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Atlantic Flyway Review: Piedmont-coastal Plain, Region Iv, Fall 1999

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Atlantic Flyway Review: Piedmont-Coastal Plain, Region IV, Fall 1999

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USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center
Laurel, MD 20708-4015

In a slight reorganization, the Mount Nebo station in the mountains of western Maryland near Oakland was moved to Region III (Western Ridge), in exchange for Lakeshore Estates in Leon County, Florida, which we welcome to Region IV. This was the year of the hurricane in Region IV, with the majority of stations commenting on summer drought, persistent easterly winds, or hurricanes. Nine of the ten stations that operated in both 1998 and 1999 banded fewer birds in the 1999 season, the notable exception being Chino Farms, which jumped from 5193 to 8225 birds and also had a 3% increase in birds per 100 net-hours. Summing across these ten stations: 27,911 birds were banded in 1998, 24,753 in 1999, a decrease of 11%. (Net-hours are not available for all sites for 1998.) Yellow-rumped Warbler was again the species most commonly banded, followed again by Common Yellowthroat (which was among the top ten species at all sites except Lakeshore Estates at Tallahassee), and with American Goldfinch a surprise in third place.

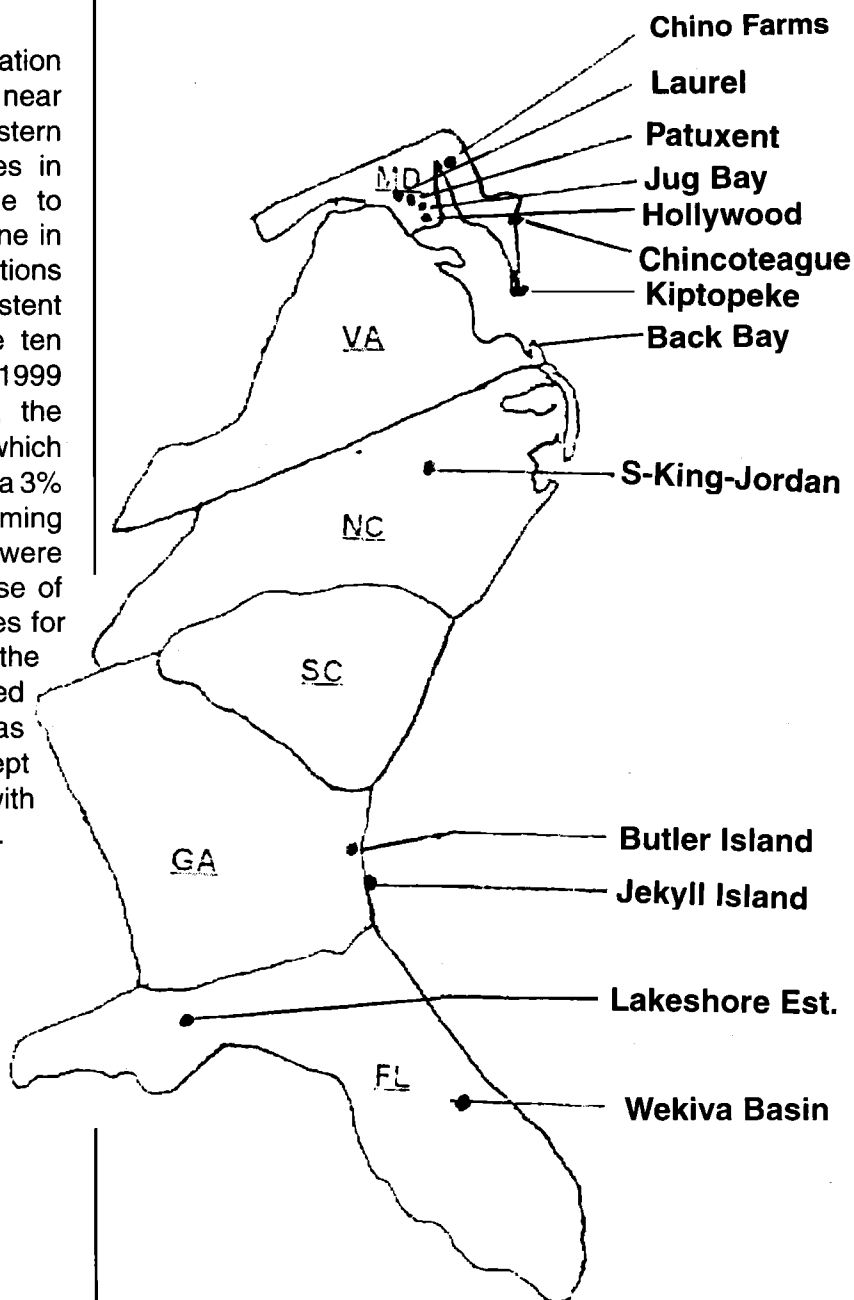


Table 1. AFR Region IV, Fall 1999 Summary.									
	Laurel	Patuxent	Jug Bay	Hollywood	Chino Farms	Chincoteague	Kiptopeke		
First Day	15 Aug	1 Aug	15 Aug	28 Aug	1 Aug	9 Sep	23 Aug		
Last Day	30 Nov	30 Nov	15 Nov	17 Oct	24 Nov	12 Dec	29 Nov		
Days Oper.	78	106	43	13	82	25	80		
Nets Used	3 to 14	17 to 26	26	1 to 3	11 to 67	3 to 7	20		
Net-hours	385.3	785.0	335.5	66	25,361	643	8688		
Best Day	32	77	143	16	409	32	460		
Date	15 Aug	13 Oct	13 Nov	28 Aug	19 Oct	26 Sep	25 Oct		
Most Species	15	24	27	11	42	10	40		
Date	18 Sep	2 Oct	20 Sep	2 Oct	6 Oct	25 Sep	23 Sep		
Banded '98	512	3600	3024	259	5193	-	8549		
