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ATLANTIC FLYWAY REVIEW: Region IV

Piedmont—Coastal Plain, Fall 2002

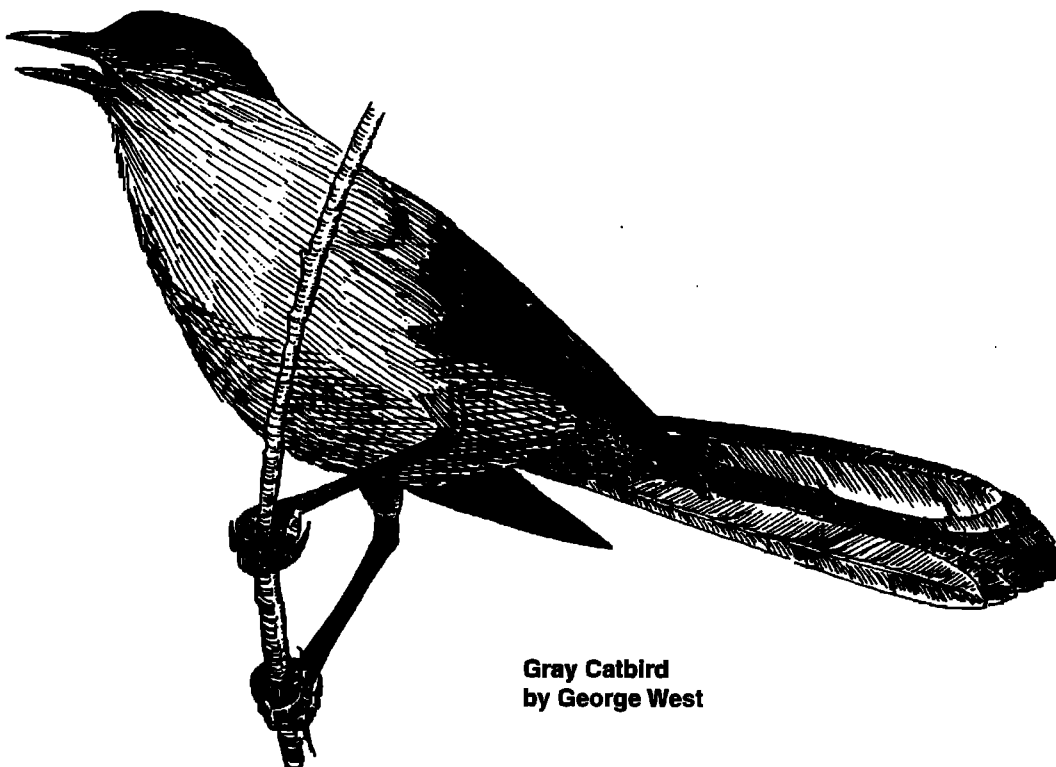
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This was an anniversary year for three Region IV stations: 25th year for Jekyll Island, 30th for my small backyard station in Laurel, and 40th for Kiptopeke. Participating banders were the same as last year except for a switch in Florida, where a new station at Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park replaced Richard Poole's Rock Springs station.

Every author mentioned the influence of weather patterns on the migration at his/her station. The entire region, except Florida, was still under the influence of a multi-year drought at the opening of the migration season in July, and the first relief did not arrive until the end of August. In fact, the twelve months from Sep 2002 through Aug 2003 was the driest on record in Baltimore and Washington, and Atlanta experienced the driest August since 1976. September remained hot and dry, except along the coast where a series of coastal storms disrupted

banding activities. The whole region was wetter than normal for the remainder of the migration season.

