

1999

Atlantic Flyway Review: Piedmont-coastal Plain Region Iv - Fall 1998

North American Bird Bander

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Recommended Citation

North American Bird Bander (1999) "Atlantic Flyway Review: Piedmont-coastal Plain Region Iv - Fall 1998," *North American Bird Bander*. Vol. 24 : Iss. 3 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/nabb/vol24/iss3/8>

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Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and the recovery of one of those siskins at Seattle, WA. The annual meeting was hosted by the Delmarva Ornithological Society at the University of Delaware and the banquet cost was \$4.00. Bob Yunick was President of EBBA, which had nearly 700 members. Chris Rose offered wing rules for sale at \$4.60 each.

If you have an opportunity, spend some time browsing through the back issues of *EBBA NEWS* or *NORTH AMERICAN BIRD BANDER*. We need to understand and appreciate our history!

Elizabeth W. Brooks

Atlantic Flyway Review: Piedmont-Coastal Plain Region IV - Fall 1998

Elizabeth W. Brooks, Co-coordinator
1435 Waterwells Road
Alfred Station, NY 14803

H. David Leake, Co-coordinator
2A Ginguite Trail
Southern Shores, NC 27949

David Leake resigned as AFR Region IV coordinator due to health reasons. We are grateful for the time and energy David gave to the Region IV report. During the eight years he served as coordinator, he worked diligently to get good banding coverage in his region and to improve the quality of the reporting. Many thanks, Dave.

The Region IV reporting stations were joined by Fran Pope and Connie Skipper from Mt. Nebo Wildlife Management Area located in the mountains of western Maryland. Unfortunately, however, we lost the Scott King-Jordan Gameland report due to the death of Liz Pullman's husband. We extend our sympathy to Liz. We also lost the Chichauk report due to the relocation of David Leake. And Back Bay and James Island did not submit a report for 1998. We hope they will be back with us in 1999.

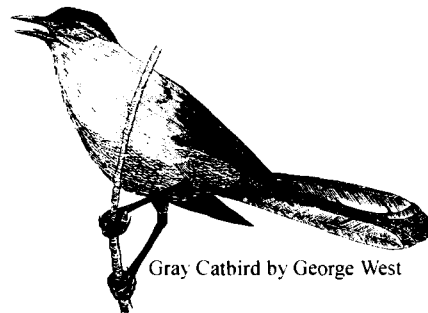
Of the seven stations reporting, results were about evenly split: numbers were up at Laurel, Hollywood, Kiptopeke, and Wekiva Basin but down at Mt. Nebo, Butler and Jekyll Island. Birds/100 net hours were down at Mt. Nebo and Butler Island, about the same at Jekyll Island and Wekiva Basin, slightly improved at Laurel, but dramatically up at Hollywood (51 in 1997; 150 in 1998) and Kiptopeke (51.1 in 1997; 99.6 in 1998). Gray

Catbird and Common Yellowthroat made the top ten list at all seven banding stations.

Weather was cited as a negative influence at three stations. The El Nino weather pattern resulted in few strong fronts. Migration weather was "flat" at Butler Island except for a quick visit from Hurricane Earl. Except for a brief period of rain in September, the weather was dry and frontless at Jekyll Island. Conditions at Hollywood were very dry and Laurel was in a severe drought for the second fall, with 1998 rainfall 9 inches below normal.

As usual, nets caught more than birds. Chan Robbins reported that a deer crashed through three nets in a single morning. Two nets at Butler Island were blown down and filled with debris from Hurricane Earl, (but at least the two baby alligators stayed out of the nets). Wekiva Basin lost two nets to a Black Bear! And Jekyll Island almost caught a Wheatear!

The new Pyle *Identification Guide to North American Birds* continues to improve our ageing and sexing techniques, but not without some degree of frustration. A Myrtle Warbler banded as a HY-M at Butler Island in fall 1995 was recaptured during fall 1998 - as an AHY-F! We're all getting better at this, though!



Gray Catbird by George West

Table 1. Fall 1998. Region IV Summary.

