

2003

News, Notes, Comments

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upper sides of the breast and on the rump, followed by the back, tail coverts and dorsal wing coverts, finally on the head where crown molt starts at the base of the maxilla and works backward to conclude on the nape. Wing covert replacement can be complete before molting progresses to the nape.

Some individuals can have renewed the wing coverts and the body plumage (though still possess sheaths at the bases of some of the contour feathers) by as early as 18 Aug, while others may be only in the early stages of this molt by as late as 3 Sep. This bird at Island Beach was not a case of temporally delayed molt, rather one which had foregone all of the normal earlier stages of body and covert molt and had completed only the very last stages of head molt.

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Slate-colored Junco at Least Eight Years Old

During routine winter trapping on 12 Jan 2003 at my home station, I trapped a Slate-colored Junco (SCJU) which turned out to be eight years and five months old, assuming I aged the bird correctly at initial banding on 11 Mar 1995. At that time I had judged it to be an SY male with a wing chord of 80 mm and gray-brown eye color.

A review of records showed the junco, #2131-08870, was banded with a size 1 band. It was one of 35 birds banded on that March date in 1995. Repeat records showed that the bird was encountered subsequently on 4 Jan 1997 and 2 Feb 1998, before it disappeared from the records.

At the recent encounter, the bird appeared to be in good condition with no noticeable abnormalities, except tail feathers were frayed. The bird weighed 23.9 g at 1410 hours. On the previously encountered dates, it weighed 22.8 g at 1100 hours on 4 Jan 1997 and 22.2 g at 0845 hours on 2 Feb 1998. Weight was not recorded when first banded. The "old" bird was released in fair weather (29° F) along

with 11 newly banded SCJUs and three other repeating juncos, banded in Feb 2000 and 2001.

A check of the banding office website, <www.pwrc/uscg.gov/bbl/homepage/longvree.htm> showed the oldest known SCJU to be 10 yr 09 mo. This information was listed under AOU 4930-5020 and was last updated February 2002.

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How Many Jelly Beans Are There in The Jar?

Here is the winter feeder watcher's equivalent of "how many jelly beans are there in the jar?" How many Downy Woodpeckers frequent the suet feeders at the Thrush Wood Banding Station?

The general rule in censusing a resident bird population is to select a three-month period in which there is little or no movement into or out of the area. In our case, we chose 26 Nov 2002 through 25 Feb 2003. Because of the severe and persistent cold weather, it was possible to trap on only 14 different days and for only a brief time each day. Only tree traps could be used as it was too cold/wet/snowy to use ground traps. No netting was possible.

So, how many different Downy Woodpeckers were using the feeders? A very little hint: we often saw five at a time. Another hint: we usually caught about 20 or 22 individuals each trapping day.

Answer: There were at least 62 downies in the yard! Only once was a bird caught twice in one day. Many were caught only one or two times during the winter. Ten individuals were caught from seven to nine times during the period. However, during the next several sessions after 25 Feb, three more individuals that had been banded in 1997, 1998, and 2001, respectively, were caught as was an unbanded bird. All four, and quite possibly others, were probably out there all along.