

2005

## AFR Region IV - Fall 2004

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**Are elevated mist nets required to adequately sample the avian community at Braddock Bay?**  
- David Bonter and Elizabeth W. Brooks,  
Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, Rochester,  
NY 14612

We analyzed the height of capture for birds trapped in six elevated mist-net rigs located at a stopover site on the south shore of Lake Ontario in an effort to assess the utility of standard ground-level mist nets for sampling the avian community. Each net rig consisted of two 12-m mist nets (one above another) with the lower net sampling from approximately 0.5-2.5 m above the ground and the upper net from 2.5-5.0 m. Capture height was recorded for 14,083 birds banded during eight migration seasons (fall migration 1999-spring migration 2003). Capture rates were significantly

greater in the lower mist nets for 26 species with  $N \geq 30$  captures. Two species, Blue Jay and American Robin, were significantly more likely to be captured in the top nets of the rigs (paired t-test,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Birds on the move: Encounters of birds banded at Braddock Bay** - David Bonter and Elizabeth W. Brooks, Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, Rochester, NY 14612

Approximately 8000 birds are banded at Braddock Bay each year. Although the percentage of re-encountered birds is small, these records provide important information that helps to identify migration routes and link the breeding and wintering areas of bird populations.

## **ATLANTIC FLYWAY REVIEW: Region IV Piedmont—Coastal Plain, Fall 2004**

**Chandler S. Robbins**  
Region IV Coordinator  
USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center  
Laurel, MD 20708-4000

July, August, and September were cool and wet in the Southeast, with multiple hurricanes threatening the banding stations. Banding results ranged from poor in Laurel and Chincoteague to excellent at Chino Farms, Kiptopeke, Jekyll Island, and the Florida stations. There was little agreement on peak migration days, which ranged from 11 Oct to 6 Nov. Likewise, the date for maximum species ranged from 19 Sep to 9 Oct in Maryland and from 11 Sep to 15 Oct in states farther south.

Myrtle Warbler numbers are still below normal, and warblers in general seemed scarcer except at Bill Baggs Cape Florida where warbler numbers approached those at Appalachian stations. Jekyll Island had an extraordinary total of 69 Tennessee Warblers in October, possibly pushed off course by the remnants of Hurricane Matthew in the lower Mississippi valley.

Vireos are seldom mentioned in Region IV reports, but this year Blue-headed Vireo was a first for Eden

Mill and was a highlight at Jug Bay. Chino Farms banded a record eight Warbling Vireos, Kiptopeke banded a Yellow-throated Vireo and the first Warbling Vireo in at least 11 years. Jekyll Island banders had two Philadelphia Vireos.

Finally, Michelle Davis's report from Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park concludes with the mention of *three* West Indian vagrants.



**Tennessee Warbler**  
by George West

**Table 1. AFR Region IV, Fall 2004 Summary.**

	Eden Mill	Laurel	Jug Bay	Chino Farms	Chincoteague	Kiptopeke	Jekyll Island	Key Biscayne	Tallahassee
First Day	3 Sep	15 Aug	16 Aug	1 Aug	5 Aug	15 Aug	28 Sep	15 Aug	21 Aug
Last Day	7 Nov	30 Nov	19 Nov	18 Nov	19 Nov	22 Nov	21 Oct	3 Nov	15 Nov
Days Open	10	95	42	77	53	99	24	67	69
Nets Used	7.5 to 10.5	5 to 16	26	9 to 70	4 to 10	21	4 to 15	11 to 15	4 to 9
Net Hours	397	5482	3623	20,171	1415	12,564	1167	3976	3085
No. Best Day	83	25	123	300	51	478	292	92	18
B D Date	29 Oct	18 Oct	6 Nov	27 Oct	11 Oct	14 Oct	16 Oct	14 Oct	23 Oct
Most Species	20	13	26	37	17	36	25	22	8
" " Date	9 Oct	19 Sep	4 Oct	20 Sep	11 Oct	11 Sep	12 Oct	15 Oct	12 Oct
Banded 2003	220	346	1484	7535	669	6783	1710	847	97
Banded 2004	329	377	2596	8049	587	7003	2492	1445	381
Species 2003	30	51	87	110	57	96	39	44	28
Species 2004	47	45	83	114	55	108	53	50.5	39
B/100nh 2003	79.4	6.1	72	39.9	63	59.7	180	32	6
B/100nh 2004	82.8	6.9	72	39.9	41.5	55.7	213	41	12
% HY 2003	60%	68%	59%	85%		91%	97.6%	60.7%	61%
% HY 2004	74%	72%	72%	83%		93%	91.2%	58.9%	61%