Banded '99	394	2498	2462	102	8225	229	6418		
Species '98	58	88	87	34	105	-	98		
Species '99	53	81	90	27	120	41	98		
B/100 nh '98	9	41	74	150	28	-	100		
B/100 nh '99	10	32	73	155	32	36	74		
% HY 1998	63%	59%	-	63%	-	-	90%		
% HY 1999	68%	63%	73%	59%	78%	60%	-		

Table 1. (cont'd.) AFR Region IV, Fall 1999 Summary									
	Back Bay	Scott King	Butler Island	Jekyll Island	Wekiva	Lakeshore Est.			
First Day	24 Sep	31 Aug	29 Aug	19 Sep	1 Sep	24 Aug			
Last Day	7 Nov	14 Nov	31 Oct	16 Oct	31 Oct	15 Nov			
Days Oper.	20	20	55	26	56	35			
Nets Used	40 to 118	2 to 4	5 to 12	6 to 12	3 to 21	3 to 9			
Net-hours	-	158	1937	1061	4299	1980			
Best Day	219	11	46	225	86	14			
Date	1 Oct	2 Sep	12 Sep	30 Sep	8 Oct	2 Oct			
Most Spec.	36	8	12	17	16	7			
Date	1 Oct	4 Oct	23,25 Sep	2 Oct	2 Oct	2 Oct			
Banded '98	-	-	1844	2190	2444	296			
Banded '99	1619	65	1033	1757	1746	118			
Species '98	-	-	51	48	71	44			
Species '99	78	30	51	38	56	27			
B/100 nh '98	-	-	75	202	43	14			
B/100 nh '99	-	41	53	166	41	6			
% HY 1998	-	-	85%	98%	57%	69%			
% HY 1999	94%	92%	83%	87%	69%	64%			

Table 2. AFR IV. Ten Most Commonly Banded Species, 1999.

Laurel	Patuxent		Jug Bay		Hollywood		Chino Farms		Chincoteague	
	% HY		% HY		% HY		% HY		% HY	
45 WTSP (1)	54	295 RCKI (1)	33	347 AMGO (10)	78	15 COYE (6)	87	1173 AMGO	74	77 MYWA
40 GRCA (2)	82	252 SCJU (5)	47	210 WTSP (3)	72	8 FISP (4)	88	791 WTSP	63	24 GRCA
36 NOCA (3)	66	220 WTSP (2)	53	184 SOSP (7)	79	7 NOCA (10)	14	760 SCJU	66	17 COYE
29 CACH (5)	73	213 GRCA (4)	78	159 COYE (4)	67	7 CARW (8)	29	515 RCKI	87	12 FISP
25 ETTI (4)	50	163 COYE (6)	40	144 BLGR (5)	80	7 WEVI	86	373 COYE	72	11 SOSP
23 MAWA (8)	64	148 MAWA (8)	38	138 INBU (2)	76	5 GRCA (5)	60	360 SOSP	90	10 WPWA
21 HETH (6)	76	112 REVI (3)	67	97 CHSP (6)	92	5 SOSP (7)	60	347 MYWA	79	7 SWSP
18 CARW	90	78 GCKI (9)	59	97 MYWA (1)	67	3 INBU (3)	67	332 CHSP	92	6 AMRE
16 COYE (9)	64	53 SOSP (10)	70	82 SWSP (9)	58	2 YBCH	67	281 FISP	89	5 BAOR
14 AMRE (10)	71	51 HETH (7)	71	77 SCJU (8)	60			240 GRCA	84	5 GCKI

Table 2 (cont'd.). AFR IV. Ten Most Commonly Banded Species, 1999.

