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AN UNPRECEDENTED CONCENTRATION OF SAW-WHET OWLS

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On October 16 and 17, 1965, David and Margaret Bridge were kind enough to let me stand in for them at their Operation Recovery station located at the tip of Kent Point, Queen Annes County, Maryland. The Bridges had other commitments this day and were not able to run their station. Bob Pepper had been operating the station that week and Donald Meritt and I relieved him on Saturday morning, October 16.

There was a good flight of birds on Saturday; 205 individuals were captured and banded. Blue Jays and Myrtle Warblers led the list. The weather was clear and a balmy 76° temperature was reached during the day.

That evening the wind changed from NNE at 10 m.p.h. to ENE at 18 m.p.h. and the temperature dipped to a chilly 45° during the night. These very favorable conditions provoked a terrific flight of fall migrants during the night and we were capturing goodly numbers of birds as early as two hours prior to sunrise on the 17th.

Heading the list of the most common birds captured on the 17th were the Myrtle Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Song Sparrow, and our subject—Saw-whet Owl. By the time the sun had finally risen we had removed an unprecedented 29 Saw-whet Owls (*Aegolius acadicus*) from the mist nets. This is by far the largest number of Saw-whet Owls captured, at one time, in Maryland. We were blessed with the presence of these personable little birds all day as they preferred not to fly far when released. Instead they viewed us from nearby tree branches and low bushes. Several were recaptured by hand during the day for study and photography by visitors.

We were kept so busy by the onslaught of other migrant birds that we could not spend as much time with the owls as we would have liked. By the end of the day we had set another record by capturing the largest number of birds (459) ever banded in one day at the Kent Point Operation Recovery station. I am sure that morning will be long remembered by all the participants and the Bridges will probably never forgive us for having such a good day at their O. R. station.