

News, Notes, Comments

Longevity Record for Chipping Sparrow

The Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) is a common bird throughout North America, breeding from Alaska in the west to Newfoundland in the east and from the boreal forest of the north to the mountains of Mexico. It winters from the southern states to Mexico (Scott 1999). In the Guelph area, it is a very common breeder from April to October in yards and parks.

Since 1974, the author has banded a total of 203 Chipping Sparrows as summarized in the following table. All the sparrows were caught in the Guelph area using mist nets. As can be seen from the table, our banding effort has not been consistent. This is due to the fact that since 1980 the author has spent many summers overseas and the banding station was thus inactive. This, unfortunately, means that little or no analysis of the data can be done. In particular, a longevity curve for the species would be very inaccurate from the data and, indeed, that is why the raw data are being presented. In spite of this shortcoming, it shows that 6.1% of the sparrows were retrapped in the same year they were banded, which is not an insignificant number. This compares to 1.01% for the Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*) and 2.34% for the American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) banded/retrapped at the same location with the same effort. Only four individuals of the Chipping Sparrow (1.97%) were retrapped in subsequent years. This compares to 3.82% for the Common Grackle and 1.75% for the American Robin. Both of these species are summer residents of the Guelph area.

On 13 May 1998, sparrow #750-34028 was retrapped as an after-hatching-year(!) male at the author's home. It was banded on 10 Sep 1987 as a hatching year of unknown sex at the **exact** same location. Hence, the bird was at least 10 yr 8 mo old. Assuming that the bird was hatched locally between June and August, this would put its age between 10 yr 9 mo and 10 yr 11 mo. Checking the Banding Office records on the WWW (Klimkiewicz 1997, WWW 1999), we see that the longevity record for a Chipping Sparrow was 9 yr 9 mo. Hence, #1750-34028 has set a new longevity record.

A Summary of Chipping Sparrow Bandings/Retraps in the Guelph, Ontario, area.

Year	Number Banded	Years Retrapped after Banding				
		0	1	2	3-10	11
1999	14		None		None	
1998	9			2		1
1996	29	2				
1988	1					
1987	3					
1985	2					
1984	4					
1981	44					
1979	29	3				
1978	18			1		
1977	31	8				
1976	5					
1975	3					
1974	11					
Totals	203	13	None	3	None	1

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LITERATURE CITED

- Klimkiewicz, M. K. 1997. Longevity records of North American birds. Version 97.1. Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Bird Banding Laboratory, Laurel, MD.
- Scott, S.L., ed. 1999. Field guide to the birds of North America, 3rd ed. National Geographic Soc., Washington, DC.
- WWW. 1999. The Banding Office World Wide Web address is:
<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/homepage/long4930.htm>

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