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Atlantic Flyway Review: Spring 2008 Ruthven Park

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when 5296 and 4752 birds were banded in about the same number of net hours. Red-bellied Woodpecker and American Crow were the only new species added to the cumulative total spring list, which now stands at 141 forms.

There were record high numbers banded of Black-billed Cuckoo (8), Ruby-throated Hummingbird (59), Western Palm Warbler (147), and Blackpoll Warbler (94). On the negative side, Golden-crowned Kinglet was missing this spring, after being banded in all but two of the past 22 years. Because of the early spring, most early migrants had moved through the area before we opened and so were down in numbers (Winter Wren, Tree Sparrow, Brown Creeper, Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, etc.).

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). The samples were processed at U.C.L.A.

Dave Alexander (Duluth, MN), Noelle Boone (Rochester, NY), J. Alan Clark (Armonk, NY), Sue Evans (Bloomfield, NY), Tom Klotzbach (Waterport, NY), Brad Mudzynski (Elba, NY), and Emily Runnells (Concord, NH) successfully completed our spring Bander Training Course.

Visitors included the Spring Ornithology class from the Laboratory of Ornithology, students from Dr. Chris Norment's SUNY Brockport Ornithology class, a class from the Farmington Calvary Christian School, and students from the Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury, VT. The members of the Allyn's Creek Garden Club held their May meeting at the banding station, highlighted by a presentation on migration by David Bonter. We had visitors from as far away as Alaska and gave informal banding demonstrations to several hundred visitors

Thanks to all our faithful volunteers: David Alexander, Jim Bair, Dave Edwards, Judy Engerman, Sue Evans,

Chris Gates, Marilyn Guenther, Gary Herbert, Kathy Habgood, Kathleen Holt, Peggy Keller, Joanna Klima, Greg Lawrence, John Lehr, Dave Levy, Tom McDonald, Chita McKinney, Shirley Meston, Terry Perry, Bill, Lisa and Sandy Podulka, Lee Schofield, Dominic Sherony, Jeanne Skelly, Ruth Stork, Leanna Twohig, Tom Verhulst, Chris Villone, and Megan Whitman. Special appreciation is extended to Bill Kaiser and the Board of the Genesee Land Trust for use of their land.

Ruthven Park

425-0795

Cayuga, Haldimand County, Ontario

Bander: **Rick Ludkin**

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Chief Assistants: Loretta Mousseau, Brian Pomfret

The banding station, founded in the fall of 1995, is situated on the grounds of Ruthven Park, a National Historic Site overlooking the Grand River about two km north of Cayuga, Ontario. The park itself comprises ~1500 ac of mostly agricultural and forested lands with six ac of lawns directly surrounding the historic mansion. The net lanes have been cut into the shrubby second growth, making the transition between the lawns and the surrounding woodland.

1. American Goldfinch	192
2. Yellow Warbler	97
3. Gray Catbird	72
4. Brown-headed Cowbird	67
5. Slate-colored Junco	63
6. White-throated Sparrow	60
7. Chipping Sparrow	56
8. Rose-breasted Grosbeak	49
9. Baltimore Oriole	48
10. Song Sparrow	43

Migration monitoring started on 1 Apr and ran through to 6 Jun. In total, we banded/monitored on 63 of a possible 67 days (94% coverage). Days missed were due to very bad weather. On some days, some (sometimes all) nets were not opened due to rain or high winds and ground traps were used alone. We had 26 people volunteer their time, ranging from one day to 32 days, to help out (see list below).

Sixteen 12-m nets were set out in 10 net lanes cut into the shrubby second growth surrounding the historic mansion. Nine of these net lanes have been in place since 1996. We set up a new net in an area that we had planted in red-osier dogwood five years ago specifically for this purpose. 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).

As well as 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/early May. We have run two sets of feeders for many years now and these attracted many moving birds during this time, especially American Goldfinches, Dark-eyed Juncos, and sparrows.

April tended to be cool and damp. May was quite pleasant with lots of "nice" days. Nice days weatherwise 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 the breeding area. "Fall outs" 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.

We set a new record for net hours—5,223. However, our banding total of **1,512** was only our second highest (behind 1,888 last year). That is because our rate of capture—25.6 b/100nh—was one of the lowest in our banding history. Our "biggest" day was 14 May, when we banded 86 birds. On the bright side, we had the most diversity—86 species banded.

