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# Thirteen years at a decoy trap

Harold E. Burt and Maurice L. Giltz

We operated a large (15 x 30 m) decoy trap on the University Farm in Columbus, Ohio, almost continuously from October 1963 to mid-June 1976. We have published more than 30 papers on analyses of banding data and behavioral studies of the birds obtained at this trap. It seems appropriate, now that the project has terminated (because of advancing age of the principle operator and loss of support for research), to present some figures to indicate the magnitude of the project.

Table 1 presents data for more than 97% of the captures, which were Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*), Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), and Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*). The totals for these species are 137,00 captures and 108,808 birds banded and reported to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The latter reported that 2,076 of these birds were recovered.

In addition to these totals, our decoy trap captured 23,014 birds which were placed in other categories described here. Birds captured but not banded included:

(1) Birds supplied for governmental or University research projects under permits issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

(2) Repeats and re-entries which were banded

previously, whose bands were read and the birds released.

(3) "Large catches" of greater than 900 birds and/or the pressures of other obligations making it necessary merely to note the species, count, and release the birds.

(4) Other species captured and banded: 2,396 Mourning Doves (*Zenaidura macroura*), 617 American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*), 216 Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*), 57 Cardinals (*Richmondia cardinalis*), and 13 other species totalling 254 birds. Adding these figures to the 137,500 mentioned earlier gives a grand total of captures of 141,040. When we add the 23,014 repeats to this, we have 164,054 birds that were handled.

Simple arithmetic indicates that approximately 3% of the Starlings and 4% of the Common Grackles were recovered (possibly reflecting their urbanization), while only 0.9% of the cowbirds and 0.6% of the Red-winged Blackbirds were recovered (possibly reflecting their habit of spending more of their annual cycle "in the country").

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Table 1. Captures at the decoy trap

	Number captured	Number banded	Number repeaters	Number repeats	Number recoveries
Starling	48,412	31,578	548	650	1,033
Common Grackle	14,519	13,760	1,783	6,274	538
Red-winged Blackbird	30,500	28,001	1,727	4,471	173
Brown-headed Cowbird	44,069	35,469	4,882	11,619	332
Totals	137,500	108,808	8,940	23,014	2,076