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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV (Piedmont-Coastal Plain) Fall 2005 Chino Farms

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Eden Mill

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We began this year with the construction of a banding pavilion, in memory of long-time friend and birdwatcher, Joe Vangrin. It was truly a group effort, including members of the Harford Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, the Eden Mill Nature Center and banding volunteers. It provided us with a fold-down table as well as a place to get out of the weather. We are indeed grateful to all who participated.

Numbers were down this autumn for all species in proportions consistent with the relative abundance of species for previous years. Birds banded per 100 net hours were roughly consistent with previous years, yet reduced compared with last year, which was likely an anomaly. Species relative abundances were identical for the top five species as last year, however.

Fall warbler numbers were generally down, but our first Brown Creepers were captured this fall. Numbers of Northern Cardinals, Gray Catbirds, and Fox Sparrows were consistent with previous years. Recaptures included a Northern Cardinal at least eight years old.

Our best days were 15 and 28 Oct, where the latter included our first nine-hour day. Given the consistent productivity of the nets during this trial, it is likely we will continue to schedule full-day activities this time next year. Given the relatively fast decline in birds between weather fronts in the mid-Atlantic in mid-September, we missed our usual productive day for Neotropical migrants.

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

Chino Farms

Chestertown, Queen Anne's Co., MD

J. M. Gruber**391-0755**

Chino Farms completed its eighth fall season of banding in 2005. Habitat in the area remained good until the last days of September when we

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began a 15-day period of east and southeast winds. At that time, when we would expect to band on average 100+ birds per day, we averaged only 60-70. This accounts for the slight decline in captures and 600 fewer birds than last year. After mid-October, migration was back on track and we banded what we would expect.

We banded two new species and one new hybrid for the station this fall: a Golden-winged Warbler on 12 Sep, single Philadelphia Vireos on 14 and 26 Sep, and a Brewster's Warbler on 22 Aug. Other highlights were a Red-tailed Hawk on 24 Aug, a record-high total for the station of 101 Eastern Wood-Pewees, a Clay-colored Sparrow on 22 Sep, an Oregon race of the Dark-eyed Junco on 8 Nov, a Summer Tanager on 28 Aug, and a Bicknell's Thrush on 19 Sep. Surprising misses this fall were Pine and Prairie warblers. We also missed Bay-breasted Warbler, but it has been some years since we have banded one here.

In addition to the banders already listed, the following persons volunteered many hours helping at the station: Harry Sears, Henry Davis, Helga Orrick, Maren Gimple, Dan Small, Doug Gill, Jeannine Tardiff, Hillary Staver, Nancy Lee, and Pam Rickman.

Chincoteague Natl. Wildlife Ref.**375-0752**

Assateague Island, Accomac Co., VA

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The 2005 fall banding was very clearly defined by weather events. August and September had almost continuous southerly winds and very little migration. Then there was a complete switch the second week of October when the northerly winds and rain started after the three-month drought. August had 14 b/100nh, September had 15.6, while October and November had 80.7 and 97.9, respectively. Over half of the birds banded in August and September were AHY birds that were probably local, further indicating the lack of migration during that period.

There were significantly more HY Gray Catbirds this year than the previous years and the numbers of Common Yellowthroats were higher than the last five years. The Myrtle Warbler peak came about

10 days later than average, a fact that was noted with many species and was most likely related to the weather events as noted above.

For the second year the nets located on the refuge in the scrub line behind the ocean dunes provided the highest species count in any one day. This reinforces the concept mentioned last year that many fall migrants are blown out over the ocean and those that return to land seek cover in the first vegetation available.

This is the second year that a Black-billed Cuckoo has been banded on the refuge as well as the second year they were heard calling in June and July. This is the first indication that this species is nesting in the area.

Kiptopeke Songbird Banding Sta. 371-0755
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The Kiptopeke banding station was in operation for its 43rd year, starting back in 1963. The 2005 season was again started on 15 Aug and ran through 27 Nov. This year a total of 102 species were banded. This is only the second time since 1994 that the station had banded over 100 species. The last time was the 2004 season when 108 species were banded. The 9,567 individuals banded this season make it the highest total since 1982 (23 years).

Again this year, the habitat around the banding station saw changes both prior to and during the banding season. Many pine trees were removed and the year-and-a-half-old fallow field remained productive. 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 individuals captured this season was attributed to the dedicated staff of volunteers and the huge movement of birds that passed through the area in the middle of October. Being well staffed helped us band 739 birds on 21 Oct and another 702 the very next day! During the nine-day span, 15-23 Oct, we banded 4,426 birds.

The 739 birds banded in one day was the highest one-day total since 1982, and the back-to-back two-day total of 1,441 was the fourth highest ever for the Kiptopeke station.

The season saw its share of interesting and rare birds. The biggest highlight and the most rare came on 18 Nov when we caught the state's first MacGillivray's Warbler. A few days earlier, on 11 Nov, we had caught an Oregon race Dark-eyed Junco. Another new species for the cumulative list was a Green Heron banded on 10 Oct. Other rare-to-us birds include our third Rusty Blackbird, fourth Cerulean Warbler, and the fourth Tree Swallow since 1978. We also banded a Gambel's race White-crowned Sparrow on 30 Sep, a very rare capture for the station.

We had four species this season that totally crushed their previous ten-year high. We banded 8 Cooper's Hawks (old high was 2), 17 Wood Thrushes (old high was 6), and 229 Swamp Sparrows (old high was 93). The fourth was Gray Catbird: The old ten-year high was 599 set in 2001; this season however, we banded a total of 1,289. That is 690 more birds than the previous ten-year high, and the most the station has ever caught in a season dating back to 1963.

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

Jekyll Island Banding Station 310-0812
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The 2005 fall banding session at JIBS stood out by our failure to capture migrating bird species during the period of time we were in operation. There were a few cold weather fronts during the 21 days, but these fronts were generally weak.

Another reason our numbers were significantly lower than normal could be that we had to discontinue use of long-utilized net locations. The primary vegetation in this area is wax myrtle. The wax myrtle has been in a state of severe decline for the past two years and collapsed completely this