Acknowledgements

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SOME NOTES ON A TRIP TO AN EVENING GROSBEAK NESTING AREA

BY G. HAPGOOD PARKS AND HAZEL C. PARKS

Introduction:—

Chances are very good that if you have banded a significant number of Evening Grosbeaks (*Hesperiphona vespertina*) within the past decade your records show that one or more of those birds met an untimely end in Rimouski county of Canada's Quebec Province. Benjamin M. Shaub (1960) described this Quebec situation in his paper: "The Destruction of Nearly One Hundred Evening Grosbeaks at St. Leon le Grand, Quebec". In this enlightening story Mr. Shaub introduced to his readers Monsieur Thomas Brousseau, the bilingual French-Canadian who had reported so many of the band numbers to the U. S. Bird-Banding Office.

For more than a year prior to the publication of Mr. Shaub's paper we had been corresponding with M. Brousseau. This interesting correspondence had started when he reported the first of a series of five Evening Grosbeaks, which we had banded at Hartford, Conn., as having been "killed" on the West Branch of the Patapedia River in Rimouski county, P. Q. A warm intimacy developed as this correspondence continued and we decided to visit the region in order to discover what sort of men were killing these birds, and why.

Although Mr. Shaub's paper answered some of our questions it failed to deter us from our plan. When we decided to combine with our visit a banding study of the Evening Grosbeak population in that locale we found that the Canadian Wildlife Service was interested and most cooperative. We received permission to work in the region from the president of the Meadow Brook Fishing Club which organization controls trespass rights along the Patapedia River through governmental lease.

Excepting the intermittent spring showers which we encountered, the 800 miles from Hartford, Conn., to Amqui, P. Q., were covered without incident and we arrived there on June 12, 1962. The remaining 40 miles to M. Brousseau's camp at the 39-mile point on the Patapedia River is not recommended for the ladies even under

optimum conditions and a heavy rainfall just prior to our arrival made the road definitely impassable. Consequently, it was noon on the 14th when we finally stowed our equipment on a rented truck and clambered aboard.

At the gate which marks the entrance upon Crown lands there was a momentary pause while the guardian issued our "*permis de circulation*" (travel permit). About ten muddy miles farther on the truck became helplessly mired. Fortunately there was a logging operation nearby from which a caterpillar tractor soon emerged and it was not long until we were again on our way. If possible, the road became rougher, and wetter, as each mile passed, until we reached 39-Mile Camp considerably shaken, somewhat bruised, but apparently whole. We found barely time to pitch our tent before nightfall.

The Evening Grosbeaks arrive:—

During our drive from Hartford we had seen individual Evening Grosbeaks and scattered small groups of them along Route 17 as we crossed New Brunswick. A single male was also observed near Lac Humqui just before we entered the Quebec bush, but none was seen during the truck trip to 39-Mile Camp. At the guardian's gate we learned that two males had been seen there on May 30. Pete (M. Thomas Brousseau is "Pete" to *all* of his friends) informed us that he had seen at his camp on June 8, 9, and 10, two (males), two, and six Evening Grosbeaks, respectively. While we were pitching our tent very late in the afternoon of the 14th we also observed six of them. Before sunup next morning a group of 12 (5 males, 7 females) gathered in an ungrassed area just outside the door of the camp and pecked actively at the bare earth.

We set our traps:—

Although we had been reluctant to attempt the capture of this strong-billed species in mist nets we came equipped to do so since we were uncertain that our bait would attract them from the natural foods which their normal habitat provided so adequately. To supplement our nets, however, we had brought along two 3-celled Potter traps and a supply of sunflower seeds.

Early in the morning of June 15 we tossed a handful of the seeds upon a convenient board which rested on the camp's woodpile. For more than an hour they remained undiscovered, but once the birds found them it became immediately apparent that we need have felt no scruples regarding their attractiveness as bait. So, with what appeared to be a flock of about a dozen birds at hand, sexes quite equally represented, we set our two Potter traps.

The following table tells the story of the next 11 days. It shows quite graphically the manner in which the Evening Grosbeak population swelled and how the males became heavily predominant. The record for drizzly June 20, when trapping was greatly restricted, blurs the total picture a bit, perhaps. The table summarizes the Evening Grosbeaks taken in *two* 3-cell Potter traps at 39-Mile Camp on the West Branch of the Patapedia River.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF EVENING GROSBEAKS TRAPPED AT 39-MILE CAMP

Date (1962)	Banded					Birds handled	
	Sex		Total	Foreign Retraps	Repeats	Daily Total	Cumulative Total
	M	F					
June 15	6	7	13	0	1	14	14
" 16	17	10	27	1	11	39	53
" 17	11	12	23	1	6	30	83
" 18	21	17	38	1	40	79	162
" 19	33	14	47	2	25	74	236
" 20	12	5	17	0	39	56	292
" 21	68	12	80	3	27	110	402
" 22	39	12	51	3	30	84	486
" 23	56	4	60	1	30	91	577
" 24	87	11	98	2	13	113	690
" 25	40	6	46	2	9	57	747
Totals	390	110	500	16	231		747