Most banders blamed the drought and/or scarcity of cold fronts for this year's lower numbers of migrants captured. Comparing the catch at the nine stations that were in operation in both 2001 and 2002, the number of birds banded dropped 21% from 28,576 to 22,679 in spite of an increase in net hours of 3.6%. Whether bird numbers were actually fewer or whether the birds simply were not captured is unknown. Jim Gruber's drop in goldfinches from 1797 in 2001 to 97 in 2002, for example, reflects total failure of the sunflower crop in the adjacent field, so the birds would have been searching for food elsewhere. Comparing Table 2 with the same table last year, the greatest declines were in Myrtle Warblers, but catbird numbers were also lower almost everywhere. The species showing the most increases were cardinal and redstart. The non-migratory cardinal was actually the most commonly banded species at two stations.



Gray Catbird
by George West

Table 1. AFR Region IV. Fall 2002 Summary

	Laurel	Patuxent	Jug Bay	Chino Farms	Chincoteague
First Day	16 Aug	1 Aug	14 Aug	1 Aug	1 Aug
Last Day	1 Dec	30 Nov	19 Nov	21 Nov	8 Dec
Days Open	66	103	42	57	65
Nets Used	3 - 5	21 - 26	26	14 - 68	4 - 10
Net Hours	3733	8700	3596	11,489	1281
No. Best Day	18	115	129	409	43
Best Day Date	21 Sep	19 Oct	17 Oct	15 Oct	8 Dec
Most Species	10	24	24	36	11
Most Species Date	18 Aug	25 Sep	30 Sep	17 Sep	19 Sep
Banded 2001	519	3737	2661	8057	430
Banded 2002	286	3104	2316	5619	579
Species 2001	90	84	42	NA	39
Species 2002	88	82	41	36	33
B/100nh 2001	69	34	188	NA	8
B/100nh 2002	67	31	187	20	19
%HY 2001	96%	95%	96.2%	NA	68%
%HY 2002	95%	92.1%	90.6%	56.3%	63%

Table 1 (cont'd.). AFR Region IV. Fall 2002 Summary

	Kiptopeke	Back Bay	Jekyll Island	Cape Florida	Lakeshore
First Day	15 Aug	27 Sep	22 Sep	5 Oct	29 Sep
Last Day	22 Nov	10 Nov	13 Oct	18 Nov	15 Nov
Days Open	90	20	21	34	42
Nets Used	21	32 - 148	15	10 - 12	4 - 9
Net Hours	9300	9748.5	916	1795	1315
No. Best Day	487	376	167	43	16
Best Day Date	15 Oct	2 Nov	7 Oct	17 Oct	6 Oct
Most Species	29	26	15	12	9
Most Species Date	15 Oct	2 Oct	4 Oct	17 Oct	12 Oct
Banded 2001	8026	3150	1802	NA	194
Banded 2002	6218	2591	1715	359	251
Species 2001	90	84	42	NA	39
Species 2002	88	82	41	36	33
B/100nh 2001	69	34	188	NA	8
B/100nh 2002	67	31	187	20	19
%HY 2001	96%	95%	96.2%	NA	68%
%HY 2002	95%	92.1%	90.6%	56.3%	63%

Table 2. AFR IV. Ten Most Commonly Banded Species, Fall 2002.

Laurel	Patuxent	Jug Bay	Chino Farms	Chincoteague
%HY	%HY	%HY	%HY	%HY
40 NOCA (7)	351 WTSP (2) 56	188 CHSP (8) 86	854 WTSP (2) 74	176 MYWA (1) 100
31 WTSP (1)	340 RCKI (1) 25	163 WTSP (5) 63	447 CHSP (10) 97	52 COYE (2) 90
30 GRCA (2)	309 GRCA (3) 92	162 AMGO (6) 71	381 RCKI (9) 87	46 GRCA (3) 100
19 ETTI (6)	184 REVI (10) 69	146 INBU (2) 85	378 SCJU (3) 74	23 HOWR (8) 100
19 HETH (3)	161 COYE (7) 51	145 COYE (4) 72	300 INBU (7) 90	23 WPWA 96
17 CARW (12)	155 SCJU (4) 50	133 SOSP (1) 60	288 SOSP (4) 77	22 SCJU 91
15 CACH (14)	147 HETH (9) 78	132 MYWA (7) 79	231 COYE (8) 65	16 REVI 81
14 OVEN (13)	98 MAWA (6) 49	119 RCKI ?	227 MYWA (5) 77	16 BTBW 100
11 AMRO (4)	71 OVEN (13) 70	101 SWSP (3) 73	203 GRCA (6) 90	14 AMRE 100
8 SWTH (16)	70 GCKI (5) 60	92 SCJU 60	180 FISP 89	13 FISP 92

