

2010

## Atlantic Flyway Review: Region III (Western Ridge)- Fall 2009 Ruthven Park

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**Lewiston****431-0790**

Niagara County, NY

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The 2009 fall banding season started on 2 Sep. There were very few warblers in the woods at this time, with only a total of four species being handled, totaling eight birds. This condition did not change throughout the season. This station recorded the lowest number of warbler species as well as total warblers in 33 years of fall operation! Other species, such as Black-capped Chickadee and all the thrushes, seemed to be present in normal numbers. The last day of banding was 14 Oct.

The weather played a minor role in number of days operated; there were a total of four scheduled days lost due to either rain or high winds. There were no new species handled this fall; a total of six local retraps were handled with data being taken.

There were only three visitors to the station this fall with the day of their visit being very disappointing with only six birds being captured and banded.

**Ruthven Park****425-0795**

Haldimand County, ON

**Rick Ludkin, Loretta Mousseau, Brian Pomfret, Banders**

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The station is situated on the grounds of Ruthven Park National Historic Site, about 100 m from the historic mansion. The entrance to the site is located about 2 km north of the town of Cayuga. This station is one of three banding stations that make up the Haldimand Bird Observatory - Rock Point Provincial Park and Dry Lake. All three stations are within 40 km of each other.

The station was run from 1 Sep to 8 Nov. Although fall migration is well underway in August, we did not feel we could man it consistently without jeopardizing our ability to concentrate our efforts in September and October—you can only ask so much of volunteers. Even so, due to periods of poor

weather and work commitments of its banders, the station was in operation for only 42 days this season.

Up to 16 12-m mist nets (30 mm mesh) were deployed in 10 net lanes. These net lanes are long-standing with some being in the same place since 1995 and all but one being in place since 2000. The lanes have been cut into the dogwood/scrubby edge habitat that acts as a buffer between the lawns and fields of the historic site and the surrounding forest. On some days, not all the nets were utilized—especially on days with high winds. We also deployed up to four ground traps and one Potter trap—especially in October, when ground-feeding sparrow species were more numerous.

The weather in September was simply wonderful: warm and sunny throughout. October was more “mixed,” with periods of bad weather but not really cold temperatures.

This was a “difficult” season in that I was the only bander available with any consistency (although we were helped out by Loretta Mousseau and Audrey Heagy for a few days each). Consequently, the number of days of coverage was down: 42 days, compared with an average of 58 over the past five years. [Comparative averages given will be based on numbers extending from the 2004 season, when we restricted ourselves to a fall season that ran from the beginning of September to the end of the first week of November. Prior to that, numbers may have included banding time in the summer months.] Our coverage in September was actually pretty good (due to the excellent weather, which was an incentive for me to take time off work), but noticeably reduced in October (when the weather was more often not very good). So the number of birds banded, **2,408**, is down (avg. = 2,888) and the number of net hours is, **3,641** (down from an average of 4,579). Interestingly, the rate of birds captured, b/100nh, remained the same (**63.15** vs the average of 63.11). Last year we banded only 28 more birds despite having almost 2,000 more net hours! The bottom line is that this good year could have been a great year with better coverage. But sometimes it goes like that.

We had only one day on which we banded over 100 birds (117 on 4 Oct). Usually we will have multiple days at 100+. More than anything, this probably reflects a lack of coverage during October (although last year we had only one 100+ day too).

Some of the more interesting results include:

- We banded an Olive-sided Flycatcher—only the second one we have banded (the other was in 1999).
- We banded a record high nine Eastern Tufted Titmice. The first titmouse we banded was in 1998 and from then until 2007 we banded a total of 16 in the fall. We have banded 17 in 2008 and 2009—these birds are certainly shifting their range north.
- We banded only two Cedar Waxwings (compare to 135 in 2008). This is the lowest number since we started in 1995. This is a species that is quite serendipitous, wandering from food patch to food patch. I guess they just missed us, despite a pretty good berry crop.
- We had 73 Chipping Sparrows—a record high number.
- Song Sparrow numbers were down to 74 (vs a 5-year average of 138).
- The total of 745 American Goldfinches (vs a 5-year average of 624) was the second highest (1,280 in 2007).
- I try to get a sense of the number of Neotropical warblers we band by totaling the overall number of warblers caught and then subtracting the medium-distance fliers (Yellow-rumped Warblers, for example). This year the number of “long-distance warblers” was only 7.3% of the total catch—second lowest since 1995 (vs 6.3% in 2005).

We had 84 return birds of 18 species. Two noteworthy captures were a Gray Catbird and a Blue Jay, both banded in 2003.

We had several foreign recaptures, including American Goldfinches that were banded at Dry Lake and Rock Point.

