North American Bird Bander

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News, Notes, Comments

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Common Grackle 1213-95044 Banded as AHY-M by Peter Lowther at Iowa Lakeside Laboratory, Dickinson County IA on 18 June 1984. Killed on road on 9 June 1991. At least 8 years old.

Purple Finch 850-41282 Banded as AHY-M by S.M. Speich near Olympia WA on 23 Apr 1989. Retrapped by Otis Swisher at Medford OR on 27 Feb 1991, about 550 km S of banding site. [At least ASY when first banded, so 4+ years old.]

Evening Grosbeak 8001-87060 Banded as ASY-F by David Prescott near Exshaw AB on 19 Jan 1991. Recovered at Grande Prairie AB on 25 Sept 1991, about 240 km NW of banding site.

News, Notes, Comments

AHY White-throated Sparrows Said to Have Retained Juvenal Plumage

Craves (1993. *N. Am. Bird Bander* 18:116-117) described a female White-throated Sparrow banded at Dearborn, Michigan, in May as having had "a great deal of breast streaking," and attributed this to the retention of juvenal plumage. She quoted Bent's description of the juvenal plumage of this species; this account was taken by Bent from the classic work by Dwight (1900. The sequence of plumages and moults of the passerine birds of New York. *Annals NY Acad. Sci.* 13:73-360). The juvenal body plumage of the White-throated Sparrow, like that of virtually all passerines, consists of feathers that are lax and relatively weak compared to those of later plumages. In a few passerines, such as the *Catharus* thrushes, isolated juvenal body feathers may persist into the winter, but this is never true of an entire area of the body such as the underparts.

Streaked underparts are quite common in White-throated Sparrows in the first basic plumage. In a sample of 49 fall skins in the Carnegie Museum of Natural History of White-throated Sparrows in first basic plumage (HY - skulled by the preparator), 18 have various amounts of ventral streaking. The streaked feathers are *new*, i.e. of the first basic plumage, *not* retained juvenal feathers. This species undergoes a partial prealternate molt in the early spring, whereby individually variable amounts of the basic plumage are replaced. In most instances, apparently, the streaked ventral feathers of the first basic plumage are replaced by plain or lightly marked feathers. In a few instances, however, birds in alternate plumage (spring-summer) can be found with ventral streaks, as in Ms. Craves's bird.

In the Carnegie collection I have found spring-summer White-throated Sparrows with ventral streaking as follows:

40225	M	Moose Factory, Ont.	14 Jun 1912
82247	F	Deerfield, IL	15 May 1920
102444	F	Point Natashquan, Que.	1 Jun 1928
102498	M	" " "	26 May 1928
114779	M	North Bay, Ont.	5 Jul 1933
164704	F	Beaufort Co., SC	22 Apr 1941
164708	M	Cambridge, MA	26 Apr 1909
164709	F	" "	5 May 1909

It should thus be reemphasized that streaked underparts in White-throated Sparrows in their first basic plumage do *not* represent retained juvenal plumage. It may be assumed that at least most of the spring-summer birds with streaked underparts are SY, although there is no direct evidence of this. There are only two or three fall White-throat specimens in our collection that were skulled as AHY (thus in second or later basic plumage) that have ventral streaks, so I would expect that streaked underparts would be a very rare variant in White-throated Sparrows in definitive alternate (spring-summer ASY) plumage.

Kenneth C. Parkes
Sr. Curator of Birds
Carnegie Museum of Natural History

Reply

I would like to thank Kenneth Parkes for clarifying the occurrence of streaked underparts in White-throated Sparrows.

I am surprised about the frequency of streaked underparts in this species in first basic plumage and beyond. This note should be interesting to bird banders as this information is not found in the literature or the Banding Manual.

Since my reported encounter with the streaked spring White-throated Sparrow, I have encountered one more, as well as several with very dusky gray breasts. It would be informative to gather more data on the various plumages of this species.