Table 2 (cont'd.). AFR IV. Ten Most Commonly Banded Species, Fall 2002.

Kiptopeke	Back Bay	Jekyll Island	Cape Florida	Lakeshore
%HY	%HY	%HY	%HY	%HY
2793 MYWA (1) 97	1598 MYWA (1) 98	649 COYE (2) 91	103 BTBW 52	40 NOCA (1) 60
382 AMRE (3) 95	101 GRCA (4) 93	567 WPWA (1) 95	37 AMRE 43	26 WEVI (2) 65
367 BTBW (4) 98	75 WPWA 100	89 AMRE (4) 84	35 WPWA 43	24 WOTH 63
299 GCKI 99	67 COYE (9) 91	59 PRAW (5) 76	24 COYE 79	18 GRCA (3) 67
179 COYE (5) 96	63 RCKI (3) 79	57 PABU (6) 91	22 OVEN 64	17 SWTH 82
172 RCKI (9) 74	43 AMRE 86	55 NOCA (10) 69	17 PABU 65	14 ETTI (9) 79
164 HETH 92	40 GCKI (2) 83	41 BTBW (7) 80	17 GRCA 94	13 MYWA (4) 54
158 GRCA (2) 97	39 NOCA 90	38 GRCA (3) 92	17 BAWW 47	9 GCTH 75
119 WTSP (7) 82	33 SSHA (5) 100	30 NOWA (8) 100	12 NOWA 83	8 GCTH 75
102 BAWW (8) 95	32 SWSP (7) 70	27 REVI (12) 100	9 NOPA 22	8 NOMO 75

() Indicates placement on list in 2001.

Robbins Nest**390-0765**

Laurel, MD

Chandler S. Robbins

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The prolonged drought in the middle Atlantic states helped set the stage for the lowest birds-per-hundred-net-hours in the 30-year history of this suburban station. The 'best' day was the only occasion in the whole season when I averaged more than one bird per net (18 birds with 15 nets). Comparing my first ten years (1973-1982) with the most recent ten, the number of birds/100nh dropped 50% from 19.3 to 9.6. As expected, the greatest declines have been in the migrants. The most common residents—cardinal, chickadee, and titmouse, which comprised 5.3% of the birds banded in 1973-1977—made up 15.7% of the total in 1998-2002.

I was surprised to capture an Ovenbird I had banded the previous autumn, my first recapture here of a warbler from a previous season. I suspect it had wandered over from High Ridge Park across the river, where they still nest. My oldest returns this year were a 7-year-old cardinal and a 6-year-old titmouse. An HY Wood Thrush (#1681-14584) that weighed 69.4 g on 14 Oct tipped the scales at 61.2 g four days earlier. The heaviest of 354 HY Wood Thrushes from the Operation Recovery program in 1967-1969 was 70.0 g (unpublished summary). See the Lakeshore Estates report below for a really obese Wood Thrush.

