

2009

Atlantic Flyway Review: Region II (North Central) Fall 2008 Ellenville Station

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- One American Robin at 4.
- Four Gray Catbirds at 4 (3) and 7+.
- One Cedar Waxwing at 6.
- One Warbling Vireo at 4+.
- One Red-eyed Vireo at 3+.
- Two Yellow Warblers at 4 and 5+.
- One Chestnut-sided Warbler at 4+.
- Three Common Yellowthroats at 4, 5 and 6.
- Three Northern Cardinals at 4, 5 and 5+.
- One Chipping Sparrow at 4.
- One Song Sparrow at 4.
- One Common Grackle at 4.
- One House Finch at 4+.
- Six American Goldfinch at 6 (3), 5+, and 4 (2).

In sum, our returns this year represented 3% of our banded total; a very nice return percentage.

Overall health was excellent. Hippoboscids flies were few and the few abnormalities were unremarkable. The rare gynandromorphic goldfinch was by far our most unusual bird ever.

Inadvertent net captures of Odonata were limited to 21 individuals of six species.

We thank Doris Cohrs, Bob and Judy Cosgriff, A.L. Donahue, David Guaspari, Jay Schissell and Ruth Young for their generous support, Victoria Bond Kelly for her talent and time in maintaining our website, and several others who contributed advice and assistance. These include Stillman's Greenhouse, The Hi-Lights printing (Bridgette Goodman), Spidertech, Clara McCarthy and Barlow Rhodes.

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This station did not band this season due to the operator recovering from a torn rotator cuff in his shoulder. He is doing well and we look forward to his return in 2009.

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The 2008 AFR banding season began well after a very good MAPS season. August produced the usual number of *Empidonax* flycatchers, early warblers, and local nesting hatching-year birds. Surprisingly, I banded only 17 Red-eyed Vireos in August, a month in which I usually band 50-100 birds. While the shrubs with fruit were not fully ripe at the beginning of August, they ripened steadily throughout the month. September was slow and October was slower.

There were no new species. Red-eyed Vireo numbers were down for the second year in a row, but Gray Catbird numbers were a high for the 20 years I have had this station—128. This is after banding 41 new and 10 returns during June and July. Gray Catbirds were a MAPS target bird for cloacal swabbing and feather pulls and Common Yellowthroats and House Finches were target birds for LaMNA swabbing. All three of those species made the top 10 list.

I compared the top five species of 2008 to the top five in years 1999-2008. None was on that list every year and Song Sparrow made the list only this year. I was surprised that any warbler made the list, as I am not a 'warbler' station. Magnolias were on the list three times.

My banding partner and consultant, Harriet Marsi, passed away in June. She had banded on this land since 1960.

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In the 39th consecutive season of operation, fall 2008 results were remarkably similar to those of 2007. The number of birds banded was 626 vs 630 last year, numbers exceeded only four times since 1970. Net hours were above average, and the number of

species banded (57) was the same as 2007, slightly above the long-term average. Mild weather permitted a tie with last year's high number of days of banding (44). However, the yield of 52b/100nh was below that of 2007 and well below previous highs for this location.

Weather conditions this fall were favorable for netting. Temperatures each month were within a degree or two of normal, and wind required furling nets only a couple of times all fall. Precipitation was about 2" below normal in August, and about an inch above normal in both September and October. My ability to keep nets open even though rain was forecast was improved by new availability of radar on high-speed internet (finally). A rare problem here occurred 21 Oct, when I caught too many birds: 53 were already in the nets when I checked them for the first time. I called for help in furling each net as soon as it was emptied, and rain began just as all were removed.

Overall, 66% of new birds were HY. Last year almost all juncos were adult (only 12% HY), but 51% were HY this year. In contrast, almost all catbirds were HY: 92% in 2007 and 82% this year. The top five species made up 48% of the total catch, and the top ten made up 66%, very close to 2007 numbers.

The fruits on the shrubs around the net lanes were plentiful, though not as abundant as in 2007. Silky dogwood (*Cornus amomum*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera* sp.) and multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) had good fruits, though arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*) seemed to have fewer than usual. Robins and Cedar Waxwings were attracted to black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) fruits high overhead, but few were caught. For some unknown reason, the usual deer were absent, as evidenced by abundant apples that ultimately rotted on the ground.

Fruit-eating birds were well represented. Red-eyed Vireos were caught in the fourth highest numbers ever (52)—twice the average of all previous years. Catbird numbers were high (67), exceeded only a few times before, and White-throated Sparrow numbers

were good. However, all the thrushes were banded in numbers well below their highs of last year.

Ninety-nine warblers (16% of all bandings) of 15 species were caught, led by yellowthroats, Ovenbirds, black-throated blue, and magnolia. This represents a rebound in warblers from the lowest ever 8% of all bandings of last year, but well below the 25 to 30% of earlier years.

Two new species were banded for the first time here this fall: a female Cooper's Hawk and three Rusty Blackbirds, bringing the cumulative total to 108 species. A locally rare species, Connecticut Warbler, was banded on 8 Sep, the first since 1995 and only the fifth caught here.

Note: After watching a demonstration of saw-whet owl calling, catching, and banding, I decided to try to band a few here even though I had no reason to think that saw-whet owls migrated through my property. In 39 years of fall banding here I had not caught (or seen or heard) one, though I had had eight nets up all night on five dates in October in the late seventies. Even so, just before dark on 24 Oct 2008, I opened six of my usual 30 mm mesh nets (though 60 mm is standard for saw-whets) and started to broadcast the male advertising call as was used in the demonstration. To my great surprise, I caught seven owls in about three hours, and 29 more plus two repeats on succeeding evenings into early November. (No data on saw-whets is included in the totals for this report because the use of a broadcast call is not consistent with the protocols used in this banding project.) I am humbled by how little I really know about the migrating birds of my back yard.

McGill Bird Observatory 454-0739

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McGill Bird Observatory (MBO) was established in 2004 at the west end of the island of Montreal, on a 22-