We got word from the Banding Office of a remarkable recovery: an American Goldfinch banded here in Jun 2007 was recovered in Mar 2008 in Lacombe, LA—a town only a few miles north of New Orleans and 1700 mi SSW of Ruthven! This is the most distant recovery of a Ruthven-banded bird ever.

Daily estimated totals are generated for each species of bird encountered on any particular day. It really is an educated guess of how many birds of that species are present in and around the banding area that day. It is based on the number of birds banded and retrapped; on the birds observed and counted on the formal census; and on the number of birds counted/observed in the course of running the nets. The various count methods complement each other. Some cryptically colored and/or skulking birds would not often be counted if they were not caught in the nets. On the other hand, birds moving along the river are not caught in nets but are often observed during the census. Waterfowl and raptors most often are seen flying high overhead.

Overall, for the season we encountered 134 species/forms. Highlights include: 12 species of raptors (including regular sightings of Bald Eagles), 23 species of warblers, and an Olive-sided Flycatcher.

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. Marilynn Havelka (CAO) and Christine Madliger (Species at risk Co-ordinator) have been especially supportive. Haldimand Bird Observatory, of which Ruthven is a part, has received support from the Norfolk Field Naturalists, Ontario Power

Generation, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Ministry of Natural Resources (CFWIP grant) and the Observatory's friends and members.

Many thanks to all who helped this season!! A lot of people contributed a lot of time (738 volunteer hours): **5+ weeks:** Rick Ludkin

**3-4 weeks:** Nancy Furber, Christine Madliger

**1-2 weeks:** Peter Thoem, Elaine Serena

**4-6 days:** Faye Socholotiuk, Marg Ludkin, Loretta Mousseau, Oliver Love, Audrey Heagy

**1-3 days:** Christina DeMelo, Shirley Klement, Emily Johnson, Jim Smith, Rick Hoy, George DeFossard, Cornelia Buecklers, Sandra Loher, Mike Alkema, Siobhan Stewart, Chris Harris, Liz Vanderwoude, Mathew Furber, Tina Semeniuk, Christie Macdonald, Michelle Bultje, Dale Stockton

#### **Rock Point**

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Dunnville, Haldimand County, ON

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**Roswitha Matuschek, Chief Assistant**

We had a reasonable fall showing sixth highest in 10 years, which is an improvement over the last few years. Species-wise, it was the second best year. We did catch a Green Heron, which is really all about being at the correct net at the correct time. Rick Hoy, from Ireland, told me he would bring back a new species for the station and the heron did that.

We had Rick Hoy from Northern Ireland for most of the fall and he thoroughly enjoyed our North American birds. Ashley Casault from Wales and returning to Canada was with us through August. My other regular volunteers, Roswitha Matuschek, Kim Christoff, Bev Stevenson, Rick Young, and Dora Young did their usual admirable job. Fergus Nicoll and Steve Gillis dropped in to lend a hand.

In total, the volunteers and myself logged 1,555 field hours.

We had 662 recaptured birds and, of this total, 123 birds were multiple catches representing 19%. Out of the 123, we had 76 (68%) caught twice, 21 (17%) caught three times, 13 (11%) were caught four times, and 13 (11%) were caught between five and thirteen times. Black-capped Chickadees took 10 of the 13 positions in the last section. My earliest recapture date was 2004 (Black-capped Chickadee), four from 2005 (Yellow Warbler, American Goldfinch, Slate-colored Junco, Song Sparrow) and five from 2006 (3 Gray Catbirds, 2 American Goldfinches). We had 22 from 2007, 72 from 2008, and the rest from 2009.

We had two foreign retraps: one American Goldfinch and one Yellow Warbler.

Recoveries were an **American Goldfinch** banded Aug 2007 and recovered 25 Feb 2008 in Montgomery County, AL; a **Gray Catbird** banded 24 Sep 2007 and recovered 8 May 2009 at Avon Lake, Lorain County, OH; an **American Goldfinch** banded 19 Sep 2007 and recovered 30 Sep 2007, in Cayuga, ON; a **Yellow-shafted Flicker** with multiple recaptures in Chestertown, Kent County, MD, first banded 16 Sep 2008; a **Golden-crowned Kinglet** banded 23 Oct 2008 and recovered 5 Nov 2008 at Lindsey, Sandusky County, OH; a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** banded May 2008 and recovered May 2010 at Scarborough, ON, a **Yellow Warbler** banded 20 Jul 2009 recovered 31 Jul 2009 at Clarion County, PA; and a **Myrtle Warbler** banded 8 Oct 2009 and recovered 8 May 2010.

We are appreciative of Parks Ontario for continued support in allowing us to remain in Rock Point Provincial Park. Individual donations and corporate monetary support helps us continue. Bird Studies Canada is analyzing long-term trends. Niagara Falls Nature Club gives monetary support. And my individual volunteers make the slow mornings great and the really busy mornings possible.