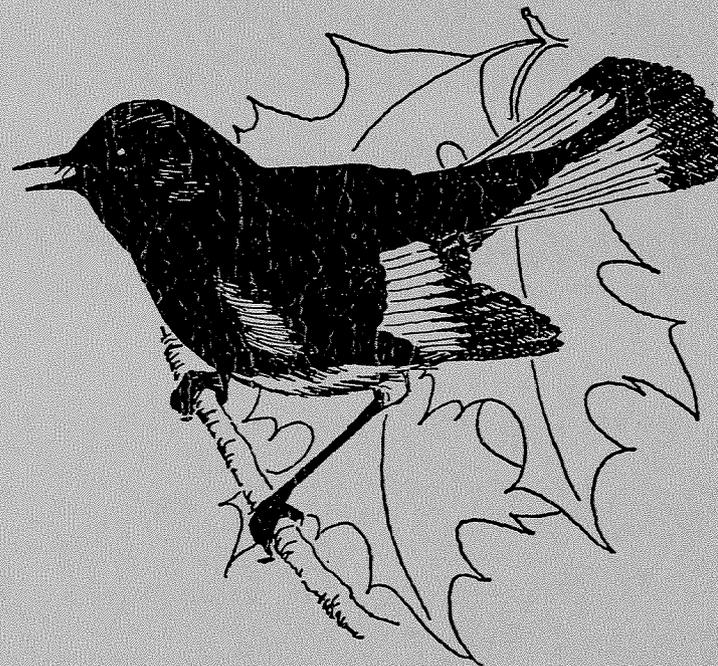


The **REDSTART**

VOLUME 38—NUMBER 3

JULY, 1971



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McClintic Sortie

George Koch

Our first Sortie was held in Kanawha State Forest in 1966. We felt that it was successful enough to warrant continuing the operation. Consequently, the evening of Thursday, May 25, 1967 found seven BBCers at "the barn" at The Clifton F. McClintic Wildlife Station north of Pt. Pleasant in Mason County, W. Va. for a five day stay. This year Hurley and I did not have to work the study areas by ourselves the first morning. Sixteen were on hand Saturday and there were still nine of us to break camp Tuesday afternoon. The weather was favorable and we did not lose a daylight hour of field work as most of the few showers and the one severe thunderstorm were at night.

We found a surprisingly large number of birds, identifying 104 species, and we found 35 nests exclusive of Redwings'. Most of us had the added thrill of seeing a life bird as several unusual species were in the area, the Connecticut Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Least Bittern, and Black-crowned Night Heron, to name a few. Our census studies, nest hunting, banding and observations indicated a large breeding population as well as several late migrants.

As we compiled our lists we were surprised that no one had worked southwest of Oldtown Creek, opposite pond 19, in the only mature woodland of the area. (Later in the summer we found a Brown Creeper in these woods.) We were even more surprised not to find a Chipping Sparrow in the entire area during the Sortie.

At the banding station the nets were set during Saturday and Sunday with quite good results. We banded 47 new birds of 17 species and had 8 returns from previous years banding in the area.

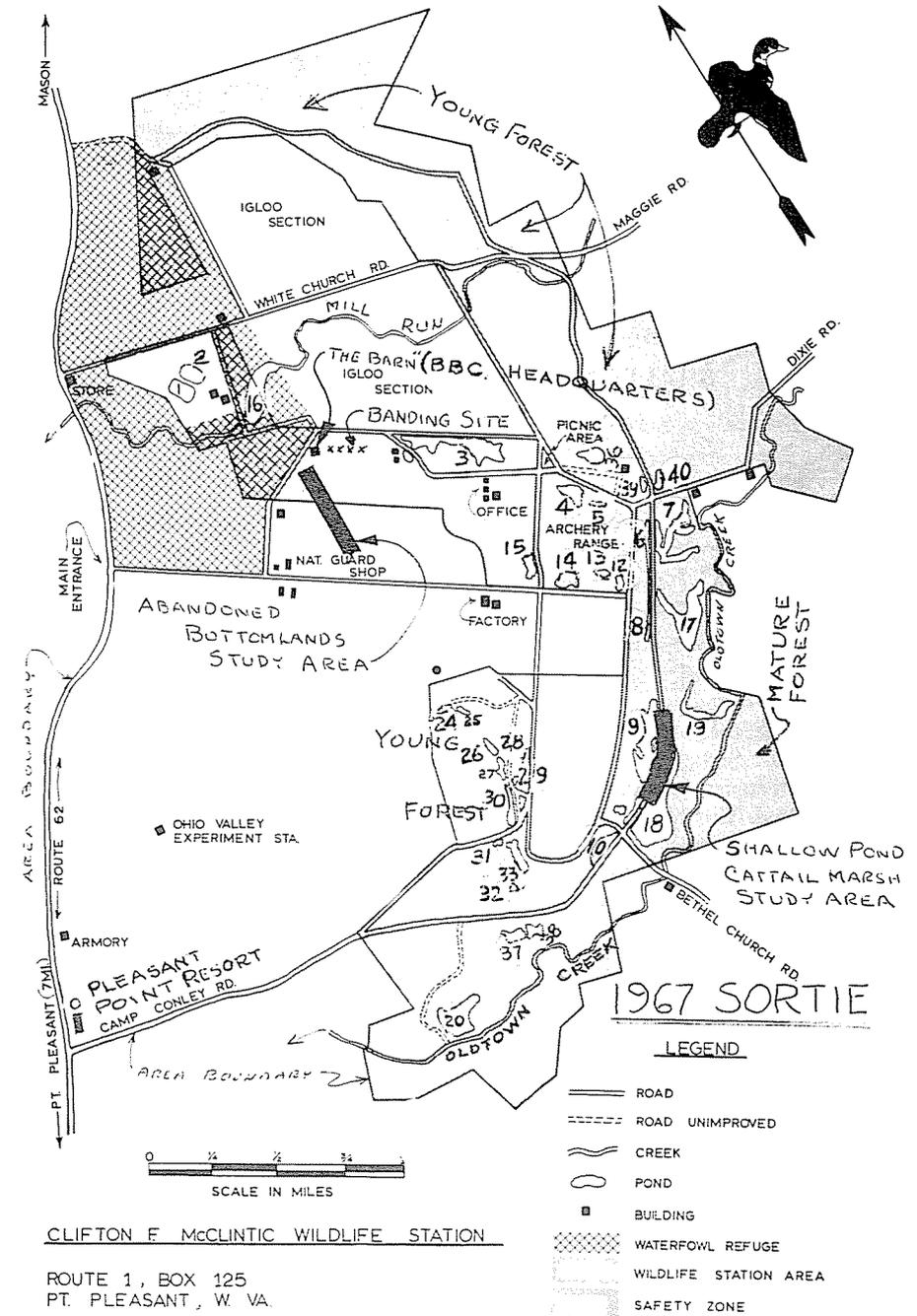
The results of the banding, nest hunting and general observations are included in the annotated bird list.