Kiptopeke	Back Bay		Scott King		Butler Island		Jekyll Island		Wekiva		Lakeshore Est.	
	% HY		% HY		% HY		% HY		% HY		% HY	
2268 MYWA (1)	616 MYWA	97	19 NOCA	100	406 COYE (1)	86	699 WPWA (2)	91	497 GRCA (1)	75	34 WEVI (2)	56
546 AMGO	114 BLPW	98	14 MYWA	100	139 MYWA (2)	90	485 COYE (1)	99	450 COYE (2)	77	12 NOCA (1)	92
476 AMRE (2)	112 GRCA	99	14 SCJU	100	104 NOWA (3)	93	97 AMRE (4)	93	96 AMRE (5)	56	11 HOWA (4)	27
291 COYE (5)	94 WPWA	99	12 CACH	100	71 GRCA (4)	94	82 PRAW (8)	93	73 BTBW (6)	52	9 RCKI (5)	20
278 BTBW (3)	65 COYE	95	6 COYE	100	35 NOMO (8)	74	65 GRCA (3)	97	66 HOWR (9)	29	6 MYWA (3)	67
195 GRCA (6)	41 AMRE	98	6 RBNU	83	32 TRES	47	43 PABU (7)	60	57 OVEN (3)	63	5 CARW (6)	80
177 WTSP (4)	33 BLJA	88	5 INBU	100	27 TWAR (5)	70	32 WEVI	94	53 NOCA	75	4 BRTH	50
150 SOSP (8)	33 GCKI	67	5 AMGO	60	26 NOCA (9)	58	31 BTBW (6)	87	50 WEVI	62	3 SUTA	67
135 MAWA	33 REVI	97	4 CARW	100	21 SWSP	71	31 NOWA	90	47 VEER (4)	68	3 SWTH (7)	67
128 GCKI	30 SCJU	90	3 RSTO	100	20 HOWR	90	26 REVI (5)	92	45 PRAW (10)	69	3 BLJA	100

Robbins Nest

Laurel, MD

Chandler S. Robbins

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390-0765

This is the first of three stations along the Patuxent River. Elevation here at the edge of the Piedmont ranges from 265 ft at the house to 160 ft at the river. In spite of easterly winds and heavily overcast skies from Hurricanes Dennis, Floyd, and Irene, we suffered from drought all summer, not rain. We had only about two inches each in June and July, 4.55 in August, then a whopping 16.03 in September, and a normal 3.46 in October. This station operates all day on weekends, but only before and after work on other days. Net-hours were 5% above the 26-year mean of 3655, but way down from last year because other commitments kept me out of town on several weekends. I had only 14 days when I could net all day. Although the most birds were banded on opening day, the most per net-hour were on 19 and 15 October and 23 September.

The nets caught 26 returns from prior years, the oldest being a seven-year-old Blue Jay and a seven-year-old cardinal. To illustrate how biased a sample one can obtain from netting, I captured only one junco in the nets, but caught 47 of them in baited traps on our deck. Other species taken only in the traps (and not included in the totals) were Mourning Dove, Chipping Sparrow, House Finch, Pine Siskin, and American Goldfinch.

Patuxent Powerline Right-of-way**390-0764**

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center

Laurel, MD

Deanna K. Dawson

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Fall 1999 was among the poorest seasons in this banding station's 20 years of operation. Record high capture totals were set for only two species: Ruby-throated Hummingbird (41 individuals captured, none banded; previous high 21) and White-breasted Nuthatch (two individuals banded; previous high, one). The only other species that stood out as being unusually numerous was Blackpoll Warbler, for which the banding total (33 birds) was the highest since 1988. Bandings of several species (Red-eyed Vireo, Tennessee Warbler, Nash-

ville Warbler, Ovenbird, Hooded Warbler, Canada Warbler, Eastern Towhee, and Field Sparrow) were at record lows, and bandings of many other species were below the long-term (1980-1998) mean.

