

2008

Atlantic Flyway Review: Region III (Western Ridge)- Fall 2007 Allegheny Front Migration Observatory

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did not. Fall banding here has steadily declined as compared to 2002, when 145 new birds were banded and 2003 when there were 121. Of the 27 different species banded in 2007, at least half were of just one or two individuals.

Mature vegetation is probably the biggest influence on net captures. From Pennsylvania Atlas observations in my back yard, there were numerous sightings of Scarlet Tanager, American Redstart, Indigo Bunting, Black-and-white Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Northern Parula. Also, a Blackpoll Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler and Tennessee Warbler were observed on 5 Oct at a drip bird bath. It is evolving into a kind of contest to see how low the banding catch will get before it gets better. Perhaps logging the property is the solution.

Mt Nebo Banding Station **392-0792**
Oakland, Garrett County, MD
Connie Skipper and Fran Pope, Banders
connieskipper@hohnet.com

This was the seventh season of banding at Mt. Nebo Wildlife Management Area. The station was open 36 days between 27 Aug and 31 Oct. In total, 1010 birds were banded of 56 species, with a station effort of 2723 net hours. Capture rate was 37 b/100nh. No new species were added to the station list this fall.

The top three species banded were White-throated Sparrow (an astounding 23% of the total), Indigo Bunting (11%) and Song Sparrows (10%). Skipper wrote in the daily log on 27 Aug: "The clearing beyond nets 12 and 13 is full of millet. I expect lots of Indigo Buntings and sparrows." This certainly proved to be true. The number of sparrows banded (421) was twice the station average. We banded five Fox Sparrows, a station high.

Common Yellowthroats (81) and Ovenbirds (31, a station high) were abundant and accounted for 11% of the total. Other warbler numbers and diversity were disappointing.

Gray Catbirds, normally in the top three, dropped to fifth place this season. They accounted for 7% of our total banded.

Nineteen birds banded in previous years at Mt. Nebo WMA were recaptured. Eleven of them were banded in 2006 (5 Song Sparrows, 3 Gray Catbirds, 1 Black-capped Chickadee, 1 Hermit Thrush, and 1 Common Yellowthroat). Five birds were banded in 2005 (2 Song Sparrows, 1 Purple Finch, 1 Eastern Towhee, and 1 Gray Catbird). Three were banded in 2003, all of them banded as AHY (Eastern Towhee male, Gray Catbird, and Ovenbird). Interestingly, the Ovenbird was also recaptured in 2005.

Twelve visitors spent time at the station working on their bird identification skills.

Thanks to Rick Latshaw and the Mt. Neb technicians for their help in clearing net lanes and to Samuel and Irene Yoder for their help in setting up and tending the nets.

Allegheny Front **390-0791**
Migration Observatory
Grant County, WV
Ralph K. Bell and Joan Bell Pattison, AFMO
Banding Leaders
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Allegheny Front Migration Observatory (AFMO) conducted its 50th year of bird banding at Dolly Sods, WV, this fall. AFMO is located 10 miles southeast of Davis, WV. Banding began on 11 Aug and ended 21 Oct 2007. A total of 8053 birds were banded of 85 species, with a station effort of 85.6 b/100nh. A total of 220,397 birds have been banded from 1958-2007. This year was the best year for total number of birds banded since 1998, when 8585 were banded. There have been only six years when the total number of birds banded was higher than this year. The numbers have improved greatly since the U.S. Forest Service approved trimming and maintenance of vegetation at the banding station to a condition similar to what existed when the station was founded.

The station was open for 70 days and closed two days due to rain. There were 17 days when over 100 birds were banded, nine days over 200, one day over 500, one day over 600, and the best day of the season was 23 Sep when 945 birds were banded, which was the second largest day in AFMO's history. The most dominant species

banded that day were Black-throated Blue Warbler (383), Blackpoll Warbler (164) and Magnolia Warbler (132). The flight on 23 Sep began steady with a good number of birds; however, when low clouds began dropping down just above the nets, we began to catch an exceptional number of birds. Since birds do not like to fly in fog or rain while migrating, many were flying low enough under the clouds to be caught in our nets. Evidently conditions had been set for the big flight because there had been six clear days earlier and rather strong westerly winds the day before. In fact, a total of 1434 birds were banded the next three days and these were clear days with westerly winds.

The Black-throated Blue Warbler was the most numerous species this year with 2109 banded, which is 142.1% above the 10-yr running average. It has been the leader for the past seven out of ten years. The Black-throated Green Warbler was the second highest, with 1103 banded (130.1% above the 10-yr average), and Tennessee Warbler was third, with 574 banded (86.2% above the 10-yr average). The Magnolia Warbler was the fourth highest with 589 banded (116.6% above the 10-yr average), and Blackpoll Warbler was the fifth highest with 508 banded (-26.7% under the 10-yr average). The total of the top five species banded was 4862, which was 60.4% of the total birds banded this season.

A hybrid warbler was banded at AFMO on 23 Sep. Morphologically, it favored a Magnolia Warbler, but some of the plumage was uncharacteristic of that species. Jan Runyan photographed it and all information was sent to Carla Dove, Ph.D., Museum Specialist, Division of Birds, at the Smithsonian Institution. She and her colleagues verified that it was a hybrid.

Viral samples were collected at AFMO for LaMNA and are being tested for Avian Influenza by UCLA's Center for Tropical Research.

