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# WESTERN BIRD BANDER

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

For most banders this is the least enjoyable part of the year. The weather is apt to be bad, birds scarce, and we have little alternative to staying indoors and catching up on our record-keeping. It is also the time of the year when we must face that information sheet from the Banding Laboratory that asks the potentially embarrassing question — What are you doing with your banding data? Those who continue to simply place bands on birds in hopes that someone else will find them in a distant place or time can only point to the numbers of birds they have banded by way of accomplishments. On the other hand those who use banding as part of planned investigations can also point to the accumulating pile of data on survival, movements, weights, molt, and other aspects of the biology of birds. However, if these data — valuable though they may be — remain in the files, little has been accomplished and the efforts expended must be equated with the work of those who simply “ring and fling.” We should look at the information sheet from the Banding Laboratory as a helpful reminder to summarize our data and publish it, thereby making it available to others. Only in this way have we contributed to the overall goals of the bird banding program.

What I have just said is only a re-phrasing of a message oft repeated in the presidential messages of previous years. However it bears repeating. As members of the W.B.B.A., I hope all of us will include among our resolutions for 1973 the promise to carefully analyze the goals of our banding programs and make every attempt to achieve these — including the sharing of the results through publication.

The excuses we come up with to avoid writing papers are many. Included among them is the feeling, perhaps shared by many of you, that the small amount of data you have is insignificant in itself. In some cases this may be so, but if it were contributed to a larger program of analysis perhaps it would be invaluable. The establishment of a series of group projects to which interested banders could contribute data has long been a pet idea of mine. I have just found a kindred soul in Dr. Arthur E. Staebler (Department of Biology, California State University, Fresno, California), and he has accepted the position of Project Chairman for W.B.B.A. He will undertake the job of coordinating programs to which we can all contribute. I am sure he would appreciate your ideas on this and certainly deserves the support of each and every one of us.

The state of health of W.B.B.A. is excellent! We are in the best fiscal shape we have been in for years, due to the energetic membership work by Terry Wahl and cost reduction efforts of our Editor, Eleanor Radke. However, please continue to help by promoting memberships, both individual and institutional, and also by providing manuscripts for *Western Bird Bander*. Your ideas and suggestions for the association are always welcome whether sent by mail or, even better, delivered in person at our annual meetings. The details of our 1973 annual meeting at Morro Bay are on the following pages. Please plan to attend!

— Charlie Collins

## RECOVERIES AND RETURNS OF TRICOLORED BLACKBIRDS, 1941-1964

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To date, the only published band recovery data for the Tricolored Blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) are 93 recoveries summarized by Neff (1942) for the period 1924 through 1940. From 1941 through 1964 the Bird Banding Laboratory processed 43 more returns and recoveries for Tricolors, all from California, and we report this additional banding information here.

### BANDING LOCATIONS AND RESULTS

**Merced County (18 recoveries).** All 18 recoveries were of Tricolors banded as nestlings in Merced County (San Joaquin Valley) by the co-author from 1937 through 1939 (Figure 1). Five were recovered during ensuing breeding seasons (April through August) within 25 miles of their banding sites. Another Tricolor, recovered during July, 5 years after banding, had moved about 150 miles north to Arbuckle, Colusa County. This is similar to a recovery reported by Neff (1942) and supports his thought that some of the Merced-raised Tricolors might later nest in the Sacramento Valley rice district.

The remaining 12 Tricolors from Merced County were recovered during ensuing winters (September through March). Six were from points north (Sacramento Valley and San Francisco Bay-Delta region), three were from points south (up to 65 miles), and three were recovered near the original banding location.

The one recovery in Calaveras County (Figure 1) was farther east than any of the recoveries Neff (1942) reported from Merced County. The remaining 17 recoveries were from locations similar to those reported by Neff (1942). This tends to support two of his general conclusions: (1) there is no major movement southward from Merced County after the nesting season; and (2) any movement is likely to be north or northwest from breeding colonies to wintering areas.

