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Atlantic Flyway Review: Spring 2006 Ruthven Park

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There were record high numbers banded of Eastern Wood-Pewee, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Veery, Common Yellowthroat, Fox Sparrow, and Eastern White-crowned Sparrow. On the negative side, Scarlet Tanager was missing after being banded during 16 of the past 20 spring seasons.

The season began with a massive movement of Black-capped Chickadees through the area, with 1,014 banded. The chickadee movement was already well underway when the station opened, with 111 banded on 15 Apr, our first day of operation. There was another surge on 26-27 Apr with 281 banded during those two days.

Mark Deutschlander continued his research on nocturnal migratory orientation of Swainson's Thrush, Gray-cheeked Thrush, and White-throated Sparrows. Using state-of-the-art listening devices installed at three locations in our field, Stefan Hames and Jim Lowe of the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell recorded the nocturnal vocalizations of migrants each evening during spring.

Cloacal swabbings and feather samples were taken from 100 birds this spring as part of the Avian Influenza Monitoring Program being coordinated by the Landbird Migration Monitoring Network of the Americas (LaMMNA).

Omar Gordillo (Chiapas, Mexico), Ember Jandebour (Newport, PA), Adam Kneis (N. Java, NY), David Mathiason (Webster, NY), Leanna Twohig (North Chili, NY) and Karen Velas (Woodland Hills, CA) successfully completed our Bander Training Course.

Zach Stone from the Diversified Occupations (DO) program at Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury, VT, served a two-week internship.

We hosted a tour of the banding station as part of the IMBD/Earth Day celebration celebrated at Braddock Bay Park on 22 Apr. An Environmental Science class at Monroe Community College visited the banding station; a boy scout troop visited as did a third grade class from the Calvary Christian School in Farmington, NY. We gave informal banding demonstrations to several

hundred visitors and to students from the Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury, VT, who visited on 23 and 24 May. Members of the Allyn's Creek Garden Club also visited the banding station.

Bob Marcotte held a book signing at the banding station on 13 May for his new book, "Birds of the Genesee."

Thanks to all our faithful volunteers: Nancy Chevalier, Jennifer Cumbo, Jack and Barb Duval, Cricket Fegan, Marilyn Guenther, Gary Herbert, Donna Hilborn, Kathleen Holt, Peggy Keller, John Lehr, Chita McKinney, Shirley Meston, Greg Onufryk, Jesse Roberts, Lee Schofield, Jeanne Skelly, Ruth Stork, and Scott and Theresa Wolcott.

Thanks also to the four Kodak 'Day of Caring' volunteers—Steve Cox, Dave Killius, Julie A. Lewis and Ray Mack—for tirelessly spreading gravel on our trails; to Bob Mulvihill and Adrienne Leppold of Powdermill (PA) Nature Reserve for the donation of used nets; to Heather Bradstreet for gloves and hand sanitizer; to Carol Radford for her patient data entry; to Richard Carstenen for GPSing our nets and net lanes; and to Steve Singer for help with habitat maintenance.

Special appreciation to Bob and Charlene Reed for providing housing to visiting banders, interns, and students; and to Bill Kaiser and the Board of the Genesee Land Trust for use of their land.

Ruthven Park **425-0795**

Cayuga, Haldimand County, ON

Bander: Rick Ludkin

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Chief Assistants: Loretta Mousseau, Brian Pomfret

This marks the eleventh spring banding season at Ruthven Park. We started on 1 Apr and banded/monitored almost continuously for the next 59 days—finishing on 31 May. Although we did not open nets on days of seriously inclement weather, and opened fewer nets in poor conditions (e.g., high winds—we are especially susceptible to westerly winds), we would do a census and try to get a sense of the types and

numbers of birds moving through the site. We missed only one day in April and one in May. This was due to the sharing of the load by three banders: myself, Loretta Mousseau and Brian Pomfret. We ended up banding 1,494 birds (a new spring record for Ruthven—the previous high was 1,407 in 1999) of 79 forms.

- 278 American Goldfinch**
- 129 Yellow Warbler**
- 120 White-throated Sparrow**
- 101 Ruby-crowned Kinglet**
- 69 Golden-crowned Kinglet**
- 69 Slate-colored Junco**
- 57 Chipping Sparrow**
- 54 Gray Catbird**
- 43 Myrtle Warbler**
- 41 Magnolia Warbler**

We had unusually good weather in April; the middle two weeks were especially mild. There was little precipitation. The fourth week was cooler and wetter. May started off warm—we had our first mosquitoes by the beginning of the month (which is very early here)—but the middle two weeks were cool and wet. May 21st was described as being “like November” with air temperatures in the late morning being only 7° F and with strong southwest winds. One would have expected the unsettled conditions in May to have resulted in “fallouts” of migrants at Ruthven (a pattern we have seen in many other years) but this was not the case this year.

Nine net lanes contain 15 nets (four singles and five “chains” containing two to three nets each). We have used the same net lane locations for many years now. We also used up to four ground traps and one Potter trap; these were moved throughout the season in response to movements of birds on the property. Birds were ‘processed’ in the recently refurbished banding lab located in one of the small outbuildings of the historic site.

