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## Western Station Reports: An Outstanding Wintering Ground Banding Station in Mexico

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## An Outstanding Wintering Ground Banding Station in Mexico

The shape of North America is that of a funnel which is widest at its northern most extreme corresponding to Canada, and narrowing as we move through the United States towards Mexico, where the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the State of Oaxaca, which is the narrowest strip of land before entering Central America, being an important area where the various bird migration corridors converge.

México is where the temperate and the Neotropical geographic zones merge and this, combined with its topographic variability, partially explains its richness in biodiversity where the southern state of Oaxaca ranks first with 756 species of birds.

Since December 2001, our banding station is situated in a 2.2-ha Botanical Garden in downtown Oaxaca city, the capital of this state. It started out as the first established Monitoreo de Sobreviviencia Invernal station (measuring the over-wintering survival of birds in the Neotropic and Tropical regions) in Mexico in conjunction with the Institute for Bird Populations. Due to a very high incidence of capture and recapture during the first months of work, the banding protocol was modified to a single six hour banding morning session usually the last Sunday of every month year round as of September 2002 and continues thus uninterrupted to this day.

In this station we use six standard mist nets with a constant location, which are set up the day before the session and dismantled at the end of the banding activities. So far there have been 4,983 birds captured, which correspond to 73 species and 704 recaptures, after a total of 43 banding sessions which add up to 1548 hours of mist nets. This Sunday, 25 Jun, we expect to break the 5000 captured birds mark. [Eds. Note: The 5000<sup>th</sup> bird was a White-throated Towhee, an Oaxacan endemic species.] During the banding sessions, volunteers are always welcome; and due to individual interest and persistence of some of them, they have come to be fairly well trained in this activity.

The day of least captures was in September 2005 when 54 birds were captured, and the highest number of birds captured was 210 in December 2002.

This is an individual effort supported by the authors with some assistance by the State Institute of Ecology in obtaining the first set of bands, as well as from the National Band and Tag Company for this year's bands.

Some of the outstanding results from this effort include important information on wintering site fidelity for 12 North American migrant species.

To illustrate the migratory convergence of corridors mentioned above, one of the most commonly caught winter migratory species is Audubon's Warbler, a western race, and last fall we caught a Nashville Warbler, banded in Tadoussac, Québec.

Our banding station is also a place for teaching and environmental-awareness building. In the course of the numerous banding sessions, local community members, students, passionate ornithologists, professionals, tourists and children have visited us. On an average, the site has had the assistance of five volunteers per session. After numerous years of constant effort, one of our young local banders is now able to manage the station. And this is just the beginning.

See pictures from the Oaxaca banding station in WBBA's website gallery.

Read more about the Oaxaca banding station at <http://www.tierradeaves.com/>

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