The number of species banded was also below the long-term mean of 86 species, and tied the previous low. Possible contributing factors included drought conditions in Maryland and elsewhere in the East, which may have influenced nesting productivity and migration dates for some species; Hurricanes Dennis and Floyd, which influenced East Coast weather through much of September; the unprecedented scarcity of Hercules' Club (*Aralia spinosa*) fruits at the banding station; and occasional visits by a gray fox, which reduced operation of some nets in October and November. A season highlight was the August capture of 37 Red-eyed Vireos banded at this station in previous years, including a bird banded in August 1989. These are almost certainly locally nesting birds that feed on the abundant fruits of *Viburnum dentatum* in the powerline right-of-way in late summer.

Regular assistants at the banding station included Woody Martin, Susie Michaelson, Jane Nicolich, Gemma Radko, Jack Saba, Julie Tomita, and Laurie Walter. Danny Bystrak and Mary Gustafson each served as bander-in-charge on several mornings.

Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary**384-0764**

Bristol, Anne Arundel County, MD

Danny Bystrak

dbystrak@aol.com

The banding site is an old agricultural field with a half-acre island of shrubs (8 nets) and a 100-foot wide tree/shrub buffer (16 nets) around the perimeter. It is located on Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary property on the tidal portion of the Patuxent River. The field is being managed in warm-season grasses, and the tree buffer is being improved by the addition of native shrubs to form a dense understory. We caught ten species not captured in 1998, but missed seven that were caught in 1998. Exceptional birds in 1999: Dickcissel, Northern Harrier, 13 Bobolinks, two Grasshopper Sparrows.

Main assistants: Mike Quinlan, Lloyd Lewis, Mandy Lightcap, Colleen Troxler, Elaine Franklin. Special

thanks go to the Friends of Jug Bay for financial assistance in the purchase of nets and for a stipend to hire an intern.

Greenwell Field Station **382-0763**
Hollywood, MD
Ron and Mark Runkles
ron_runkles@nema.org

Two species were conspicuous by their absence this fall, Myrtle Warblers and Swamp Sparrows. We failed to observe them in the vicinity of our banding station even in the days following the closing of our nets for the season. However, we captured Great Crested Flycatchers and a Grasshopper Sparrow for the first time at Greenwell.

We shared the area of our field station this fall with an organization that trains search and rescue dogs. As the dogs initially worked the area, they drove birds into the nets. However, as the morning progressed and the dogs barked considerably, birds were totally driven from the area. We have noticed that Brown Thrashers are particularly sensitive to barking dogs. Unlike other bird species that we handled near the dogs, while holding a Brown Thrasher in our hand, we could feel its pulse suddenly increase as a nearby dog started to bark.

This fall there were several days when fog engulfed our banding station, which overall probably kept numbers down. Fog tends to work either for or against us in the autumn. When fog is scattered in the region of our banding station, we expect a better-than-average number of captures for the morning. When fog engulfs our station, we do not need to open our nets. When a fog bank is to the south of our banding station and the station itself is clear, we expect record numbers of migrants.

At first we thought this was a poor fall banding season for Neotropical migrants, but when we compared it to the previous two seasons, it was not so bad. We keep our own list of Neotropical migrants that we monitor. According to that list, in 1997, 37% of the birds we banded were Neotropical migrants; in 1998, 15%; and in 1999, 21%.

Chino Farms **391-0755**
Chestertown, MD
J. Gruber, R. Lesh, W. Snyder

Chino Farms Banding Station was only in its second year of operation in 1999. Thirteen new species were banded this year bringing the station total to 134. Habitat at this station is a mixture of hedgerow (20%), field (40%), and wooded area (40%). Fall weather was warm and dry, with moderate-to-light winds, except for the tropical systems that moved through in early September. We experienced a goldfinch invasion starting around the 10th of October that was fairly strong through November. Other finches were, for the most part, in very small numbers.

Notable bandings were Common Redpoll (1), Dickcissel (1), Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow (1), our second one this year, and Bicknell's Thrush (1). We had one foreign retrap, an ASY Sharpshinned Hawk, netted on 26 September 1999. It was originally banded by R. R. Runkles at Island Creek, MD, on 26 April 1998. We had 23 small and large banding demonstrations with 246 people in attendance. Additionally, Maryland Public Television came to the station and filmed the banding of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird for a segment on hummingbirds for their program *Outdoors Maryland*.

