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Two old woodpeckers

Jane C. Olyphant

A Recovery

In early March 1977, I received a "Report to the Bander" from the BBL concerning a Pileated Woodpecker that I had banded in a remote part of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, Superior National Forest in Northeastern Minnesota. The circumstances of the recovery were unusual, in fact, I think astounding.

BBL had received a letter dated 7 Sept. 1976 stating that Band No. 534-34606 was found on the femur bone of a bird by a canoeist. The recovery was on 20 August 1976, 18 miles northeast of Ely, Minn., in the Nina Moose River area. No other information was given.

In answer to a letter written to Karl P. Sederits, the Wildlife Biologist of Superior National Forest who sent in the band, he stated that "the band was still intact on the femur bone" (more likely the tarsus). According to the experts, little bird bones do not remain intact for very long, so there is a good possibility that the big woodpecker had not been dead for too long a time.

This Pileated had been caught in a standard small-mesh 6 m. net on the eastern side of the peninsula in Nina Moose Lake. The banding date: 8 August 1964. The coordinates for both the banding and recovery are 481-0920.

Before the capture and banding, this bird was in the company of 2 other Pileated Woodpeckers, possibly its parents, as it was a Hatching Year male. The recovery of the band indicates that possibly this woodpecker resided in the vicinity of the Nina Moose River and lake for most of its life, and lived into its 13th year.

A Return

On 13 May 1977, I recaptured an AHY F Hairy Woodpecker wearing Band No. 772-38487. The band was in good shape as was the woodpecker. After examining her and recording the information, the bird was released. Since the band number was one of a series recently used, I thought no more about it. Sometime later, when I was digging in my records, I discovered — much to my surprise and excitement — that this band number was not the original band placed on this bird, nor was it the second, but it was a third replacement.



This aged Hairy Woodpecker had originally been banded as a Hatching Year female on 17 July 1964, the same year as the aforementioned Pileated Woodpecker. The Hairy, including this latest return, has been a returnee 11 times and a repeater 4 times. She is now in her 14th year of life.

The return dates were as follows: 24 August 1965, 13 October 1966, 21 May 1967, 2 September 1967, 17 May 1968, 29 October 1968, 2 August 1970 (re-banded), 9 May 1971, 30 June 1972, 21 September 1974 (re-banded), 13 May 1977. She repeated 12 October 1965, 28 May 1967, 18 May 1968, and 10 June 1968.

During these last thirteen years, she has been handled a total of 16 times. It is fairly evident over the years since her hatching date in 1964 that she has probably resided within a small radius of the same oak woods that we have called "home" for the past 20 years. ♦

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