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## Atlantic Flyway Review: Northeast Coastal Region I - Fall 1998

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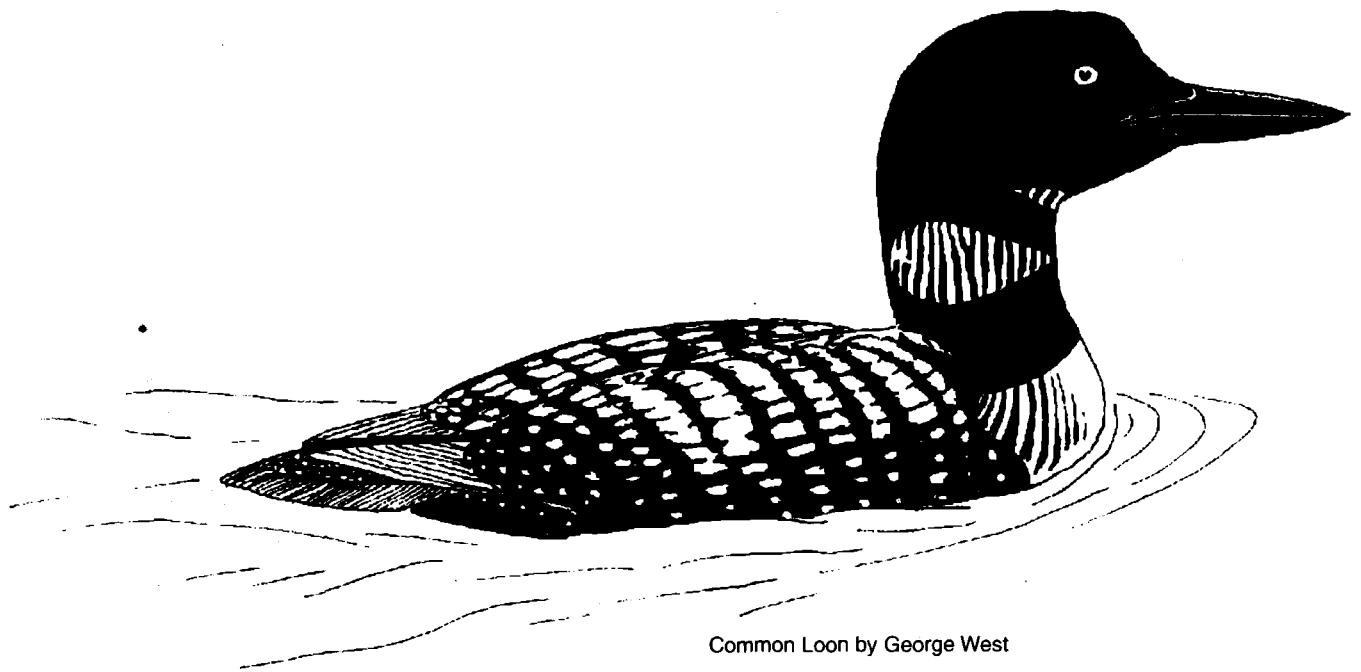
# Atlantic Flyway Review: Northeast Coastal Region I – Fall 1998

**Tracey Dean** - Regional Coordinator  
Huntsman Marine Science Centre  
Brandy Cove, St. Andrews  
New Brunswick, Canada E0G 2X0

Calm winds provided good netting weather along the northeast coast for the 1998 fall banding season. Many stations were able to open nets more often and extend their overall season. The general regional trend was an increase in the number of birds captured per 100 net hours compared to 1997 (Table 1), but these numbers are still low when compared to numbers from the 1960s and 70s according to the Kingston Wildlife Research Station. From north to south in the Northeast Coast Region, the pace and timing of the migration changes considerably and is well reflected in the date of the largest daily catch and last day of banding at a particular station (Table 1). This year Golden-crowned Kinglets provide a

common link. Flights of kinglets were wide-spread and this species ranked first on the Top Ten Species List for three stations and near the top for all but one station (Table 2). Vermont Institute, the most inland station, does not include Golden-crowned Kinglets among their top ten species.

