the observation point or at a lower level. At stations recording the largest numbers of color-banded birds, red '50 were most numerous with red '47 a close second and red '49 a poor third. Blue bands were the next most numerous with about the same ratios by years. Green bands came next in numbers observed with white and orange trailing. Only scattered pink only was reported. The relatively larger numbers of 1950 banded birds observed were to be expected as more grosbeaks were banded this season and naturally currently-banded birds would be more numerous.

An analysis of all reports received showed that Evening Grosbeaks banded with red in 1947 were observed mainly in Massachusetts from Carver (near the coast) through the central part of the state to Pittsfield and north to Mt. Hermon. Many reports were received from the Connecticut Valley in Massachusetts and Connecticut south to Hartford and southeast to Norwichtown. Berlin, N. H., and Schenectady, N. Y., each produced reports of birds of 1947 banding. 1949 red-banded birds were reported from only a few scattered localities in the Valley in Massachusetts and Connecticut and at Athol, North Brookfield and Rochdale, Mass. Red bands of 1950 were observed over a wide area including the important Valley stations as well as at two localities to the southwest—Naugatuck and Cos Cob, Conn.

Evening Grosbeaks banded with blue in 1947 showed up in the same general localities with a little wider dispersal in Massachusetts including Attleboro, Concord, Lunenburg, West Townsend and Athol. This color was also observed at Schenectady, N. Y. Birds of 1949 blue banding were reported from only a few localities in the Connecticut Valley and at West Townsend and Pittsfield, Mass. Grosbeaks blue-banded in 1950 were also seen at the Valley stations as well as in Orange and Pittsfield, Mass., and Terryville, Conn.

Reports of white and orange bands were so few as to have little significance but green-banded birds of 1947 and 1950 were reported from a number of stations from Mt. Hermon, Mass., to Hartford, Conn.

Saranac Lake, N. Y., and Barre, Vt., each reported 1947 green-banded birds and green 1950 was seen at Pittsfield, Mass.

Grosbeaks with bills red lacquered at Storrs, Conn., were reported at Glastonbury, Suffield and Norwichtown, Conn., and at Ware, Monson, Springfield and Longmeadow, Mass. Those with bills orange-lacquered at Delmar, N. Y., were seen at Schenectady, Delmar, Albany, Troy, Slingerlands and several other localities, none much over 20 miles from the point of banding. The dates of observations indicated that sometimes in two weeks the lacquer was all scratched off and a month was the maximum time the color was discernible.

The dates of exodus from the observers' stations were generally quite variable between the last week of April and middle of May, the latest ones being May 22nd from Parks (Hartford, Conn.) and Hubbard (Pittsfield, Mass.). Other mid-May last dates were the 13th, Anderson (Orange, Mass.); the 14th, Bagg (Holyoke, Mass.); the 16th, Bowles (Northampton, Mass.); and the 18th, Albertine (Ware, Mass.) and Smith (Suffield, Conn.).

From the observers' reports a number of conclusions can be drawn. It was found that the Evening Grosbeaks banded in previous years tended to return to the region where they were banded but not necessarily to the specific locality of banding as more observations of blue bands were made in Massachusetts than in Connecticut. This may have been due in part to the greater number of observers in Massachusetts or it may indicate that fewer birds moved into Connecticut. Naturally, birds banded in 1950 were observed in fairly large numbers close to the banding stations. However, in some instances a number of colors were reported by observers residing near a banding station. M. H. and J. A. Watrous, Northampton, Mass., observed a wide range of colors despite their proximity to the Shaubs. Miss Eleanor Smith, Suffield, Conn., recorded many blues from the Hartford stations but also a number of green, orange and red bands. Although flock size varied from one bird to 185, the size most frequently observed was less than 25.

One trait of the species which recurs frequently in reports from both banding and observing stations is its habit of not returning to stations after early afternoon. The time of last appearance could be stated as roughly two to three P.M. early in winter, becoming progressively later, as days lengthened, to three to four P.M. This study has not unearthed a single piece of satisfactory evidence on the species' roosting habits. When the birds disappear early in the afternoon, they have been unobserved until their reappearance the next morning. Whether they use this period for a pre-roosting feeding upon natural foods such as tree buds, or merely for "loafing" cannot be definitely stated from the evidence at hand.

As the close of the season approached, there was not a noticeable increase northward of color-banded birds from the Hartford region and the migration northward was very rapid in comparison with the fairly slow movement southward early in the winter.

