

BANDING ROBINS AT NORRISTOWN

By RAYMOND J. MIDDLETON

Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) are abundant summer residents of southeastern Pennsylvania. In recent years a few of this species are found during the winter season. In the winter of 1957-58 large flocks were to be seen.

However, as yet we have no evidence of any individual being a permanent resident. In fact, all available records tend to prove that the summer birds of this area move to the deep south to winter (this we shall show later in the paper). There are many who believe that wintering flocks are summer residents of far northern areas that move into the northeastern states to winter.

This species moves into the area in good numbers in early March, and before the month is over they are quite abundant. During April the nesting season gets underway rapidly. We have about three acres of woodland on our place, one third being old deciduous woods, mostly hickory and various oaks, also a grove of tall evergreens (white pine). Then there are many wild cherry and mulberry trees which provide good food for Robins in late spring and summer months. This species nests in good numbers all over our grounds. During the heat of summer, flocks of young of the year from over much of nearby areas come into our woods to seek welcome shade.

Our station was put in operation in July of 1921. For seven years we had a single sparrow trap in use and 36 of this species wandered into it. Late in 1928 water traps came into use. In 1929 we placed several single chardonneret traps out with waterdrips as bait; that year we caught 68 Robins.

We noticed that many robins walked around these traps looking for a ground entrance during the summer. We at once saw the need of a ground entrance trap to use with water as bait if many of this species were to be taken. That winter the Middleton Thrush Trap came into being. In May of 1930 three were put out, and our summer catch mounted to 164 Robins. The summers of 1932 and 1936 turned out to be our banner years as we banded 395 each year. Not since then has this species been so abundant. We kept well over 200 each year until 1949; since then our annual catch has ranged from 75 to 150. We operate the water traps from April 15th on, using three Brenkle and six thrush traps. A dry hot summer brings many robins into the woods while in a wet cool summer water traps have little attraction.

TABLE 1 Total Captures—

Number banded	4887
Number repeats	369
Number of returns	78
Recovered elsewhere	42

We believe that the flocks of young of the year moving into our woods during the heat of summer actually come from over a considerable part of the surrounding territory. Consequently, even if they return in later years there is little chance of them coming to the trapping area. We feel that the low rate of returns from immature birds (less than 1%)

TABLE 2 Division of the Age Groups—

	Age			Totals
	Adult	Immature	Unknown	
BANDED	580	4180	127	4887
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL	11.5	85.9	2.6	100
REPEATS	9	360	—	369
RETURNS	45	33	—	78
RECOVERIES	7	32	3	42

in later years is not the true return rate, as many may find their way back to the general area but not to the small station grounds.

For this reason, in this paper we have included as returns all birds found within a radius of three miles around the station. In previous papers (with other species) we have classed only as returns those individuals taken in the traps or found within an eighth of a mile of us, beyond this all are recoveries.

TABLE 3 An albino robin that holds our longevity record—
Adult No. 39-369745 banded August 15, 1939

Return 1	.....	April	1, 1940
"	2	.....	April 2, 1941
"	3	.....	March 30, 1942
"	4	.....	April 5, 1943
"	5	.....	March 23, 1944
"	6	.....	April 1, 1945
"	7	.....	June 1, 1946
"	8	.....	May 4, 1947

This bird was a partial albino, body all white, wings and forehead normal; at least one year old when banded, when last seen it was nine years old and may have been more. This bird was so unusually marked that we could observe its movements all summer of each of the years as it ranged all over our place. Some years it nested right on our farm while in others it nested in nearby gardens. At no time did we learn of its nesting site until the young had flown; thus we had no opportunity to determine if its young showed any traces of albinism.

