

REVIEWS

Ninth Annual Report of the Australian Bird-banding Scheme, July, 1962 to June, 1963, by W. B. Hitchcock. Published as C.S.I.R.O. Division of Wildlife Research Technical Paper No. 7.

The latest report tabulates the 83,218 birds of 355 species banded during the year 1962-63. This number represents a significant increase in the banding rate, almost doubling the number of birds banded during the previous year. The list provides much interesting speculation for the bander; who banded the first three Jabirus? and who banded the one and only Swift, and how? and how are the fingers of the banders who tackled the 167 adult Galahs and Corellas? The lack of suitable trapping techniques for some comparatively common and wide-spread species (e.g. the Lorikeets and Cuckoo-shrikes) is well illustrated by the small totals of banded birds.

Full data are given for 88 selected recoveries. Those of particular interest include four Fleshy-footed Shearwaters banded at Lord Howe Island and taken by fishing line on the same day at some place off Japan.

Eight distant movements of Silvereyes are recorded, including three between Sydney and Tasmania. Two Little Egrets banded on the same day near Balranald, N.S.W. achieved the unlikely record of being recovered in New Zealand and New Britain respectively; another banded at the same place three years previously was recovered in Papua.

Longevity data are accumulating, and 23 recoveries relating to longevity are given. In some cases (e.g. three years ten months for a Spur-winged Plover) these data probably reflect the relatively few birds banded and the short life of banding in Australia rather than the potential maximum life of the species.

During the year 74 operators mist-netted 30,848 birds of 246 species, more than doubling the previous year's total. Perhaps the next year or so will see a yearly total of over 100,000 birds banded, with over 50,000 taken in mist-nets. — JOHN LIDDY.

Wader measurements and wader migration, by P. R. Evans: *Bird Study*, 11(1): 2338, 1964.

This most interesting 'technique' paper discusses methods for the measurement of wing, bill and total length of live waders, and describes a new method of wing-length measurement — a method that will enable data of different investigators to be compared. Of measurements taken from museum specimens, only bill lengths can be usefully compared with corresponding measurements from live birds.

In the interpretation of measurements, separate treatment must be given to data from juvenile and adult birds, from different localities and from different times of year. (How important it is to have accurate information on plumage changes and their correlation with age!)

Evans sampled autumn populations (two years) of juvenile Dunlin, *Calidris alpina*, and was able to show division, on bill and wing lengths, into several populations. For this species, then it was possible to make tentative assignments for peak values of the different populations to British, Icelandic, and other races.

There are of course problems inherent in the techniques described, but eventually it may be possible "to assign a trapped Wader to a definite place of origin with a specified degree of confidence. If this can be done, banding studies of Wader migration will have vastly more value than they have at present." — W. B. HITCHCOCK, Canberra.

An analysis of the records of a South African ringing station, by M. K. Rowan: *Ostrich*, 35: 160-187, 1964.

This paper by Mrs. Rowan (a research officer at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology) analyses capture and recapture records for the birds banded during a 6-year period at a private banding station on the outskirts of Johannesburg. All told, 13,182 birds of 88 species were banded.

The recovery rate of dead birds was extremely low: 0.46 per cent over-all, 0.64 per cent for the 13 best-ringed species. Also, 60 per cent of recoveries were made at or near the station, and 50 per cent within a year of the banding date. By contrast, the chances of catching a marked bird alive were over 70 times as great in well-ringed species, and many individuals were retrapped at intervals over several years.

One of the important points made by Mrs. Rowan (and this has implication for banding in Australia) is that recapture records are potentially more informative than recoveries — especially in Africa, where the "co-operating human population is sparse and the density of predators and scavengers high." The author believes (and her beliefs are supported by the organizer of the South African Scheme) that "at least equal emphasis should be given to the great research potential of consistent, repetitive trapping in a single area, sustained over a number of years."

Statistical analysis of recapture data for three species of Weaver-Finches (*Ploceidae*) yielded important information on sex ratios, survival and mortality rates, and plumage changes. For each species there is a useful discussion (with tables) on average trapping rates and on 'lapse rate' — derived from an examination of the periods elapsing between banding and final return of banded birds. "Progressively fewer individuals are recaptured as these periods are prolonged, and the manner in which numbers fall off with increasing time may be described in life insurance terminology as the 'lapse rate.'" — W. B. HITCHCOCK, Canberra.

SYDNEY MEETING

We invite all members and their friends to a scientific meeting to be held in the Hallstrom Theatre, Australian Museum, College Street, at 1.30 p.m. on Saturday, 7th August.

The programme for the meeting has not yet been finalised, although we can promise you another interesting and informative afternoon.

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