TABLE 2. FOREIGN RETRAPS CAPTURED AND RELEASED AT 39-MILE CAMP

Band No.	Age	Sex	BANDED			Trapped and Released* (1962)
			Date	Place	Bander	
55-124467	A	F	Jan. 2, '61	Needham, Mass.	R. L. Sargent	June 17
57-113393	A	M	May 4, '62	Amsterdam, N. Y.	Mrs. M. A. Fitzgerald	" 23
57-160318	A	M	Dec. 28, '60	Littleton, N. H.	H. C. McDade	" 22
57-177356	A	M	Jan. 9, '61	Wolfeboro, N. H.	R. G. Carpenter	" 25
57-182591	A	M	Jan. 14, '60	Mt. Desert, Me.	Mrs. Barbara Patterson	" 17
59-105672	A	M	Jan. 25, '60	State College, Pa.	Miss D. L. Bordner	" 19
59-117554	A	F	Feb. 19, '60	Watertown, N. Y.	F. A. Clinch	" 19
59-126169	A	M	Feb. 26, '60	Herkimer, N. Y.	Mrs. W. N. Parsons	" 21
59-140707	U	M	Dec. 29, '61	State College, Pa.	Miss D. L. Bordner	" 21
59-165711	A	M	Apr. 1, '61	Adams, Mass.	Miss Frances Brierley	" 22
61-128684	A	F	May 8, '62	Adams, Mass.	Miss Frances Brierley	" 16
61-139362	A	M	Feb. 24, '62	Dallas, Pa.	E. L. Johnson	" 22
61-187570	A	M	Dec. 26, '61	Sheffield, Pa.	Mrs. Earl Smith	" 24
62-144460	A	M	Mar. 27, '62	Midland, Mich.	L. D. Line	" 25
62-148425	S	M	Mar. 4, '62	Sheffield, Pa.	Mrs. Earl Smith	" 21
62-158250	U	M	Mar. 4, '62	Stevens Point, Wis.	A. C. Epple	" 24

*at 39-Mile Camp, West Branch of the Patapedia River, Rimouski county, P. Quebec, Canada.

Bands Nos. 52-195301 to 52-195800, inclusive, which had been supplied by the Canadian Wildlife Service, were employed on the 500 unbanded birds captured. Sixteen foreign retraps were also taken and released. We handled 231 repeats. During almost the entire banding period one trap was allowed to remain set on the feeding table we had constructed for the purpose while the other was brought into the camp with any captured birds it might hold. By the time its captives were banded and measured the set trap was almost always filled to capacity.

Thanks to the efficient cooperation of the U. S. Bird-Banding Office we are able to report in our next table the histories of the 16 foreign retraps which were captured.

Referring to Table 2 it is worthy of note that the 13:3 ratio of males over females among these foreign retraps re-emphasizes the prevalence of males which our banding (Table 1) has already suggested.

Additional facts which may be of interest are to be found in Table 2, for example:

1. Two males (62-148425 and 62-158250) which were at banding stations as widely separated as Pennsylvania and Wisconsin on March 4, 1962 had converged upon the Patapedia River nesting area by June 21 and 24. Males 61-139362 (in Pennsylvania on February 24) and 62-144460 (in Michigan on March 27) indicate a similar movement pattern by entering our traps on June 22 and 25.

2. The two Adams, Mass., birds (male 59-165711 and female 61-128684) suggest the possibility of an annual returning to this same region in Quebec. Banded in Massachusetts on dates 13 months apart, we find these two birds together here in June after they had worn their bands one and two years, respectively.

3. Evidence of flock cohesion may be found in the case of males 57-160318 and 57-177356 which were at points not too greatly separated in New Hampshire in late December, 1960, and early January, 1961, and were both again captured at 39-Mile Camp on June 22 and 25, 1962. Again, four Pennsylvania males (59-140707, 61-139362, 61-187570, and 62-148425) banded between Dec. 26, 1961 and March 4, 1962 were all found in the Patapedia River region on June 21 to 24, 1962. The New York-banded pair (female 59-117554 and male 59-126169) add further evidence of this same flock consistency. Banded in Watertown and Herkimer on Feb. 19 and 26, 1960 they were together in our study area on June 19 and 21, 1962.

4. If we analyze our table in terms of the dates and locations of banding we find the following distribution:

Winter of Flight	Place of Banding
'59 - '60	Me., N. Y. (2), Pa.
'60 - 61	N. H. (2), Mass. (2).
'61 - '62	Mass., N. Y., Pa. (4), Mich., Wis.