Due to other commitments and a very busy schedule, David Holmes was unable to put together a summary of the 1998 banding season at Appledore Island. He promises a combined report of 1998 and 1999 next year. Grand Manan also did not report this year as Brian Dalzell is still looking for a permanent location to set up his nets; hopefully, he will find one soon.



**Table 1. Fall 1998 Region 1 Summary.**

	St. Andrews NB	Vermont Institute VT	Bon Portage Is. NS	Seal Island NS	Kingston Wildlife RI	Block Island Bluestone RI	Isl. Beach SP NJ
First Day	1 Aug	3 Aug	13 Aug	15 Sep	7 Aug	31 Aug	19 Aug
Last Day	28 Oct	30 Oct	31 Oct	23 Oct	31 Oct	12 Dec	22 Nov
Days Operated	42	63	72	33	74	55	50
No. Nets Used	5-13	7-19	4-15	4-15	10	--	3-23
Total Net Hours	1347	6892.5	3459	1360	3304	2851	3249
Birds Banded 1997	856	1462	1816	541	dno*	1680	2947
Birds Banded 1998	828	1863	2179	456	860	981	4786
Diff. Species 1997	54	77	71	58	dno*	75	83
Diff. Species 1998	54	86	81	57	58	68	90
Birds/100nh 1997	79	21	46	17	dno*	23	132
Birds/100nh 1998	61	27	63	34	26	34	147
Largest Daily Catch	52	119	121	76	46	77	459
Date of LDC	1 Sep	15 Oct	6 Oct	14 Oct	16 Oct	4 Oct	20 Oct
% HY **	79%	72%	71%	80%	65%	na	83%
% HY ***							91.5%

\*dno = did not operate

\*\* = HY% calculated as number of HY/total number of known age birds

\*\*\* = HY% calculated as number of HY/total number of captures

**Table 2. Region 1 Top Ten Species. Fall 1998.**

	St. Andrews NB	Vermont Inst. VT	Bon Portage Is. NS	Seal Island NS	Block Island RI	Island Beach SP NJ
1	80 WTSP (5)	250 WTSP (1)	191 GCKI (7)	66 GCKI (7)	140 MYWA (1)	1191 GCKI (1)
2	71 GCKI	191 AMRO (2)	171 MYWA (1)	38 RCKI	135 GRCA (2)	414 MYWA (3)
3	68 MYWA (3)	159 HETH (6)	147 REVI	30 WTSP (1)	88 GCKI (5)	297 GRCA (6)
4	64 NAWA (2)	118 GRCA (7)	124 BLPW (4)	30 SOSP	66 REVI (4)	285 RCKI (8)
5	54 COYE (7)	108 COYE (9)	119 BAWW	28 SWSP (6)	58 COYE (3)	273 SCJU (5)
6	47 MAWA (1)	107 CEDW	114 AMRE	27 MYWA (3)	47 SCJU (7)	261 COYE (7)
7	44 RCKI	104 SOSP (3)	103 COYE (5)	24 COYE	45 WTSP (6)	247 AMRE
8	40 BTNW (6)	80 MYWA (8)	100 YWAR	20 REVI	40 HETH	204 BRGR (4)
9	34 AMRE (4)	79 REVI	87 NOWA	15 OVEN	35 RCKI (9)	201 WTSP (2)
10	30 NOPA	53 EAPH	77 SOSP (3)	14 SSHA (10)	33 SWSP (10)	160 SOSP (10)

**St. Andrews Banding Station****450-0670**

New Brunswick, Canada

**Tracey Dean** (bander)

Assistant: Owen Diamond

The fall weather conditions in St. Andrews were ideal for mist-netting, with an above-average number of calm, dry days. Nets were open on 42 days for a total of 1347 net hours, well above the amount of effort in any previous years. Unfortunately, this did not translate into more birds being caught; 61 birds per 100 net hours is well below the 79 birds/100nh recorded in 1997. The lack of fronts produced a steady stream of migrants instead of "feast and famine" cycles one often associates with major weather systems. The largest daily catch was only 52 birds but there were 14 days, scattered throughout the season, with over 30 birds which reflects the evenness of the migration.