Area Survey

The McClintic Wildlife Station is situated in the floodplain of the Ohio river about six miles upstream from Point Pleasant and a mile from the river. It is a portion of a World War 2 T.N.T. plant that was too disturbed by construction and manufacturing activities to be returned to the original owners. About 2500 acres were given to the state to be developed into wildlife habitat and 500 acres where earth covered concrete igloos are located were retained as a U.S. Reservation for the storage of munitions and dangerous chemicals.

The area is relatively level, sloping up from 550 feet elevation where Oldtown Creek leaves the area to 620 feet at the foot of the hills that bound the area on the north, east, and south. These hills rise to an elevation of 800 to 900 feet and are formed from the Pittsburgh sandstone and the shales of the Monongahela Series. The soil is the Wheeling sand silt and the Huntington clay silt. These silts can be a fertile combination but the grading process during plant construction buried the original topsoil and even after fifteen years of "reclamation" the fertility of much of the area is still low. This is especially true in the U.S. Reservation where no attempt has been made to build up the soil or to plant food or cover for wildlife.

The area includes 100 acres of mature woodland, 800 acres of smaller second-

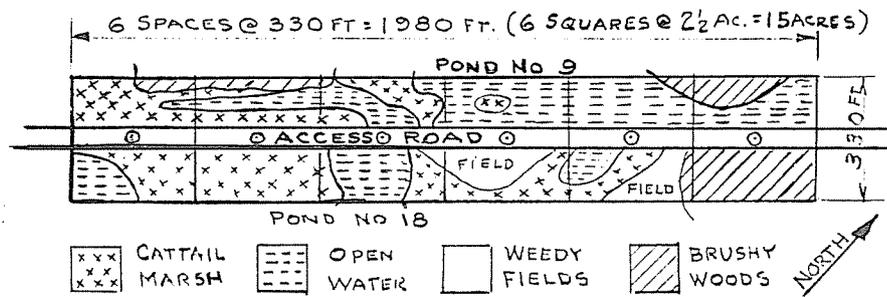


growth timber, 100 acres of occasionally cultivated land, 1500 acres of game cover and food plantings (trees, shrubs, and perennial herbs), and 500 acres unimproved. Much of the area is overgrown with goldenrod, asters, other common poor soil weeds, and the most vicious blackberry vines we have ever encountered. The area is surrounded by cultivated or pastured farmland.

The Study Areas

The singing male census was conducted on two areas. One was pond marsh wetlands in Redwing Blackbird habitat. The other was typical of the reclaimed T.N.T. plant area now brushy and weedy where the Chat and Towhee abound. Together they should typify all of our area except the forests. Both study areas are noted on the map of the Sortie Area.

SHALLOW POND-CATTAIL MARSH



Location. Pond number 18 and part of Pond number 9 in the Clifton E. McClintic Wildlife Station six miles north of Pt. Pleasant (Mason County) West Virginia.

Size. Fifteen acres, measured. A rectangle 110x660 yards.

Description. This combination of shallow ponds, cattail marsh, field and woody edge is typical of probably 10% of the area on the Station. A 30 foot road and bank, elevated about 2 to 5 feet above the adjacent marsh, bisected the area longitudinally. Four habitats were; (see map) 1. Open water varying in depth to about five feet comprised about 35% of study plot. Duckweed and arrowhead were present. Alders were scattered along the pond edges. Many snags of dead trees were scattered throughout the open water area. 2. Cattail marsh was estimated to cover 35% of the plot. 3. The roadway, banks and dry fields were about 15%. 4. The remaining 15% was woodland. Vegetation here included sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis*; box elder, *Acer negundo*; common locust, *Robinia pseudo-acacia*; American elm, *Ulmus americana*; blackberry, *Rubus* sp.; multiflora rose, *Rosa multiflora*; common teasel, *Dipsacus sylvestris* Huds. A high voltage electrical transmission line crossed part of the area.

Edge. Similar to study area.

Topography. Level, altitude about 600 feet above sea level.

Coverage. May 26, 27, 28 and 29, 1967. Hours from 5:30 to 7:30 AM. EDT. Total, about 16 manhours.

Census. The number of each species nesting, other than the Red-winged Blackbird, was determined by the Singing Male Method (Hall). Redwings were guesstimated as explained below under comments.

Species	Census	
	Territorial Males	Males per 100 Acres
Redwinged Blackbird	340	2200
Yellow Warbler	4	27
Song Sparrow	3	20
Trail's Flycatcher	2	13
Least Bittern	2	13
Tree Swallow	2	13
Yellow-breasted Chat	2	13
Yellowthroat	2	13
Sora Rail	1	6.5
Kingbird	1	6.5
Catbird	1	6.5
Bluebird	1	6.5
Blue-winged Warbler	1	6.5
Cardinal	1	6.5
Baltimore Oriole	1	6.5
Warbling Vireo	+	
Totals	364	2357

Visitors. Green Heron, Canada Goose with young, Wood Duck with young, American Coot, Spotted Sandpiper, Mourning Dove, Black-billed Cuckoo, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Barn Swallow, Common Crow, Starling, Black-poll Warbler, Common Grackle, Goldfinch.

Comments. The Redwing census was not based on the number of singing males for two principal reasons. There was such a high concentration of singing males in the cattail part of the marsh that it was not possible to distinguish and count them all. Also, it is known that these birds are polygamous and even an accurate count of singing males might not represent all of the nesting pairs. To arrive at an educated guess as to the number of birds a small section of cattail marsh, 550x15 feet, along the end of Pond 3 which was similar to the area censused was searched intensively. Twelve occupied nests were found indicating that each pair of birds occupied about 675 square feet of cattail marsh. This is much less than the 1330 to 6300 square feet found by Nero (1956) in his studies in Wisconsin in the early 1950's. In a more recent study in Oklahoma Goddard and Board (1967) found territories to vary from 435 to 7187 square feet. The 675 feet in the present study when transposed to the study area gave the 340 nesting pairs noted in the table. The "model" area containing the twelve nests was essentially a strip or "edge" of cattails. One section of the study area was a solid growth of cattails measuring about 650x160 feet. If there is an edge effect the calculated population would be too high.

The Kingbird nest was found on the electric transmission line tower about 50 feet up. Both Tree Swallow nests were found in holes in dead trees in the open water. A nest believed to be that of the Least Bittern was found on a small island where the bird had been seen several times.

Census Takers. N. Laitsch, J. Koch, L. Kiff, F. Olsen, K. Anderson and G. Hurley (compiler).

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Hall, G. A., Breeding Bird Censuses *Audubon Field Notes* 18, (1964) 413
 Nero, R.P., A Behavior Study of the Red-winged Blackbird. II Territoriality *The Wilson Bulletin* 68, 129 (1956)
 Goddard, S.V. and Board, V.V., Reproductive Success of Redwinged Blackbirds in North Central Oklahoma. *The Wilson Bulletin* 79, 283 (1967)

Abandoned Bottomland

Location: Six miles NNE of Point Pleasant, West Virginia, in the McClintic State Wildlife Station. Starts 150 yards SSW of the Barn and extends south. 38 deg. 55 min. 31 sec. N, 82 deg. 05 min. 03 sec. W, Cheshire Quadrangle, U.S.G.S.