Principal bander was Jim Gruber, with help from sub-permittees Trish Gruber, Bill Snyder, and Ryan Lesh. Assistants were Helga Orrick, Harry Sears, Doug Gill, Jim Stasz, Gary Dodge, Scot Ferenberg, Chris Root, and Zach Parks.

Chincoteague, VA **370-0752**
Richard N. Roberts
nroberts@shore.intercom.net

This station was new in 1999. It was started as part of a long-range study on use of various habitats on the refuge by passerine species during different seasons. The habitats netted included mature pine forest, large areas of ten-foot-high wax myrtle, edges of woodlots/reforestation areas, and marsh edges of *Spartina* species. Nets were operated one site per day by one man.

**Kiptopeke Songbird
Banding Station**

370-0755

Cape Charles, Northampton County, VA

Bill Williams

williamsb@wjcc.k12.va.us

Despite two hurricanes, incessant winds, and extensive flooding, the 1999 Kiptopeke banding season proved to be an outstanding success. This was due in large part to the unfaltering support from our many praiseworthy volunteers. Dedicated volunteers have always been an integral part in the success of the station; and with continued support like this, there is no stopping the potential of Kiptopeke.

Our biggest day was 25 October, when we caught 460 birds. Equally outstanding was 23 September when we captured 40 different species of birds—a remarkable achievement for any North American banding station. The first ever capture and banding for the Kiptopeke station of Common Redpolls (not just one but seven!) and the first ever banding of Eastern Bluebirds for our resident bander were momentous occasions. The new record of 546 American Goldfinches completely shattered the previous high of 161 and the annual average of only eight. Blackpoll Warblers made a very impressive showing with 85 banded. Other noteworthy species captured were two Bicknell's Thrushes and nine Connecticut Warblers.

Funding for the research was provided through a grant from NOAA through the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

Back Bay

363-0755

Sandbridge, Virginia Beach Co., VA

Rob and Ann Simpson

snphotos@visuallink.com

This is an educational banding station run by Lord Fairfax Community College. Students are instructed in net setup, bird capture, bird handling, identification, sexing, aging and other banding techniques. In cooperation with Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, we are doing a study on habitat selection of Neotropical migrants on their staging grounds.

The weather was not very conducive for migration. Our only good front came on the last shortened

day of operation. We continue to have a strange reverse migration where the Neotropical migrants move north during the day. We welcome suggestions as to why this happens. As usual, close to 100% of the Neotropical migrants are HY. This seems to be very high compared to other banding stations and we are still trying to find out why.

Our best bird was a Clay-colored Sparrow on 2 Oct. We caught both Salt Marsh and Nelson's Sharp-tailed sparrows, including one of the *subvirgatus* race.

A special note of thanks goes to Gary Sargent, a long-time associate who is responsible for all of our computer operations and data analysis. The instructors and students appreciate Gary's wizardry with the computer and help in the field.

Scott King-Jordan Gameland

355-0785

Durham, NC

Liz Pullman

Liz@poultry.poulsoci.ncsu.edu

You will note there were no numbers for 1998. My husband was ill and died in October so I did very little banding that fall. This year there was a great gap in banding because of Hurricanes Dennis and Floyd in mid-September. Combined with a major drought most of the summer, I am surprised that I had any luck at all.

Waves, or at least what pass for waves in central North Carolina, were detected on 21 and 25 September and 4 and 10 October. My 'coolest' bird was a Veery on 2 September; I rarely get them in either spring or fall. Arrival of Red-breasted Nuthatches on 10 October, Ruby-crowned Kinglets on 15 October, and Slate-colored Juncos on 28 October seemed about a week earlier than usual, although Myrtle Warblers on 15 October were right on time.

My highlights included a tick (*Ixodes brunneus*) on a junco on 31 October, a HY goldfinch with a severely deformed beak on 21 September, and a young cardinal banded earlier in the summer that showed up this fall with flamingo pink plumage.

Butler Island Altamaha Station **312-0812**
Darien, GA
Doris Cohrs
doris_cohrs@yahoo.com

The 1999 migration banding at BIAS was interesting, to say the least. We were visited by a series of hurricanes/tropical storms, none of which caused damage, but all of which caused days off and diminished numbers of migrants. When the largest daily catch with 12 nets at this site is 46 birds, something is wrong. Although the species count was the same as last year, the overall total of birds banded was down considerably. We can only surmise and hope that all the hurricane activity moved the coastal migrants farther inland.