**Table 2. AFR IV. Ten Most Commonly Banded Species, Fall 2004**

Eden Mill	Laurel	Jug Bay	Chino Farms	Chincoteague	Kiptopeke	Jekyll Island	Key Biscayne	Tallahassee
% HY	%HY	% HY	% HY	% HY	% HY	% HY	% HY	% HY
99 WTSP (1) 47	59 NOCA (2) 73	369 INBU (5) 89	963 WTSP (1) 69	298 MYWA (1) 100	2765 MYWA (1) 92	851 WPWA (1) 94	277 BTBW (2) 51	63 NOCA(1) 62
53 GRCA (3) 83	37 GRCA (1) 86	363 AMGO 71	795 SOSP (2) 86	28 GCKI 100	438 AMRE (2) 95	505 COYE (2) 98	223 OVEN (1) 64	49 WEVI (4) 51
45 NOCA (4) 60	33 WOTH(8) 88	199 SOSP(2) 82	643 INBU (8) 96	26 GRCA (2) 92	413 SOSP 96	232 GRCA (5) 89	156 AMRE (3) 42	33 WOTH 79
26 SOSP (6) 65	26 OVEN (6) 46	197 COYE(4) 63	541 AMGO 80	20 WTSP (4) 75	348 GRCA (3) 96	87 PABU (3) 94	125 BAWW(4) 50	29 SWTH(9) 48
23 INBU (2) 82	25 AMRO(3) 76	178 WTSP(1) 52	474 COYE (9) 72	19 RCKI 100	230 AMGO 96	80 PRAW 88	99 GRCA 88	18 RCKI 67
12 CACH 67	22 WTSP (1) 59	164 SWSP(3) 74	470 GRCA (7) 86	17 COYE (3) 88	222 COYE 94	74 INBU 96	97 WEWA(6) 53	16 HOWA 19
12 SWSP(10) 67	19 ETTI(21) 42	122 CHSP(9) 91	437 RCKI(3) 89	17 NOCA(10) 70	205 BTBW (4) 96	72 AMRE (6) 81	52 REVI 94	14 CARW(2) 57
11 WEVI 45	18 RCKI (19) --	82 NOCA(8) 56	343 FISP (10) 94	14 SWSP (7) 100	176 WTSP(10) 77	72 BTBW (9) 65	49 NOWA (5) 49	12 GRCA(3) 67
10 FOSP 60	14 HETH (9) 80	80 BLGR 93	291 SCJU (4) 72	13 CARW 50	175 REVI 97	69 TEWA 73	39 COYE(10) 82	12 HOFI (8) 83
6 REVI 67	13 BTBW 92	76 MYWA 49	249 SWSP(10) 80	11 BTBW 63	139 INBU 91	39 REVI(7) 100	37 NOPA (8) 43	12 MAWA 42

( ) Indicates placement on list in 2003.

**Eden Mill**

Pylesville, MD

**Mark S. Johnson**

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**394-0762**

Our sixth autumn banding season was roughly consistent with results of the previous year. Numbers of Indigo Buntings were similar, yet other species such as Swamp and Fox sparrows increased. Other changes, though anecdotal, are noted as follows.

Myrtle Warblers were few including those recorded yet not banded (i.e., observed). This observation is consistent with other local data collected during this period and throughout the winter (e.g., Fall Count, Christmas Count, Mid-Winter Count). Numbers of Field and Lincoln's sparrows were also fewer than expected. Greater numbers of Northern Cardinals and White-eyed Vireos were encountered. Our first few Blue-headed Vireos were banded as well as two Yellow-billed Cuckoos. Our first evening attempt at baiting for Northern Saw-whet Owls was successful, banding a HY female on 5 Nov.

Best days included 9 and 29 Oct, where the former produced the greatest species diversity (20) and the latter the greatest number of individuals. In both cases, White-throated Sparrows were the most common.

Many thanks go out to our volunteers who make each day especially enjoyable: Suzanne Procell, Jerry Strickroth, Les Eastman, and the staff at Eden Mill Nature Center.

**Robbins Nest**

Laurel, Prince George's Co., MD

**Chandler S. Robbins**

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**390-0765**

The continuing decline in migratory species is depressing. For a 'migration station' to report Northern Cardinal as the species most commonly banded during the autumn months came as a real shock, especially when the cardinal was so far ahead of second-place catbird. I caught twice as many cardinals as all sparrows combined (including juncos), and the total for cardinals came within ten birds of the total for all warblers combined. Warblers comprised only 16.8% of this fall's catch, compared with an average of 21.7% for the previous five years. Hurricanes Bonnie and Frances passed to the east of us and Charles and Ivan to the west, but none was followed by a landfall of migrants.