Size: 15 acres (rectangular, 110 x 660 yards, measured).

Topography: Level at elevation 610 feet, draining westward to a brush-lined ditch, 10 feet deep, that flows through the edge of the area for 150 yards before leaving it about midway. Two roads at elevation 615, paved but unused at present, cross the study plot.

Census:

Species	Territorial Males	Males per 100 Acres
Yellow-breasted Chat	8	53
Rufous-sided Towhee	7	47
Song Sparrow	5	33
Field Sparrow	4	27
Catbird	2.5	17
Yellowthroat	2	13
Prairie Warbler	2	13
Blue-winged Warbler	1	7
House Wren	1	7
Black-billed Cuckoo	1	7
American Woodcock	1	7
Brown Thrasher	0.5	3
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	0.5	3
Eastern Phoebe	0.5	3
Carolina Wren	+	+
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	+	+
Indigo Bunting	+	+
Yellow Warbler	+	+
White-eyed Vireo	+	+
Red-winged Blackbird	+	+
Brown-headed Cowbird	+	+
Totals: 21 species	36	240

Visitors: Bobwhite, Green Heron, Am. Goldfinch, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Chimney Swift, E. Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Cedar Waxwing.

Remarks: Nests found: Am. Woodcock (4 eggs); Field Sparrow, 2 (4 eggs in one, 4 young in the other).

Plant Cover: The plot is typical of 2000 acres in the Ohio River flood plain that were graded in 1942 during the construction of a munitions plant, since abandoned. Most of the topsoil was removed as igloos of earth were heaped over the storage bunkers and the roadways were built a few feet above the area level. Making a slow recovery from the grading process the area offers a plant growth of common field weeds with occasional small trees to 25 feet high, perhaps 40 per acre, including a row of Scotch Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) to 20 feet planted beside one of the roads. Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) is the most common tree, all completely defoliated by tent caterpillars and many dead from previous infestations, which accounts for the high incidence of both Cuckoos in the vicinity this year. Other small trees are Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), Elm (*Ulmus americana*), Black Locust (*Robinia pseudo-acacia*), Apple (*Pyrus malus*), and Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*). A low (2 feet), erect form of Poison Ivy (*Rhus radicans*) is quite common as is Sumac (*Rhus glabra and typhina*) and Steeplebush (*Spiraea tomentosa*). High weedy growth includes Ironweed (*Veronia* sp.), Joe-Pye Weed (*Eupatorium fistulosum*), Goldenrod (*Solidago* sp.), Asters (*Aster* sp.) and Thistles (*Cirsium* sp.). Blackberries and Dewberries (*Rubus* sp.) are abundant. The most common Blackberry growing both in thickets and scattered among the weeds is an erect species about 3 feet high, stiff, heavily armed with sharp, curved thorns, that bears fruit of good quality. Lower plants are Rushes (*Carex* Sp.), Grasses (*Gramineae*), Common Cinquefoil (*Potentilla simplex*), Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum flexuosum*), Purple Milkwort (*Polygala sanguinea*), and Sensitive Fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*). A row of Rosa multiflora was planted on each side of both roads but becomes a hedge only occasionally.

Coverage: May 26-29, 1967. Nine trips between daylight and 8:00 A.M. One trip in the evening. Total party hours, 9.

Census Takers: George Koch assisted by Kenneth H. Anderson, Joyce Koch, Thomas H. Olsen, and Virginia B. Olsen.

Plants

The number and inclination of our workers limited our botanical work to a rather superficial examination of the flora. However, so that one may form a general idea of the vegetation, John Laitsch listed some of the more common seed plants and ferns. The mature forest was mixed hardwoods. The young forest contained a large percentage of Black Locust and some Scrub Pine. The game cover plantings included Multiflora Rose, Red, White and Scotch Pine, and Autumn Olive.

Some Plants Found At McClintic Wildlife Station
 Mason County, West Virginia
 May 28, 29, 30, 1967

Agrimony	Milkweed, Common
Alum root	Milkweed, Swamp
Beardstongue, Hairy	Milkweed, Vining
Bedstraw, Great	Mouseear, Small
Blue-eyed grass	Mullein, Common

Bluet
 Bindweed
 Bladder Campion
 Boneset
 Burdock
 Catnip
 Cat tail, Broad
 Clover, Tall sweet
 Clover, Red
 Clover, White
 Clover, Yellow
 Cinquefoil, Common
 Cinquefoil, Sulphur
 Corn
 Cranebill, Carolina
 Daisy
 Dandelion
 Deptford Pink
 Dewberry
 Disporum, Hairy
 Dock, Narrow leaf
 False Boneset
 Fleabane, Mouse hairy
 Fleabane, Philadelphia
 Fire Pink
 Golden Alexanders
 Hawkweed, Yellow
 Henbit
 Horehound
 Indian Cucumber
 Indian Hemp
 Ironweed
 Joe Pye Weed
 Lambquarter
 Lotus
 Mermaid Weed
 Mexican Tea

Oyster Plant
 Pennyroyal
 Penstemon
 Peppergrass
 Phlox, Early
 Pink Oxalis
 Pussytoe
 Pokeweed
 Plantain, Broadleaf
 Plantain, Rattlesnake
 Plantain, English
 Plantain, Downy
 Plantain, Water
 Rue Anemone
 Sedum, Stonecrop
 Sheep Sorrel
 Shepherd's Purse
 Skunk Cabbage
 Solomon's Seal
 Speedwell, Common
 Spring Beauty
 Strawberry
 Sweet Pea (cultivated)
 Thistle
 Three seeded Mercury
 Venus's Looking-glass
 Violet, Early
 Violet, Marsh
 Violet, White
 Waterleaf
 Wild Onion
 Wild Pansy
 Willowherb
 Wild Geranium
 Yarrow
 Yellow Sorrel
 Yellow Rocket

Ferns

Ferns Found At McClintic Wildlife Station
Mason County, West Virginia
May 28, 29, 30, 1967

Broad Beech Fern
 Lowland Brittle Fern
 Christmas Fern
 Ebony Spleenwort

Interrupted Fern
 Narrowleaf Spleenwort
 Northern Maidenhair Fern
 Marsh Fern

Sensitive Fern
 Silvery Spleenwort Fern
 Rattlesnake Grape Fern

Common Grape Fern (Obliquum)
 Lace leaf Grape Fern
 Field Horsetail

Animals

One gray squirrel, several muskrats, and one opossum were seen. Rabbits were abundant and numerous young were seen.

Station personnel were trapping turtles from ponds 3, 9, and 17 for population control and food habit study. About 100 snapping turtles had been taken from pond 3, the largest weighing 32 pounds. Painted turtles were taken from all three ponds and soft-shelled turtles from pond 17.

