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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region III (Western Ridge) Fall 2005 Powdermill Nature Reserve

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mid-September. Tracy Graziano also spent several days video-taping the station, some of which may be used at the new Presque Isle Visitors Center.

Seventeen birds returned or repeated here this fall. Of special interest was a banded Blue Jay we first thought was dead in the bottom panel of a net. It was stiff and lifeless, but as I pulled off the last string of netting the bird opened one eye—it had been playing possum. It was a bird I had banded on 11 May 2002. I have banded 1,350+ Blue Jays over the years, but this was the first time one buffaloed me!

We had three interesting retraps of birds banded elsewhere. A Tree Swallow banded on 9 Jun 2000 at Darby, PA, was caught and released here on 12 May 2004. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet banded on 25 Oct 2004 40 mi north of Long Point, Ontario, was caught and released here on 3 Nov 2004. And a Common Yellowthroat banded 19 Jul 2003 at McArthur, OH, was retrapped and released here on 16 May 2004.

Many thanks to Barb Mitchell, Jean Joyce, George and Donna Eckert, Susan Smith, Evelyn Anderson, Ken Anderson, Ruth Swaney, Linda McWilliams, Tracy Graziano, Stacy Small, Kim Van Fleet, Dennis Cole, and the park staff.

Powdermill Nature Reserve 400-0791

Rector, Westmoreland County, PA

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Powdermill Nature Reserve's Bird Banding Program, located on the 2,200-ac biological field station of Carnegie Museum of Natural History in the Laurel Highlands region of southwestern Pennsylvania, completed its 44th consecutive fall migration-banding season in 2005. We banded 9,914 birds this season, the third highest fall total in the history of the program. We also amassed 20,435 net hours, the fifth highest effort put forth in the 44-year history of the program, reflecting favorable banding conditions throughout the

majority of the season. The overall capture rate for this fall (48.5 b/100nh) is well above the long-term average of 42 b/100nh and is the highest we have recorded since the record-setting fall migration season in 2001, when 10,655 birds were banded.

We banded 100 or more birds on 34 days this season. Overall, 11% of the cumulative total was banded in August, 29% was banded in September, 43% in October, and 17% in November. This is actually the highest percent composition of birds banded in November in, at least, the last five years, attesting to a strong, late migration of northern sparrow and finch species. Unfortunately, predators around the banding area and windy weather throughout much of the month of November limited our effort. Otherwise, November totals likely would have boosted the overall fall season total for 2005 into contention for the highest fall season total ever. Additionally, an unexpected storm that dropped five inches of heavy wet snow on the area the morning of 25 Oct precluded banding for that entire day and limited our effort the rest of the week because downed branches and trees made our net lanes impassable. With a limited number of nets and no power on 27 Oct, we still managed to band 446 birds, which was the eighth highest daily total in the history of our program. So, given a full effort, it is easy to imagine that we might have set even higher record breaking totals that week.

We banded 111 species of birds this season, making it the fifth highest species count for any fall season. The most specious days (43 each) at Powdermill were on 24 Sep and 9 Oct. While higher species counts usually do not coincide with a high daily banding total, 9 Oct was also the second highest daily total for the season with 349 birds banded.

Thirty-four species were one or more S.D. above average in terms of the raw banding totals and only two were below. Eastern Towhee (92 vs 85 in 1995), Gray Catbird (398 vs 390 in 1995), Rose-breasted Grosbeak (160 vs 156 in 2004), Ruby-throated Hummingbird (319 vs 309 in 1962), and Winter Wren (71 vs 66 in 2002) were the five species that set record highs this fall, with Black-throated Blue Warbler being only one shy of tying the record of 101 set just last year. American Goldfinch (1302), Black-capped Chickadee (374),

Dark-eyed Junco (675), and White-throated Sparrow (810) were among the species that, despite not setting a new record high, still staged an impressive flight and were banded in large numbers.

Notable highlights from the season were the fourth ever bilateral gynandromorph (half male, half female side-to-side) to be banded at Powdermill—a hatching-year Rose-breasted Grosbeak banded on 7 Sep and only the seventh-ever Cooper's Hawk, banded on 1 Oct. Other "good gets" (species for which the long term average is < 1) this season included: Chimney Swift (only the seventh ever to be banded in a fall season), Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pine Warbler (only the 10th ever banded at Powdermill during the fall), and "Brewster's" Warbler. There were no record low numbers of any species, but there were conspicuously few Cedar Waxwings both banded and observed around the station throughout the fall season and even into December.

Additionally, there were a handful of "misses" (species for which the long term average is > 1): Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Marsh Wren (missed for the second year in a row), Cerulean Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat (no more than two have been banded in any fall in the last 14 years), and Evening Grosbeak (none has been banded in the last four fall seasons).

Following such a fantastic season, there are, of course, many visiting bander friends and colleagues, interns, and volunteers to thank. For regular help with banding we thank: Emma DeLeon (Bioacoustics intern from the Univ. of Pittsburgh), Pam Ferkett, Dan Hinnebusch, Matt Shumar, Kristin Sesser, Molly McDermott, Jessica Maggio. We also enjoyed visits and help from fellow banders: Fred and Carol McCullough, Rosemary Spreha, Guy Ubaghs, Tom Greg, Mark Hopey, Lynn Brandon, and Joe Schreiber. We are also grateful to our bander development workshop participants for their help and participation: Sandy Polcyn, Jennifer Maxwell, Jennifer Hanley, Margaret Fritze, Keri Parker, Tyler Beck, and Jessica Scopel.

We once again enjoyed an extended visit by Dr. David Norman, our British friend, ringing colleague, and research associate from the

Merseyside Ringing Group. We were also fortunate to have Cokie and Annie Lindsay, Trish Miller, and Bruce Horner, additional Powdermill staffers, who took time out of their normal daily activities to help whenever needed during busy banding days. We also thank Dr. David Smith, the Director of Powdermill Nature Reserve, for his unfailing support of the banding program and ongoing research at the Powdermill Avian Research Center. Last, but not least, we acknowledge the work of our data entry operator at Carnegie Museum's Section of Birds, Marilyn Niedermeier, who enters, checks, and double checks all of our banding records, and who is responsible for generating banding schedules and filling data requests.

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Our bird banding effort got off to a slow start on 2 Sep and ended prematurely on 15 Oct due to an early and very heavy, deep snow. Normally, early snows melt off within a day, but this one would be around for weeks. Therefore, I slogged more than two miles round trip through 9" to 12" of snow to check on the nets and retrieve them if possible. Trees had fallen and branches had snapped off, mashing many of the nets to the ground and ensnaring them in the twigs and leaves still on the limbs. It was quite a job getting the nets untangled, bagged, and carried back to the truck.

We were in operation 28 days, banding 615 birds. Sixteen nets were opened with a total of 1945 net hours. This was 31.6 b/100nh, below the average of 39 b/100nh for this station. We banded 52 species of birds, with Gray Catbirds, Common Yellowthroats, and Song Sparrows making the top three. These are not unexpected species, considering the surrounding habitat of a wildlife management orchard and hedgerows of autumn and Russian olive and numerous other berry bushes.

No new species were added to our list this fall. Common Yellowthroats made up 14% of the total, compared to the three previous years where they were less than 4% of the total. Black-throated Blue