The operation of the Connecticut Valley Evening Grosbeak Survey for three winters has proven a success and has shown that observer-

cooperation can produce significant results provided the habits of the bird bring it close enough for easy observation and study, and that the observers are persistent enough in obtaining a continuity of their records.

The continuation of the Connecticut Valley Evening Grosbeak Survey, however, was not considered feasible because there was a limited selection of colors in plastic bands to enable assignment of distinctive colors to each banding station; neither were there available enough colors to provide a band to indicate the year of banding. Also, the Fish and Wildlife Service officially discouraged the use of coiled plastic bands because of several reported injuries to birds' legs. Another factor was that interest in color banding had spread among banders to such an extent that the arbitrary use of colored bands by some banders, without consultation with the Survey, only confused the reports. It was therefore decided to terminate the study of Evening Grosbeaks in the Connecticut Valley under the set-up described above.

The Connecticut Valley Evening Grosbeak Survey has been superseded by the Evening Grosbeak Survey which is currently studying the Evening Grosbeak in those parts of eastern United States and Canada which are included in its range. Information on this species, gathered from both banding and observing stations, is correlated and disseminated through the *Evening Grosbeak Survey News*, published December through May by B. M. and M. S. Shaub, 159 Elm Street, Northampton, Mass.

SUMMARY

The Connecticut Valley Co-operative Evening Grosbeak Survey, initiated in May 1946 and carried on in the winter of 1946-47, was continued in the two winter periods, 1948-49 and 1949-50. Studies of the Evening Grosbeak were made through the medium of numbered aluminum bands, supplemented by colored plastic bands or bill lacquering.

(1) 400 Evening Grosbeaks were color-banded at two stations (Parks, Hartford, Conn.) and (Shaubs, Northampton, Mass.) during 1948-49 and the comparatively small number of Evening Grosbeaks present that season produced only a little over 200 reports from 32 observers. A few interesting reports of 1947 color-banded Evening Grosbeaks were received from widely scattered points outside the Valley.

(2) 4,353 Evening Grosbeaks were banded in the winter of 1949-50 by 18 banders. Of these, 1,001 were banded with aluminum only, 2,871 with color, and 481 had bills lacquered with red or orange. Several hundred reports came from 89 observers.

(3) Conclusions from these reports were as follows:

- (a) Some flocks were more cohesive than others.
- (b) Color-banded Evening Grosbeaks were reported over a wide area in New England and New York, but birds banded in previous years tended to return in larger numbers to the region where they were banded.
- (c) Lacquering of bills proved to be only a temporary marking and this technique seems of value only for short-term studies

lasting not longer than a month.

- (d) Flock size varied enormously but averaged less than 25 birds.
- (e) The time of exodus from the Valley varied between the last week of April and middle of May with rapid migration northward.
- (f) A number of still unanswered questions regarding this species need further investigation. These include locations of roosting sites, and the extent to which native wild foods supplement the sunflower seeds eaten almost exclusively at feeding stations.
- (g) Cooperative surveys of a single species can produce results provided the bird is easily identifiable and reporting is consistently carried out in the period of the study. A centralized control of the distinctive marks used is also a necessity.

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MORE EVENING GROSBEAK NOTES FROM HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

BY G. HAPGOOD PARKS

Little did we realize what the next few winters held in store for us when, one morning in early February, 1942, two female Evening Grosbeaks (*Hesperiphona vespertina vespertina* Cooper) were seen eating sunflower seeds at one of our back-yard feeders. These were the first of this species ever to visit us. Little did we realize that, when we trapped them both on the 8th day of that February and marked them with government bands 41-211434 and 41-211435, we had begun a study which was to result in the accumulation of well over five thousand individual records within the next eight years.

No other Evening Grosbeak was observed that winter and the following year brought not even one of them to us. An inkling of what was to come should have been apparent, perhaps, when 41-211434 returned to our trap on March 10, 1944. From January 22 until April 28 of that year small flocks were irregularly and unpredictably with us and we succeeded in banding 45 females and 4 males. In addition to the one return a single recovery was also trapped.

We again drew a blank during the 1944-45 season, but on December 13, 1945, a banded female was seen at our suspended feeder and that season's historic invasion was on. But let us save space and time by constructing a tabular picture of the feathered actors which play the parts in the drama that is about to unfold (Table I).

During the 1946-47 season each newly banded bird was marked with a blue plastic on its right tarsus in addition to the numbered aluminum Fish and Wildlife Service band on its left. Brown above blue plastics distinguished the 1948-49 bandees, and during 1949-50 we used pink above blue.