	Mt. Nebo WMA MD	Laurel MD	Hollywood MD	Butler Isl GA	Jekyll Isl GA	Wekiva Basin FL	Kiptopeke VA
First Day/Last Day	16 Aug/25 Oct	15 Aug/30 Nov	15 Aug/8 Nov	30 Aug/1 Nov	20 Sep/18 Oct	1 Sep/31 Oct	31 Aug/28 Nov
Days Operated	46	95	22	63	28	61	82
No. Nets Used	18.5 to 19.5	7 to 14	3 to 4	6 to 50	9 to 12	8 to 25	12 to 21
Total Net Hours	3948	5520	173	2446	1084	5700	8962
Lgst Daily Catch/Date	66 on 17 Sep	22 on 19 Sep	68 on 17 Oct	86 on 24 Oct	192 on 10 Oct	123 on 3 Oct	619 on 17 Oct
No. Banded 1997	1562	437	101	1978	2626	1748	4626
No. Banded 1998	1383	512	259	1844	2190	2444	8549
No. Species 1997	69	57	37	51	51	64	83
No. Species 1998	66	58	34	51	48	71	98
Best Species Diversity	24 on 16 Aug	15 on 13 Sep	12 on 17 Oct	17 on 21 Oct	21 on 10 Oct	23 on 23 Oct	NA
Birds/100 NH 1997	47.2	8.38	51	78	200	40.1	51.1
Birds/100 NH 1998	39.6	9.28	150	75	202	42.9	99.6
% HY 1997	85%	67%	44%	78%	94%	48%	86%
% HY 1998	76%	63%	66%	85%	98%	57%	90%

Table 2. Most Commonly Banded Species - Region IV - Fall 1998

Mt. Nebo WMA MD	Laurel MD	Hollywood MD	Butler Island GA	Jekyll Island GA	Wekiva Basin FL	Kiptopeke VA
% HY	% HY	% HY	% HY	% HY	% HY	% HY
319 GRCA	75 WTSP (1)	54 MYWA	652 COYE (1)	776 COYE (1)	498 GRCA (1)	4243 MYWA (1)
158 COYE (2)	48 GRCA (4)	30 WTSP	412 MYWA (2)	580 WPWA (2)	485 COYE (2)	798 AMRE (2)
103 WTSP	47 NOCA (3)	23 INBU	179 NOWA (3)	148 GRCA (6)	167 OVEN (4)	371 BTBW (4)
94 SOSP (3)	27 ETTI (8)	21 FISP (6)	85 GRCA (4)	142 AMRE (3)	156 VEER (3)	262 WTSP (7)
80 INBU	25 CACH (5)	21 GRCA (2)	58 YWAR	119 REVI (7)	148 AMRE (5)	234 COYE (3)
59 SWSP (1)	24 HETH	16 COYE	50 PABU (5)	64 BTBW (5)	110 BTBW (7)	220 GRCA (5)
49 AMRO	22 OVEN (10)	32 SOSP	43 BHCO	59 PABU	102 REVI	210 WPWA (8)
48 BTBW	18 MAWA (7)	9 CARW (10)	41 NOMO (10)	41 PRAW (4)	85 SWTH (10)	183 SOSP (9)
37 SWTH	17 COYE	8 ACFL (5)	33 NOCA (8)	32 INBU	78 HOWR (6)	171 ROCKI (6)
34 BCCH	14 AMRE (10)	7 YPWA	32 INBU (6)	28 HOWR	54 PRAW (8)	162 FISP
		7 NOCA (1)				
		100				

Mt. Nebo WMA Banding Station **392-0792**
Oakland, MD
Fran Pope, Connie Skipper

Mt. Nebo WMA is a new location for us, in the mountains of western Maryland at an elevation of 2500'. We operated the nets in an old field planted with hedgerows of autumn and Russian olive and honeysuckle bushes. There are also scattered groups of trees, many of them apple and black cherry. The olives, honeysuckle, and apple trees all bore heavily this fall providing abundant mast for feeding birds. An alder swamp borders the station to the east and an upland deciduous forest surrounds the field to the north, south, and west.

Mt. Nebo WMA banding station was open 46 days from 16 August through 25 October. The first day produced the second highest number of birds banded, 57; the highest being 66. The big push was from 14 September through 23 September when we banded 25% of this fall's birds in seven days of banding. We banded 1383 birds of 66 species.

It is tempting to make comparisons between this year's results and those of the prior six years, especially since 19.5 nets were used each of those seven years. However, the change in location and habitat makes the data not directly comparable. We were at Cherry Creek Swamp from 1992 through 1997. During that time the Swamp Sparrow consistently ranked number one. The Common Yellowthroat nearly always ranked number two, with Song Sparrows consistently in the top five. The move in location gave us a change in rank with Gray Catbirds as number one, Common Yellowthroats remaining number two, Song Sparrows number four, and Swamp Sparrows number six. The number of thrushes, White-throated Sparrows, and Black-throated Blue Warblers far exceeded numbers in prior years. It will be interesting to see whether these species were also abundant at other stations or whether this is due to our new location and the plentiful food supply. Other species banded were not significantly different in number than at the Cherry Creek location.

