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## Atlantic Flyway Review: Region II (North Central) Fall 2006 Kestrel Haven

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Several slide presentations on bird banding were given to local clubs, including the Alfred Lions Club and the Allegany County Bird Club. A banding demonstration was held at Foster Lake on 9 Sep.

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We had a nice, but average season with most of the excitement coming early and followed by lengthy periods of inactivity due to weather during the prime movement periods. The major differences between a 5,000+ individuals and a 3,600 individuals season were the weather and lack of our staple—goldfinch.

We banded 3,591 new birds of 93 species in 89 days of operation. We also had 1,142 repeats, 118 returns and 262 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. The hummingbirds were not banded. The total birds netted was 5,113, making our measure of efficiency 112 b/100nh for newly banded birds and 160 b/100nh overall. Hatching-year birds were slightly below the 20-year norm at 86%.

The station's species banded list grew to 131 species plus five forms banded (136) with the addition of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

We had very few "big days" and only one with over 100 birds, which was on 5 Oct, when we banded 113. The reason for that high was amorphous, as numbers were fairly well distributed over 22 species. Overall, 11 species were banded in numbers exceeding 100, including a very unusual irruption of Magnolia Warblers. We banded our second Northern Shrike and had our first ever Traill's Flycatcher return.

American Goldfinch was the big disappointment. As we have reported previously, the last several years have seen a huge increase in their numbers leading to three successive years of around 2,000 individuals banded. That all changed this season with only 425 banded, our

lowest total since 1997. Anecdotal feeder reports from the larger geographic area support our result. We believe the migratory flow moved quite a bit westward this year.

During the last iteration of the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas (2000-2005), we reported very "early" fall Yellow-bellied Flycatchers on two years. In both cases, the adult females presented with very active, vascular brood patches. Unfortunately, atlas criteria for confirmation required an egg to be present in the oviduct, which was not the case. The species was reported as a "probable" breeding species here. On 8 Jul 2006, we again captured and banded an after-second-year Yellow-bellied Flycatcher that presented with a highly edematous brood patch but we could not feel an egg. Once again, we had to assume early southern movement. The closest known breeding area for this species is the Adirondack Mountains to our northeast. Local records and birding publications show a late spring date of 13 Jun and an early fall date of 31 Jul (previous banding here).

Militating for a new breeding record was the recapture of this individual on 5 Aug 2006. At this time, vascularity of the brood patch had receded and molt was beginning. However, the bird may have just liked its surroundings and was in extended stopover. We recaptured this bird two other times between the 5 and 10 Aug.

The clincher came on 10 Aug, when we banded a hatching-year Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in fresh plumage, strongly supporting the breeding of this species in the Finger Lakes highlands!

Despite the weather, most species were captured within normal parameters. A few are significant and worthy of mention: We had our first miss of Eastern Wood-Pewee in 21 years; Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were twice the norm; Least Flycatcher, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Waterthrush and Northern Cardinal were all banded in their highest numbers ever, as was Magnolia Warbler, which exceeded the norm by five times! Sparrows and other species were down, but we believe those to be related to the shutdown of the station during extended bad weather in the prime movement dates.

Returns were terrific! Two goldfinches at 10 years of age challenged the species longevity record, while our eldest return was an 11-year-old Black-capped Chickadee. Of the 118 returns, 33 of 14 species were in excess of four years of age. They shred out as follows:

- One Downy Woodpecker at 6
- Six Black-capped Chickadees at 11, and 4+ (5)
- One White-breasted Nuthatch at 4+
- One American Robin at 4
- Four Gray Catbirds at 9 and 4+ (3)
- One Chestnut-sided Warbler at 5
- Three Yellow Warblers at 7, 6+ and 5+
- One Common Yellowthroat at 4+
- One Northern Cardinal at 6
- One American Tree Sparrow at 4
- Four Song Sparrows at 7, 6 (2) and 4
- One Purple Finch at 6
- One House Finch at 4
- Seven American Goldfinches at 10 (2), 5, 4+ (2) and 4 (3).

Overall health reflected the cool, wet weather of the breeding season. We had avian pox in Yellow Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Common Yellowthroat and Song Sparrow, while many species had abundant hippoboscids, especially early in the season. Two Least Flycatchers had heavy feather mite infestation on their tails, and an American Goldfinch was infested in the facial region. Fault bars were prevalent in many species.