We received reports of four recoveries of birds banded at AFMO. An AHY Red-eyed Vireo banded on 27 Sep 2006 was found dead at Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia, on 20 Sep 2007. A Black-throated Blue Warbler banded on 6 Sep 2006 was caught and released at Tomoka Bird Banding

Station, Ormond Beach, FL, on 19 Apr 2007. And a HY male Ruby-crowned Kinglet banded on 13 Oct 2007 was spotted at a suet feeder at Slidell, LA, a month later. The band number was read by an astute bird watcher from photographs she had taken with a high-powered camera from 18-24 Nov 2007. The fourth recovery is an example of what could be a disastrous effect of the current and proposed wind turbines on the high ridges of the Allegheny Mountains. A HY Blackpoll Warbler banded on 3 Oct 2006 was recovered on 12 Sep 2007 under a Michigan communication tower approximately 20 mi southeast of Grand Rapids, MI. The finder, Joelle Gehring, Senior Conservation Scientist at Michigan State University, has been studying avian collisions with communication towers in Michigan since 2003 and has learned that taller, guyed towers with red non-blinking lights (combined with blinking lights) are involved in more avian fatalities than shorter, unguyed towers with white strobe lights.

We also had one foreign recovery at AFMO during fall 2007. On 5 Sep, we caught an adult female Ruby-throated Hummingbird that had been banded as a HY on 6 Sep 2005 at Powdermill Nature Reserve, Rector, PA. We gave her some unflavored Pedialyte to reduce the risk of dehydration, and upon her release, she continued on her migration in a southwesterly direction.

To celebrate AFMO's 50th year, Ralph K. Bell was presented a plaque from Anne and Harvey Shreve that said "AFMO Banding Station, Ralph K. Bell, Founder, September 18, 1958." Campground hosts Randy and Beth Ritter held a picnic in Ralph's honor and over 50 of his colleagues and friends were there to celebrate with him. At the picnic, Ken Heselton presented Ralph a clock he made out of a beautiful piece of wood from Dolly Sods.

The Flyover Count was started in 1990 and has continued every year during the banding season. Results from the 2007 fall count of four selected species are: 308 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (18-yr average 441); 5612 Blue Jays (18-yr average 5900); 4439 American Goldfinches (18-yr average 3034) and 3348 Monarch Butterflies (18-yr average 1231). The Red-breasted Nuthatch flyover count of 338 was a new record at AFMO and their peak

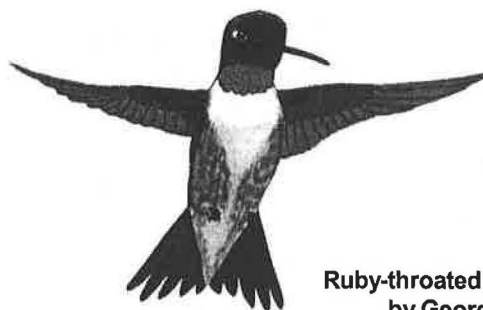
day was 26 Sep, when 53 were counted. The peak day for Monarch Butterflies was 13 Sep, when 2625 were counted, most of them in the afternoon.

This fall, 1193 people signed our visitors' book. Visitors came from 20 states, Washington, DC, and five foreign countries—Australia, Germany, Israel, Japan and New Zealand. As usual, several elementary and middle schools, and colleges visited AFMO, including the Highland Adventist School from Elkins, WV, Pendleton County Middle School from Franklin, WV, Bridgewater College Ecology Class, Eastern Mennonite University, West Virginia University Adventure Program, and West Virginia Wesleyan College.

We thank the personnel of Monongahela National Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson, Cheat/Potomac District Ranger Jeff Hammes, Special Use Manager Laura Hise, Forestry Technicians Ed Lang and John Waggy and all others for their cooperation and help. We also thank the Brooks Bird Club, the Ralph K. Bell Bird Club, the Audubon Naturalist

Society, the Nature Conservancy, the WV Highlands Conservancy, and many visitors and volunteers for their financial support which is our only means of replacing mist nets. Everyone's support is much appreciated.

The banders who participated this year were Bob Dean, Ken and Sue Heselton, Fred and Carol McCullough, Randy and Beth Ritter, Charles Ziegenfus and Station Leaders Ralph K. Bell and Joan Bell Pattison. Bill Agee and Ken Heselton contributed many hours of computer time and expertise. The scheduled volunteers were as follows: Bill Beatty, Kathleen Dullnig, Tom and Dawn Fox, Walter Fye, Kathleen Larken, Jack and Joleene Minear, Tim Newlin, Don Pattison, Maggi Perl, Jan Runyan, Carl and Joan Rowe, Todd and Kim Schnopp and Stephen Sushinski. LeJay Gaffious erected the banding shed with help from Tim Newlin, the Schnopps, Bob Hickory and Robin Dea. We thank all of the above volunteers and the many other interested people who helped in many ways this year.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird
by George West

Four Banders Earn North American Banding Council (NABC) Certification

An NABC evaluation was held 3-5 Oct 2008 hosted by Braddock Bay Bird Observatory. Congratulations are due four individuals who passed their Bander-level certification: **Mark Deutschlander** of Canandaigua, NY; **Richard Joos** of Toronto, ON; **Gretchen Putonen** of S. Dennis, MA; and **Karen Velas** of Emeryville, CA.

Mark Deutschlander and **Richard Joos** also earned their Trainer-level certification, taking advantage of NABC's new policy that allows individuals to take the Trainer-level evaluation the day after they pass their Bander-level certification, provided they have passed the written test with a score of 90% or better.

Participating NABC Trainers were Betsy Brooks, Mary Doscher, Anthony Hill, David Holmes, Erin Karnatz, Sara Morris, and Hannah Suthers.