Patuxent Powerline Right-of-way 390-0764

Patuxent Research Refuge

Laurel, MD

Deanna K. Dawson

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The total number of birds banded in 2002 was considerably lower than during the past two autumns, but only slightly below the station mean for the previous 22 years of operation (3216 ± 404). After a year-long drought, the rains returned in mid-October, putting a damper on bird and banding activity during what normally is the busiest week of the season, and there were frequent mornings thereafter with some frosted or frozen nets. The banding total was record low for only one species, Magnolia Warbler, and that was only one bird fewer

than the previous low. Red-eyed Vireo numbers rebounded after a record low in 2001, and a few new capture highs were set: Traill's Flycatcher (46 birds, previous high 42), Carolina Wren (44, previous high 36), and Gray-cheeked Thrush (53, previous high 44). Sixty-five birds banded in previous years were captured, including a record high 11 Gray Catbirds, the oldest banded in Aug 1997 as an adult. Two of the eight Red-eyed Vireo returns were banded in Aug 1994, one as an adult, last recaptured in 1999. Other highlights included captures of an adult Black-billed Cuckoo, a Bicknell's Thrush, and an American Tree Sparrow, species captured in only a few previous years.

Nora Diggs, Lynn Cassell, and Terri Rafiq, assistants of Dr. Peter Marra at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, collected blood samples from about two-thirds of the birds to test for exposure to West Nile Virus; results are not yet available. Thanks to them for also assisting in operation of the banding station, and to Marty Barron, Joanna Bezek-Balcombe, Danny Bystrak, Barbara Dowell, Woody Martin, Jane Nicolich, Diann Prosser, Mike Quinlan, Gemma Radko, Jack Saba, John Sauer, and Ben Vitale, who provided regular or occasional assistance.

Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary**384-0764**

Bristol, Anne Arundel Co., MD

Danny Bystrak

dbystrak@aol.com

Jug Bay Bird Observatory's sixth autumn of operation was an interesting transition from one of the worst droughts in our history to almost continuous reschedulings due to rain during the latter half. We operated 26 nets for 3½ hours starting at dawn from 14 Aug to 19 Nov on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday schedule (with frequent rescheduling). Our catch of 91 species was above average, but the total of 2316 individuals was about 100 birds below average. Highlights of the year were: Mourning Dove (new), Cooper's Hawk (new), 3 Sharp-shinned Hawks, American Kestrel (new), Barn Swallow, 2 Great Crested Flycatchers, Cape May Warbler, 3 Yellow-throated Warblers, and Grasshopper Sparrow. Equally exciting was a Gray Kingbird that spent one morning tantalizingly close to two of our nets. This is the fifth Maryland record. Our top 10 species

changed more this year than ever before, including Ruby-crowned Kinglet for the first time, with a dramatic jump to 119 birds.

Along with serving as a migration monitoring station, we also continue to track differences in bird occurrence by habitat, as well as offering public educational demonstrations. We had the help of (and thank) our many volunteers, most notably Mike Quinlan, Lloyd Lewis, June Bourdat, Arlene Ripley, and Sandy Curry. Special thanks also to our intern Ashley Sutton.

Chino Farms **391-0755**
Chestertown, Queen Anne's Co., MD
J. M. Gruber

Year five for Chino Farms Banding Station was somewhat disappointing after last fall's high numbers of birds, especially American Goldfinches. Birds/100nh, days in operation, and new birds banded were all lower than last year. For the first time in five years, goldfinch (2002: 97, 2001: 1797) was not one of the top ten new birds. This was primarily because of the drought and the failure of the sunflower field near the banding station. The sunflowers grew to a height of 4 to 6 in and had only marigold-size flowers. This produced virtually no seed crop. There were highlights, though. We banded our first Red-shouldered Hawk for the station. We again had one Bicknell's Thrush on 30 Sept, two adult Gambel's White-crowned Sparrows on 22 Oct, and a record high number of cardinals (174).

As usual the station could not function without a lot of volunteer help. Thanks go to Trish, my wife, and to Helga Orrick, Jen Siani, Matt Hafner, Zach and Jared Parks, Sarah Potter, Doug Gill, and our ever-generous host Dr. Harry Sears.