Julie Craves
University of Michigan-Dearborn

An Invitation to the Bird Banders of North America to Contribute to the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) Program

The Institute for Bird Populations extends an invitation to North American bird banders to become part of the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program: a cooperative, continent-wide network of constant-effort mist-netting stations for the long-term monitoring of landbird productivity, survivorship and population levels.

Recent analyses of long-term population-trend data from the North American Breeding Bird Survey and other more limited and local datasets suggest that populations of many landbird species, especially forest-inhabiting Neotropical migratory species in eastern North America, are declining. The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Program, "Partners in Flight," was established to reverse the apparent population declines of these species.

Unfortunately, however, the existing population-trend data on Neotropical migrants provide no information on the primary demographic parameters (productivity and survivorship) of these birds. As a result, the existing data provide no means for determining at what point(s) in the life cycles of these species problems are occurring, or to what extent the observed population trends are being driven by causal factors that affect birth rates or death rates or both. In particular, the large-scale, long-term avian monitoring programs in North America that provide only population-trend data generally have been unable to determine to what extent forest fragmentation and deforestation on the temperate breeding grounds, versus that on the tropical wintering grounds, are causes for declining populations of Neotropical migratory landbirds. Indeed, without critical data on productivity and survivorship, it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to identify effective management and conservation actions to reverse the current population declines. Clearly, the need for a continuing and comprehensive program of demographic monitoring for landbirds is justified.

Here is where the efforts of banders like us can aid enormously. By banding and recapturing in subsequent years the individual birds that we encounter, we can accumulate data on the population size and survivorship of the birds. By ageing each individual accurately, we can accumulate data on the numbers and proportions of young birds captured and thus on the productivity of the birds. Furthermore, by networking with other banders, we can provide meaningful information on changes in productivity and survivorship over large geographical areas. Now in its sixth year, the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program, coordinated by The Institute for Bird Populations, has expanded considerably from 17 stations in 1989 to about 250 stations in 1993. Endorsed by the Monitoring Working Group of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Program as a necessary and potentially viable tool for determining changes in the productivity and survivorship of landbirds, the MAPS program should dovetail nicely with other large-scale, long-term avian biomonitoring programs already being conducted on the continent. Furthermore, the operation of a four-year pilot MAPS program in the Northeast and Northwest Regions of the continent was approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1992.

The goal of the MAPS program for the summer of 1994 is the operation of at least 300 MAPS stations. To meet this goal, we are seeking addi-

tional stations in all regions, particularly in the Southwest, Southeast, and Alaska Regions. Analysis of the first four years (1989-1992) of MAPS data suggests that data from 40-60 stations in a region will allow extremely precise determinations of productivity and survivorship for target species.

The MAPS program provides banders with the opportunity to make an important and crucial contribution to avian biomonitoring. Moreover, the methodology is simple and straightforward.

(1) Establish a study area and banding station at a location that can be utilized for at least five years and that will permit the capture of substantial numbers of many of the common species of landbirds.
(2) Set up one 12-m mist net at each of about 10 permanent net-sites in the study area.
(3) Operate these nets in a standardized manner for about six morning hours per day and for one day in each of six to twelve consecutive ten-day periods from May to Au gust. Each station should begin netting after most migrant individuals have passed through the study site.
(4) Identify to species, age and sex, and band all birds captured, including recaptures.

We urge banders from all parts of North America to become part of this exciting project. For more information, please write to Kenneth Burton (MAPS Coordinator), The Institute for Bird Populations, P.O. Box 1346, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956, or call (415) 663-1436.

Kenneth M. Burton and David F. DeSante

Experienced Birders Needed by MAPS Program

The Institute for Bird Populations is seeking experienced birders to run MAPS stations on Federal lands in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Montana, Kansas, Missouri, Texas, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, and Virginia. Positions run from **about 20 April or 1 May**, depending on location, **to 28 August 1994.** Duties include bird banding and some vegetation analysis and habitat mapping; some positions also involve point counting. Prior banding experience is helpful but not necessary. Point counters must be familiar with songs and calls of most breeding species in the study area. Stipend of $375/mo. and housing (or camping) provided. Alaska positions include round-trip transportation. Applicants with good field vehicles are especially needed. Please pass this announcement on to anyone who might be interested in such a position.

