

STATUS OF THE ANALYSIS OF MOURNING DOVE BANDINGS

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The analysis of mourning dove bandings and recoveries has not been completed as yet because of recent personnel changes in the Section of Migratory Upland Game Bird Studies. However, it is hoped that this analysis will be completed in 1965 and then made available to all interested persons through the Bureau's Special Scientific Report Series.

Although the analysis has not yet been completed, a few of the objectives are as follows: All bandings and recoveries through 1962 will be included in the report. However, only those bandings and recoveries from 1949 through 1962 will be critically analysed. The reason for this is that prior to 1949 very few bandings and subsequently recoveries were reported to the Bird Banding Laboratory. From the time dove banding was begun until 1948, only 30,845 doves were banded and only 478 recoveries were obtained from these bandings. Through the 14-year period, 1949 through 1962, 344,459 mourning doves were banded. From this total, 7,991 recoveries were obtained. These figures represent all birds banded throughout all years. Bandings and subsequent recoveries will be further subdivided in the report by banding periods such as May through August for adults and immatures. Strong evidence suggests that flying birds banded during this time are locally produced or locally breeding birds and calculations of the distribution and derivation of dove kill will only be made from these data. Other subdivisions include winter bandings (November through February), spring migration period bandings (March through April), and fall migration bandings (September through October).

The banding analysis report will also contain comparisons of hunting season regulations throughout the years and the possible implications these regulations had on the management of the mourning dove. It will attempt to strengthen the position of the boundaries of the present management units or change them as the need is seen. It will outline distribution of the kill from birds banded on production areas by State and banding and by management unit. It will also outline the size and derivation of the kill in various harvest areas and indicate the relative importance of the harvest area involved. It will indicate the importance of each State in the harvest of the mourning dove; a considerable section will be devoted to the importance of Texas and Mexico in the harvest as nearly 40 per cent of the annual continental harvest is made in these two areas. The recovery rates and mortality rates will be treated by State and by management unit.

Direct recovery rates of shot birds increased from 1.23 per cent during the early banding years to 2.06 during the period 1949 through 1962 (Figure 1). However, the recovery rates for other than shot birds remained approximately the same. The possible reasons for these results will be discussed in the report.

Only three States provided enough data with which to make statistical comparisons of sex differences and kill patterns. These were Missouri, Louisiana, and Arizona. The data from these States indi-

cated that there were some differences in the kill patterns between sexes, which points up the need for accurately making sex distinctions amongst the birds that are banded. There were significant differences among age classes; adults were shot more consistently in the State of banding, whereas young tend to wander and were shot more consistently out of State.

Management unit boundaries, as presently used, appear to be accurately outlined with the possible exception of the Eastern Management Unit. That Unit could possibly be divided into two subdivisions; one east of the Appalachian chain, and the other one to the west.

Mortality rates derived from recoveries are considerably higher in the Eastern Management Unit than either of the other two and lowest in the Central Unit. Recovery rates varied inconsistently among all States.

Figure 1.—Bandings and Direct Recoveries from the Earliest Records through 1962.

| Period | No. of Banding | Shot | | Other Than Shot | |
|-----------|----------------|-------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | No. | Recovery Rate | No. | Recovery Rate |
| 00-1948 | 30,845 | 380 | 1.23 | 98 | .32 |
| 1949-1962 | 344,459 | 7,109 | 2.06 | 882 | .26 |
| TOTAL | 375,304 | 7,489 | | 980 | |

REGULATIONS' NEEDS IN DOVE MANAGEMENT

I am one of many exponents of simplified regulations, realizing that species management in waterfowl, if pursued in the future, will almost surely prevent this. In dove regulations, however, we are fortunate in that such is not the case.

A large step forward has been made this year in the simplification of the dove baiting regulations, and, as you know or have guessed, this change, effective this year, has been partly based on the study of kill by field types which was conducted for four years in this region. Of course, outright lifting of the baiting regulations would have further simplified them. Such a drastic change, however, would quite probably bring down the wrath of the Audubon Society, garden clubs and other bird lovers and by so doing could have provided enough ammunition for these organizations to have the dove declared a song bird and the season closed entirely. Another possibility is that outright baiting may have provided means of holding doves on one area for sufficient time to permit near extermination of the local population. I, personally, wonder if this would be true. There is a need for documentation of facts in furthering our knowledge in this matter.

The new regulation which this year requires that birds in the field, or being transported to the abode of the hunter, have one wing unplucked for identification purposes applies to doves as well as other migratory game birds. Actually, in this region there is no problem in identifying picked doves except, perhaps, in southwest Louisiana where white-winged and mourning doves might be found together and in southern Florida where white-crowned pigeons and exotic doves occasionally show up. This being the case, the regulation, as it applies to doves, could possibly be localized to the area where needed.

An old proposal, but one worthy of continued consideration, is the creation of a dove stamp or, perhaps, inclusion of the dove and other