Chincoteague National Wild. Ref. **375-0752**
Chincoteague, Accomack County, VA
Richard N. Roberts
bandbird@verizon.net

This was our strangest year yet. South winds prevailed most of September and part of October with almost no northerly wind events. We experienced several weeks of stationary highs with no birds moving, and many days with no birds to

band! Greatly increased effort yielded much lower birds/100nh and fewer species.

Kiptopeke Songbird Band. Sta. **371-0755**
Cape Charles, Northhampton County, VA
Jethro Runco, head bander
jethro_runco@hotmail.com

This year the Kiptopeke Banding Station celebrated its 40th year of banding! Starting in 1963, the banding station has been run every year since! One of the biggest reasons that the Kiptopeke banding station is still around is the dedicated volunteers. They have been an integral part of the history of this station. Without them, this station would have perished years ago. I tip my hat to all who helped this season!

The season could be summed up in four words: not like last year. Unlike the fall of 2001, in which no days were missed because of rain, this season a total of ten days were called off because of rain. Also, a few more days were cut short or started late because of rain. The wind this season on the southern end of the Delmarva Peninsula was also a problem. The station lost more net hours from wind than rain this season. These two weather patterns caused a large drop in total net hours.

This year was marked by some species being in very large numbers while others were just barely present. The incredible number of both species of kinglets in the area was obvious with both setting ten-year highs. A total of 172 Ruby-crowned Kinglets were banded, and an amazing 299 Golden-crowned Kinglets found the net! Black-throated Blue Warblers were also in very high numbers. Ending up five short of the ten-year high, 367 of these Neotropical migrants were banded. Some of the other highlights were a Lincoln's Sparrow, four Orchard Orioles (only numbers 6, 7, 8, and 9 in the 40-year history), two Hairy Woodpeckers (only numbers 11 and 12 historically) and a Seaside Sparrow (only the fifth one ever!). Other noteworthy species were a Bicknell's Thrush, 35 Blackpoll Warblers, and 50 Brown Creepers. Although not banded, a European Starling was captured; quite odd for Kiptopeke. Also a near capture of a Red-tailed Hawk, gave us all a little jumpstart to the heart, big hole in the *bottom* of the net!

Our biggest day came 15 Oct when 487 birds were banded. Also, on that same day, we had the high number of 29 species. It was a busy day but a load of fun!

Special thanks go out to Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (my employer) and the Kiptopeke State Park. Your help and generosity is more than appreciated. I am forever indebted to both of you.

Back Bay **363-0755**
Sandbridge, Virginia Beach County, VA
Rob and Ann Simpson
Lord Fairfax Com. Coll., Middletown, VA
snphptos@adelphia.net

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 during either of our 10-day sessions. Normally we get some strong fronts during our second session, which bring large numbers of Myrtle Warblers. This accounts for the much lower number of individual birds caught in 2002 compared to 2001 (2591 vs 3150) even though we had more net hours in 2002 (9748.5 vs 9354). No new species were caught for the station, and the excitement of catching rarities did not happen. We did have "fun" with a Willow and an Alder Flycatcher that were caught at the same time. They did look superficially different to everyone who saw them. Using field marks, keys, and math, we were able to run them through the identification process. They nicely fell into the two sibling species morphologically, and fortunately both obligingly gave call notes to confirm our identifications.

Although most species were down in numbers, the 14 Yellow-billed Cuckoos were an all-time high for this station. The four Red-bellied Woodpeckers, which are migrants at this coastal strand station, were also a high total for this species. Our Sharp-shinned Hawk numbers were down, but they still continue to be mostly males (29 male, 9 female) and all were HY birds. We rarely capture a Sharp-shinned Hawk during our late September session,

even though the nearby Kiptopeke banding station catches many during that time period. Possibly the large number of males we catch in early November could be related to differential sexual feeding strategies. The smaller males seem to have a particular affinity for the large number of Myrtle Warblers that arrive in late October and early November. The extremely high HY rate is still a mystery. One foreign Sharp-shinned Hawk recapture was banded at Cape May, NJ, 2 Nov 2002, and we caught it 8 Nov 2002. 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.

