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## Atlantic Flyway Review: Spring 2007 Ruthven Park

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Course. Ten banders attended a workshop given by Dr. Kristi Hannam of SUNY Geneseo on the techniques for taking blood samples from birds.

We enjoyed a visit from the Fairport Retired Teachers Association, the Spring Ornithology class from the Laboratory of Ornithology, a group from the University of Rochester, students from the Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury, VT, and a group from the Silver Lake Day Treatment Center. We had visitors from as far away as Holland and gave informal banding demonstrations to several hundred individuals.

**Appreciation** - Thanks to all our faithful volunteers: David Alexander, Nancy Chevalier, Don Cowley, Jennifer Cumbo, Charles Eldermire, Judy Engerman, Sue Evans, Kevin Griffith, Marilyn Guenther, Gary Herbert, Donna Hilborn, Kathleen Holt, Peggy Keller, Bill, Lisa and Sandy Podulka, John Lehr, Chita McKinney, Shirley Meston, Jesse Roberts, Lee Schofield, Francis Scott, Dominic Sherony, Lisa Silvestri, Jeanne Skelly, Bob Spahn, Ruth Stork, Leanna Twohig, Dee Weber, Megan Whitman, Aggie Windig, and Scott and Theresa Wolcott.

Thanks also to Chris Gates and Shirley Meston for repairing our frayed aerial net ropes; to John Boettcher for cleaning and refurbishing the PC at the banding lab; to Virginia Duffy for the cedar posts for Rob's trail; to Dave Mathiason for mowing Rob's trail; and Colleen Gagnon for helping to spread woodchips; to Dave Frosini, Doug Smith, Dave Tetlow, and Boy Scout Dads John Humnicky and Craig Purdy for helping Kelly and Kevin Dockery with the roofing job. Special appreciation is extended to Bill Kaiser and the Board of the Genesee Land Trust for use of their land.

**Ruthven Park** 425-0795  
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Chief Assistants: Loretta Mousseau, Brian Pomfret

Migration monitoring started on 31 Mar and ran through to 2 Jun. In total, we banded/monitored on 59 of a possible 64 days (92% coverage). Days missed were due to very bad weather. Four of

these days occurred in the first three weeks of April; we did not miss any days in May.

Fifteen 12-m nets were set out in nine net lanes cut into the shrubby second growth surrounding the historic mansion. These net lanes have been in place since 1996. The vegetation around the nets is "managed" to try to maintain second growth conditions (both because migrant birds tend to really like it and to keep the data comparable over time). On some days, not all the nets were utilized—especially on days with high winds. [We also closed two nets for about one and a half weeks due to squirrel predation—both red and black squirrels.]

As well as using nets, we caught birds using up to five walk-in ground traps and one Potter trap. These were especially effective when the juncos and sparrows were moving in April.

We ran into a spate of bad weather during the first three weeks of April—cold, windy, and wet. Some days we did not open nets, using just traps; some days we just stayed in bed. We have run two sets of feeders for many years now and these attracted many moving birds during this time, especially American Goldfinches and Dark-eyed Juncos—note that these two species were #1 & #2, respectively, in the "top ten" banded this season at Ruthven.

May was quite pleasant with many "nice" days. Nice days, weather wise, at Ruthven do not usually translate into good banding days. Our sense is that migrants take advantage of good weather to "fly over" the area between the north shore of Lake Erie and the south shore of Lake Ontario in their hurry to get to their breeding area. "Fallouts" of migrants (when you catch birds in large numbers) occur when migrants encounter bad weather. Thus, we never had a "big day" (which we interpret as a day on which we band 100+ birds), but we did catch birds in good steady numbers throughout the month and had two days of 87 (6 and 10 May).

This was a record high season at Ruthven Park—we banded 1,888 birds, which is 394 birds more than the previous high, achieved last year. Both the April and May totals were new records (April by 15 birds and May by 202. The rate of capture, 40.1 b/100nh, is second only to 1999.

We banded 83 different forms or species and had record high spring numbers for 21 species:

- Yellow-billed Cuckoo (6)
- Hairy Woodpecker (3)
- Downy Woodpecker (11)
- Brown Creeper (12)
- House Wren (23)
- Golden-crowned Kinglet (94)
- Gray-cheeked Thrush (5)
- Swainson's Thrush (19)
- Brown Thrasher (4)
- Blue-winged Warbler (14)
- Tennessee Warbler (12)
- Black-throated Green Warbler (5)
- Black & White Warbler (7)
- American Redstart (11)
- Northern Cardinal (14)
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak (44)
- Field Sparrow (20)
- Dark-eyed Junco (128)
- Orchard Oriole (15)
- "Baltimore" Oriole (36)
- American Goldfinch (458)

The record number of long-distance migrants that do not breed locally are simply fortuitous—we had the right nets open at the right time. For these birds, the increases should not be interpreted to suggest an increase in their overall numbers. However, the increases in some of these species that breed locally are interesting. Orchard Oriole numbers have taken off in the last two years as have those of Field Sparrow. The latter is likely due to agricultural fields close to the banding area being "let go" to regenerate; hard to say for Orchard Orioles. Could some of the birds be taking advantage of the gypsy moth scourge that has hit local woodlands in the past two years?

The American Goldfinch number is very surprising—152 more than any previous spring. Most of these birds are caught in the area of the feeders. We also had many (68) goldfinch retraps—birds that were banded here in previous years. These birds molt body plumage at this time in preparation for the breeding season. This is energetically demanding and oil sunflower and niger seed is an excellent source of energy. These feeders have been in place for many years. Do these birds now count on

this food source to meet their energy requirements at this time? Are "new" birds following birds that know the feeders are there? These feeders, we feel, were a very important source of nutrients during the bad weather in April; juncos, for example, stayed in their vicinity for more than a week, putting on/maintaining fat loads. The bottom line is that feeding birds attract other birds, and it sure paid off this season for these two species at least.

I thank the Lower Grand River Land Trust for their ongoing support of the banding program at Ruthven Park. This includes the use of the grounds, use of the banding lab building, and financial support. Ruthven Park staff, Marilyn Havelka (CAO) and Linda Jackson, have been great to work with (especially when they bring tea and goodies). Haldimand Bird Observatory, of which Ruthven is a part, has received support from the Baillie Birdathon Fund which is administered through Bird Studies Canada, from the Norfolk Field Naturalists, Ontario Power Generation, and the Observatory's friends and members. We also thank Pat Chow-Fraser from McMaster University's Biodiversity Program for her involvement (and that of her students).

#### **Appledore Island**

**425-0703**

#### **Migration Station**

Appledore Island, York County, ME

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**Chief Assistants:** Amber Bratcher, Liz Burton, Bill Clark, Lindsay Herlihy, Jason Jacobs, Susan Lee, Charlotte Ott, Jeff Ott, Stephanie Parkinson, Carlene Riccelli, Carolyn Schmitz, Bethany Stephan, Amanda Stockwell, Ryanne Sullivan, Andy Theide, Stella Walsh

Spring 2007 was a great season on Appledore. After two years of low numbers and bad weather, spring 2007 was more typical of our expected spring seasons. Weather caused only relatively minor disruptions to our schedule, requiring the station to open a day later than planned and to remain closed only two other days during the season (18 May and 4 Jun). Our total birds banded (3,110) was our highest total in the past eight years and was higher than our spring average of 2457 ±