Apr - Jun 2005

Last year I reported the sharp drop in Tufted Titmice and Carolina Chickadees locally and the small number of returns from prior years. This year, after no overwintering titmice, numbers have returned to nearly normal, but chickadee numbers are still only half normal. I recaptured cardinals from each year back to 1999, but the only other birds more than two years old were a Carolina Wren and two titmice banded in the autumn of 2000.

**Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary**

Bristol, Anne Arundel Co., MD

**Danny Bystrak**

dbystrak@netzero.com

**384-0764**

Jug Bay Bird Observatory's eighth autumn of netting was not as wet as last year. As in the past, we operated 26 nets for 3½ hours starting at dawn from 16 Aug to 19 Nov on a Monday-Wednesday-Friday schedule. Our catch of 83 species tied our lowest, but 2596 individuals was our third highest catch. Highlights of the year were: Blue-headed Vireo, Blackburnian Warbler, Canada Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Purple Finch, and Grasshopper Sparrow. After last year's shocking declines, Myrtle Warbler and American Goldfinch made it back into the top 10 with 76 and 363 individuals, respectively. 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, Sandy Teliak, Lloyd Lewis, June Bourdat, Arlene Ripley, and Sandy Curry. Special thanks also to the Friends of Jug Bay for funding help, and to Jordan, Erin, Pam, and Keith Rutter for their excellent net repairs.

**Chino Farms**

Chestertown, Queen Anne's Co., MD

**J. M. Gruber**

201 Maple Ave., Chestertown, MD 21620

**391-0755**

Chino Farms completed its seventh fall season of banding in 2004. Habitat in the area remained the same as last year with the exception that the warm season grass fields were mature this year. Local populations of grassland and edge species seemed to be in higher numbers this year with the exception of Chipping Sparrow. The weather in August and September was more typical until the series of tropical systems hit the area. We had very few northerly winds during that time and the weather

was dominated by easterly and southerly winds, which seemed to slow migration to a crawl. Things were better during the last part of October and the first week of November, but then migration seemed to almost stop altogether after that. One new species for the station was banded on 26 Aug, a Barred Owl. Other highlights were 20 Least Sandpipers from 23 Aug through 20 Sep, our third and fourth American Tree Sparrow for the station on 27 Oct and 15 Nov, a very early adult Clay-colored Sparrow on 2 Aug, a record high for the station of eight Warbling Vireos, and a Bicknell's Thrush on 21 Sep.

In addition to the banders already listed, the following people volunteered many hours helping at the station: Harry Sears, Henry Davis, Bill Snyder, Zach and Jared Parks, Fred Cleaver, Brittany Bortner, Helen Czech, Doug Gill, Jeannine Tardiff, Matt Haffner, Hillary Staver, Meg Parry, Nancy Lee, and Mike Burchett.

**Chincoteague Natl. Wildl. Ref. 375-0752**  
Chincoteague Island, Accomac Co., VA  
**Richard N. Roberts**  
bandbird@verizon.net

The 2004 fall banding resulted in the lowest number of birds per hundred net-hours in at least four years. Compared with the four-year average, 2004 was 20% lower, reflecting the spotty nature of the migration. There were many days in August and September when no migrants were captured. North winds sometimes brought a group of birds, but not always. Rain did not seem to be a factor.

The following species have shown a sharp decline for the past three falls: Common Yellowthroat, Black-and-white Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and Western Palm Warbler, while non-warbler species such as Swamp Sparrow, Red-eyed Vireo, and House Wren have stayed relatively unchanged. Banding during the nesting season reinforced this conclusion.

Nets were operated in the scrub line just behind the ocean beach dune this year for the first time, and these were seen to capture migrants on days when the standard woodland edge nets were not producing a significant number of birds. This was interpreted as indicating that the surviving migrants that had been blown out over the ocean were making first landfall in this habitat. This net set gave the highest numbers and species for a day this fall.

**Kiptopeke 371-0755**  
**Songbird Banding Station**  
Cape Charles, Northhampton Co., VA  
**Jethro Runco, head bander**  
jethro\_runco@hotmail.com

The Kiptopeke banding station was in operation again for the 42<sup>nd</sup> year, starting back in 1963. The 2004 season was possibly the longest season in Kiptopeke's history. Between opening day of 15 Aug and the closing day of 22 Nov, the station was in operation for 99 days missing only one day, 13 Nov, because of weather. Also possibly setting an historic high was the number of species. A total of 108 species were banded, 10 higher than the 98 species of 1998 and 19 higher than the average of 89 from 1994 to 2003.

