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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV (Piedmont-Coastal Plain) Fall 2005 Kiptopeke Songbird Banding Station

Jethro Runco

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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
Cape Charles, Northampton Co., VA
Jethro Runco, head bander
jethro_runco@hotmail.com

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
Jekyll Island, GA
Chris Pitman, Jan Pitman, and Charles Ratliff
ovenbird@earthlink.net

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