This was a record year in terms of number banded: 1,494. The next highest year was 1999 (1,407 banded). We got off to a great start with the good weather in April, although we were generally getting good numbers throughout. The April total of 670 birds banded was a new record. The rate of capture—32.9/100nh—was the second

highest. So, going into May, we were poised to smash the old '99 record. And then the bottom fell out. May was comparatively a ‘poor’ month—the total of 824 banded was only the fifth highest and the rate of capture, 31.2 b/100nh, was the seventh highest. On our “biggest day” we banded only 60 birds. Thank goodness it was on International Migratory Bird Day when we had 17 visitors (they got a good show!). We were expecting to get large numbers (“fallout”) on the days of inclement weather in the middle of the month but this did not happen. Somewhat concerning was the drop in numbers of long-distance migrants. In the past 11 years, Veerys, Gray-cheeked and Swainson’s thrushes typically have made up 1% of the overall number banded (range 4-24); this year we banded only 2 (0.13%) Swainson’s Thrushes. Over the past 11 years, warblers have made up 22% of the total number of birds banded. However, if you take out Yellow Warblers and Common Yellowthroats, many of which nest locally, and Yellow-rumped Warblers, a short-distance migrant, then the 11-year average is 10.9% of the catch. This year it was only 6.7% of the catch. It will be interesting to look at results from other stations in the province to see if this was a general trend throughout (and, therefore, alarming) or an anomaly specific to Ruthven (and, therefore, only frustrating). We did record a banding first for the station this season—a Cooper’s Hawk.

We had 259 returns of birds banded at Ruthven in prior seasons and recaptured this season. It is interesting to ponder the various environments experienced by the long-distance migrants that have made multiple trips between the tropics and their summer home at Ruthven. Highlights included a Warbling Vireo banded in 1999, a White-breasted Nuthatch, Yellow Warbler and Rose-breasted Grosbeak banded in 2000, and a Chipping Sparrow and Baltimore Oriole banded in 2001.

We are waiting for information on half a dozen foreign retraped birds. We have information on one spring recapture: an American Goldfinch banded at Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory on 11 Nov 2004 was recaptured at Ruthven on 22 Apr 2005.

The station could not run effectively without the considerable efforts of a number of hard-working people. Thanks to you all! **5-6 weeks:** Brian Pomfret; **4-5 weeks:** Rick Ludkin; **2-3 weeks:** Loretta Mousseau, Jim Biggar; **1-2 weeks:** Peter Thoem; **4-6 days:** Mitch Beck, Liz Sukkau; **1-3 days:** Leanne Jennings, Elaine Serena, Shirley Klement, Louise Unitt, Anne Billings, Jeff MacLeod, Scott MacLeod, Daphne Payne, and Kristen Niwranski.

There was also a lot of work done "behind the scenes," i.e., work that contributed greatly to the effectiveness of the station but not directly to the banding program. Jeff MacLeod developed and is running an excellent blog for Haldimand Bird Observatory that features daily commentary and pictures from Ruthven Park. The URL is : <http://birdbanding.blogspot.com>

I thank the Lower Grand River Land Trust and especially the staff of Ruthven Park for their wonderful support. This project was supported financially by the Land Trust and by Bird Studies Canada with funds raised through the annual Baillie Birdathon.

Appledore Island Migration Sta. 425-0703
Appledore Island, York County, ME

Sara Morris, Compiler

morriss@canisius.edu

Banders: Anthony Hill, David Holmes, Sara Morris, Becky Suomala, Mary Wright

Chief Assistants: Kevin Bronson, Peggy Buckley, Katie Chmelowiec, Carol Cushing, Kristen Covino, Judy Fahnstock, Rose Graves, Maura Hanna, Lindsay Herlihy, Mike Hurban, Liam Knott, LizLewis, Martha Stauffer, Amanda Stockwell, Andy Thiede, Stella Walsh

Spring 2006 will be remembered for a long time, not for the birds that we handled, but rather for the awful weather and the low number of birds. Our total of 1,722 was the second lowest spring total since the station expanded spring banding in 1990. The only season with a lower total was 1990, which is particularly notable since that banding season was only 22 days while the station was in operation 35 days this spring. Of those 35 days, the station was closed for six entire days and a large part of six additional days.

Our net hours were much lower than normal (2006: 2802, ten-year average: 3863 ± 512 net-hours). Although the number of net hours was slightly higher than in 2005, this was due primarily to the low number of days with large numbers of birds (when some of the nets have had to be closed). The station generally handles more than 200 birds on several days each spring, but the highest daily total this spring was 183 and totals on only three other days were higher than 100 (120, 133, 180). The number of birds captured per net-hour (61.5) was well below the 2005 level (114.0) and was below the average of 71.4.

	<u>%SY</u>	<u>%ASY</u>	<u>%AHY</u>
394 Com. Yellowthr.	63.7	23.9	12.4
192 Magnolia Warbler	75.0	19.3	5.7
172 Red-eyed Vireo	38.4	33.7	27.9
78 Amer. Redstart	83.3	14.1	2.6
71 Gray Catbird	49.3	10.8	9.9
70 Wh-thr. Sparrow	32.9	5.7	61.4
42 Bl-and-Wh Warb.	52.4	35.7	11.9
42 Blackpoll Warb.	73.8	21.4	4.8
40 Bl-thr. Blue Warb.	72.5	25.0	2.5
40 No. Waterthrush	55.0	30.0	15.0

Despite the low number of total birds, no species totals were significantly different from normal levels (more than two standard deviations from their averages). Nonetheless, many common bird species totals were lower than average. For example, our total of 394 Common Yellowthroats, the most common species over the last 17 years, was well below our average of $535 (\pm 176)$. Our second most common bird, the Magnolia Warbler, was similarly low. We captured 196 in 2006, although the spring average is 302 ± 86 . The one common species that was captured in higher-than-normal numbers was the Red-eyed Vireo, which totaled 172 this spring compared to the average of 125 ± 60 . The unusual captures for the season included the station's third Hairy Woodpecker, fifth Orange-crowned Warbler, and two White-breasted Nuthatches.

The station participated in the avian influenza monitoring program coordinated by LaMMNA. We gave banding demonstrations to credit classes, non-credit groups, and other visitors at