BIAS added six new species this year, bringing our six-year total to 78. The most exciting addition was a Louisiana Waterthrush. These usually move out of our area before we begin migration banding, so we were surprised to capture one on 12 September. The other new species for the station were Tree Swallow, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Kentucky Warbler, Lark Sparrow, and Boat-tailed Grackle.

We had one foreign retrap, a Magnolia Warbler captured on 20 October. It was banded at Kiptopeke station on 2 October. That's 18 days and about 550 miles away from Butler Island. Of 104 retraps, 14 were returns from previous years: six were permanent residents (Carolina Wren, White-eyed Vireo, Northern Cardinal); one was a probable summer resident/breeder (Painted Bunting); and seven were definitely migrants (Northern Waterthrush and House Wren). The "oldest" returned migrant was a Northern Waterthrush banded in the autumn of 1996.

My thanks go to the following for their assistance: Don Cohrs, Steve Holzman, Eugene Keferl, Mary Nevill, Scott Somershoe, and Beth Willis, plus all the other stalwart souls who braved the doldrums of near-birdless days and the hordes of mosquitoes that plagued us this year.

Jekyll Island **310-0812**
Brunswick, GA
Don Cohrs
doris_cohrs@yahoo.com

The weather did us in. Between Hurricanes Floyd and Irene and several odd morning rains, which hardly wet anything, we lost over 21% of our net time and this was during two very dry months. We banded 1757 birds of 38 species, both all-time lows for a four-week effort. This does not indicate a population crash, as we have evidence of a westward shift in the migration due to the winds.

We had one foreign retrap, whose origin has yet to be determined. No data were available when this was written. We did have 12 Yellow Palm Warblers, which is a high number for us. Our numerous Palm Warblers are always mostly Westerns.

A transition team is in place to assume control of JIBS as Don Cohrs is phasing out because of age. The team consists of Chris and Jan Pitman, Charles Ratliff, and Roger Atchison. Our intern this year was Christie Dollar. We had many volunteers as usual and they were much appreciated. We could not do the job without them.

Wekiva Basin GEPark **284-0812**
Apopka, FL
Parks Small, Richard Poole, Bob Wheeler
Parks.Small@dep.state.fl.us

Our fifth season rounded the corner with two of our station founders newly employed some distance away. The weight (and hours) of this season were carried by new sub-permit holders Richard Poole (and his new wife Christine) and Bob Wheeler. These two men have been the workforce from our beginning! This season we closed our first array of nets located in Wekiva Springs State Park and kept the more productive array in Rock Springs Run State Reserve operational.

It was our first year not to lose nets to deer, but the pigs and black bears did come calling. The hurricane season also left its mark with the most days missed since we started. However, the strong east winds offshore brought us our first fall Blackpoll and Cape May Warblers. Ruby-throated Hummingbird (released unbanded) and Great Crested Flycatcher were our other new species.

Our 317 recaptures included a four-year Northern Cardinal and three-year White-eyed Vireo, Common Yellowthroat, Red-eyed Towhee, Ovenbird, and Gray Catbird (in the fourth year with this net array), but no foreign recoveries. We look forward to next season.

Lakeshore Estates

3029-08417

Tallahassee, Leon County, FL

Peter H. Homann

homann@bio.fsu.edu

The netting lanes I used were the same as in previous years: in my yard along shrubbery under scattered pine trees, in the mixed woods south of it and in a temporary bog adjacent to a clearing with a telecommunication tower approximately 250 m from my home. Migrants and dispersing resident species were so scarce that my banding total was barely more than 50% of the past five years' average (211 ± 56). However, Hooded Warblers and White-eyed Vireos were caught in "normal" numbers.

Among the migrants known to winter in this area, only an occasional Myrtle Warbler showed up, but Ruby-crowned Kinglets were more plentiful and, in fact, above-average numbers were netted during the six weeks following the period covered by this report. One reason for the generally disappointing bird life may have been a persistent drought that left my bog dry throughout the second half of 1999. I suspect that most birds avoided altogether the dry, high grounds where my netting lanes are located, preferring instead the moister deciduous woods and the land near our lakes. Support for this contention comes from the fact that a normal overall abundance of birds was recorded during this year's Christmas count even though my netting success had remained poor through the rest of the year. Noteworthy returns were those of an after-third-year Hermit Thrush, a third-year female Myrtle Warbler, and an after-fifth-year Chipping Sparrow.