The habitat around the banding station saw changes both prior to and during the banding season. Many pine trees were removed from the area and the agricultural field next to the station was allowed to go fallow. This fallow field produced huge jumps in Indigo Bunting, American Goldfinch, and Song Sparrow numbers this season, with all three in the top ten in total captures. The removed pines left big holes in the forest coverage, but plans to reforest with native hardwoods and shrubs are currently in progress with hopes of a more diversified forest creating more of a food supply for migrating birds.

The high number of species captured this season was attributed to the captures of very uncommon species for the Kiptopeke station. A Virginia Rail was banded for only the second time since 1994. Two Chuck-will's-widows and a Warbling Vireo were all banded for the first time in at least the last 11 years. Other unusual birds banded include Yellow-throated Vireo, Northern Flicker intergrade, Golden-winged Warbler, Seaside Sparrow, Purple Finch, and Pine Siskin. The rarest bird banded this season was a Dickcissel, only the second time one has been banded since 1963. The most unusual bird banded was a leucistic Prairie Warbler. A very beautiful and striking bird!

The Kiptopeke station is highly indebted to its many volunteers. Their help is essential to run this station. Also, thanks go out to the Kiptopeke State Park and Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory.

**Jekyll Island Banding Station**      **310-0812**  
Jekyll Island, Glynn Co., GA  
**Chris and Jan Pitman**  
ovenbird@earthlink.net

This year's banding session started, actually did not start, with the threat of Hurricane Jeanne bearing down on Jekyll Island. On our scheduled setup day of 25 Sep we met with a representative of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to review the banding site. At that time we were informed that the expected ocean storm surge would cover our banding site with at least six feet of water. We felt it prudent to delay setup until the storm passed. We were able to set up nets in very high winds on 27 Sep and begin banding on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Without surprise, Western Palm Warbler and Common Yellowthroat were our highest count species, but unexpected was an influx of Gray Catbirds that yielded four to five times our normal count. With the unusual weather patterns came some unusual species for JIBS. Blue Grosbeak (2), Black-throated Green Warbler (2), Orange-crowned Warbler (2), Philadelphia Vireo (2), Prothonotary Warbler (2), White-crowned Sparrow (3), and Wilson's Warbler (5) were welcomed rarities for us. Other rarities were first-time captures of Chuck-will's-widow (1) and House Finch (1). This was the first year House Finches were seen in this area. A Tennessee Warbler count of 69 is very high for JIBS; a large flock arrived at the banding area on 16 Oct, allowing a volunteer to count 21 in one small tree.

Our scheduled closing date was to be 17 Oct, but bander Charles Ratliff was able to stay on the island to extend our session to 21 Oct. Charles has become a driving force in the operation of the station. Thank you, Charles! Many thanks to the numerous volunteers, especially to Jan Pitman for your efforts "behind the scenes."

**Bill Baggs Cape Florida St. Park**      **254-0800**  
Key Biscayne, Miami--Dade Co., FL  
**Michelle Davis**  
vireoojorojo@hotmail.com

This was the third year of mist netting at BBCFSP during fall migration, and the second complete season. Eleven to 15 nets were placed in a restored hardwood hammock that is 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.

We started banding this year on 15 Aug, two days after Hurricane Charley's passage across the state from SW to NE, an unusual trajectory for August. Migration was light but steady until 25-29 Aug, when the first noticeable wave of migrants arrived, probably in response to fronts passing a few days earlier to the north. The site was completely dismantled for three days while slow-moving Hurricane Frances passed just north, and we set back up again within 36 hours of landfall and were rewarded with an excellent fallout of birds. We captured 103 b/100nh (almost all warblers), surpassing our previous high of 77 b/100nh. This would most likely have been our biggest day banding for the whole season except it took all morning to set up the nets. Twenty-four hours of N wind followed by 24 hours of W wind at 30-50 mph makes Cape Florida banders happy! Frances caused some mild tree damage, but also knocked fruiting Virginia creeper vines out of the canopy and down to net level, which was a boon to mist netting when the thrushes and catbirds came through later in the season. Hurricane Ivan's passage to the south of Florida in mid September gave us days of strong E winds, yet, surprisingly, migration continued at a moderate pace. The final hurricane of the season, Jeanne, was a faster-moving repeat of Frances, with weaker winds at our location. Taking a cue from Frances, we set our nets back up even sooner after landfall but were rewarded with an afternoon outside in lightning, tropical downpours, and 35 mph gusts with exactly one Ovenbird recaptured the following day. A welcome strong cold front passed on 15 Oct and gave South Florida one of the best movements of birds in a couple of years, and then high pressure built in and migration shut down for the season. A few winter species trickled in, but it was time to close for the season by the first week in November. Migration in South Florida seemed to end rather abruptly in late October or early November; I think as a result of Caribbean or Central American birds passing through completely and no great numbers of wintering species such as Yellow-rumped Warblers, goldfinches, and sparrows to replace them.

