

BIRD BANDING IN THE MOHAWK VALLEY

BEATRICE SULLIVAN

On the sixth day of March 1950 Mrs. Gerald Fitzgerald banded her first bird. It was a tree sparrow. In the ten years following she has banded more than thirteen thousand birds at her home, Bird Haven, a private sanctuary on the shore of the Mohawk River in Amsterdam. Here she has banded one hundred twenty-one in a day, and during May 1958 the total included eight hundred forty Evening Grosbeaks. All these birds have been reported to Fish and Wildlife Service for Mrs. Fitzgerald is one of their authorized banders. For them she has tagged forty-six species.

Foreign retraps and recoveries have come from other near-by banders. Many Evening Grosbeaks had been banded by Mr. Steve Fordham at the Delmar Game Farm (incidentally, it was Mr. Fordham who taught banding to Mrs. Fitzgerald.) An Evening Grosbeak wearing the band of Mr. Walter Sabin at Slingerlands dated March twenty-ninth 1958 did not arrive at Bird Haven, some thirty miles away, until the fourth of May.

From farther away came two Evening Grosbeaks banded by Mr. Maurice Broun of Hawk Mountain, Pa. One of these arrived in ten days, May ninth 1958, May 19. The other was trapped and released May ninth, but had been banded February fourteenth.

Birds trapped at Bird Haven represent many states: Connecticut, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin, as well as from the Provinces of Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec. One Tree Sparrow has returned for five years, and the most interesting bird to visit Bird Haven was a female Orchard Oriole (a new record) banded May twenty-fourth 1956. Dickcissels have been banded here also, as well as Lincoln's Sparrows.

The Fish and Wildlife reports to Mrs. Fitzgerald of the fate of birds bearing her bands have been interesting. One of her male Evening Grosbeaks, banded December twenty-second 1951, was recaptured by Mrs. Irma Werner of Cumberland Mills, Maine, April thirtieth 1960, nearly nine years after being banded. Another recovery, a Catbird, banded September twenty-first 1956, was found dead in a garden at Ensign, Kansas, October twenty-fourth 1956. This bird had crossed seven states. A white-throated Sparrow, banded April twenty-ninth 1955 was killed by a car in Leesville, South Carolina, November eleventh 1955, seven months after leaving Bird Haven. A Purple Finch, wearing a Bird Haven band of April first, 1954, was shot in Omaha, Texas, February twentieth 1955. Another, banded March eleventh 1954, perished in a snowstorm at Grand Rapids, Minnesota (not Michigan) just two months later to the day. There were other reports of Purple Finches found dead in Alabama, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Tennessee.

In the following table the year 1959-1960 shows a great drop in the banding activities of Mrs. Fitzgerald. This is due to the fact that a new express highway has completely destroyed this lovely sanctuary and natural

habitat. The wooded area which gave coverage, the many feeding stations and even Mrs. Fitzgerald's home have all been sacrificed to progress. A fresh start is now being made in a twenty-acre woodland across the road with a new home and a new sanctuary. It is good to be able to say that the birds are slowly finding their new Bird Haven where they will be welcomed by Mrs. Fitzgerald who is happy to report the arrival of fifteen Evening Grosbeaks on November fifth 1960.

Year	Total Number Banded	All Species Banded	Evening Grosbeak	Purple Finch
1950	882	22	140	38
1951	1258	17	500	292
1952	1285	30	881	11
1953	2098	20	863	355
1954	2613	21	178	559
1955	1141	14	549	108
1956	1906	28	1212	208
* 1957	920	19	110	632
1958	1540	17	1352	66
** 1959	33	7	None Banded	None Banded
* Mrs. Fitzgerald away			** Mrs. Fitzgerald moving	

Species Banded

American Bittern	Yellow-throated Warbler
Wood Duck	Canada Warbler
Red-tailed Hawk	Red-wing
Ruffed Grouse	Baltimore Oriole
Killdeer	Rusty Blackbird
Mourning Dove	Scarlet Tanager
Belted Kingfisher	Cardinal
Flicker	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Hairy Woodpecker	Indigo Bunting
Blue Jay	Dickcissel
Black-capped Chickadee	Evening Grosbeak
White-breasted Nuthatch	Eastern Purple Finch
House Wren	Pine Siskin
Carolina Wren	Common Goldfinch
Catbird	Slate-colored Junco
Robin	Tree Sparrow
Wood Thrush	Chipping Sparrow
Veery	White-crowned Sparrow
Eastern Bluebird	White-throated Sparrow
Cedar Waxwing	Fox Sparrow
Northern Shrike	Lincoln's Sparrow
Black-throated Blue Warbler	Swamp Sparrow
Oven-bird	Song Sparrow

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