BIRD BANDING IS INTERESTING WORK

WAUKEGAN MAN EXPLAINS

W. I. Lyon of That City Tells of Experiences in This Line; How Feathered Friends Are Caught

Old-fashioned poets who like to sing of the wild, free spirit of the bird, which would pine away and die from a moment's imprisonment, might rearrange their dactylic hexameters somewhat after a brief conversation with W. I. Lyon of Waukegan, who sells real estate for profit and catches birds for pleasure.

Mr. Lyon is president of the Inland Bird Banding association. The membership extends from Saskatchewan to Texas. Each member is expected to catch the birds that come into his ken, and place a neat aluminum band about the ankle of each one. The birdie then gets a number in a big book in Washington, D. C., kept by the United States biological survey, and becomes from then on a personage of scientific interest.

In his yard in Waukegan Mr. Lyon maintains about fifty traps—each a sort of temporary confinement for the birds before they are "booked"—and about ten of them, he says, are "successful." This isn't a good time of year for a bird-bander to ride his hobby, the real estate man said, because most of the birds are somewhere else.

Habit Grows on Them

"Some birds acquire what we call the "trap habit,'" he said. "After having been caught and banded they seem to lose a great deal of their fear of man. They keep coming back to the traps day after day, where they know there is something to eat. I can get within ten feet of them without their taking flight."

A bird that is a steady customer at the bread-crumb line is known as a "repeat" in the bird-bander's lexicon. A bird that is seen a year or more after having been registered—either caught in another man's trap or killed—is a "return." Since 1920, when the biological survey took over the work, some 350,000 birds have been banded in this country. Out of that number there have been 11,000 "returns," Mr. Lyon said.

"I have banded about 18,000 birds and have met with some 30,000 "repeats,'" he continued. "The birds include 130 species. My yard once was an orchard and several trees still stand. A number of species don't walk into my traps. The birds which like the open fields won't come anywhere near me."

A bird is just a bird to most folks, but not to this man who has handled thousands of them. He had five white-throated sparrows in a trap at one time. Each had a different disposition. One was a "kicker," another a "squealer," a third was too proud—or perhaps too scared — to fight; and so on. These sparrows were flagrant "repeats" and Mr. Lyon learned to identify them by holding them in his hand and noting their actions.

Fish Bait Fails

Passing by a fishing-tackle emporium once, the bird man was smitten with an idea. Why not, he asked himself, get an imitation fly and a phony bug and a rubber angleworm and use 'em for lures in the traps for such birds as liked that diet? So he did. But he admitted a bait that will deceive a poor fish will be scorned by a wise old bird. The bait is still as good as ever, he said.

Recent announcement that a citizen of LaRochelle, France, had picked up an arctic tern whose aluminum ankle brace proclaimed it as coming from some island near Labrador brought up the subject of transatlantic flights of birds. If this one is authentic, Mr. Lyon said, it makes the seventh on record. Five of them, peculiarly enough, are of flights from Europe to America, and only one before this one of America to Europe.

"Lindbergh, though, needn't fear that some tern is going to beat his record," said Mr. Yyon. "The fastest a tern can fly—and the tern is one of the swiftest in flight—is sixty miles and hour.

"But the arctic tern sees more hours of daylight than any living creature. He spends his summers in the arctic, watching the midnight sun. For winter, he flies to the antarctic, to get in on the sun there. And he sees plenty of sunlight in the rest of the country in his annual fight of 22,000 miles."

They say that England is more law-abiding than the United States, but after reading a bunch of English detective stories we are almost convinced that Scotland Yard has a new murder mystery to work on every ten minutes and that the British peerage must be almost wiped out by now.

Out in Montana they have what is called "hen hootch." Five drinks and a man lays in the gutter.—Florida Times-Union.

MIGRATORY BIRD LAW FEATURES OUTLINED

Common Birds Protected; Others Considered as Game in Certain Seasons

Robins and English sparrows are the most common of all birds. Next in number is the song sparrow, chipping sparrow, meadow lark and catbird. Bird lovers, sportsmen and game officials are all pretty much agreed in the desire to protect all the useful species of bird life. At the same time such birds as ducks, jacksnipe, woodcock, geese, yellowlegs, golden plovers, coots, quail, grouse, pheasants, and other birds are regarded as useful and desirable food, and as such are legitimately hunted under proper game laws that have the approval of good citizens. The American Game protective association strives to secure sensible game laws that will command respect.

It is against the law to use airplanes or motor boats to drive ducks or keep them moving so as to make bettef shooting.

Every state has laws to protect its fish and game. There is a federal, or government act, known as the migratory bird law. Twenty-one states help to enforce this federal law which reduces the "bag limits" or the number of birds that may be killed by hunters.

During the present session of Congress new migratory bird refuges are being provided for. There are many of these in the United States, and birds are protected against hunters in these places.

Entomolithic

How doth the little busy B
Delight to joke and tease?
He hides himself from you and me,
And all we pull are D's.

"SLICK SPOTS" IN MUD ROADS CALLED "FAULTS"

Many of the bottomless mud-holes which travelers have found in the dirt roads of Illinois during the past winter are the typical "slick spots" now definitely recognized by scientists as a flaw in the soils in certain sections of the state, according to E. A. Norton, of the soil survey division, college of agriculture, University of Illinois.

These spots vary in size from a few feet to several miles square and in some localities they make up ten per cent of the total soil area. When dry the spots become very had and resist further penetration of water. When they are thoroughly wet, however, they take on more water readily and seem bottomless. In this stage, the soil in them has a smooth or slick feel — whence the spots get their name.