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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region III (Western Ridge)- Fall 2009 Allegheny Front Migration Observatory

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privilege of banding at Mt. Nebo WMA. Thanks to Samuel Yoder for his help in setting up the station, especially for placing the net poles, as well as the careful tending of nets with his sister, Irene. Bill Pope's availability for clearing paths, monitoring nets, and running errands was greatly appreciated.

**Allegheny Front
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 52nd year of Bird Banding at Dolly Sods, WV, this fall. AFMO is located 10 miles southeast of Davis, WV. Banding began on 15 Aug and ended on 14 Oct 2009. In total, 4428 birds were banded of 80 species, with a station effort of 66.8 b/100nh. Mourning Dove is a new species for the station this fall, which brings the AFMO total species banded to 121. The overall percentage of hatch year birds (using known-age birds only) was 72.15%. In total, 230,478 birds have been banded since 1958, when the writer (Bell) founded AFMO.

The station was open for 48 days and closed for 13 days due to high winds, fog and/or rain. There were seven days when over 100 birds were banded, two days over 200, two days over 300, and the best day of the season was 1 Oct, when 471 birds were banded. The most dominant species banded that day were the Blackpoll Warbler (220), the Black-throated Blue Warbler (52) and the Blue Jay (40).

The Black-throated Blue Warbler was the most numerous species this year with 1048 banded, which is 0.01% over the 10-year average (including 2008). It has been the leader for the past eight out of 10 years. The Blackpoll Warbler was the second highest with 894 banded (29.5% above the 10-year average), the Black-throated Green Warbler was the third highest with 492 banded (-11.3% under the 10-year average), the Cape May Warbler was the fourth highest with 182 banded (44.2% over the 10-year average), and the Swainson's Thrush was the fifth

highest with 171 banded (-21.7% under the 10-year average). The total of the top five species banded was 3,139, which was 70.9% of the total birds banded this season. The next highest banded were Tennessee Warbler (167), Magnolia Warbler (141), Slate-colored Junco (130), Blue Jay (126), and Ruby-crowned Kinglet (109).

Compared to birds banded at AFMO in 2008, there was an increase in Blackpoll Warblers banded this fall and a decrease in Tennessee, Black-throated Blue, and Black-throated Green Warblers, which could possibly be weather related at nesting time. An article in the Fall, 2009, *Purple Martin Conservation Association* magazine (Vol. 18, pp. 4 & 5) stated that in late June and early July this year there was an extensive low pressure system that moved very slowly across the Great Lakes bringing cold, wet and windy weather and, as a result, thousands of nestling Purple Martins died because their parents could not bring them enough food.

We received notice of a foreign recovery of a bird banded at AFMO. A HY Blackpoll Warbler banded by Bob Dean at AFMO on 25 Sep 2006 was recaptured by Ralf Strewe, Magdalena University, 1 mile SE of Santa Marta, Colombia, on 24 Oct 2008. Jo Anna Lutmerding, Biologist/Encounter Data Manager for the Bird Banding Laboratory at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, Maryland, stated to the writer (Pattison) "this is the only encounter record we have of a Blackpoll Warbler in South America." Recoveries of banded Blackpoll Warblers indicate that they are from northwestern United States, western Canada, and Alaska and are migrating to northern South America for the winter; but those caught in the nets at AFMO on Dolly Sods are migrating southwestward. A possible answer to this could be found in a study by Dr. Sidney A. Gauthreaux, Jr., a professor of zoology at Clemson University who contends that when birds are blown off their migratory path by strong winds, they apparently compensate to get back on the original route, and that is why they are going southwestward at AFMO. However, how far they go before turning southeastward again is not known.

Mike Lanzone from the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Powdermill Avian Research Center, Rector, PA, returned to AFMO this fall to continue his research on nocturnal flight calls. Along with his research assistant, Amy Amones, Lanzone used Portable Recording Chambers he built to record detailed samples of flight calls. Migrating wood warblers and other selected species were first netted, documented, and banded at AFMO. The selected birds were then placed in the Recording Chamber and previously recorded flight call notes were played. This often elicited calls from the birds in the Recording Chamber. Mike Lanzone states: "recording flight calls of temporarily captive birds...allows us to study inter- and intraspecific variation in call notes of birds of known identity, age, and sex.....flight calls recorded in captivity are similar to those recorded from wild birds.....The results of our analysis greatly facilitate the development of automated sound-analysis algorithms critical for implementing and strengthening future acoustic monitoring applications" (Lanzone 2009, *Auk* 126:511).

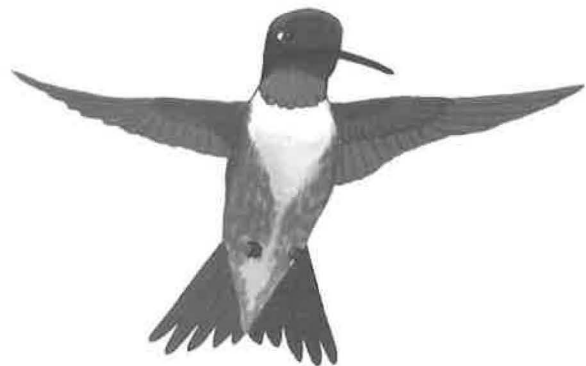
The Flyover Count was started in 1990 and has continued every year during the fall banding season at AFMO. Results from the 2009 fall counting of four selected species which make up the majority of the Count are: 153 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, 2922 Blue Jays, 1862 American Goldfinches, and 68 Monarch Butterflies. All four were below the previous 19-year average, which was 435 for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, 5800 for Blue Jays, 2901 for American Goldfinches, and 1176 for Monarch Butterflies.

This fall, 934 people signed our visitors' book. These visitors came from 22 states, Washington DC, and six foreign countries: Canada, China, Czech Republic, Germany, Philippines and United Kingdom. Several elementary and middle schools and colleges visited AFMO, including The Highland Adventist School from Elkins, WV, Glenville State College Ecology Class, Georgetown University Freshman Group, Mountaineer Montessori School, Charleston, WV, Mountaineer Audubon, Morgantown, WV, Tidewater Appalachian Trail

Club, Norfolk, VA, Mountwood Bird Club, Parkersburg, WV, and Ralph K. Bell Bird Club, Waynesburg, PA.

We thank the personnel of Monongahela National Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson, Special Use Manager Laura Hise, Forestry Technician John Waggy and all others for their cooperation and help. We thank the West Virginia D.N.R. for the use of their building for storage of our banding shed. We also want to thank the Ralph K. Bell Bird Club, The Brooks Bird Club and many visitors and volunteers for their financial support, which is our only means of replacing our mist nets.

The banders who participated this year were Bob Dean, LeJay Graffious, Ken & Sue Heselton, Fred & Carol McCullough, Randy & Beth Ritter (also Campground Hosts), Todd & Kim Schnopp, Charles Ziegenfus and Station leaders Ralph K. Bell and Joan Bell Pattison. The scheduled volunteers, in addition to the banders, who helped for extended periods of time were: Bill Beatty, Tom Fox, Tim Newlin, Don Pattison, Maggi Perl, Jan Runyan, and Stephen Sushinski. LeJay Graffious and Todd Schnopp and other volunteers erected and took down the shed for the season. We want to thank all of the volunteers who helped in many ways this year.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird
by George West