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Author, Unknown, "Memorandums: Banding Year Class Codes, 1967" (1967). *Research*. 4.
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BANDING "YEAR CLASS" CODES

(To become effective for birds banded after June 30, 1967. The "age" codes provided via MTAB 6 should be used to report all birds banded during the period January 1, 1967, through June 30, 1967.)

Any "age" code system based on "bird years" (breeding season to breeding season) is very difficult to apply to banding data. This is due to the large number of species involved, the variety of geographical areas in which they are captured and/or banded, the tremendous variation in breeding seasons among species and areas, etc.

For this reason the Bird Banding Laboratory's "age" designations are based on calendar years instead of "bird years." This "calendar year" is defined as the period January 1 through December 31. It should not be interpreted as a "bird year" (breeding season to breeding season) or necessarily a 12-month period. For example, a bird hatched June 1, 1966, is in its second calendar year on January 1, 1967, although it is only about 7 months old.

A bird "graduates" each time it passes January 1. This is the same method used to age race horses (for what that's worth).

Under this system the "age" codes (hereafter called "Year Class" codes) entered on the records you forward to the Bird Banding Laboratory may or may not agree with the physiological "age" of the bird. By indicating correctly the bird's "year class," however, you will enable scientists working with these data to interpret correctly the "age" of your birds.

To use these codes accurately, it is necessary to ask yourself two questions:

1. During what Calendar Year did this bird hatch? This must be answered by your knowledge of the sequence of molts, skull ossification, soft-part coloration, breeding seasons, cloacal changes, or other physiological or morphological indicators of "age" in the species you are banding.
2. Within how many Calendar Years has this bird lived? This can be answered by taking your answer to Number 1 above and relating it to the date on which you band the bird.

These revised "Year Class" codes are primarily an expansion rather than a modification of the former code system and are as compatible as possible with data already on file.

For example:

<u>Old Code</u>	<u>equals</u>	<u>New Code</u>
Local or Nestling		Local
Immature		Hatching Year
Sub-adult		Second Year

If age determination techniques are available and if you are aware of and use them, these revised "Year Class" codes will enable you to record precisely the "year class" of a bird through its first 3 calendar years.

These codes will also enable you to indicate birds which are at least "X" years old but perhaps older (Codes "AHY," "ASY," or "ATY").

REMEMBER - EVERYTHING "GRADUATES" ON JANUARY 1.

AFTER JULY 1, 1967, AND UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE, PLEASE DO NOT ENTER THE NUMERIC CODES ON YOUR BANDING SCHEDULES. The numeric codes are provided for your interpretation of coded data you receive from the Bird Banding Laboratory.

UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE, ENTER ONLY THE "ALPHA" CODES FOR YEAR CLASS IN THE RECORDS YOU FORWARD TO THE BIRD BANDING LABORATORY.

<u>Numeric Code</u>	<u>Alpha Code</u>	<u>Alpha Designation</u>	<u>Definition</u>
0	U	Unknown	A bird which you were unable to place accurately in any of the following categories. Except for birds for which the data were not recorded or have been lost, <u>ONLY BIRDS BANDED DURING THE PERIOD AFTER THE BREEDING SEASON AND BEFORE JANUARY 1 CAN BE CORRECTLY CODED "U."</u>
4	L	Local	A young bird banded before it was capable of sustained flight.

<u>Numeric Code</u>	<u>Alpha Code</u>	<u>Alpha Designation</u>	<u>Definition</u>
2	HY	Hatching Year	A bird old enough to be capable of sustained flight and known to have hatched during the <u>same</u> calendar year in which it was banded. Example: Banded 1967 -- Hatched 1967
1	AHY	After Hatching Year	A bird known to have hatched before the calendar year of banding; <u>year of hatch otherwise unknown</u> . Example: Banded 1967 -- Hatched sometime before January 1, 1967. (Birds which would have been coded "U" on December 31 "graduate" to class "AHY" on January 1.)
5	SY	Second Year	A bird <u>known</u> to have hatched last year (it is now in its second <u>calendar year</u> of life). Example: Banded 1967 -- Hatched 1966
6	ASY	After Second Year	A bird known to have hatched <u>before</u> last year; <u>year of hatch otherwise unknown</u> . Example: Banded 1967 -- Hatched 1965 <u>or earlier</u> .
7	TY	Third Year	A bird <u>known</u> to have hatched the year before last (it is now in its third <u>calendar year</u> of life). Example: Banded 1967 -- Hatched 1965
8	ATY	After Third Year	A bird known to have hatched before the year before last (it is now in at least its fourth calendar year of life). Example: Banded 1967 -- Hatched 1964 <u>or earlier</u> .

In summary, FOR A BIRD HATCHED IN 1965, possible codes by year are set forth in the following table:

<u>Year of Banding</u>	<u>Possible Codes (most discrete listed first)</u>
1965	Local (L) or Hatching Year (HY) or Unknown (U)
1966	Second Year (SY) or After Hatching Year (AHY)
1967	Third Year (TY) or After Second Year (ASY) or After Hatching Year (AHY)
1968	After Third Year (ATY) or After Second Year (ASY) or After Hatching Year (AHY)

EXAMPLE OF THE USE OF "YEAR CLASS" CODES. The "age" codes for the birds noted on the sample schedule (page 19, MTAB 6) are "translated" into the new "Year Class" codes below:

<u>Birds Wearing Band No.</u>	<u>Would Be Coded</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
123-50009	SY	Blue Jays retain some "juvenal" plumage into at least their second calendar year. This bird has such feathers. It obviously didn't hatch in 1966 and would have replaced these feathers if it had hatched in 1964 or earlier. Therefore, it must have hatched in 1965 and is in its Second calendar Year of life (SY). (If the bander had not been aware of this age criterion, all he could have said was that the bird did not hatch in 1966 and would have coded it "AHY.")
10 & 11	ASY	These Jays had no "juvenal" plumage nor other "immature" characteristics. All we can say is that they did not hatch in either 1966 or 1965. Therefore, we know they hatched at least two calendar years ago, but the year of hatch is otherwise unknown.
12 thru 14	SY	
15 & 16	ASY	
17	SY	
18 thru 20	ASY	
21 thru 35	HY	Mourning Doves replace their buffy-tipped "juvenal" primary coverts during their first autumn (or, rarely, winter). These birds had such feathers and, therefore, must have hatched in 1966 (the Calendar Year in which they were banded).
36	AHY	Since this bird obviously did not hatch in 1966, all we can say is that it hatched before 1966.

<u>Birds Wearing Band No.</u>	<u>Would Be Coded</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
37 thru 49	ASY	Common Grackles retain some "juvenal" plumage well into their second year. These birds had no such feathers; therefore, they apparently did not hatch during either 1966 or 1965. They must have hatched in 1964 or earlier and, therefore, are coded "ASY."
50 thru 53	ASY	Woodcock retain "juvenal" flight feathers into their second autumn. These birds had no such feathers; therefore, they apparently did not hatch in either 1966 or 1965. They must have hatched in 1964 or earlier and, therefore, are "ASY."
54 thru 72	L	
73	AHY	
74 thru 79	L	
80	AHY	
81 thru 92	L	
98 thru 00	HY	

Remember that the codes you enter on your schedules indicate the "age" of the bird at the time of release.