We had record high spring numbers for 14 species:

Killdeer (4) – a banding first for us
Black-billed Cuckoo (3)
Great Crested Flycatcher (5)
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (8)

Black-capped Chickadee (26)
Eastern Tufted Titmouse (5)
Western Palm Warbler (15)
American Redstart (15)
Rose-breasted Grosbeak (49)
Indigo Bunting (21)
Field Sparrow (29)
Swamp Sparrow (22)
"Baltimore" Oriole (48)
Common Redpoll (5)

On the other hand, we had a dramatic drop in the number of American Goldfinches—from 458 last spring to only 192 this season, a 266 bird difference. Especially noteworthy was the banding of an Acadian Flycatcher on 21 May.

The increase in numbers of some of these species that breed locally is 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. Also, Baltimore Orioles were at a new high. To go along with the 48 banded, we retrapped 24 that had been banded in other years for a total of 72 handled!

We had 264 return birds of 33 species. Especially noteworthy were: Great Crested Flycatcher (banded in 1999); Yellow Warbler (banded in 2000); and Brewster's Warbler, Baltimore Oriole and Brown-headed Cowbird (banded in 2001) The most common retrapped returning bird was the Yellow Warbler with an amazing 36 re-encountered.

We especially thank the Ontario Power Generation Corporation for their generous donation of funds to refurbish the banding lab. We were able to triple the space available for banding and for visitors—especially important as we had a record 432 of them this spring.

Also, thanks to 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, administered through Bird Studies Canada, 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).

Volunteer Effort:

Thanks to all that made this such a successful (and fun!) season:

28+ days Rick Ludkin, Brian Pomfret

14 – 20 days Loretta Mousseau

7 – 13 days Matt Searles, Peter Thoem, Gwenn French

4 – 6 days Mitch Beck, Elaine Serena, Faye Socholotiuk, Cheryl-Anne Miller, Phil Alaimo, Jeff MacLeod (this does not include the enormous amount of time Jeff has put into developing and running the blog—check out: <http://ruthvenpark.ca/natureblog>)

1 - 3 days Marg Ludkin, Daphne Payne, Jackie McInnes, Revven Martin, Shirley Klement, Richard Joos, Margaret Troy, Michelle Kenny, Rhiannon Leshyk, Beth & Jean Leishman, Norm Pomfret, Margaret Heslin, Mike Alkema

Rock Point Banding Station 420-0793

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Roswitha Matuschek, Rick Young, Dora Young, Ken Perry: Chief Assistants

On the whole this was a cool spring with winter coat and heater on early mornings well into May. We used the same equipment as in previous years with nets in double configurations and remaining in the same position as previous years. This year showed the lowest catch rate of 37 b/100nh in the seven years that spring banding has been carried out at Rock Point. In contrast, it was the second highest

number of species caught with 15 of the 84 species being represented by only one bird. The number of warblers caught this spring represents the second worst total in seven years. So on the whole, not such a good spring.

<u>Species</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>% SY</u>	<u>% ASY</u>	<u>% AHY</u>
1. White-throated Sparrow	224	66	33	1
2. Ruby-crowned Kinglet	139	53.2	44.6	2.2
3. Gray Catbird	108	72.2	26.8	1
4. Yellow Warbler	107	63.6	35.5	.9
5. Slate-colored Junco	90	52.2	42.2	5.6
6. American Goldfinch	75	64	34.6	1.4
7. Song Sparrow	60	68.3	28.3	3.4
8. Swamp Sparrow	59	67.8	27.1	5.1
9. Magnolia Warbler	55	58.2	40	1.8
10. Red-winged Blackbird	53	60.4	37.7	1.9

Some returns of note were two Blue Jays banded in 2000; Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Yellow Warbler, and Black-capped Chickadee banded in 2002; and two Yellow Warblers and two Gray Catbirds banded in 2003. We had 242 returns this year. Two possible foreign returns were caught with information still pending. Recoveries showed only one Brown-headed Cowbird first banded in 2004 and recovered only 15 km from the banding station.

We continued with a co-operative study involving feather collection for isotope studies. Unfortunately, we contributed only one sample since Tennessee Warbler and Orange-crowned Warbler were being targeted and neither is plentiful in the spring at Rock Point.

Visitors are still welcome at Rock Point and we were fortunate in having Ken Perry with us for a week in May. Ken is from Ireland and thoroughly enjoyed our variety of birds. A group of guys from England looked us up as they continued their bird tour along Lake Erie. They had found us through our web at <http://www.geocities.com/rockpointbanding/>

A grant from T.D. Friends of the Environment enabled us to buy a dedicated computer for entering data, a new roof for the banding shed, additional boardwalk, solar panels, paint, and a hydro hookup for a new trailer. We are very grateful for this grant.