

and the interspersing of agricultural and forest land provides ample food and cover. In sections where there is more forest land than cultivated land, blackbird populations are sparser. This is true in much of eastern South Carolina and Georgia, where more and more of the land is being planted to pine.

During milder winters, a fairly large Redwinged Blackbird population is present in the Delaware Valley and Chesapeake Bay area. Corn left in the fields from mechanical corn picking probably is important in holding Redwinged Blackbirds this far north in winter.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ROOSTING COVER

Roosting areas of large aggregations of Redwinged Blackbirds usually are in wetlands and often are remote and inaccessible. In the main wintering grounds of the Atlantic Seaboard, roosts are in three principal cover types: Phragmites cane (*Phragmites communis*) and Big Cordgrass (*Spartina cynosuroides*) in the Delaware Valley-Chesapeake Bay area; swamps and pocosins in southeastern Virginia and eastern North Carolina; Giant Cutgrass (*Zizaniopsis miliacea*) and Big Cordgrass in coastal South Carolina and Georgia. The stands of Phragmites cane usually are found in tidewater, where the plants average 10 feet high and form dense cover. Big Cordgrass grows in brackish marshes, where it averages 7 feet high and provides good roosting cover.

The great pocosin swamps or bogs of the Coastal Plain section of North Carolina contain the most impenetrable thickets anywhere in eastern North America. The jungle-like aspect of these areas results from a dense undergrowth of shrubby broad-leaved evergreens mixed with catbriers (*Smilax laurifolia*). Solid stands of Pond Pine (*Pinus serotina*) form the overstory. Most blackbird roosts are in this mixture of thickets and pines, although some are in the canebrakes (*Arundinaria*) of the same region.

Along the lower reaches of many of the Coastal Plain rivers of South Carolina and Georgia, Redwinged Blackbirds roost in small flocks in Giant Cutgrass. This plant forms extensive stands in the fresh tidal zone of the river estuaries, where it reaches 6 or 7 feet in height.

Although the principal winter Redwinged Blackbird roosts have been geographically located as depicted in Figure 1, others may exist in the rather extensive area of interest. Readers who know or learn of other roost locations are urged to contact the authors of this article.

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GENERAL NOTES

A Method of Recording Feather Molt in Birds.—While studying the molts in several species of birds, I was hampered by the tedious method of recording the stages of molt through which individual birds were passing. Taking written notes on feather loss and gain in several of the pterylae seemed to occupy too much time. In searching for a faster, more accurate method I came upon a process which may be of use to other banders.

I began by tracing several figures on an eight and one half by eleven inch piece of paper (Figure 1). The dorsal and ventral views of a Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens insularis*) by Pitelka (1945) show the feather tracts very well. The wings from Peterson (1947) are a bit small and should be drawn larger. The tail is just a schematic figure. From this sheet a stencil was cut and other copies were mimeographed. (The actual process I used was somewhat different and called multilith.)

Now, the procedure was somewhat simplified. The bird was examined for molt and those areas in molt were shaded in with a colored pencil. By varying the color, I was able to indicate old, molting, and new feathers. In the case of the retrices and remiges, a line showing the approximate length was drawn to scale on the diagram. If measurements of certain feathers were taken, the length was written "on the feather."

Other information such as date, weight, time, fat class, wing chord, etc., could be written or typed on the back of each sheet. These sheets in turn can be put in folders and stored in a standard sized filing cabinet.

REFERENCES

- PETERSON, R. T. 1947. A Field Guide to Birds. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston.
 PITELKA, F. A. 1945. Pterylography, Molt, and Age Determination of American Jays of the Genus *Aphelocoma*. *Condor*, 47: 229-260.

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