We had 32 visitors including a van-load of students from Frostburg State University on three different days and a group of home-schooled children for a banding demonstration.

Robbins Nest **390-0765**
Laurel, MD
Chandler S. Robbins

This backyard station is located along the Fall Line, atop the Patuxent River gorge just outside the corporate limits of Laurel. The front half of the 2.5 acres is residential and garden; the rest is steep, mature deciduous forest with scant understory. A six-month drought this summer and fall was even more severe than last year's, with only 5.18 inches of rain during the fall banding season, 1 Aug -30 Nov, compared with the normal 14.31 inches. We continue to be plagued by deer; one crashed through three nets in a single morning. No nets are operated near the feeders.

Although my 5520 net-hours (a new high) were 54% above the 25-year mean of 3580, most of the common species were caught in numbers comparable to the past five years. Myrtle Warbler captures, however, dropped from 28 last year to four this year, and Swainson's Thrushes from 14 to four, their poorest showing here since 1983. On the plus side, this was my best year of 26 for Downy Woodpeckers (11) and Connecticut Warblers (5), and my second-best year for cardinals. Both last year and this year I had a low percentage of hatching year (HY) titmice (18% and 31%) but a high percentage of HY chickadees (69% and 65%). Both species were caught in record-high numbers in 1997 and continued unusually common in 1998.

The only new bird for this station was a "Brewster's" Warbler on opening day. The oldest of 62 returns were a six-year old Carolina Chickadee, and a five-year old Tufted Titmouse and Northern Cardinal. I caught a young (3.5 months old) Eastern Bluebird banded six miles downstream at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center by Woody Martin.

Greenwell Field Station **382-0763**
Hollywood, MD
Don Runkles

The 1998 fall banding season was the second fall season of operation at Greenwell State Park near Hollywood, Maryland. During the weekends, I

generally opened three 9-meter nets and sometimes a fourth in a hedgerow and along the edge of a forest that is dominated by deciduous trees. The hedgerow and forest surround three sides of a field comprised of tall fescue with scattered blackberries, milkweed, and emerging black locusts. The nets were placed perpendicular to the edge of the field. This was different from the fall of 1997 when I used five nets with the majority of them set deeper in the forest and in another old hedgerow. Also, I set the nets about two weeks later into the fall of 1998 and 1997, but the total net hours were slightly less in 1998. Several significant changes occurred in the results when the 1998 fall season is compared to the 1997 season. More birds were captured and banded (259 versus 101); a higher percentage of HY birds was banded (66% versus 44%); more birds were banded per 100 net hours (150 versus 51); and there were differences in the species captured as noted below.

Species captured and banded for the first time in the fall at Greenwell included the Slate-colored Junco (2), Eastern Towhee (5), Lincoln's Sparrow (2), Swamp Sparrow (3 - one was a very dark form), Summer Tanager (1), Yellow Palm Warbler (7), Chestnut-sided Warbler (1), Brown Thrasher (2), and Hermit Thrush (2). Several species were missed in 1998 such as Traill's Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, American Goldfinch, Northern Parula, Ovenbird, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, and Carolina Chickadee.

One net captured approximately 49% (126 of 259) of the birds banded. This net was located in the forest edge where the forest comes to a point in the field. On at least three occasions I had to collapse all the nets for about an hour after they were open because of the number of birds captured and a shortage of help. Otherwise, totals could have been much higher.

Because the weather was very dry during the entire banding season, birds did not seem to linger. This fall I recaptured approximately only 4% of the birds banded during the course of the season as compared to approximately 9% for the fall 1997 season.

Banding at Greenwell State Park is still in its infancy as net locations will probably be changed again and the potential exists to expand the banding efforts to include more weekdays and more nets. Now that a source of funding has been obtained to purchase equipment, the major limitation is that of manpower.

At least fifteen people visited the field station on the weekends, and two groups of Junior Rangers visited during the week in the early part of the season. Also, Tim Fabian, Martin Cribb, Mark Runkles, J.D. Russell, and Connie Trent assisted me.

