

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

voce,' sweet, tender, lovely." They describe it as resembling that of the Catbird, (*Dumetella carolinensis*), Robin (*Turdus migratorius*), Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), and American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*). All these observations seem in accord with what Thorpe (1961) writes concerning the non-communicative whisper song or sub-song. Thorpe writes (p. 61) "in the Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) subsong seems to be most frequently and consistently produced by first year males in the early spring." "Wild chaffinches are non-imitative birds, yet when they sing the sub-song, it is possible to recognize the notes and phrases copied from canaries, tits (*Parus* spp.) and other birds." (p. 70) "We may safely guess as further material comes to hand, subsong will be found to be a very widespread phenomenon among birds."

Hardy also thinks that the song of the Blue Jay has no communicative function. However, what Hardy describes as the song of the jay is quite different from the subsong described above. He says (p. 79): "The song is definitely closely related to the conversational notes." "The some is somewhat like that of the Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*) and the Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*) but harsher and more uneven." This song I also noticed in my year-old jays when the Baltimore Orioles (*Icterus galbula*) were singing. I did not hear it in July. It reappeared suddenly on 1 August when the orioles again sang briefly. I recorded "the jays reply to the oriole" on this same day. However, Hardy's description fits this song very well.

In the Kellogg-Allen record we hear the Blue Jay's rendition of the calls of the Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) and the Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*). Hardy makes no mention of acquired calls in his hand-reared Blue Jays. Bent takes the position that mimicry by the Blue Jay is unproven. My first pair of jays lived in a flight cage in Maryland for over 10 years. Their acquired vocabulary was limited but permanent. During their first summer they repeatedly gave a loud imitation of the human "wolf-whistle." At first both birds gave the complete 2-syllable call. By their second summer and as long as they lived thereafter, one bird would give the first note ("Oh") and the other would respond with the second ("Boy"). This pair of jays also acquired a perfect imitation of the Red-shouldered Hawk.

The second pair of Blue Jays reared in Pennsylvania, where I have never heard the Red-shouldered Hawk call, never acquired this call. By 28 March in their first spring one bird repeatedly gave a very loud call that we at first mistook for the monosyllable call of our resident Screech Owl (*Otus asio*). When this (female?) jay was released for three days late in its second summer, we could easily follow its whereabouts by the very distinctive call. Both birds also gave a perfect imitation of the warning calls of the Common Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) as heard at a distance. Sometimes, when both birds were quiet, this call could be aroused by slamming the door to their cage.

From these observations it seems clear that the Blue Jay is an imitative species and that some of the calls it mimics in early life may become permanently established. Possibly someone with access to sound spectrograph analysis could confirm this conclusion.

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