Accepting these data as typical there is indicated a very restricted flight during the 1960-'61 winter and a flight which extended especially far to the westward during the 1961-'62 migration.

Behavior patterns and general observations:—

The most extraordinary characteristic of the behavior exhibited by these Evening Grosbeaks as we handled them was their extreme calmness, their gentleness, their willingness to be handled with a minimum of the struggling, biting, or screeching which has so frequently characterized the winter flocks we have studied in Connecticut and New York. Of the 747 birds we handled not one revealed any flight difficulty upon release and only one showed even the slightest trap injury. The latter, a female, bruised one wing slightly; she was one of the foreign retraps.

Strong attraction between paired mates was persistently apparent. Males shucked seeds and fed the pleading females. On many occasions when a female was in a trap her apparent mate stood beside the compartment which held her, or on top of it, drove other males away, and "talked" to her in plaintive tones. In six instances while a female was being handled inside the camp a male flew in through the open window or door and alighted on the trap, the floor, or some piece of furniture, there to remain until she was released and they flew away together.

One early morning we had just counted 8 males and 8 females in a group on the ground outside the camp when something disturbed them. Off they flew to eight different points of the compass with *two* birds, a male following a female, along each of the separate courses. That flock was composed of eight *pairs*.

The beak of every bird we handled was colored the typical apple-green which is so much like the color of fresh new leaves in early spring.

Physically, the birds as a whole were in good condition. Some of the males which flooded the area late in our study, however, showed worn plumages and they lacked the plumpness of body possessed by the earlier arrivals.

Ectoparasites were conspicuously absent.

Old, healed injuries were noted on five birds: a female had lost her left eye; a male's left leg was deformed from an apparent break above the "heel"; two males and a female had cracked or shattered mandibles; another female's right eye was swollen and inflamed as from a more recent injury. A splinter which closely resembled a grapevine tendril was removed from its coiled position about another female's foot. One end of the splinter was embedded at least 1.5 mm. into the flesh.

We have already referred to a grassless area just outside the door of the camp. This almost circular plot of bare soil, about 6 feet in diameter, marks the spot where waste water from dishwashing and laundering has been thrown during many seasons. This moist patch was particularly attractive to the Evening Grosbeaks as well as to Purple Finches (*Carpodacus purpureus*), Tree Swallows (*Iridoprocne bicolor*), Pine Siskins (*Spinus pinus*), and to large numbers of Tiger Swallowtail butterflies (*Papilo glaucus*). Upon one occasion 52 of these butterflies were counted intermingling with the bird species as, together, they formed a brilliant living carpet on the bare earth. It was here that the first Evening Grosbeaks assembled in the

morning, often as early as 0400, and seldom was it without a feathered visitor until evening darkness fell upon the last stragglers still pecking along the edges of the bare patch. When Pete spread table salt around the perimeter one day it became especially attractive and at one time 26 males and one female were counted pecking at the raw salt.

During the 15 days we watched these birds we failed to discover any actual nest building although one female was observed gathering beakfuls of dry grass. The behavior of one pair (male 52-195331 and female 52-195360) indicated that they were nesting about 30 feet from the ground in a balsam fir which stood about 70 feet from the camp. Our attempts to find the nest, however, were unsuccessful.

From the time of our arrival in the late afternoon of June 14 to our departure on the morning of June 28 we noted a constant change in flock content. It was apparent that the birds that were pouring into this region dispersed almost at once to their nesting territories. Meanwhile, the percentage of males over females increased decisively. It was on June 28 that we saw our largest flock of 45 birds (42 males and 3 females) of which only 6 could be seen to wear bands.

A screen door and some bird-band "jewelry":—

One day Pete brought out for our inspection a watch-chain and a metal chain bracelet. Both of these pieces of jewelry were strung from end to end with aluminum bird-bands. Additional similar bands dangled on a length of fishline. In all, some 270 bands were involved, mostly No. 1A's, a few No. 2's. Then he handed us a sheaf of flimsies and a pile of IBM cards each of which recorded the history of one of the bands. Then our host explained that these were the bands which had been removed from the Evening Grosbeaks shot near his camp and at another camp on the Kedgwick River some 11 miles away, and which he had reported to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Some of these slaughtered birds had been the inspiration for the Shaub paper to which we have already referred, but it was apparent at once that there were many more records involved than were known to Mr. Shaub at the time he composed his story.

Since space does not permit an adequate treatment here we shall submit our analysis of these records later in a separate report.

None of the windows in the camp was screened, nor the door, but a screen-door was to be seen leaning against the rear wall inside the room. We were intrigued by the pattern formed by 74 round holes which we counted in the screen of that door. It appeared that a charge of buckshot might have caused them. We asked Pete if such was the case. After replying negatively he explained that in the process of shooting Evening Grosbeaks for their bands the birds were able to see him through the open door and were easily flushed, so he built the screen-door and installed it as a blind through which he was more successful in shooting the birds without being seen by them. The holes marked the paths of his .22 caliber slugs through the screen of the door.