**Kern County (14 returns or recoveries).** Five adult Tricolors banded in Kern County from 1948 through 1954 were recovered north of where they were banded (Figure 1). Four of these moved north less than 75 miles, but the fifth moved considerably farther — about 230 miles from Bakersfield (May 1954) to near San Anselmo, Marin County (November 1957). Neff's (1942) single Kern County recovery also showed a northward movement of considerable distance (140 miles), and because of it he speculated that at least some of the Tricolors throughout the San Joaquin Valley migrate to more northerly wintering areas. The present Kern County recoveries support further this belief.

In addition to the recoveries, nine other Tricolors were retrapped near Bakersfield, within 5 miles of the banding site, during the spring and summer of 1955. All had been banded as adults during the preceding spring.

**San Diego County (10 returns or recoveries).** Nine adult Tricolors banded near Vista, San Diego County during the spring of 1942 were retrapped the following spring within 10 miles of their original banding location. Another Tricolor banded near Vista in 1943 was recovered 4 years later near Oceanside, about 15 miles to the west. These returns and the nine returns to the Kern County banding site show that some Tricolor populations are resident or at least return to the same general area during the breeding season.

None of the Tricolors banded in San Diego County in 1942-43 nor any of those banded in other coastal areas of southern California before 1942 was recovered in the Central Valley (Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys). And to date, none of the thousands of Tricolors banded in the Central Valley has been recovered in coastal southern California. These facts strongly suggest that the two populations have little or no interchange.

**Yuba County (1 recovery).** Only one recovery resulted from Tricolor banding in the rice district of the Sacramento Valley. An adult banded near Marysville, Yuba County, in 1959 was taken near Camino, El Dorado County, during February 1961 (Figure 1). If valid, this movement is unique and may indicate that some Tricolors winter in fairly high (about 3,000 ft.), mountainous areas. This recovery is also farther east than any reported by Neff (1942) from bandings in the rice district.

### LONGEVITY RECORDS

Neff (1942) reported a Tricolor that was retaken 6 ½ years after banding; this was the oldest bird recovered through 1940. Our more recent data show that two Tricolors survived more than 12 years. In fact, one banded in Kern County in May 1949 was retrapped and released alive in the same area in March 1962 — nearly 13 years later. And a nestling banded in May 1938 in Merced County was shot during the "hunting season" of 1950, about 12 ½ years later. Another Merced County nestling was shot nearly 8 years after banding. In comparison, Fankauser (1967) reported a Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) that was shot 14 years after it was banded as an immature.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Banded Tricolored Blackbirds recovered from 1941 through 1964 generally showed the same movement patterns as pre-1941 recoveries published earlier by Neff (1942). In particular, Tricolors raised in Merced County (San Joaquin Valley) moved mainly north to the Sacramento Valley rice district or to the San Francisco Bay-Delta region. This northward movement to wintering areas probably extends to some extent throughout the San Joaquin Valley. Band recoveries further indicate that (1) some Tricolors raised in Merced County may breed in the Sacramento Valley in later years; (2) Tricolor populations in coastal areas of southern California remain separate from populations in the Central Valley (Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys); and (3) some Tricolors survive up to 13 years.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the following banders for use of their returns or recoveries: E. R. Selnes for Yuba County banding; Rev. N. Class for San Diego County banding; and C. M. Herman, G. A. Hutson, and H. E. McClure for Kern County banding. McClure also banded the Tricolor that was recovered nearly 13 years later.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Fankhauser, D. P. 1967. Survival rates in Red-winged Blackbirds. *Bird Banding* 38(2): 139-142.
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FIGURE 1. Recoveries and returns of Tricolored Blackbirds (1941-1964) from banding in Kern, Merced, and Yuba Counties, California. (The shaded circles in Kern and Merced Counties are approximately 25 miles in diameter and include all banding locations. Eight recoveries are within the shaded circle in Merced County; nine returns are within the shaded circle in Kern County.) Ten additional returns and recoveries in San Diego County were all within 15 miles of the banding site and are not shown here.

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