Annotated Bird List

1. Pied-billed Grebe -R- Two were seen.
2. Great Blue Heron -R- Only one—near pond 17.
3. Green Heron -C- One nest by JK & KA.
4. Black-crowned Night Heron -R- Two sub-adults on pond 3, May 26.
5. Least Bittern -U- Found at pond 3 and on the study area at pond 9.
6. Canada Goose -A- Young were out of nest. At least 6 broods, 21 or more young birds.
7. Mallard -R- One pair on pond 17.
8. Blue-winged Teal -R- One male seen.
9. American Widgeon -R- One pair on pond 3, May 26.
10. Wood Duck -C- Numerous broods. Young found on many ponds and on Old-town Creek. One hen on pond 3 had 13 young.
11. Lesser Scaup -R- One on pond 3.
12. Turkey Vulture -U-
13. Coopers Hawk -R- One listed
14. Red-tailed Hawk -R-
15. Red-shouldered Hawk -U- 3 were listed.
16. Marsh Hawk -R-
17. Sparrow Hawk -U- 4 listed. One nest (JK) with young in old house near pond 39.
18. Bobwhite -A- Especially near the barn. Seven young reported.
19. Sora -R- One on pond 18 study area was seen by T. Olsen and heard calling on several trips through the area.
20. Common Gallinule -R- One on pond 3.
21. American Coot -C- About a dozen, mostly on ponds 9 and 3.
22. Killdeer -U- 2 noted.
23. American Woodcock -C- One nest with 4 eggs on study area in fields (GK).
24. Spotted Sandpiper -R- 3 listed, one on pond 9.
25. Mourning Dove -A- One nest with 2 young in tree beside road west of pond 3 (JK).
26. Yellow-billed Cuckoo -C- Two banded. One nest in autumn olive orchard (GH).
27. Black-billed Cuckoo -C- Three banded.
28. Barred Owl -U- Three heard one night.

29. Whip-poor-will -C- Heard each night and morning.
30. Chimney Swift -U-
31. Ruby-throated Hummingbird -R-
32. Belted Kingfisher -U- Only two reported.
33. Flicker -C- Three nests found (NL,JK,GK).
34. Pileated Woodpecker -C-
35. Red-bellied Woodpecker -C- Reported each day. One nest (GK).
36. Hairy Woodpecker -R-
37. Downy Woodpecker -U-Two nests (NL,MK) but few additional birds seen.
38. Eastern Kingbird -C- Three nests (KA,LK,CK). Lloyd Kiff found his about 4 feet above the water in pond 14 and Ken Anderson spotted his 75 feet up in a transmission tower above the pond study area.
39. Great Crested Flycatcher -U- Very few seen.
40. Eastern Phoebe -C- One nest reported (KHA).
41. Acadian Flycatcher -C- One nest with 3 eggs (KHA & GH).
42. Traill's Flycatcher -C- Heard in most marshy areas.
43. Least Flycatcher -R-
44. Eastern Wood Pewee -C-
45. Olive-sided Flycatcher -R- One found on pond 19 by Maxine Kiff, May 27. Observed by NL & GH
46. Horned Lark -U-
47. Tree Swallow -C- Four nests, one incubating, 3 feeding young (GH,JK,KHA & NL).
48. Barn Swallow -U-
49. Purple Martin -U- One house, of two at the office had 12 of 16 apartments occupied. Other houses in the vicinity were vacant.
50. Blue Jay -U- Have increased in numbers in recent years.
51. Common Crow -C-
52. Carolina Chickadee -C- Three young out of nest being fed (NL).
53. Tufted Titmouse -C-
54. White-breasted Nuthatch -U-
55. House Wren -C- Boxes erected some years ago increased this species.
56. Carolina Wren -U-
57. Mockingbird -U- Usually rather common but not many were seen during this study.
58. Catbird -A- Five banded. One nest with 4 eggs in multiflora rose (GH).
59. Brown Thrasher -A- One banded.
60. Robin -C-
61. Wood Thrush -C- One banded.
62. Swainson's Thrush -R- Heard in woods west of pond 30 by V. Olsen.
63. Eastern Bluebird -C-
64. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher -C-
65. Cedar Waxwing -U-
66. Starling -A-
67. White-eyed Vireo -A- Two banded.
68. Yellow-throated Vireo -R- One listed.
69. Red-eyed Vireo -U-

70. Warbling Vireo -C- One nest (GH)
71. Worm-eating Warbler -R-
72. Blue-winged Warbler -C-
73. Tennessee Warbler -R- One heard and seen in woods across Oldtown Creek from pond 19.
74. Yellow Warbler -A- Three banded.
75. Cerulean Warbler -C-
76. Black-poll Warbler -R- One visitor on pond study area.
77. Prairie Warbler -C-
78. Oven-bird -R-
79. Northern Waterthrush -R- Two found near pond 14 by N. Laitsch. Seen May 26 & 27.
80. Kentucky Warbler -U-
81. Connecticut Warbler -R- Two seen - one west of barn, May 28 (JK)—one west of pond 30, May 29 (VO & GH).
82. Mourning Warbler -R- Pair seen and heard above pond 33, May 27. Male seen and heard near pond 7, May 30. One was banded.
83. Yellowthroat -A- Four banded, one nest found (GH).
84. Yellow-breasted Chat -A- Seven banded, two returns netted from '63 and '64.
85. Hooded Warbler -R- One across Old Town Creek from pond 19, May 30 (GH).
86. Wilson's Warbler -R- One banded.
87. American Redstart -U-
88. House Sparrow -C- Around office building and feeders.
89. Eastern Meadowlark -C-
90. Red-winged Blackbird -A- As expected in a predominantly marshy area the Red-wing was the most abundant bird. Many nests were found.
91. Orchard Oriole -U- One nest found (NL).
92. Baltimore Oriole -C- One nest found (GK).
93. Common Grackle -C-
94. Brown-headed Cowbird -C-
95. Scarlet Tanager -U-
96. Summer Tanager -U-
97. Cardinal -A- Four banded, one return netted from '65, one nest (LM).
98. Indigo Bunting -A- Four banded, two returns from '62 & '64.
99. American Goldfinch -A- Three banded.
100. Rufous-sided Towhee -C- One banded, one nest (NL).
101. Grasshopper Sparrow -R- Two heard.
102. Field Sparrow -A- Three banded, two returned from '64, 3 nests (JK & GK).
103. White-crowned Sparrow -R- One stray remaining of an abundant winter species. Seen May 28 (NL & others).
104. Song Sparrow -C- One banded.

Key: A, abundant; C, common; U, uncommon; R, rare.

Acknowledgements

Participants assisting in the Sortie were Kenneth Anderson, George Hurley, Maxine, Ben, and Lloyd Kiff, Constance Katholi, Janice Musser, Leona Miller, Tom, Virginia, Cheryl, and Karen Olsen, Leon Wilson, Jeri Stewart, and Joyce, Laura, and George Koch.

