

KESTREL HAVEN AVIAN MIGRATION OBSERVATORY

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FALL 2002 MIGRATION BANDING REPORT

An abundance of goldfinch and several strong Northwest fronts accompanied by blocking systems to our south combined to allow us the largest catch in our 17 years of fall AFR banding. As usual, weather precluded much banding in November as early snows, high winds and extreme cold predominated.

Two highlights of this remarkable season were our fifth Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow (also banded in 1997 (2), 1998 and 2000) and the reported return of a junco banded during the fall 1999 chickadee and junco irruption. All five of the Gambel's were netted following strong Northwest frontal passages often referred to as "Alberta clippers". This species may be a more regular migrant through our area than previously thought. It may simply been not netted or, more likely, not recognized among the many Eastern White-crowned Sparrows. A second enigma has been the fate of the 652 chickadees and 180 juncos that swarmed through here in but a few days of October 1999. None had been recovered or reencountered. (Braddock Bay did have one of its almost 1000 chickadees recaptured in Southwest Ontario within a few days of banding.) Our junco was found dead in Clifton, Va., a Washington, DC suburb, in November of this year leading to the supposition that it and perhaps other erupting birds remained in newly established territories to our south. Only more data will resolve that question but it is supportive of the mass dispersal theory of irruption.

This year, we banded 1,041 American Goldfinch, 992 of those in the fall. This may serve to illustrate the northward proliferation of species theory associated with global warming. In the first twelve years (1986-1997) we banded only 1,745 goldfinch. In the six-year period since then we have banded 3,801.

Overall, we banded 3630 individuals of 94 species during 113 days of operation. We also had 1,086 repeats, 96 returns and 159 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (not banded). Three other birds were released without bands: a sickly Mourning Warbler that we later found dead, a Northern Cardinal with two injured tarsi and, a poor little Yellow Warbler with such a degree of Avian Pox on both tarsi that the legs gauged for a size two band! The total of birds netted was 4,974 making our measure of efficiency 102.5 birds/hundred net hours for newly banded birds and 140.4/100NH overall. Hatching year birds showed a small increase to 88.7% of the total banded. Our total species banded count remains at 124 species and five forms.

Of the 96 returns, 30 individuals of 14 species were recaptured at ages of four years or more, the eldest of which was a ten-year old Gray Catbird. A second catbird was nine. Others were: a Hairy Woodpecker at 8+ years; two Downy Woodpeckers at 6 years; an Eastern Kingbird at 4+; a Blue Jay at 4; five Black-capped Chickadees at 4, one at 5 and another at 8 years of age; an Eastern Tufted Titmouse was at 4; an American Robin at 4; a Warbling Vireo at 4; a Yellow Warbler at 7; a COYE at 7 and two at 4+ years; Song Sparrows at 4, 5, and 7 years; a House Finch at 4 and, two American Goldfinch at 5 and 6 years of age.

In addition to the junco reported above, two goldfinch recoveries were reported. An SY-M banded in May 2001 was struck by a car a few miles to the Northwest in June 2002. An HY-F banded in November 2001 was trapped and released in May 2002 by Eric Marchell at Prince Edward Point NWA in Ontario.

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers have moved in. We banded two prior to 1999 and 23 since. Traill's Flycatchers showed a 50% decrease as did Eastern Kingbirds. Winter Wrens surged to

nine times our average while both kinglets arrived in numbers three times greater than normal. We haven't had a big thrush year since 1995 and since that time their numbers have been low but stable. We banded our first Brown Thrasher in three years and noted a fifty percent decrease in Warbling Vireos.

The 26 warbler species banded included our first Northern Parula since 1995 and four Cape May (6 in 17 seasons). We missed Mourning for the first time while enjoying a doubling of Wilson's numbers. Indigo Buntings were but half of last year's surge of 106 but still three times the norm. Savannah Sparrows returned to high average while Song Sparrows continued below norm. Finally, we banded more White-throated Sparrows than ever before.

Several of the White-throated Sparrows exhibited intertarsal joint hematoma or dislocations, which we repaired, leading us to use even greater caution when handling the species. The cause is uncertain but may be a genetic weakness of that joint as we also noted several birds with what appeared to be healed joint injuries. One White-throated sparrow presented with a very leukistic head.



We encountered very few hypoboscid flies although we did remove the tiniest one we've ever seen from a hummingbird. One Rusty Blackbird had but two millimeters of rust edging on only a single tertial. Tumors were observed on a junco, an Ovenbird, a catbird and a Common Yellowthroat. We removed a tick from the orbital feathers of a Connecticut Warbler and noted feather mite damage to the crowns of a Myrtle Warbler and an Eastern Phoebe as well as the entire facial area of a Common Grackle. A Song Sparrow presented with a crossed bill while a Rose-breasted Grosbeak exhibited double the normal size upper mandible due to excessive keratin formation. A Field Sparrow had a tar ball covering one withered foot. We removed most of the tar to no avail as the bird was recaptured a month later without that foot.

Two adult flicker intergrades were banded (three this year) joining the growing number of partially red-shafted flickers in our general area. One had P5, 6,7 red-shafted bilaterally while the other had red shafts on P5, 6 right and only on P4 left. An HY Cedar Waxwing presented with many waxy tips while an AHY-M of the same species had waxy tips on six rectrices.

Our second year of identifying and marking dragonflies resulted in 25 individuals of 9 species bringing our total to 64 species of Odonates identified here.

Our catch this year was diminished by the arrival of two feral cats in mid-October forcing us to operate the remainder of the season with only upper net panels as these two hunted the net lanes. We were unable to trap "Osama" and "Sadam" as they were well fed and most likely harboring "over the border" at a neighboring farm when not terrorizing the station. Earlier in the season we also came upon a groundhog that had taken a netted bird, reminding us that these normally herbivores can be carnivorous when presented with opportunity.

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A photo gallery of this season’s highlights is available at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cvbirds> and our reports at www.chemungvalleyaudubon.com thanks to the generosity of the Chemung Valley Audubon Society.

Station Operating Statistics:

Start: 4 July
Stop: 25 November
Days of Operation: 113
Nets Used: 2 to 23
Net Hours: 3,542
Best Day: 119 on 14 September
Reason: 65 goldfinch and 23 species overall
Best Diversity: 23 species on 14 September
Banded 2001: 3,073
Banded 2002: 3,630
Species 2001: 87
Species 2002: 94
Birds/100NH 2001: 104
Birds/100NH 2002: 103
%HY 2001: 85
&HY 2002: 89

Most Frequently Banded Species:

Rank	Species	Number	%HY
1.	AMGO(1)	992	92
2.	SOSP(2)	357	97
3.	COYE(5)	234	87
4.	SCJU(3)	185	84
5.	RCKI	137	100
6.	GRCA(4)	128	88
7.	WTSP(7)	118	98
8.	CEDW 102	52	
9.	GCKI	100	98
10,	YWAR 96	86	

(#) = ranking last fall

Percent of total banded: 67%