Two other return records are of special interest—

ADULT No. A322102 banded June 15, 1929

Return 1	on April 13, 1930
"	2 on April 20, 1931
"	3 on April 23, 1932

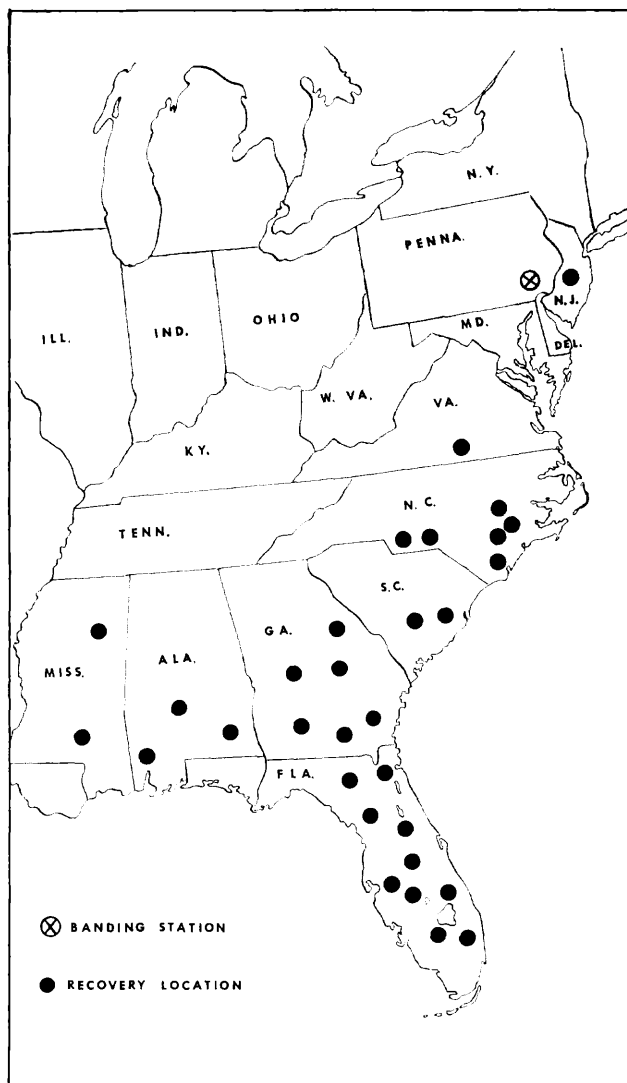
NESTLING No. 626740 banded in nest July 18, 1928

Return 1	on May 14, 1930
"	2 on May 28, 1932

This bird was captured every other year and in 1932 was mated to A322102 and was nesting in a wild cherry tree just 50 feet from the tree in which it had been banded.

AGE SUMMARY

26	lived to be	2	years old		
26	"	"	"	3	"
17	"	"	"	4	"
1	"	"	"	5	"
1	"	"	"	6	"
1	"	"	"	7	"
1	"	"	"	8	"
1	"	"	"	9	"



RECOVERIES

Of 11 birds recovered within 50 miles from station, 3 are of special note—

One immature banded in 1942 was found dead at Glenside in 1946.

One immature banded in 1938 was found dead at Glenside in 1946.

This is 18 miles from station.

One immature banded in August 1941 was caught in April 1942 at Princeton, New Jersey by Charles Rogers.

SOUTHERN RECOVERIES

BAND NUMBER	DATE BANDED	DATE OF RECOVERY	PLACE OF RECOVERY	CAUSE OF DEATH
45-314404	6-23-47	1-14-48	Newsons, Va.	caught
503-82223	5-1-53	1-28-54	Sumter, S. C.	inj. released
42-355271	7-19-46	11-21-46	Nichols, S. C.	found dead
B337664	8-1-32	12-26-35	Fair Bluff, N. C.	found dead
B385242	9-24-32	3-1-34	Whiteville, N. C.	killed
B385783	6-27-33	1-10-38	Raleigh, N. C.	caught by cat
36-324616	8-22-36	3-7-43	Nashville, N. C.	killed
36-327823	7-7-37	2-11-41	Smithfield, N. C.	found dead
41-332903	8-17-41	2-6-42	Fair Bluff, N. C.	found dead
A322139	7-24-29	11-5-30	Faceville, Ga.	found dead
B377858	9-12-32	1-17-33	Pearson, Ga.	found dead
35-327051	9-23-35	3-1-37	Chula, Ga.	caught
36-324623	8-23-36	2-15-37	Jesup, Ga.	found dead
38-323999	7-12-39	1-25-40	Hazelhurst, Ga.	found dead
523-83893	7-17-55	1-7-58	West Green, Ga.	found sick
A235478	6-30-30	1-11-33	Plant City, Fla.	found dead
B329651	6-9-32	1-18-33	Tampa, Fla.	killed
B337629	7-20-32	12-20-32	Brandon, Fla.	killed
B385793	6-28-33	3-2-37	Opa Locka, Fla.	shot
C301670	6-3-34	2-26-37	Mulberry, Fla.	shot
C301768	7-23-34	3-7-37	Groveland, Fla.	killed
36-324598	8-21-36	2-1-39	Lithia, Fla.	killed
36-324609	8-21-36	2-28-39	Central Wauchula, Fla.	found dead
36-327938	7-22-37	1-1-40	Cornwall, Fla.	killed by cat
38-323828	9-14-38	2-15-39	Jacksonville, Fla.	found dead
B385748	6-21-33	3-3-34	Wetumpka, Ala.	found dead
36-327985	9-7-37	1-30-39	Mobile, Ala.	found dead
523-83557	7-4-54	1-17-56	Stapleton, Ala.	found, wing broken
C301651	3-24-34	2-24-36	Magnolia, Miss.	caught
35-327088	5-18-36	5-5-37	Tupelo, Miss.	injured, died

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