Notes On Spring Plumage Change Of The American Goldfinch

Merit B. Skaggs

In my early years of bird study, I noticed the flocks of American Goldfinches (*Spinus tristis*) that appeared with migrating warblers when the apple trees were blooming in northern Ohio. This would be in early May. My conclusion was that the flocks were newly arrived after spending the winter in the southern states. Now, I know better, as my years of participating in the annual Christmas Counts and banding in the cold months have taught me that some goldfinches winter in our area. Numbers vary considerably, perhaps depending on food supply and weather conditions. It seems fair to assume that some unknown percentage of our breeding goldfinches do wander southward during our winter season.

Bird banders have splendid opportunities to observe plumage changes of birds, especially if a given species can be captured over a period of a month or more and in adequate numbers.

During the winter of 1969-70, the American Goldfinch wintered in much greater than usual numbers in the Lake County, Ohio area. One neighbor had from 75 to 100 coming in to feed all winter long while another proprietor of a feeding station said, "The patio was just yellow with goldfinches." Our own feeders had more goldfinches and siskins flocking in to feed than at anytime in the past twenty years!

During January, I banded nine birds and only six in February; and because they varied so little in appearance, I did not attempt to classify any as to sex. I am aware that some bird portraits in various books show the winter male goldfinch to have definite yellow lesser wing coverts. However, (1) Chapman states that immature males in winter have lesser wing coverts olive-green or olive-gray and that the bright plumage of the adult male is "acquired at the second prenuptial molt." This being so, it may be quite difficult to accurately determine, by color alone, the age or sex of either a female or a male in the first winter. On this feature, (2) Godfrey states, "—the males throughout their first year, lack the bright yellow lesser wing coverts of adult males".

During February there was no noticeable change in plumage color but in mid-March some of the males began to show evidence of the spring molt. They looked very much as though an artist had dabbed a streak or blotch of bright yellow paint on the breast or throat area. When handled, some of the short feathers on the head would come off in my hand. This was first noticed on March 17 and by the end of the month, nearly all individuals handled could be quickly classified as to sex. During this period, the black cap of the males became very evident.

Todd, (3) writing on the birds of western Pennsylvania, a territory adjacent to northeastern Ohio, says of the goldfinch—"In late March and early April, a gradual molt transforms the dull plumage of the males into the vivid yellow dress of the summer months. The females undergo little change."

Forbush (4), quotes some original observations from C. L. Whittle who wrote: "male goldfinches in the first winter plumage have yellowish-brown lesser coverts with a marked greenish cast. Such birds in their second winter plumage have in life the lesser coverts of bright lemon-yellow, and the medium coverts of a 'dark mouse-gray' color—" and "still older males have in the winter season bright lemon-yellow lesser coverts and also lemon-yellow tips to the median coverts"—. He goes on to say that old males, thought to be in at least their third winter plumage, therefore,

have a considerably larger wing patch of yellow than do those males known to be in second winter plumage. The thought is given weight by the "infrequent occurrence of such birds." The above presentation should be of interest to bird banders who have opportunity to closely examine winter goldfinches during the banding operation.

While most of the males had virtually completed their molt by April 26, 1970, some still had areas of dark feathers, usually on the nape but sometimes on the breast area.

An influx of goldfinches and Pine Siskins (*Spinus pinus*) was noted on April 25 and the chorus of songs as the birds sat in nearby trees awaiting their turns to come to the feeders was sweet melody indeed.

By May 2, nearly all males had completed their molt to the nuptial plumage. On May 5, I saw one male that had a few dark feathers on the nape but the yellow underparts showed no remnants of winter plumage. It should be mentioned that, aside from birds that were trapped and banded, the two feeders were located 3 and 8 feet from the observation window so that viewing conditions were excellent. After May 8, all birds observed seemed to have completed the spring molt. During the next few days the flock dispersed as far as our feeders were concerned and on May 17, the goldfinch was one of the most common birds in the woods, fields, lawns and roadsides. The observations this spring were made on at least 100 birds of which 93 were trapped and banded.

Very similar conditions prevailed in 1958 when Don Hinman, working with me as a banding subpermittee, banded 51 goldfinches between March 15 and May 8, 1958. That year, the molt was noticed on some birds starting on March 22 and by April 12 all birds were readily identifiable as to sex and the last bird was banded on May 8 when feeding stopped or the flock dispersed to wander about the countryside. Mr. Hinman's location is about 15 miles south of my home.

Summary and conclusions: In northern Ohio, wintering populations of the American Goldfinch vary considerably from year to year. The winter of 1969-70 was a peak year.

The average bird bander finds it difficult to accurately determine sex of all birds in winter plumage.

Bright yellow feathers acquired by the male goldfinches in the spring molt first become evident about March 17 to 22, (at the latitude of northern Ohio) as noted in two years of observation 12 years apart. The females undergo little change in color. Population studied was about 150 birds.

Nearly all of the males had completed the molt by April 26 but a few still had dark feathers on the nape as late as May 5. Yellow underparts appear to be completely acquired before yellow on head and back. The molt was completed by May 8 and flocks dispersed about the countryside on May 10, undoubtedly joining with others coming in from the south.

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FIELD NOTES

Mrs. Nevada Laitsch, Editor
MC 21, East Liverpool, Ohio

WINTER SEASON
December 1 Through February 28

The early portion of the Winter Season was mild and open. January and February brought several snowfalls and some very cold spells. The region was still in the grip of winter at the end of the period and very few early migrants had been noted.

Possibly the most interesting aspect of the season was the great numbers of sparrows remaining to winter. White-throated Sparrows were particularly abundant. Very few so called "northern visitors" appeared. Of local interest was a Snowy Owl at Charleston, W. Va. and a Harris Sparrow at Bethany, W. Va.

The *Field Notes* Editor expresses appreciation to all contributors and solicits regular reports from irregular contributors and newcomers.

Loons, Grebes and Herons—Two **Common Loons** were seen near Washington, Pa. Dec. 12 and remained in the area through January (SH). One was listed on the Mason County, W. Va. Christmas count. **Pied-billed Grebes** were recorded at Charleston, W. Va. Jan. 2 (NG); Greensburg, Pa. Feb. 5 (VO); 3 on Hancock County, W. Va. Christmas count (ADR); 11 on Mason County Christmas count and 6 on the Ona, W. Va. count (MK). 19 **Great Blue Herons** were listed on the Hancock County Christmas count; 11 on the Mason County count; 2 on Charleston count and 1 on the Ona count. A **Black-crowned Night Heron** was seen at Magic Island, Charleston, W. Va. Dec. 7 and Jan. 2 (NG).