Interested persons should send a résumé and cover letter indicating bird identification skills, particularly by ear; date of availability; location preference; permanent address; Social Security number; and whether or not they would have a car to:

KENNETH BURTON
The Institute for Bird Populations
P.O. Box 1346
Point Reyes Station, CA 94956
(415-663-1436)

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY

"PROJECT TANAGER" NEEDS YOUR HELP

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is looking for birders nationwide to assess the breeding status of four tanager species in forests of different sizes. Tanagers are Neotropical migratory birds whose populations may be declining due to fragmentation of their forested habitats. Project Tanager draws upon the expertise of local birders to locate tanagers, monitor their reproductive behavior, and search for nests. This effort is part of the Lab's volunteer-based National Science Experiments, sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

in1993, a successful pilot study was conducted in which more than 70 teams of volunteers studied tanagers at nearly 1,000 sites in 32 states and two Canadian provinces. Their data suggest that Scarlet Tanagers in the East may disappear from small woodlots (under three acres), whereas Summer and Western Tanagers may be less sensitive to small habitat areas. The validity of these findings will now be tested with the full-scale launching of **Project Tanager**, beginning in spring 1994. By incorporating the comments and suggestions of our pilot tanager-watchers, we have revised and streamlined Project Tanager's methodology. For example, study sites will be selected largely by professional land managers and biologists, while birders will concentrate their efforts on finding and observing the birds. All participants will receive a kit with full instructions, data forms, and cassette tapes for learning tanager vocalizations.

So, lend us your ears! (and eyes). Join the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's National Science Experiment to collect information that will help us protect Neotropical migratory birds. There is no charge to participate in Project Tanager, and organized efforts by bird clubs are most welcome. For more information or to sign up, write:

Mindy Westgate/Project Tanager
Cornell Lab of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Road
Ithaca, New York 14850
(607) 254-2446

Early Skull Pneumatization in the Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*)

At Coyote Creek Riparian Station in Alviso CA, we have found juvenile Black Phoebes that have completely pneumatized skulls in July, up to 6 weeks before the August 31 date listed in Pyle, P., S.N.G. Howell, R.P. Yunick and D.F. DeSante. 1987. Identification Guide to North American Passerines. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas CA. During the month of July we captured 36 juveniles and 2 adults in breeding condition. Of the 36 hatching year birds (aged by the presence of buffy-cinnamon wing bars), 4 had completely pneumatized skulls in July. Each of the birds in the following table was evaluated by at least two banders and we have a photo of one of these birds available on request.

Band Number	Date	Molt
2111-84964	7/3/93	none only 1mm windows in top of skull
2111-84976	7/13/93	none
2111-85408	7/22/93	none-fresh plumage
2111-84986	7/31/93	light body

In August, we captured 12 juveniles and one adult, a recapture from 1991. Ten of the hatching year birds had buffy wing bars and incompletely pneumatized skulls. The other two, aged at earlier banding, had no wing bars and completely pneumatized skull. The histories of these two birds are given below.

Band #	Date	Skull	Wg Bars	Molt
2111-84912	5/18/93	Inc	Yes	None
	8/13/93	Comp	No	Hev bdy
2111-84963	6/24/93	Inc	Yes	None
	8/9/93	Comp	No	Hev bdy & Wing

These data indicate that juvenile Black Phoebes in the San Francisco Bay area can have completely pneumatized skulls in July and some may lose their buffy wing bars in August. I suggest using caution when aging Black Phoebes in July and August, especially in California. If anyone has further information on early skull completion in the Black Phoebe, please send it to me.

Kristin Shields
Coyote Creek Riparian Station
PO Box 1027
Alviso CA 95002