Tumors were abundant and the causes unknown. A Common Yellowthroat had a gape tumor, a Cedar Waxwing had a throat tumor, a House Finch had a culmen tumor, a Gray Catbird had a large patagial tumor, and one poor Brown Thrasher had multiple tumors and a deformed upper mandible. We had one flicker intergrade that displayed red shafts bilaterally on primary six. A very rare Cedar Waxwing presented with wax on all rectrices as well as the secondaries and tertials in addition to the normal wax tips; we banded a similar bird last fall. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet male showed an orange crown. The H5N1 collection effort was very disappointing as funding, and therefore supplies, was minimal.

We were able to collect only 50 samples to bring the year's effort to 102 birds sampled. We hope those in charge achieve better funding and efficiency of operation next year; as of this writing, UCLA has yet to report on the spring 2006 samples.

Finally, deer were again a problem and mist nets suffered. A doe gave birth to twins in our yard and the three remain in a very small territory to this date. While they caused some damage, they usually approached a net and nuzzled it up at the base and scooted under in a flash without damaging the net. At nets further removed, we had another case of deer taking birds. Last year we resolved the situation by placing pig manure at the net poles. That kept the deer away. This year our source no longer kept pigs, so we had to resort to the "nuclear option." Hoping that deer instinctively fear their prime predator of a century or more ago, we visited a wildlife rehabilitator couple that specializes in big cats. We returned from that interesting foray with a sack of cougar manure (dubbed Panther Poop) and spread it at the nets. It was a smelly but effective deterrent.

Our sixth year of identifying and marking dragonflies incidentally netted resulted in identification of 43 individuals of 15 species. The station total of odonates is now at 72 species.

Kestrel Haven banding and point count data for the last several years were again used in biological site studies for more large-wind power projects in our and nearby counties. The Speedtech avian prediction algorithm we reported last fall proved to be a failure and their instruments disappointing in all respects.

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we couldn't do it without her! In fact, the data and reports on the site have been a prime source for many outside projects and studies by a wide variety of people and interests.

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I started on 9 Jul 2006 and went through 26 Nov, for a total of 49 days. Even though my net hours and number of nets increased for this season, fewer birds were captured and banded.

Using one to eight nets, totaling 581 net hours, I captured 422 new birds of 54 species (seven new species this year). There were also 25 repeats and 32 returns. The peak banding day was on 6 Oct when 26 birds were banded.

Among the 32 returns were a seven-year-old Black-capped Chickadee, a five-year-old Red-bellied Woodpecker, and two three-year-old Downy Woodpeckers. Ten other species returned, all of which were under three years old.

Very few cold fronts passed over south-central New York state. The first significant frost occurred on 30 Sep. For the banding period, I had recorded many days with a northeast wind, which is not conducive to an influx of birds at this station. Temperatures, based on previous years, were in the normal range and there were not a significant number of rain days when the nets had to be closed and so did not interfere with banding.

Recently, land surrounding my banding station was purchased. Much of that land was covered with multiflora rose and was good nesting habitat for catbirds, etc. For the last three years, my number one species banded has been Gray Catbird. The new owner had the land plowed and planted to field corn and now my property on two sides has cornfields. This has had a negative impact on banding at this station.

The most interesting record and/or highlight of this year happened on 6 Oct (my best day) when

I was fortunate enough to capture and band the first ever Bicknell's Thrush banded at this station. This seems to have been a good thrush year, as I had a total of 22 thrushes: 10 Robins, 4 Hermits, 3 Veerys, 3 Gray-cheeks, and 1 Swainson's.

The top three species continue to be Gray Catbird, Slate-colored Junco, and Song Sparrow.

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Banding in 2006 is a story of weather, which cooperated early in the season, but was not conducive to banding in October and early November. MAPS banding was made more interesting as I was pulling tail feathers and taking cloacal swabbing of adult migrating birds. These samples were sent to UCLA for analysis for avian influenza. After MAPS ended and during AFR banding, the sampling continued but as a part of Landbird Migration Monitoring Network of the Americas (LaMMNA).

August and September banding was good. For the number of birds caught and birds per 100 net hours for any August since I took over this station from Harriet Marsi in 1998, 30 Aug was memorable. It was the fourth day in a row of cloudy weather which kept the birds on the ground. The wind was from the SE and rain was approaching. In the two hours my nets were up (rain forced me to close the nets), 53 new birds of 13 species were caught. Fortunately I had a helper, Andrea Martin, who recorded all the data—her first time relieving the birds and me from a long and stressful morning. The combined results of birds caught on 15 and 16 Sep was 97; 15 Sep was rainy and overcast, but 16 Sep was only cloudy with a SE wind—conditions that lead to good banding.

October banding was disappointing. The weather did not cooperate. Many mornings were cold, windy, foggy or rainy. When conditions were right for banding there were no birds. Most noticeable was the lack of Dark-eyed Juncos. We never got the large flocks, which typically are here in October and November.