

# WATERFOWL BANDING IN CANADA

By C. H. RICHARDSON, JR.  
*U. S. Game Management Agent*  
Alabama

## WATERFOWL BANDING ON THE PRAIRIE PROVINCES OF CANADA

Waterfowl banding is now considered the most reliable method of obtaining scientific information about our ducks and geese. The banding of birds had its beginning in Europe in 1899 by a school teacher in Denmark who banded a few storks, teal, starlings and two or three species of birds of prey. Dr. Paul Bartsch of the Smithsonian Institution in June 1902 was the first bander in North America to use numbered metal bands. The American Bird Banding Association was organized in December 1909 and continued to develop the banding program until 1920. At this time it was taken over by the U. S. Biological Survey (now the Fish and Wildlife Service) as an official research project. Banding in North America is now under the general direction of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service. In fact this function is authorized by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Within the last few years waterfowl banding on the nesting grounds of the prairie provinces of Canada has developed into a rather large operation. This is a cooperative program conducted by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service, assisted by personnel of the various state and provincial game departments. In this operation there are two methods used in catching the birds, drive trapping and dog teams. In the drive trapping method we usually have four men, who catch the birds, by setting a trap, that is very much like a hoop net that the commercial fisherman uses, only it is of very small mesh and attach wings to this the length of which will vary according to size and shape of the area being trapped. After getting the trap set up everyone goes to the opposite end of the slough and wades back through the water pushing the ducks into the trap. As this is done in the moulting season you will catch quite a few adults because they are flightless; although we are interested primarily in the young birds, we band both young and old.

The dog crews are made up of two men and one or more dogs. They work the smaller sloughs and potholes. At the present time we are engaged in species banding and the species that is being banded is the mallard. Of course you will catch all kind in a drive operation, so we band all that are caught regardless of species. With the dog crews, they do not release the dogs unless mallards are observed on the pothole or slough. After the drive is completed and the birds are in the trap it is carried out to dry ground where the birds are separated, according to age, sex and species, banded and released. Sometimes there are several drives made in a day. We usually try to feel sure that we can catch at least 50 birds before we set the trap, for it is quite a bit of work setting a trap and taking it up. Catches of from 200 to 400 birds at one time are not uncommon, one crew caught and banded over 1,800 birds at one time this summer.

Banding makes possible the study of individuals and groups of birds of the same species. Much of the present knowledge of migration routes is based on data obtained from banding and is being relied upon more and more in the management of the migratory game species.

One of the questions answered by bird banding is, how long do birds live in the wild, and how long are the distances traveled by some. A Newfoundland hunter shot a black duck that was banded 17 years earlier. The longest a bird has been known to survive in the wild in North America was a Caspian Tern, banded as a nestling, near St. James, Michigan on July 19, 1925, and shot in Ottawa County August 19, 1951, a full 26 years later. Following are several records which illustrate why the pintail is famous as a traveler. Banded, Labrador, Canada, September 7, 1951—killed Southern England, September 25, 1951. Banded August 16, 1949, Tululake, California—killed November 15, 1949, Cook Islands, New Zealand. Also two blue wing teal that were banded in Illinois and released November 20, 1954 were killed on Mobile Bay less than 48 hours later.

In order to avoid any confusion or duplication of the identifying band numbers, the numbers for all bands used on wild migratory birds in North America, by mutual agreement are assigned and issued by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. To try to better explain what I have been telling you, I have these color slides of the waterfowl banding operations in Canada.

## THE DOVE BANDING PROGRAM IN THE SOUTHEAST

By LEO M. MARTIN  
*U. S. Game Management Agent*  
Decatur, Alabama

There has been a lot said and a lot more written about the Mourning Dove and the banding of nestling doves. Everyone talks about it and some write about it. It seems now that we are finally doing something about it.

At the 1954 meeting of the Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners in New Orleans, Louisiana, Mr. Howard Wright from Missouri said that a dove flyway concept was needed. At the same meeting there was a panel discussion led by Mr. Harold Peters with Leonard Foote and Frank Wilson. They said that more trapping and banding in the northern states was needed. At the 1955 meeting of this same association at Daytona Beach, Florida, Mr. Harold Peters said that continuation of banding especially through establishment of permanent banding stations was needed. He also said that dove banding had fallen off alarmingly. At the same meeting Mr. Dan Russell from Kentucky gave a report on, "Do we really shoot migrant doves." He said, generally speaking, the southeastern states shooting doves in September are shooting birds produced in the state where shot. He said, between 1950 and 1954 that Kentucky banded 972 nestling doves and he used banding records to prove that 75% of the direct recoveries were made in the state where banded regardless of whether the birds were killed in September, October or even February.

At the 1956 meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas there was a panel discussion led by Mr. Harold Peters. This panel emphasized the need for additional data on breeding populations. All this and much more has been said in the last three years.

What has been done? I understand there were over 13,000 doves banded in the southeast in 1956. Who did it? The State of Louisiana I believe has banded almost half of these.

I was first asked to try banding nestling doves in 1956. My first thoughts were, how will I ever find more than a dozen or so nests during the entire nesting season? Since then I have wondered how will I ever find time to visit and band all the nests I have found.

Banding nestling doves is like banding waterfowl in only one respect. Both take a lot of time and hard work. Nestling dove banding does not take a lot of expensive equipment and travel to the far north. It can be done close to home in north Alabama. The equipment needed is a very light ladder, a car-top carrier to transport the ladder, a fishing pole with a mirror attached to its end. This is used for looking into nests without climbing and into hard-to-get-to places.

In the summer of 1956 I banded 294 nestling doves within 10 miles of Decatur, Alabama. I estimated I spent 200 hours banding this 294 doves. I located, marked and tried to observe 267 nests. Only 163 of these nests hatched the eggs and reared the birds to six days of age or older. A record was kept of the age of the birds when banded. These figures indicate that a little over half of the nests found were successful, 54% to be exact. The big loss seems to be in eggs since 163 eggs were known to be lost while only 20 young birds were known to be lost to all causes. A few nests were not visited the second time.

Sixteen bands have been recovered to date. Two of them were recovered in Louisiana, one in December and one in January. Ten were recovered in Ala-