Waterfowl—Some 2000 **Canada Geese**, which is the largest number seen there, were on Sherwin Pond at Willoughby, Ohio Jan. 10 (MS). 151 of this species were listed on the Mason County, W. Va. Christmas count. One adult and one immature **Snow Goose** and a **Blue Goose** were carefully observed in Ohio County, W. Va. the first week of December (BV&GP). Good numbers of **Mallard** and **Black Ducks** remained in the region at least until after the Christmas counts. A female **Oldsquaw** was seen at Washington, Pa. Dec. 20 (SH) and 15 were on the Kanawha river at Charleston, W. Va. Jan. 13 (NG).

Vultures and Hawks—**Turkey Vultures** were seen east of Frostburg, Md. on Feb. 23 and at Cacapon State Park near Berkeley Springs, W. Va. Feb. 24 (GHB). More persons than usual commented on hawks which seems to indicate an improvement in wintering populations. 3 **Sharp-shinned** Hawks were noted in the Clarksville, Pa. area during the period (RKB). Feb. 15 was considered quite early for a **Broad-winged Hawk** at Wheeling Hill in Wheeling, W. Va. (BV). This species nests in that vicin-

ity. **Rough-legged Hawks** were seen as far south as Ona, W. Va. (MK) and a party including Mrs. Kiff saw 27 **Rough-legged Hawks** on their wintering grounds near Kingston, Ohio on Jan. 17. Individuals were seen on two occasions near East Liverpool, Ohio in February. A **Pigeon Hawk** was seen at a distance of 50 feet by Skaggs on Dec. 7. It was hovering about 30 feet above Lake Erie shore near Willoughby, Ohio. **Sparrow Hawks** appeared in good numbers in the Ohio and Kanawha River bottomlands.

Shorebirds—Few records for shorebirds were submitted. Six **Coots** stayed at Greensburg, Pa. until Jan. 10 (VO); a few were seen on Kyger Creek ponds near Gallopis, Ohio Jan. 15 (NG), and 7 or 8 were found near Washington, Pa. Dec. 23 (SH). Few **Killdeer** were reported. A **Woodcock** was seen at Coonskin Park, Charleston, W. Va. Jan. 15 (NG). **Common Snipe** was listed on the Ona, W. Va. Christmas count and one was flushed along the Pocatalico river Jan. 25 (NG). Normal numbers (about 20) wintered at Inwood, W. Va. (CM).

Gulls, Doves and Owls—**Herring Gulls** and **Ring-billed Gulls** appeared on the Ohio and Kanawha rivers occasionally during the winter. **Mourning Doves** were numerous throughout the region. Christmas counts showed some excellent numbers in the farming areas. The only mention of **Barn Owl** was one at Clarksville, Pa. Feb. 16 (RKB). **Great Horned Owls** were heard in three locations near East Liverpool, Ohio during January. One was listed on the Ona, W. Va. Christmas count and one on the Mason County count. A **Snowy Owl** appeared in Charleston, W. Va. Dec. 22 and was seen by many people. It was last seen there Jan. 29 (NG). 3 **Short-eared Owls** were seen by the party visiting the Hawk-Owl wintering grounds near Kingston, Ohio Jan. 17 (MK).

Kingfishers, Woodpeckers and Flycatchers—**Belted Kingfishers** wintered in better numbers than they usually do. They were mentioned by most reporters. Woodpeckers are doing well. **Pileated Woodpeckers** showed some increase and **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** were also on the increase. **Red-headed Woodpeckers** wintered in the Charleston, W. Va. area in very good numbers where there was an abundance of acorns. 49 were listed on the Christmas count for the greatest number in 24 years. (NG&GFH). **Downy Woodpeckers** were considered common by several reporters. A few **Eastern Phoebes** attempted to winter in the region. They were reported at Ona and Charleston, W. Va. and Clarksville, Pa.

Larks, Jays and Crows—**Horned Larks** were not listed on the Charleston, W. Va. Christmas count for the first time in 24 years. However, 29 were found on the Huntington count; 12 on the Hancock County, W. Va. count and a flock of 20 to 25 was seen near East Liverpool, Ohio Feb. 5 (ERC). **Blue Jays** continue to increase especially along the Ohio river. More **Common Crows** remained in the region than usual. Chickadees, Creepers and Wrens—Few **Black-capped Chickadees** were reported. A flock of 4 visited the feeder in East Liverpool, Ohio throughout the winter (NL). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were extremely scarce. **Brown Creepers** were considered to be in normal numbers by most reporters. A **House Wren** was listed on the Huntington, W. Va. Christmas count and a **Bewick's Wren** was found on the Ona, W. Va. count. **Carolina Wrens** were plentiful throughout the region.

Mimics and Thrushes—**Mockingbirds** continue to increase and to expand their wintering grounds. 9 **Brown Thrashers** on the Charleston, W. Va. Christmas count was high. **Robins** apparently moved out of the region as very few were reported dur-

ing the period. The number of wintering **Hermit Thrush** was considered up in the St. Albans-Charleston, W. Va. area (GFH). A few **Bluebirds** were found during the winter in the southern part of the region.

Kinglets, Waxwings and Shrikes—**Golden-crowned Kinglets** remained in the East Liverpool, Ohio area throughout the winter. 54 **Cedar Waxwings** were listed on the Mason County, W. Va. Christmas count and small numbers were reported in other areas. The first **Northern Shrike** ever seen at Skagg's home in Willoughby, Ohio was seen there Jan. 25. Another, an immature, came there Feb. 21 and was seen feeding on a Goldfinch.

Warblers—Warblers were practically nonexistent, even in the southern portion of the region where **Myrtle** and **Pine Warblers** normally winter in fair numbers. 27 **Myrtle Warblers** were on the Charleston Christmas count and a few showed up on the Huntington and Ona feeder counts on Jan. 31.

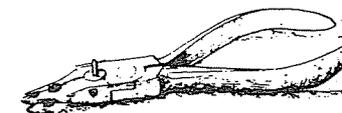
Blackbirds—**Eastern Meadowlarks** remained in fair numbers at least until January. 99 were found for the Ona, W. Va. Christmas count and 224 were on the Mason County count. Bell noted that they were at Clarksville, Pa. during the winter. No roosts or large flocks of wintering blackbirds were reported. Even **Cowbirds** wintered elsewhere except for a few stragglers which showed up at feeders.

Grosbeaks and Finches—**Cardinal** populations appear very good throughout the region as most every reporter mentioned their abundance. Less than half dozen **Evening Grosbeaks** were reported. **Purple Finches** were unreported in the northern part of the region and their numbers were way down in the southern portion. **Pine Siskins** were also very scarce. 3 listed on the Hancock County, W. Va. Christmas count was one of the few records (ADR). **American Goldfinch** wintered in large numbers. Even non birders were conscious of their abundance.

