

GENERAL NOTES

Homing in House Sparrows, *Passer domesticus*.—The House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) is a relatively sedentary species throughout most of its range with the exception of certain migratory European and Asian subspecies (Summers-Smith, The House Sparrow, Collins, Lond., 1963). The homing instinct might not be expected to be highly developed in non-migratory populations. Results of transplanting experiments, summarized by Summers-Smith, confirm this expectation. We have obtained additional information bearing on this subject and our results are reported here.

Over the past three years we have collected House Sparrows in various parts of Hale and Swisher counties, Texas, and transported them to our aviary in Plainview, Hale County, Texas, for experimental studies. Mist nets were used for catching the birds. The birds were banded and retained in the aviary for varying lengths of time. Some of the birds released in Plainview were subsequently recaptured. These data are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Recovery data for House Sparrows transplanted to and released in Plainview, Texas.

Place and date of capture	Date of release	Number released	Relationship of capture site to release point	Remarks
Rural Premise, Hale Co., Texas 6 Nov. 1967	23 Jan. 1968	33	9 miles SW	One recovered at original capture site, 19 Nov. 1968
Rural Premise, Swisher Co., Texas, 9-13 Nov. 1967	23 Jan. 1968	28	13 miles NW	Three recovered at original capture site, 18 Nov., 1968
Petersburg, Texas 14-15 Nov. 1967	23 Jan. 1968	29	22 miles SSE	One recovered at original capture site, 20 Nov. 1968 One recovered 350 yards from release point, 25 Oct. 1968
Petersburg, Texas 20 Nov. 1968	6 Jan. 1968	22	22 miles SSE	One recovered at original capture site, 1 Oct. 1969

Perhaps of greatest interest is the fact that six individuals, 5 per cent of the 112 released, returned to their original sites of capture at distances ranging from 9 to 22 miles after being retained at the release point for 47 to 78 days. More birds might have returned to their original sites of capture than were recovered, because our recapture attempts were minimal. Usually, we attempted to catch only about 50 birds at each collecting site each year.

House Sparrows, after adopting a nest site, spend most of their lives within a few hundred yards of the site except when they join the grain-field flocks at the end of the summer (Summers-Smith, 1963). Even then, few adults are believed to move more than two miles from their nest sites. All of the birds reported here were captured initially during November; consequently, it is not known whether they were birds-of-the-year or breeding adults. In any case, it seems unlikely that they would have been familiar with much of the territory between the release point and original capture sites. Griffin (*Biol. Rev.*, 27: 359-400, 1952) outlined three types of homing in birds. It is doubtful if type I, i.e., the use of wandering "exploration" when the bird is released in unfamiliar country, could account for the return of the six birds listed in Table 1. The return of these birds is perhaps more likely to have been the result of type II homing which depends on the ability to maintain a certain direction even when crossing unfamiliar territory.

Summers-Smith (1963) postulated that young House Sparrows, if transplanted prior to breeding and becoming attached to a nest site, might settle down where they are released. This might account for the recovery of the individual bird in Plainview that was recaptured within 350 yards of the release point 69 days after being released.—Carl J. Mitchell and Thomas B. Hughes, Jr., Arboviral Disease Section, Ecological Investigations Program, Center for Disease Control, Health Services and Mental Health Administration, U. S. Public Health Service, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, P. O. Box 551, Fort Collins, Colorado 80521.

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Longevity record for an Ovenbird: eight years.—On 28 May 1971 a banded (69-67006) Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*) was captured in our nets at Hutcheson Memorial Forest (formerly known as Mettler's Woods), Somerset County, New Jersey. The 63-acre mature oak forest is a well developed climax, where summer netting programs have been conducted during most of the last ten years. The Ovenbird is the most common breeding species of the forest (Swinebroad, *Bull. N. J. Acad. Sci.*, 7: 1-6, 1962). The captured bird had been banded at the woods seven years previously on 27 May 1964 by Jeff Swinebroad, and it was at least one year old when banded (adult male). Dr. Swinebroad's netting program recaptured this individual in 1964 (twice), 1965 (five times), and 1967 (once). A five-year-old Ovenbird was reported by Taylor and Anderson (*Bird-Banding*, 42: 221, 1971), but the present eight-year-old bird is apparently a record, which must closely approach the maximum longevity of this long-distance migrant.—John Kenny and Charles F. Leck, Department of Zoology, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903. Received 11 April 1972, accepted 20 April 1972.

Prevention of Starlings from lifting shutter on automatic nest-box trap.—In an earlier note (Stewart, *Bird-Banding* 42: 121-122, 1971) I described an automatic trap used successfully to capture Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and other box-nesting birds. During the 1971 nesting season several times I found the shutter closed with no bird captured. Observations quickly revealed that some Starlings were able to escape from the box by lifting the shutter closing the entrance hole. In order to prevent this method of escape, the flange on the shutter bottom was removed, and a slot was constructed into which it fell. This slot was made by fitting a piece of Masonite, one-eighth inch thick, against the bottom of the shutter and nailing the Masonite to the front of the box or to the detachable unit. A second piece of Masonite was nailed over the first piece, extending one-fourth inch above it.

Starlings were thus prevented from getting hold of the bottom of the shutter, and the trap was made escape-proof for all birds.—Paul A. Stewart, Entomology Research Division, Agricultural Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Oxford, North Carolina 27565. Received 9 March 1972, accepted 25 April 1972.

Mimesis in hand-reared Blue Jays.—For many years I have kept hand-reared Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) in flight cages. I recorded some of their vocalizations (Wollensak, T1500, 7 1/2 RPM), and these recordings are the basis for this report.

In the first-year birds, the "Jay Jay" call and the 15 to 20-syllable conversational notes were those on the record of Kellogg and Allen. So also was the warning note, rattle or growl "r-r-rt" described by Bent (1946). The "Courtship" or territorial (Hardy, 1961) "squeaky gate" or "pumphandle" call did not appear in typical form until the jays were two years old. In their first spring the young Blue Jays gave only the much more musical variation that Bent refers to as the "wheelbarrow" or "wheedle" call.

In Bent's work, we find several authors' reference to the song of Stellers' Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*) as a whisper song. I first recorded the "whisper song" of the Blue Jay in their first autumn on 28 September. By 28 March, the song was much softer and more musical. The notes involved were: "pur-o-ree, chip, chip-o-ree, cheep." In Bent's work various observers described this song as "soft, 'sotto