There were 828 birds of 54 species banded including two new species for the station: Yellow-billed Cuckoo and White-crowned Sparrow. Species recorded for the first time in the fall included Winter Wren, Chipping Sparrow, and Wood Thrush. Unbanded birds also produced a few highlights, with a small movement of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds passing through at the beginning of September, and on 25 September a juvenile No. Saw-whet Owl blundered into a net. The young owl must have been looking for a quiet place to rest and digest its latest mouse, as the victim's tail was still hanging out of its mouth.

The largest increases in birds/100nh were seen mainly in late migrant species (junco, Song Sparrow, Golden and Ruby-crowned kinglet), while decreases were recorded for Magnolia, Nashville and Black-throated Green warbler, Ovenbird, American Redstart and Black-capped Chickadee. Hermit Thrush numbers rebounded after a dramatic loss in 1997 but they still did not reach pre-1996 numbers. American Goldfinch appeared to have a very extended breeding season as two very young birds were caught on 24 September, one of which could barely fly as most of its primaries were still half sheathed.

One interesting recovery is a White-throated Sparrow which was banded at St. Andrews on 12 October and hit a window on 31 October at Stonington, Connecticut.

Banding demonstrations continue to be an important, though nerve-wracking part of the station's operation. This fall a group of Elderhostelers were on hand when a small flight of chickadees were captured, including one which appeared slightly droopy. The bird would not fly away but perched on my finger, looking around alertly. I finally persuaded it to sit on a branch in a sunny, protected spot, and it literally put its head under its wing and fell asleep giving out little bird-like snores. Five minutes later it woke up, shook itself, and flew away. The uncertainty of dealing with live creatures definitely frays the nerves, but the group members left with a new appreciation for the hardiness of these little birds. I will be checking closely for chickadee 1930-66898 in 1999.

**Vermont Institute****of Natural Science****433-0723**

Woodstock, VT

**Steve Faccio, Tim Redman, Colleen Dwyer, Chris Rimmer & Kent McFarland** (VINS staff banders)

Interns and volunteer banders: Brandt Ryder, Kristen Covert, Ray Webster, Angela Brill, Jim Tietz, Gabe Colbeck, Libby Hillhouse, Laura Gould, Dan Lambert, Emily Mahar, and Fred Benham

Our banding station is located on the Bragdon Nature Preserve at the headquarters of the Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS), a non-profit, membership-based, research and educational organization. Our net lanes are located in early successional/second growth habitat, primarily around a small (approx. 0.8 ha) pond. The vegetation consists of a variety of shrubs and saplings including autumn olive, blackberry, buckthorn, willows, maples, and dogwoods, with a broken overstory of sugar maple, aspen, black cherry, and white ash. The 1998 banding season represented our 18th consecutive year of data collection.

During the fall season, we banded 1,863 birds during 6,892.5 net hours (64 banding mornings) for a capture rate of 27.0 birds/100 net hours, an increase of nearly 7 birds/100 net hours over last year's rate. With a similar amount of effort, we captured 260 more birds in September 1998 (716), than in September 1997 (456). While fall numbers for American Robin, Myrtle Warbler, and White-throated Sparrow were relatively "normal," it was a poor year for junco, chickadee, Baltimore Oriole (2 birds captured in Aug.), and House Finch (just 13, our lowest total ever). As a group, sparrows again accounted for a good portion of our fall captures, with White-crowned, White-throated, American Tree, Song, Lincoln's, and Swamp sparrows making up 25% of our total fall catch. It is interesting to note that White-throated Sparrow numbers have remained remarkably consistent over the past four years.

With a few exceptions, the fall migration of warblers was similar to last year's with a total of 388 individuals of 24 species captured compared to 314 individuals of 20 species in 1997. Notable increases included Black-and-white, Black-throated Blue, Ovenbird, and Common Yellowthroat, while marked decreases were noted for Black-throated Green, and Palm. Interesting warbler captures included a Connecticut, a late Louisiana Waterthrush in mid-September, a Western Palm, and a Golden-winged.