Sparrows—**Rufous-sided Towhees** were reported wintering in the southern part of the region in very good numbers. 415 listed on the Charleston, W. Va. Christmas count was a 24 year high (NG). Numbers of **Slate-colored Juncos** appeared lower than normal in several areas. However at East Liverpool, Ohio the number of wintering Juncos was greater than usual. An **Oregon Junco** frequented the feeder at the Eddy residence in West Liberty, W. Va. during the winter. Several Wheeling BBC people saw the bird (AE). Numbers of wintering **Tree Sparrows** were considered low by several reporters. A small flock of 15 or so **Field Sparrows** attempted to winter in Thompson Park, East Liverpool, Ohio. At least 5 of this number probably made it as this was the number coming to feeders in late February (NL). A **Harris Sparrow** was observed at Bethany, W. Va. Feb. 26 (ARB). It was seen by many college students and several members of the Wheeling BBC. **White-crowned Sparrows** were listed in several localities during the season. **White-throated Sparrows** made a great showing. Their numbers were commented on by every reporter and the 530 listed on the Charleston, W. Va. Christmas count was the greatest number in 24 years (NG). **Fox Sparrows** were found in the Huntington-Ona, W. Va. area in greater than usual numbers. Kiff had at least 8 coming to feeders. 2 to 4 were seen regularly in East Liverpool, Ohio where they are not usually found. A **Swamp Sparrow** appeared at feeder in Willoughby, Ohio Feb. 1 and 2 in 6 degree below zero temperature for Skaggs first winter record for this species. Christmas counts at Ona listed 26, Mason County, W. Va. 19 and Huntington, W. Va. 9. **Song Sparrow** numbers were considered very good by person commenting on this species.

Contributors—(RKB) Ralph K. Bell; (GHB) George H. Breiding; (ARB) A. R. Buckelew; (ERC) Everett R. Chandler; (AE) Anne Eddy; (NG) Norris Gluck; (SH) Sarah Hugus; (GFH) George F. Hurley; (MK) Maxine Kiff; (MM) Marie Mastellar; (CM) Clark Miller; (VO) Virginia Olsen; (GP) Glen Phillips; (ADR) Arthur D. Ryan; (MS) Merit Skaggs; (BV) Betty Vossler—Mrs. Nevada Laitsch, MC 21, East Liverpool, Ohio 43920

The Gathering Cage



Constance Katholi, Editor
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South Charleston, W. Va.



Summit Lake, Wisconsin

This was one of the worst winters in Wisconsin history, with snow piling up so high in front of the windows you couldn't see out. My trapping area lay buried under five feet of snow, and Martin shovelled off the roof **without** a ladder. Needless to say there were not many birds around, nor was I able to band them. The Evening Grosbeaks didn't stay and there was no finch invasion—not even any strays.

There was, however, one incident which may be of interest. Last December I noticed at the feeder a Black-capped Chickadee which was unable to close its bill, but otherwise appeared in good health. Early in January I observed that although the bill continued to grow longer, the bird still acted normally; but by the end of the month I saw that when the bird alighted on the feeder, instead of selecting a seed and departing with it, it would sit there trying to keep all other chickadees away. I captured the bird at that time. In the hand it seemed healthy and strong with a fat class of "2", but it did not attempt to bite me as most chickadees do. The lower bill was greatly overgrown and deformed with the mouth gaping open at all times. The maxilla which measured 8 mm. was normal, but the lower mandible at 13 mm. was curved upward and outward to the right. The jaw had evidently become dislocated at some time since November 8, the last capture date, and had become "frozen" in this abnormal position to the right of center. Since the bill tips no longer met, lack of normal wear permitted abnormal growth.

I attempted to trim the mandible to its proper length so the bird could feed. This was, of course, only a temporary measure, since even after treatment the bird was still unable to close its mouth because of the dislocation,—and the bill would grow again. As soon as I finished the "operation" he attacked me vigorously, pecking and biting in customary chickadee manner. I had noted that the tongue was partially gone; perhaps it too had been frozen, and sloughed off due to the severe cold of 30 deg. below zero. The bird was back at the feeder two days later, still chasing the others away, and selecting seeds carefully, rejecting a dozen or more before carrying one away. Apparently, a certain size and shape was needed for ease of handling with the deformed bill. The bird seemed abnormally fluffed-up and not

as alert as before. I did not see it again, and so assumed that it succumbed in the cold wave which followed. In weather like that I have seen even normal healthy chickadees fall to the ground in exhaustion, needing a minute or two to recover. It was too much to hope that a deformed bird could survive. Banded as a baby in 1967, he had spent all subsequent summers and winters here breeding in our woods.
—Carol Rudy

Hudson, Maine

Early in January I started baiting birds with chicken scratch and sunflower seeds. One of the first interesting birds to show up at the feeding area was a Lapland Longspur. It stayed around about a week but would never go into any of the traps. Other visitors to the feeders were Blue Jays, Tree Sparrows, Black-capped Chickadees and Evening Grosbeaks. By April 1 I had banded 135 of the latter species and had one foreign recovery. Other than the birds just mentioned very few were to be seen anywhere this winter.

Now at the first of April at the Salmon Pool in Bangor there are great numbers of Black Ducks, Golden-eyes, Herring Gulls and about 100 Greater Black-backed Gulls. There are, of course, no salmon nowadays at the Pool—pollution has taken care of that. In the days before the paper mills the first salmon caught there in the spring went to the President of the United States. We still have between 3 and 4 feet of snow on the ground, but a few blackbirds are starting to move through. To get around in the woods one either uses snowshoes or a snowmobile; I prefer the big shoes. Much quieter.—John W. Morgan

Inwood, West Virginia

In March 1971 I went to a friend's house at Intermon near Wardensville, W. Va. to do some banding. I caught 61 new birds plus 10 returns. Among the returns were 2 Carolina Chickadees, 1 White-breasted Nuthatch, 1 Titmouse, and 2 Downy Woodpeckers ALL OF WHICH had been banded on February 28, 1965. I thought it was very interesting (Phenomenal!-Ed.) that 6 birds, all banded on the same day six years ago, should be recaptured on one and the same day.—Clark Miller

Clarksville, Pa.

There were heavy snow squalls and gusty winds most of the day on March 8, 1971. When I came home at dusk that evening, my wife told me of seeing at least 8 Bluebirds in our yard during the late afternoon, and of observing one going into a nesting cavity that I had made from a dead elm tree log perhaps 20 years ago. The next morning I checked the nesting log at dawn and found that 12 Bluebirds (8 males and 4 females) had crowded into it the night before. The last to arrive had found space at such a premium that the whole of his tail protruded through the entrance hole. Three of the twelve carried bands, and all three were males. One had been netted and banded here in the yard in March 4 years ago; a second had been banded as a nestling in a box a mile away in June 1969; and the third had been banded as a nestling in a box 8 miles away in May 1970.

Practically every winter on extremely cold nights I have noticed our local wintering Bluebirds (usually 4 to 7 of them) roosting together in the old conventional size box (5"x5") in our yard which is much larger than the log selected by the 12 Blue-

birds on the evening of 8 March. As the weather moderates our wintering Bluebirds go back to roosting in the old Barn and Cliff Swallow nests under the eaves of our barn.

