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Atlantic Flyway Review: Spring 2008 Crown Point State Historic Site

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Crown Point State Historic Site¹ 440-0732

Essex County, NY

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The spring banding station on the 360-ac grounds of the Crown Point State Historic Site opened for the 33rd consecutive season of banding between 9 and 26 May. Operated by the Crown Point Banding Association (CPBA), through an agreement with the New York State (NYS) Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPR&HP), the station is located in thickets of hawthorn-juniper west of His Majesty's Fort. The 51 species were lowest in three years, and the 384 individual birds were the lowest in a decade. Weather was just too pleasant during May, with no major fronts to help ground migrants.

1. Myrtle Warbler	52
2. American Goldfinch	44
3. Blue Jay	42
4. Gray Catbird	37
5. Common Yellowthroat	24
6. American Robin	20
7. Baltimore Oriole	16
8. Barn Swallow	15
9. Yellow Warbler	12
10. Common Grackle	10

Following a cold night, nets were opened for a half-day on 9 May, and the 46 birds banded seemed auspicious. The next day 49 birds were banded, but over the course of 14 hours, and this proved to be the largest catch of the season. The first week was sunny, with northerly breezes, until rain on 15 May, but only from 4 a.m. to 7 a.m., after which the sun came out and northerly winds resumed for another week. A brief afternoon shower on 21 May helped provide the best day for variety, with 19 species banded, but even sun showers on the next few days failed to help. On 23 May, just four birds of four species were banded over the course of 14 hours and using as many nets. Results may have improved had we remained after Memorial Day, since there were sight reports of migrant waves elsewhere in the Adirondack-Champlain region on 28 May and even thereafter.

Four staff members from OPR&HP in Albany paid a site visit and met with representatives of CPBA and Historic Site staff to examine the banding area and discuss further habitat improvement and possible removal of invasive plants, most notably common buckthorn. The Osprey platform will again be cleared of saplings, the pair having moved to a power pole along the nearby highway in 2008. Grassland birds again occupied the recently reclaimed "Bobolink Field" to the south of the station, and Savannah Sparrow, Bobolink, and Eastern Meadowlark continue to nest in the grassy field between the British fort and the banding thickets.

There were returns of a record 45 birds of a dozen species banded at Crown Point in previous years, the oldest was a Common Grackle now at least six yr, 11 mo old. Warbler variety was poor, with just 13 species banded, far short of the record 23 species in 2007. These included just 52 Myrtle Warblers—lowest in three years; but boreal species included six Western Palm Warblers and single Blackpoll and Wilson's warblers. Notable species seen or heard, but not banded, included late Snow Goose, 15 Turkey Vultures feeding on dead alewives, seven migrant Bald Eagles, calling Whip-poor-will, and a leucistic American Robin.

A major criterion for naming Crown Point SHS¹ not only an Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA), but also a NYS Bird Conservation Area (BCA), was the congregations of birds at the tip of Crown Point peninsula. Under one set of criteria, these consist of at least 2,000 waterfowl, including such birds as cormorants, who gather at a daytime roost on the west pit in Bulwagga Bay, just below the banding station. On 13 Jun, a NYS Department of Environmental Conservation boat arrived and two men began shooting, killing a reported 69 cormorants that day, and returned for longer periods on following days. Their heavy shotgun fire was difficult to explain to groups of adjudicated youth visiting the station on 16 May and sixth graders on 21 May. Adult visitors were astounded to hear the shooting and learn that the killing of these native birds was allowed on an IBA and BCA. Sport radios used at the station picked up conversations about shooting "hangers" and "flopplers" (cripples),

followed by live shots from the bay below, the students asking why they were doing this to wounded birds and why we could not stop them, until the banders could break in and radio a demand that the DEC killing team switch to another channel. This "control" operation is taking place on both NY and VT sides of Champlain in 2008, while the beaches are covered with dead alewives, a recent invasive in the lake and now a favored dietary staple of cormorants. Go figure.

We are grateful to those who helped transport the banding station: Malinda Chapman & family, Stan Corneille, Gordon Howard, Dan Lee, Gary Lee, and Bob Wei. Special thanks go to Historic Site Manager Thomas Hughes, Jake Putnam, and the rest of the Crown Point staff for their continued cooperation and many kindnesses. We greatly appreciate the interest in habitat maintenance of Matt Medler, Pam Otis, Ray Perry, and Melissa Plemens from OPR&HP in Albany. Since 1976, a total of 14,982 birds have been banded on the grounds of Crown Point State Historic Site, and we look forward to banding #15,000 during our 34th year in 2009.

Lewiston Banding Station **431-0790**
Niagara Co., NY
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The 2008 spring banding season got underway on 5 May. The banding on this day started out very well with 33 birds of 15 different species being captured. The nets were opened again on 6 May for a five-hour period with only 15 total birds of eight different species being captured. Over these two banding days, only six warbler species were handled, totaling 18 birds. It was hoped that things would pick up in the coming weeks with the main flights of warblers usually appearing around the 15th. Weather conditions remained good throughout the spring banding season.

	<u>Species</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>% L</u>	<u>% SY</u>	<u>% ASY</u>	<u>% AHY</u>
1.	Purple Martin	37	100			
2.	Gray Catbird	24		29		71
3.	American Robin	21		38		57
4.	Myrtle Warbler	18		11		89
5.	Nashville Warbler	13		8		92
6.	Ruby-cr. Kinglet	12				100
7.	Magnolia Warbler	12		25		75
8.	Rose-br. Grosbeak	11		36	19	45
9.	Wood Thrush	11		73		27
10.	Hermit Thrush	9		78		22

Throughout the month of May there was NO apparent warbler migration taking place at the Lewiston station! Warblers were handled daily with total numbers being down along with total species. Many reasons for this decline were discussed, but no positive theories came out of the discussions. As in many cases, the area surrounding the banding location has grown up with housing developments as well as a 250-ac golf course being constructed within half a mile of the net lanes, creating much loss of very valuable habitat. If we accept this theory for the reduced number of warblers, we can not explain why all the species of birds using this area have not shown similar declines. The thrush species are at an all-time high with Hermit Thrush topping the list. The birds per 100 net hours (b/100nh) dropped from 35.8 in 2007 to 22.5 in 2008, mostly showing the decline in warbler species. Again this year, there was a total of eight local retraps.

The spring banding season came to an end on 2 Jun, with a total of 262 birds of 50 species being captured, banded, and released.

Braddock Bay Bird Observatory **431-0774**
Kaiser-Manitou Beach Banding Station

Monroe County, NY

Elizabeth W. Brooks and Ryan Kayhart,
Compilers; **Ann Adams, David Bonter, Elizabeth Brooks, Kelly Dockery, Jon Dombrowski, Mark Deutschlander, Margaret Fritze, Erin Karnatz, Ryan Kayhart, Cindy Marino, David Mathiason, Robert McKinney, and Sue Smith**, Banders.

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