

should be regarded as conspecific. This problem can be solved only by taxonomists and behaviorists on the redpoll breeding grounds, and it is dangerous for a bander even to speculate.

Meanwhile, whether the perplexing redpolls represent hybrids, confusing individuals of two similar species, or are merely color phases of a single species, the bander may have a problem in separating them for record purposes. The undertail coverts and not the rump should be used as the differentiating feature, and in borderline cases the decision will be difficult to make.

Finally, I feel banders could make a small contribution to our knowledge of the movements of the different geographic populations of redpolls. Detailed measurements (including tail lengths and weights) should be kept and I would further suggest that any bander with such an opportunity should furnish the nearest taxonomist with a representative series of study specimens for the permanent record.

I wish to thank Dr. Raymond A. Paynter, Jr., for allowing me to see the redpoll study skins in the collection of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University.

—C. Stuart Houston, 2401 Hanover Ave., Saskatoon, Sask.

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Reaction of Wood Warbler to Young.—During several years of investigations on the behavior of European warblers towards their (mostly banded) fledglings I once made a quite interesting observation: Young Wood Warblers (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*) had been banded while they were still nestlings. I was very much surprised to see the adult male repeatedly trying to pull the aluminum ring from the legs of his young two days after they had left the nest (the female took care of the other part of the brood). During this procedure the young birds apparently had great difficulty in keeping their balance on the roosting twig. On the following days this behavior was not observed again.

It is well known that many parent birds remove everything from the nest which does not belong in it. Often they succeed in pulling rings from the legs of the nestlings when they have been banded while too young, or they even remove the nestling together with the ring. The observation reported above shows however, that this behavior is not only produced by the stimulating complex of the young, a foreign item *and* the nest, but in rare instances also outside the nest.

Examples of similar conduct for American birds are quoted in *Bird-Banding*, 25: 61 (April 1954), and the earlier notes cited therein. In only one of those cases the young bird—a Horned Lark—had already left the nest at the time (A. J. Berger). The rings had been kindly supplied by the "Vogelwatre Radolfzell" (Germany).—Peter H. Homann, A 813 W. St. Augustine St., Tallahassee, Fla.

LETTER

To the Editor:

In the latest issue (*Bird-Banding*, 33(4):204-05), my eye caught the account of a replacement tail molt in our Kestrel, *Falco sparverius*. While the note suggests "that the new right retrices were about 45 to 60 days old", I am sure this is an overestimate. The lesser period of 45 days is sufficient for the Gryfalcon, Peregrine Falcon, or Prairie Falcon to put in a new feather completely, including the shorter primary remiges. Even in the slow-molting Golden Eagle, a retrice does not take 60 days! The fail feathers of a juvenile Kestrel are not completely "in" when it leaves the nest cavity at approximately four weeks, but are in at least as far as the replacement retrices in the figure. I don't see how they could be more than 28 days from the dropping of the old feather, unless damage was done to the papilla