Forty-three students participated in the various classes. For logistical reasons, no more than 15 students are at the station at any time and all go through a rather rigorous mentor/mentee training session before coming to the field station. Thanks go to Thomas McHale, my lab assistant, for coordinating much of the data. We also thank John Gallegos, Wildlife Biologist at Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and the staff at Little Island Park, Virginia Beach, for help in many ways. A special note of thanks goes to Gary Sargent, a long-time associate who is responsible for our computer operations and data analysis. The instructors and students appreciate Gary's wizardry with the computer and help in the field.

Jekyll Island Banding Station **310-0812**
Jekyll Island, GA
Chris Pitman
janchrisbirders@juno.com

Every year, preparation prior to the banding dates involves numerous hours of recruiting and scheduling volunteers, checking and organizing equipment, and obtaining permits. This year took a new twist when the Georgia Department of Natural Resources required an additional site permit with net locations (with GPS coordinates) selected months in advance.

Once again the lack of cold fronts pushing down from the north affected the quantities of birds. On most days any air movement was from the southeast, which, when you are located on an east coast barrier island, does not yield migrating birds. Along with this type of weather pattern come higher

temperatures, which force us to close nets relatively early in the day to avoid heat stress to the birds.

Common Yellowthroat accounted for 38% of our numbers this year compared to 25% last year, whereas Western Palm Warbler accounted for 33% compared to 46% in 2001. The quantity of catbirds decreased dramatically from 2001 (lack of weather fronts) and inversely, cardinal numbers (residents) increased significantly.

Once again, a biologist with the S.E. Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study at the University of Georgia was on hand for part of the banding to collect blood samples from qualifying birds to test for West Nile Virus. Thus far, all tests have been negative. This banding station could not function without the participation of numerous volunteers. The time and effort of net pickers, recorders, runners, bag sewers, and banders is greatly appreciated. The efforts of Jan Pitman and Charles Ratliff as banders, advisors, and supporters are greatly appreciated.

Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Pk. 254-0800
Key Biscayne, Miami—Dade County, FL
Michelle Davis
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This was the first season of mist netting at BBCFSP during fall migration. We got off to a late start but were able to open on 5 Oct in time for the second half of migration. We had 10 to 12 nets in a restored hardwood hammock, part of a multi-million dollar project to return native vegetation to the park. The goal of this banding project is to determine whether the restored habitats are suitable for fall migrant landbirds and also to describe migration in South Florida.

The weather was very calm for the entire period. Migration everywhere in Florida was not as impressive as in 2001, probably because of lack of rain and tropical waves to make birds stop their passage and collect in the area. The most significant weather feature was a front that passed on 16 Oct, providing the first break in the summer's humidity and our best banding day of the whole season. The next front did not arrive until Halloween and it was quite weak, although it did deliver

a batch of Western Palm Warblers and the first Myrtle Warblers of the season. The November banding was lackluster in spite of increasing frontal activity.

Black-throated Blue Warblers were the most frequently captured species. A Kentucky Warbler stayed on site from 15 through 29 Oct, providing a fairly late record for this species. Several Blackpoll Warblers were captured around 20-22 Oct, and a Wood Thrush was probably the most unusual capture; 30 individuals were recaptured, and almost all of them were able to gain weight on site, both in muscle and fat. Hatching-year birds made up close to or less than 50% of our captures for several warbler species, most notably American Redstart and Black-throated Blue Warbler.

Special thanks go to Liz Golden, David La Puma, Julie Lockwood, Robin Diaz, and Frank Moore's lab for helping to make this banding station a reality.