An unscheduled interruption:—

We had but begun our trapping on June 15 when we were startled by a sound that seemed utterly foreign to so isolated a place. It was the unmistakable staccato of a helicopter engine. The machine circled twice overhead and settled into our tiny clearing. The two passengers who disembarked were Dr. J. R. Blais, forest entomologist with the Canadian Department of Forestry, and his assistant, Bob Christian. They proceeded at once to gather bough-tip samples from several of the nearby balsam firs to be examined subsequently in appraising the local budworm population.

In a few moments they were gone, but they were not to be soon forgotten. Before they left they had informed us that the forests about us were to be sprayed shortly with DDT. We saw the first spray-planes in the evening of June 24 and again in the evening of June 25. On the 26th they sprayed both morning and evening, coming always closer to our camp. At dawn on the 28th they passed directly overhead and we heard the droplets of their poison as it rained down upon our tent. It was difficult to detect its moisture on the surrounding foliage, so wet with dew, but as we packed our equipment aboard the truck for our return to Amqui some four hours later that morning the surface of the water in the streamlet which flowed across our clearing and into the Patapedia River was unnaturally iridescent. The salmon pool in the river itself beside which stood our camp was hidden under a layer of this same poisoned iridescence. Yet a flock of 45 Evening Grosbeaks settled on and about the feeding table as we made our departure. It was too early to learn how the poison would affect them.

Some results of our visit:—

1. Although we realize that the killing of Evening Grosbeaks by M. Brousseau in order to obtain their bands had ceased before the occasion of our visit we feel that his inclusion in our activities served to instil in him the proper attitude to comprehend the true purpose of the banding procedure. He assisted us frequently in our work. He handled the birds expertly and he registered an enthusiastic interest in the process and an appreciation of its purpose.

2. Of greater importance was the fact that the capture of the 16 foreign retraps gave us the opportunity to dramatize the manner of obtaining the information which the bands can provide and still release the birds unharmed to supply, perhaps, other future records.

3. We feel that the influence of our visit extended well beyond isolated 39-Mile Camp. There were visitors, native French-Canadians who were present as we released banded Evening Grosbeaks. Although our limited knowledge of their regional idioms handicapped us conversationally we could not fail to note their rapt interest and their earnest attention as Pete explained the process and its purpose to them. And the private telephone line carried daily reports of our activities to salmon guardians, game wardens, and fire wardens in their widely distributed camps throughout Rimouski and Matapedia counties. Day by day the jangle of the

camp telephone became more persistent as the crescendo of the wardens' interest rose. Some of these men, too, had mistakenly shot Evening Grosbeaks to obtain the bands. Through Pete Brousseau's publicizing of our work they were learning to mend their ways—we hope.

What does the future hold for this study?

Our initial plan to do a bit of missionary work in behalf of the harrassed Evening Grosbeaks seems to have taken on unexpectedly important proportions. We have been successful in trapping and releasing in their breeding area 16 birds which were banded at 13 different stations south and west of that area. For the first time birds taken in this region remain alive to write further records. Where will they winter? (At the location where they were banded, perhaps?) Is the Patapedia River locale their chosen breeding grounds to which they will return again?

How about those 500 Evening Grosbeaks, probably the first ever banded in this nesting region? What sort of story will they tell? Where will they go? Will they return here to nest again?

And, overshadowing all of these questions there is the DDT. What will be its effect on this Evening Grosbeak nesting area and its feathered population? We must return and endeavor to find out.

REFERENCE

SHAUB, B. M. 1960. The destruction of nearly one hundred Evening Grosbeaks at St. Leon le Grand, Quebec. *Bird-Banding.*, **31**(3): 150-156.

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RESULTS FROM BANDING GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULLS In the Northern Gulf of Georgia, B.C., from 1922 to 1949

BY THEED PEARSE

All of these Glaucous-winged Gulls (*Larus glaucesens*) were banded at Mittlenach, an isolated, rocky island in the extreme northern part of the Gulf of Georgia, about halfway between Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia. It is some five-eights of a mile long by a quarter wide, rising in the center to 157 feet.

During the period 1922 to 1949, banding was carried out only in the following years: 1922, 1923, 1925, 1927 to 1931, inclusive; 1938 to 1941, inclusive; 1946 and 1949. The original object was a personal one: to try to ascertain whether the young birds tended to stay in the vicinity of Mittlenach, or joined those of this species that pass down the gulf in great numbers each Fall. In 1938 the Western Bird-banding Association's scheme for color-banding young gulls was initiated, and Mittlenach was chosen for Glaucous-wings. After the