We banded significantly higher numbers of several species this season: 99 Gray Catbirds compared to 14 last year, 277 Black-throated Blue Warblers

(119 in 2003), 23 Gray-cheeked Thrushes (with 5 Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's mixed in) compared to 9 last year, 125 Black-and-white Warblers (66 in 2003), 156 American Redstarts (98 in 2003), 223 Ovenbirds (179 in 2003) and 25 Northern Cardinals (7 in 2003). Two species that came to represent the 2004 season for us are Worm-eating Warbler with 97 banded compared to 2003's 37, and Swainson's Warbler, with 22 banded compared to four in 2003! On the flip side, Veery and most flycatchers were noticeably absent this season. One Veery was captured (8 in 2003) and the total sum of *Empidonax* flycatchers banded was one Acadian, compared to four Acadian and five Traill's flycatchers banded in 2003. We captured two foreign recoveries: a Worm-eating Warbler banded on 15 Sep near Orlando was recaptured by us on 5 Oct; and a female Black-throated Blue Warbler banded on 30 Sep in northwestern Pennsylvania was recaptured here on 21 Oct. Eight birds returned from previous years: six Ovenbirds, one Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and one Northern Cardinal. Two of the Ovenbirds have returned for at least the third season in a row to overwinter onsite. The rarest capture was a Mourning Warbler banded on 5 Oct, and a second one was seen earlier on 8 Sep. Some good sightings of Bahamian vagrants kept everybody alert while checking nets: LaSagra's Flycatcher, Western Spindalis, and the cherry, Zenaida Dove on 14 Oct.

Special thanks go to Liz Golden and Robin Diaz for their assistance during the field season, and to Robert Yero, the Park manager, for allowing us special access when the Park was still closed due to the storms.

**Lakeshore Estates**  
Tallahassee, FL  
**Peter H. Homann**  
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**302-0841**

In 2004 I was able again to cover with my banding activities the same period as in the nineties, *i.e.* from mid-August to mid-November, rather than having to restrict myself to October and the first half of November as happened lately (note that the starting date of 6 Aug printed in the AFR report for 2003 in *NABB* 29 on p.125 is wrong and should be 6 Oct). Unlike in the early years, this year my banding activities were not limited to weekends and holidays. These changes in banding efforts not only make the comparative data in this year's summary tables meaningless, but also comparisons with data in my reports of the nineties. Therefore, I undertook

two additional analyses of this season's numbers, one in which I considered only the captures on weekends and holidays, and another in which I tallied only the numbers for the period from early October through 15 Nov. It turned out that the calculated netting success in terms of  $b/100nh$  was 11.2 for the weekend/holiday schedule and 12.6 for the October/November period. These numbers are very similar to the 12.4  $b/100nh$  calculated for the entire effort in 2004, and they represent what I consider an average banding season for any of my banding regimes.

Certainly, migratory activity in 2004 was considerably better than in 2003 when only six birds were netted per 100 net-hours. From my records, I cannot discern whether this was helped by the three hurricanes, all of which came close but fortunately not too close. For the boggy area, excess rainwater turned out to be too much of a good thing because until early October only two adjacent netting lanes at its edge were accessible. Even so, three Northern Waterthrushes were captured there.

When I discovered the low percentage of HY Hooded Warblers on my summarizing printout, I became concerned that I may have erred with some age assignments. Considering that females can be aged much more reliably than males after skull pneumatization, I scrutinized my records and concluded that, indeed, only one of the eight captured females was a HY bird. This does not prove a correct age assignments for all males but appears to confirm that AHY individuals greatly outnumbered HY birds this year.

With regard to the relative abundances of species it is noteworthy that for the second year in a row Myrtle Warblers did not make the list of the 10 most commonly banded species. On the other hand, the Ruby-crowned Kinglet is listed this year in the fifth spot; whereas, inexplicably, in 2003 I had banded only one individual by 15 Nov.

From among a few recaptures of returning migrants that of an Ovenbird on 13 Oct 2004 is worth mentioning because it had been banded almost exactly one year earlier on 17 Oct 2003 as a HY bird and remained the only Ovenbird banded in the 2003 season.

I thank U.S. Cellular for permission to conduct banding activities in the woods surrounding their telecommunication tower.