Butler Island

Altamaha Banding Station (BIAS) 312-0812

Darien, GA

Doris Cohrs

Shall we blame it on El Nino? This was the year of almost totally flat weather patterns. No fronts arrived worth mentioning. With no weather changes to spur their movement, the birds never migrated in any large numbers. The one exception to the peaceful weather was 3 September when hurricane "Earl" made a visit. Two nets were blown down and filled with debris. Don later painstakingly picked out leaves and twigs, thus salvaging one of the nets but the other was totally ruined. One other day, 30 September, we were closed because of rain. Temperatures were consistently pleasant with slight tendencies toward too hot, and in late October we were treated to only a few days with dawn temperatures in the mid-40's.

We added Grasshopper and Henslow's sparrows to the station list. Sparrows are nice but oh so tough for us to decipher. We agonized over the Henslow's for a long while before feeling confident enough to call it. If proven wrong by photographic evidence, I'll claim amnesia or something. We also added a Loggerhead Shrike, bringing our five-year overall species total to 72. Don's fingers can attest to the fact that shrikes are tough customers. I'm glad they aren't on our everyday list. (Susan Craig, you are brave!)

BIAS continues to get good returns of birds. Of 211 retraps this year, 19 were from previous years. Of these 19, the following were of note: a SOSP

banded in '96, retrapped in '97 and again this year; a MYWA banded in '95, retrapped in '96, '97, and '98; a PABU banded on 11 September 1995 and retrapped on 11 September 1998. Eight of the recaptures were local birds. The remainder were migrants, some one year after original banding dates, some two years, and one MYWA banded three years ago. This latter bird shot the heck out of our interpretation of the Pyle key to ageing and sexing. We banded it in '95 as a HY-M and it came back this time as an AHY-F. Back to the drawing board!

We had quite a few sightings of Bald Eagles over the station this year. Although they are reasonably common in the Altamaha delta area, it is always a thrill to see them. On two occasions, three were sighted at one time. BIAS had its usual complement of nonavian critters—butterflies, dragonflies, lizards, snakes, turtles, frogs, alligators (a couple of really cute babies), otters, marsh rabbits, etc. These make the slower banding days most enjoyable.

I want to thank everyone who helped at BIAS but as usual, will probably forget some, for which I apologize. My mainstays were Ann Baggett, Don Cohrs, Eugene Keferl, Mary Nevill, and Keith Tassin. Other assistants included Bud Bussell, Steve Holzman, Trish McMillan, Berkeley Minor, Susan Smith, Cecil Stafford, Joanna Taylor and Mimi Tesler.

Jekyll Island Banding Station **310-0812**
Brunswick, GA
Don Cohrs

This was a year of almos. We almost had some weather fronts, but they all died north of JIBS. We almost had our usual total of species, but the sparrows did not show. We almost had the usual net sets, but the September rains left too many wet sloughs. We were short two nets. Most species banded were in usual numbers with the exception of the Red-eyed Vireo. This bird was more abundant than in any preceding year. The previous high count for REVI was in 1989 when 87 birds were banded. The Western Palm Warbler continues to be displaced by the Common Yellowthroat for first place.

In spite of the weather letting us down and the changing terrain, we almost had a good year. The number of birds was down, but the number of bandaides was up and the quality of their performance was great! Our regulars were supplemented by several newcomers. Master bander Lydia Thompson and subs, Nancy Gobris and Chris Pitman, did their usual good job. Bandaides Lamont Albertson, Roger Atchison, Erin Bouthillier, Ashley Harrington, Joan Hesterberg, Cathy Hutcheson, A.J. Moon, Helen Ogren, and Jan Pitman all were invaluable. Our intern, Michael Hodge, a recent college graduate from Tennessee, was with us the full four weeks of this year's session. Special mention goes to Paige Mulhollan who was undergoing an intensive training program in hopes of being able to obtain his own banding permit to start a coastal migratory station on or near Hilton Head, SC. Many people helped at JIBS for two or three days. There are too many to acknowledge all of them, but they know they are appreciated. Without volunteers, the project would not happen.

During this year's session, many of our participants got "life" birds. A Northern Wheatear showed up for about two hours just beyond our parking area. It was most cooperative and one of our members got some great photos. Five days later, a South Polar Skua appeared on the beach just below our station. This bird stayed for over three weeks. These birds were a state first and a third record, respectively. It makes you want to play "what if?": What if the Wheatear had just come a few hundred yards farther south and gotten tangled in a mist net? WOW!!