Captures of Red-eyed Vireos (79) were the highest since 1992, while Philadelphia and Blue-headed vireos dropped off. Our fall capture of Hermit Thrush was unprecedented in the station's 18-year history, with 117 of the 159 birds captured during October. Wood Thrush also showed a nice increase over last year's nine fall captures with 35 this year. We also captured a Gray-cheeked Thrush with a grossly deformed bill. Other highlights of the fall season included a HY Northern Shrike on 26 October, three Black-billed Cuckoos during September, and one of our highest totals ever for Sharp-shinned Hawk, capturing a total of six (all of which were HYs).

In addition to the school groups, summer camps, and Elderhostel groups that were presented with banding demonstrations, many individuals visited the station informally to learn from our research

staff and enjoy a close-up look at resident and migratory songbirds. Thank you to all the interns and volunteers for their hard work, and we hope their experiences at the banding station are as valuable to them as they are to us.

#### **Bon Portage Island**

**432-0654**

#### **Seal Island**

**432-0660**

Atlantic Bird Observatory

Nova Scotia, Canada

**Rina Nichols, Mark Button, Trina Fitzgerald, Dennis Brannen** (banders)

Assistants: Rachel Page, Russ Bradley, Antony Perotti, Amy Gilboy, Wendy Potter, Bruce Rodrigues, Clem Dabrowski, Wendy Turner, Catherine Early, Fred MacKenzie, Mark Brennan, Charles Chron, Pam Mills, Chris Buelow, Jenna Garvey

The 1998 fall season on Bon Portage (BP) and Seal Island (SI) was an interesting one and held a few unique observations and captures. BP operated from mid-August until the end of October; SI operated from mid-September until mid-October. Both field stations had excellent net coverage, with less than 10 days lost to rain and high winds.

The majority of the birds banded on BP in August were local breeders and early migrants. The largest daily catch occurred on 14 August when 68 birds were banded. Yellow Warblers, American Redstarts and Common Yellowthroats peaked during this month with 77, 53 and 50 banded respectively.

Banding in September on BP was steady, with three days producing 60 or more birds. The migration for Red-eyed Vireo, and Black-and-White, Blackpoll, Wilson's, Nashville, Magnolia and Mourning warbler peaked at this time. September on Seal Island was not as active. The largest daily catch occurred on 29 September when 22 birds were caught, 14 of which were Golden-crowned Kinglet.

October was, by far, the most productive banding month for both stations, with an influx of Myrtle Warblers, kinglets (not as marked for the Ruby-crowned), juncos and several sparrow species

(White-throated, Swamp and Song). Peak migration occurred between 5 and 20 October for both stations.

The decrease in American Goldfinch passing through BP is noteworthy; only one was banded this year, compared to 233 in 1997. Banding totals were also considerably lower for Swamp and Song sparrow, Myrtle and Blackpoll warbler, and Slate-colored Junco. In contrast, there was a dramatic increase in the number of Golden-crowned Kinglets with over 250 banded, compared to 116 in 1997.

Once again an influx of Sharp-shinned Hawks and Merlins occurred in mid to late September on SI. This coincided with extremely low numbers of passerines in the monitoring area. Nets were left closed for two days until passerine numbers increased and raptor numbers decreased. There were 14 Sharp-shinned Hawks and a Merlin accidentally captured, presumably while chasing passerines.

An unusual variety and number of vagrants passed through the stations in October. On BP these included: Western Palm, Prairie, Pine, Mourning, Hooded, Golden-winged, Blue-winged, Connecticut and Yellow-throated warblers, Grasshopper and Field sparrows, four Yellow-breasted Chat, four Yellow-billed Cuckoo, 12 White-eyed and three Yellow-throated vireo, one Northern Mockingbird, three Indigo Bunting, one House Wren, and three American Woodcock. Vagrants found on SI included: Blue-winged, Hooded, Worm-eating, Western Palm and Mourning warblers, two Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, three White-eyed Vireo, Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-breasted Chat, House Wren, and three Indigo Bunting.

**Shoals Lab Banding Station** 425-0703  
Appledore Island, Maine

**David Holmes** sends his regrets about the lack of an Appledore Island report this year, but hopes to contribute to the 1999 article.