Lakeshore Estates 3029-08417
Tallahassee, FL
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This year I did not expect to contribute to the Atlantic Flyway Review, since I had missed essentially the entire month of September and, as a consequence, most of the early migrants. Aside from the late start, mist netting at the usual sites in the vicinity of my home and in the strip of woods to the north was curtailed by rain or threats of a thunderstorm on 13 of the 48 days remaining until the cut-off date of 15 Nov. Moreover, a pesky crop of mosquitoes often discouraged me from putting up nets in the boggy area of the woods that was partially flooded most of the time. Yet, this year's banding experience turned out to be remarkable enough that I submit a report after all.

The most striking aspect for 2002 is a doubling of the netting success (birds/100nh) over that of the preceding three years. In fact, 2002 was the best year in this respect since I began submitting a report to the AFR in 1994. How it became to be this way is not explained easily. Comparisons of my banding records rule out the possibility that the high capture rate can be accounted for by a greater abundance of birds later in the season. Apparently, conditions

this year in general and/or at my banding location were favorable for local as well as certain migratory birds, especially for Northern Cardinals, which rebounded from all-time lows in the preceding dry years, and for transient thrushes, of which three made the list of the ten most commonly banded birds.

Most of the thrushes apparently used my banding location for a brief stopover because only very few of them were captured more than once. Indeed, a need for replenishing fat deposits generally was not apparent because the majority of birds was well endowed, especially the Wood Thrushes (one of them weighed 76.7g). Yet, fat scores were not reliable predictors of the likelihood to be recaptured.

On the other hand, the two thrushes that I determined to have remained in the area for more than a week (one Wood Thrush and one Gray-cheeked Thrush) started out with only moderate fat deposits, which they then augmented noticeably. During that period the body weight increased by more than 15%.

Among eight returning Myrtle Warblers recaptured this fall were a female banded as a hatching-year bird in Nov 1997, and a male banded as an after-hatching-year bird in Feb 1998. Noteworthy also is the twenty-ninth capture on 30 Dec 2002 of a White-eyed Vireo whose claim to fame is that it is one of the North Florida's few non-migratory individuals. It now hopes to survive its third winter here.

Western Station Reports

PRBO Conservation Science Combining Outreach and Monitoring: Public Interpretation at Mist-netting Stations

PRBO has been conducting research and monitoring on songbird populations at the Palomarin Field Station (Point Reyes National Seashore, Marin County, CA) since 1965. During that time we have published 60 scientific papers from our data, evaluated songbird response to habitat change and weather conditions, trained hundreds of interns in standardized methods for monitoring songbird populations, and shared our findings with approximately 10,000 visitors each year through our Visitor Center and Bird Banding Lab.

At PRBO's Palomarin Field Station we use bird demonstrations, through mist netting and bird banding, as a tool to teach the public about bird conservation. Each year approximately 4500 people of all ages participate in school or community group tours of the mist-nets at the Palomarin Field Station. In addition, hundreds of people observe mist netting at PRBO research sites throughout California. Combining outreach and research is a unique way to expose people to birds, conservation, and field biology; also allowing people to interact with biologists as they work. It is useful in generating funding and support for research. People have a unique opportunity to connect with birds when they see them in the hand.

This highly successful program created a demand for more science-based education programs at PRBO. As a result, our education staff is now involved in classroom and field-led programs combining field ornithology and science education for grades K-12. Using study skins, binoculars, field guides, bird nests, and data forms, we explore with Bay Area students the basics of observing and identifying birds, understanding bird behaviors, and experiencing what it means to be a "bird scientist." In addition, we are partnering with other Bay Area education groups to provide teacher training and educational materials to teachers and other environmental education programs.

Education and outreach is vital to our mission at PRBO. By working with children, interns, volunteers, and the public, we hope to inspire new generations to act as life-long responsible, effective stewards of their environment. Combining outreach with monitoring at mist-netting stations provides a unique opportunity to expose people to conservation. Remember, the child who sees the bright yellow breast of the Wilson's Warbler in your hand could grow up to become a conservationist like you! For more information about PRBO, visit the website at: www.prbo.org

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