Wekiva Basin GEOpark **284-0812**
Apopka, FL
Parks Small / Erik Egensteiner

Thanks to Bob Wheeler, Bruce Anderson, Shane Belson, and Richard Poole, we were able to maintain our effort for a fourth season. This season brought us extremely warm weather with only one true cold front. The season ended with a total of 2885 captures (2444 new, 338 recaptures, 73 released unbanded) adding four new species (Black-throated Green Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Baltimore Oriole) to our station list. A Gray Catbird originally banded in Virginia in 1996 was our only foreign recapture.

Ovenbird returns continue to surprise us with birds from all years we have operated. We would be interested to hear from others with similar Ovenbird observations. We also recaptured a Ruby-crowned Kinglet that we banded last fall. Local recaptures included a fourth year cardinal, Carolina Wren, and White-eyed Vireo.

One volunteer got the surprise of her life as a black bear ran within three feet of her. Another volunteer had surprised it (or they surprised each other). Of course in the heat of the action, the bear did not forget to run through two nets.

Kiptopeke Songbird Banding Station 370-0755

Cape Charles, Northampton County, VA

Brian Johnson, Bander

Andy Davis, Chief Assistant

The 35th year of operation for the Kiptopeke Songbird Banding Station proved to be an outstanding one. Logging 8962 net hours, the station was operated 82 days from 31 August to 28 November. For the most part, the weather was warm and dry throughout the season. Closures due to wind and rain were relatively few. We banded 8549 birds—the most since 1982 and the 14th best in the station's history. The total of 98 species captured was the most since 1988, and either matches or tops all but nine previous years. On the busiest day of the season, 17 October, eight volunteers and staff extracted and processed 623 captures (387 birds/100 net hours). With 99.6 birds/100 net hours overall, the capture rate this fall was easily the highest ever for the station.

As is typical at Kiptopeke, Myrtle Warblers strongly dominated the total captures. They accounted for 49.6% of all the birds banded. However, eleven other species also had over 100 individuals captured. All hummingbirds were released at the net unbanded. A lack of OA bands also prompted the release of many kinglets. Measurements taken from captured birds this year included wing chord, tail length, tarsus length, fat score, body and flight feather molt, degree of skull pneumatization, mass, and disposition. The heaviest Myrtle Warbler weighed 17.1 g, the heaviest American Redstart weighed 12.9 g, and the heaviest Black-throated Blue Warbler weighed 14.7 g. There were 376 recaptures, 17 of which were returns from previous years. The two oldest were both Carolina

Jul. - Sep.

Chickadees—one banded in 1992, the other in 1994. There were no recoveries of birds banded from areas outside Kiptopeke.

For the first time in its history, operation of the station was extended into the latter part of November. This produced a dramatic increase in the numbers of temperate migrants. For instance, the 14 Fox Sparrows caught this season nearly doubled the station's cumulative total of seven. Similarly, high records were also set for Field Sparrow and Song Sparrow. Another station high this season was Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, with six banded.

Despite a higher species count this year, there were no additions to the station's cumulative species total, which currently stands at 156 species. Notable captures included the station's third Virginia Rail, the fourth Louisiana Water-thrush, the fourth Lark Sparrow, and the second Bobolink. Other species present in much higher-than-typical numbers include Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed Vireo, Hermit Thrush, Summer Tanager, Chipping Sparrow, and Grasshopper Sparrow. Those present in much lower-than-average numbers included Wood Thrush, Tennessee Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Baltimore Oriole.

As in past years, bird-banding demonstrations were conducted for individuals and groups visiting the study site. This year, over 1000 people stopped by the station. Formal presentations were given by the Education and Songbird Banding Coordinators to approximately 20 organized groups.

Since 1994, the Kiptopeke Songbird Station has been operated by KESTREL (now the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory). Resident and volunteer banders in 1998 were Brian Johnson, Andy Davis, Don Schwab, Jamie Cameron, John Dillard, David Leake, Bob Reilly, Dick Roberts, and Walter Smith. Nearly 70 other volunteers also contributed to this successful effort. Those who spent seven days or more at the station included Martha Dillard, Barbara Estep, Aaron Haines, Jerri Howe, Orren Hyman, Nan LaRue, Peggy Legg, Edie Lotz, Randy Lotz, Dorothy Mitchell, and Doris Smith. Considerable appreciation is extended to the staff at Kiptopeke State Park for their help with station maintenance and support.