**Kingston Wildlife  
Research Station**  
Rhode Island

412-0713

**Jason Osenkowski, Barbara Wilson, Peter Paton, Scott McWilliams** (banders)

Dr. Doug Kraus banded at Kingston, Rhode Island from 1956 until 1994. In 1998, he initiated the process of donating his land to the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and entered a cooperative agreement with the University of Rhode Island to continue his research. This property is now called the Kingston Wildlife Research Station. Dr. Kraus used four net lanes and these continue to be operated along with an additional six new ones. The 1998 banding season ran from early August through to the end of October, which is slightly shorter than previous years.

There has been a significant decline in capture rates at the Kingston Station over the years (table below) and our 1998 capture rate of 26 birds/100 net hours is considerably lower than any other year.

**Changes in birds/100 net hours at Kingston Wildlife Research Station since 1950.**

Decade	Birds/100 nh
1950s	156
1960s	117
1970s	107
1980s	62
1990s	61

The old established net lanes tended to be near forest edges and therefore had a relatively high capture rate. Some of the new net lanes have been placed in the forest interior and were successful in catching some interior species including 13 Wood Thrush and 22 Ovenbird. A total of 58 species were captured in 1998 which is similar to the average from 1956-1998 of 56.3 species but much lower than the high of 77 captured in 1976.

**Block Island Banding Station 411-0713**

Rhode Island

**Elise Lapham/ Kim Gaffett** (banders)Assistants: Susan and Mark Carr, Scott Comings,  
Penny Anderson and Erica Anderson

In general, 1998 was a mixed bag of banding on Block Island—our numbers were down but we had an interesting variety of birds not often seen here as well as interesting fluctuations in numbers.

Block Island experienced an overly warm fall and this may have contributed to a missed early migration in late August. Our net hours were kept low on weekdays as nets were only opened in the morning due to Elise's broken wrist and other commitments for Kim. There were 55 days of banding running from 31 August to 12 December with several non-banding days in between. Our busiest day was 4 October with 77 birds and 26 species; 29 September was next with 75 individuals and 24 species.

Interesting catches included: four Yellow-billed Cuckoos—the highest number since 1979; four Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, one Orange-crowned Warbler—the first since 1989; three Worm-eating Warblers—the most ever, and one Clay-colored Sparrow. Also of note was the increase of Hermit Thrushes to 40 from 1997's low of 19.

On the down side this year: only 109 Common Yellowthroats—the lowest since 1986; 184 cat-birds—the fewest ever; and 140 Yellow-rumped Warblers—the lowest since 1993

There has been a technical change at the banding station with Kim Gaffett now listed as the responsible person, but of course Elise Lapham continues to be the supervisory and guiding force.

**Island Beach State Park 395-0740**

New Jersey

**Bruce Adams, Mary Doscher, Eileen & Glenn Mahler, Robert McKinney, John Miller, Robert Pantle, Lawrence Pharo, Robert Yunick** (banders)

Assistants: Doris McGovern, Marlene Miller

During the Fall 1998 banding season nine banders operated five stations within the Park, between 19

August and 22 November. One or more of these stations was in operation on 50 of the 96 days during this period; there were two banding days in August, 21 in September, 22 in October, and five in November. Only on one day (20 October) were four stations in operation simultaneously. There were seven days with three stations active, 15 days with two stations open, and the remaining 27 days with just a single station operating.

While the season banding totals were still below average, the results were noticeably up from the dismal showing of the previous two years (see table below).

**A comparison of banding summaries for Island Beach State Park from 1987 to 1998.**

	1998	1996-97 Avg.	1987-97 Avg.
No. of banding days	50	41.5	51
Total birds banded	4786	2739	6667
Birds banded/100nh	147.3	115.9	170.3
No. of species banded	90	82	97

There were no "monster blitz" flight days report, but good flights occurred on several dates. (See table below.) Kinglets represented 54% and 60%, respectively, of the total bandings on the largest flight days.

**Dates and numbers of largest catches reported from Island Beach State Park - 1998.**

Date (# sta. operating)	# Birds Banded	# Birds Banded/nh
9 Sep (2)	340	3.6
29 Sep (2)	329	3.7
3 Oct (3)	281	1.8
16 Oct (3)	184	5.1
17 Oct (2)	439	4.1
20 Oct (4)	459	3.1

This year's "top 10" species (see table below) were identical to the "top 10" from the 1987-97 comparison period (albeit in a different order). The "top 20" differ by only 2 species and the "top 30" by only one over the 11-year comparison period.