Since our current 5 wintering Bluebirds were located roosting in their customary places under the eaves of our barn, I presumed, these were new arrivals from the south which had sought shelter from the snow and cold by roosting together. While it is evidently not unusual for Bluebirds to roost together in adverse weather periods, it is seldom reported. However, there is an excellent article on this subject in the October 1959 issue of BIRD BANDING, page 219-26, entitled "The Communal Roosting by the E. Bluebird in Winter" by Anita Frazier and Val Nolan, Jr. This article gave observations on Bluebirds roosting together on 5 very cold nights in February 1958 near Bloomington, Indiana. The authors observed that, "the birds slept **heads together and bodies pointed downward**, forming an inverted cone. Retirement was earlier on colder nights; arising was later on colder mornings—over an hour after sunrise. The long duration of roosting and the very evident sluggishness of the birds lead to the suggestion that Eastern Bluebirds may respond physiologically to intense cold by reducing body temperature during sleep to a degree not previously known for the species".

I wish I had observed more carefully the position of the Bluebird bodies in the "log" box, but due to the small size of the nest cavity, it seems improbable that the Bluebirds could have been positioned as they were in the box near Bloomington, Indiana. I do know that our wintering Bluebirds stay in the roosting box for at least a ½ hour after sunrise before venturing out on below zero mornings. As the weather moderates they return to roosting in the swallow nests under the eaves of the barn.—Ralph K. Bell

Willoughby, Ohio

In line with a recent suggestion for the column I am forwarding some of my season's returns, as follows:

Catbird, AHY, banded 5-20-67, returned 5-17-70

Catbird, AHY, banded 5-20-67, returned 5-24-71

The first bird was at least four years old, and the latter at least five. By an unusual coincidence Chipping Sparrow, AHY, banded 5-7-69 was retrapped on the same day two years later. Two Goldfinches which were banded one each in January and February of 1970 (of undetermined sex due to winter plumage) were retrapped in April and May of 1971 and both found to be males. I banded about 150 Goldfinches this spring and found that some of them which had wintered with me last year, did so again this year. There is a new bander Mrs. Flanigan, living just under a mile from me, and she is trapping some of my birds—mostly goldfinches,—and I am getting some of hers. The most interesting of these was a Northern Shrike; the full story of this capture has been sent to **The Redstart**.

Whereas last spring I had lots of siskins, this year I did not see a single one! There has been, however, an influx of two species which I do not consider very desirable: Flocks of Blue Jays are moving through and some are stopping to feed. I have banded more than double the usual number this spring. The other species is the Common Grackle. Twenty years ago this bird was uncommon here, but to date I have banded about 60.—Merit Skaggs.

Columbus, Ohio

This hypothesis was a good try, BUT. Last summer when recording Grackle repeats at the decoy trap I began to "remember" a lot of band numbers. It seemed that I was getting the same individuals over and over. It could be that they were just chronic repeaters anyway and happened to get in the trap almost every day and thus were "together" in a sense. But I began to wonder if this togetherness was limited to the inside of the trap. Presently the hypothesis developed that these Grackles operated as a group,—foraged together, roosted together, and did everything else together. In anthropomorphic terms they were a "gang".

The next step was to make a lot of charts showing which birds were in the trap on each day of the period sampled. It was then easy to spot 3 or 4 (or sometimes more) that were in the trap together on a goodly number of days in the period such as a month. For example there might be 17 days in July when these 4 birds were in the trap simultaneously.

The next question was on how many days in July could these 4 birds be expected to be there simultaneously just by chance. This is not difficult to compute. Knowing how many days in July an individual bird was in the trap you can get the probability of his being there on a given day. You get this probability for each of the 4 birds, and multiply these probabilities, which gives the probability of their all being there on a given day. From that you can determine how many days in the month they would be there together by chance. The final step is to determine whether the difference between the actual number of days and the number expected by chance is statistically significant.

I found a few groups of Grackles where such a difference was significant, and many more groups where it was not. Then I discovered the really disconcerting aspect. In some cases I could "rig" the results and make a difference significant or not significant at will merely by putting more or fewer days in the sample of repeating Grackles. In my book that is no way to confirm a hypothesis.—Harold E. Burtt

Willoughby, Ohio. I was interested in the comments made recently in The Gathering Cage by Ralph Bell and Charley Handley concerning possible revisions and improvements in the suggested band sizes for certain species. I agree with them that the size I-B is, generally, too large for a Song Sparrow, while a Size I is just a bit too small. I usually take time to shape the band into an oval after closing it on a Song Sparrow's tarsus. The oval must be formed so that the band-joint is on the smaller axis of the oval like this: "C".

Additionally I would like to suggest the use of a Size I on the White-breasted Nuthatch, although the manual calls for I-B. I believe that a bird which creeps over rough bark as much as this species does should be handicapped as little as possible. (Editor's note: It is surprising how smoothly polished the bands on this species become from this very activity!)

On November 27, 1970 I had an interesting return of a Tree Sparrow which I had banded in December 1966. All species of sparrows are of special interest to me, but the White-crowned is my favorite. It was not a common bird during fall migration 1970, and the migration period was quite short (Oct. 2 to 24, only). I trapped 24 of them, of which 11 (46%) were immatures. The White-throat flight, however, was unusually good, and I banded nearly twice as many as usual. —Merit Skaggs

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Original papers in the field of natural history are published in the Redstart. Papers are judged on the basis of their contributions to original data, ideas, or interpretations. Scientific accuracy is most important and to this end an Advisory Board, selected by the Editorial Staff, will review submitted papers. Papers should be typewritten, double spaced and on one side of the paper only. Clarity and conciseness of presentation are very important.

SUGGESTIONS TO AUTHORS

TITLE. The title should be descriptive and concise, preferably containing not more than ten words. Avoid scientific names if possible.

REFERENCES. References should be listed alphabetically by author and referred to in the text by author and year.

TABLES. Keep tables simple and easy to follow so they may be understood without reference to the text.

ILLUSTRATIONS. Illustrations should be suitable for reproduction without retouching. Sharp, glossy prints with good contrast reproduce best. Attach to each a brief legend. Do not write on the back of photographs. Line drawings and diagrams reproduce best if in black ink.

REPRINTS. Authors may request reprints at the time papers are submitted. Cost of reprints will be paid by the author. The author is responsible for putting his paper in final form for production. This will include corrections suggested by the Advisory Editorial Board.

Authors should strive for continuity of thought and clarity of expression. Some papers may fit the following outline for presentation:

INTRODUCTION. Reasons for conducting the research as well as background material relating what others have done.

DATA. The actual results of the investigation along with the methods used for collecting the data.

CONCLUSION. Interpretation of the data.

FUTURE WORK. As a result of the investigation, what work remains to be done.

SUMMARY. For longer articles it is desirable to present a brief summary of the work.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Many papers will not fit this type of presentation. Sometimes a simple sequence-of-events arrangement will serve.

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