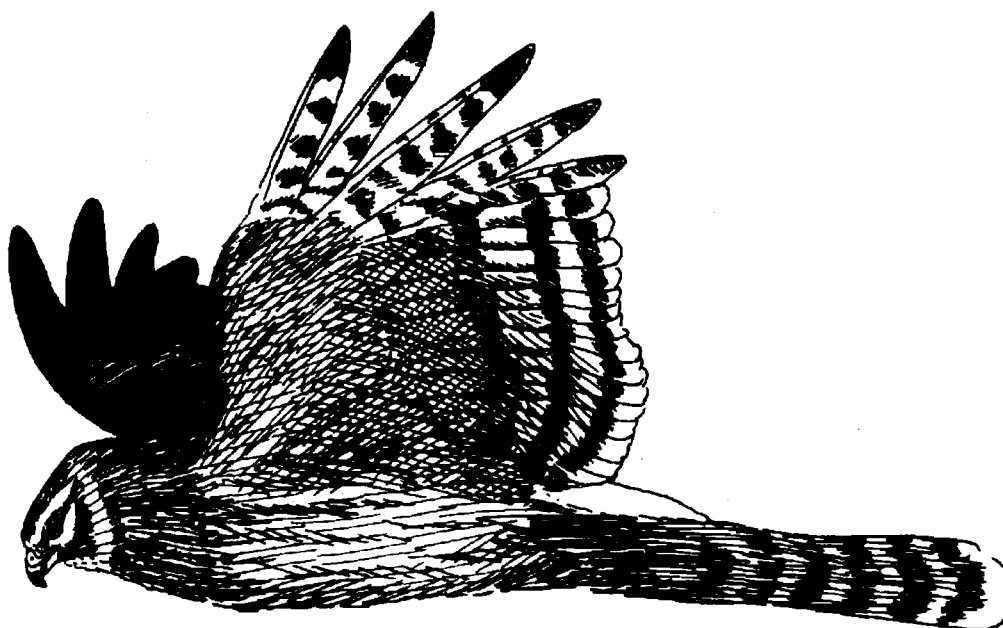
American Redstart is the only species where the number of birds caught in 1998 is actually above average; but when the number of birds captured is converted to birds/100 net hours, the fall catch of Common Yellowthroats and both kinglet species are also above average. White-throated Sparrows numbers in 1998 were well down, dropping 59% below average; in fact all sparrows in the top group were in rather low numbers this year. Looking at the "top 20" species there is an even split between gains and loses, but among the "top 30" species 13 were above and 19 below average. Overall for species caught in 1998, 37 were above and 52 below average.

Highlights of the season included a Northern Harrier on 24 September, 15 Yellow-billed Cuckoos (but only one Black-billed), nine Belted Kingfishers, an above-average nine Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, a single American Tree Sparrow (only the second record), and four Philadelphia Vireos. Significantly above-average numbers were also recorded for Red-eyed Vireo and Northern Waterthrush.

Also of note is a Hermit Thrush banded by Mary Doscher in the spring of 1995 which was recaptured on 8 November in exactly the same banding lane—perhaps this bird is over-wintering in the area.

**Comparison of the top ten species banded in 1998 to the 1987-97 average at Island Beach State Park.**

Species	# Banded 1998	Average # Banded	Birds/100nh in 1998	Average # of Birds/100nh	% Above or Below Average
GCKI	1191	1383	36.7	35.3	+4%
MYWA	414	715	12.7	18.3	-31%
GRCA	291	543	9.1	13.9	-35%
RCKI	285	304	8.8	7.8	+20%
SCJU	273	428	8.4	10.9	-30%
COYE	261	304	8.0	7.8	+2%
AMRE	247	183	7.6	4.6	+62%
BRCR	204	320	6.3	8.2	+24%
WTSP	201	587	6.2	15.0	-59%
SOSP	160	276	4.9	7.1	-31%



Northern Harrier by George West  
North American Bird Bander