

2010

Atlantic Flyway Review: Spring 2009 Kestrel Haven

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Recommended Citation

Gregoire, John and Gregoire, Sue (2010) "Atlantic Flyway Review: Spring 2009 Kestrel Haven," *North American Bird Bander*. Vol. 35 : Iss. 2 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/nabb/vol35/iss2/15>

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early Blackpoll Warbler. Spring migration can be hit and miss. If these ideal conditions had continued, it would have been over too quickly. Luckily, more seasonal north winds followed, putting a damper on the eager migrants from the tropics

Every once in a long while, weather conditions develop in precisely the right way and migration at Long Point is phenomenal. On 6 May, a record-breaking 1321 birds of more than 55 species were banded among the three stations. The previous LPBO single-day record of 1291 was set on 27 Apr 1985. The Tip station banded 746 birds on its own on 6 May. (It certainly helped that the Tip was manned with six extractors, one super-scribe, and two LPBO wardens that day!) Volunteers there observed 134 species within the census area, which established a new record as well. About 50% of the diversity was White-throated Sparrows. At one point we could barely close the nets without birds flying into them. Moments like these are encountered rarely. The adrenaline rush, excitement, and sheer awe are difficult to describe.

At least one Kentucky Warbler was banded at each of our three stations this spring, despite the complete absence of the species in 2008. The Tip and Old Cut each banded Worm-eating Warblers, and a female Prothonotary Warbler was banded at Breakwater on 11 May.

Migration seemed to slow down in the latter half of May, with less-than-ideal wind conditions as a contributing factor. An Acadian Flycatcher was banded at Breakwater on 21 May and one was observed at the Tip on the 27th. An unexpected treat at Breakwater involved a European Goldfinch of unknown origin that was caught and banded on 22 May, followed by a second individual on 30 May. In the same category of escaped caged bird, a European Greenfinch visited a feeder on Long Point on 31 May.

A combination of highly skilled volunteers able to safely handle the numbers of birds, combined with conducive weather conditions, made for impressive results this spring.

Kestrel Haven

422-0764

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This was again a dismal spring. Over 23 springs we have seen an increasingly disturbing pattern of fewer and fewer species and individuals. To make that worse, our daily point counts no longer add all that much to the banding data. Were it not for hundreds of American Goldfinches and Pine Siskins, migration would have been a non-event. There was a very large surge during a warm period in early and mid April when we were not banding.

<u>No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>% SY</u>	<u>% ASY</u>	<u>% AHY</u>
310	American Goldfinch	36	24	40
159	Pine Siskin	54	46	0
36	Slate-colored Junco	36	61	3
27	White-throated Sparrow	41	59	0
25	Purple Finch	72	28	0
20	Chipping Sparrow	15	85	0
19	E White-crowned Sparrow	0	0	100
18	Song Sparrow	0	0	100
16	Blue Jay	63	25	0
14	Black-capped Chickadee	0	0	100

We banded 779 individuals of 46 species in 22 days of operation. We also had 103 repeats, 104 returns, and seven hummingbirds not banded. Our measure of efficiency was 145 b/100nh for newly banded birds and 185 b/100nh overall. Our best day was 3 May with 107 banded, and our most species diverse day was also 3 May with 20 species banded. Our efficiency was quite high as we used only 10 nets and often closed because of high winds arising within an hour or so of opening. We banded only eight warbler species; all but one were local breeders.

The story of winter/spring was the amazing invasion of Pine Siskins. Several researchers are attempting to consolidate data on the probable

millions of birds that blanketed the entire country. Here we routinely hosted flocks of 50 to 200 birds. White-winged Crossbills feeding on our larch cones often augmented the thrill. Once the cold passed and we were able to band, it became apparent that most of these birds were retreating to the north.

We banded 159 siskins and, in early June, had but one pair remaining and probably breeding. Of the birds banded, 51 were male and 102 female, with six of unknown sex. This breaks down further to 85 SY birds and 74 ASY birds. Of the total, we had eight of the green morph siskins, beautiful birds with much more yellow as well as other identifying characteristics.

As these birds passed through, we noted an ever increasing number of females that presented with partial to fully developed brood patches, an indication of biological preparedness while enroute to a breeding site – wherever that may be. There is some contention that proposes such birds breed within 50 or 100 miles of this location but that is relatively unproven by observation. Several pairs have been documented as breeding here in Central New York, some as early as April. We believe most of the females will breed on traditional breeding grounds but expect some reports of breeding confirmed in many southern states because of the sheer numbers. On 4 May we banded a female with a desiccated brood patch implying that she completed breeding at some point to our south.

Our age data are somewhat skewed due to an ongoing study that has revealed covert feather shape to be a less-than-accurate age criterion in some species. Last spring we reported on the inaccuracy of using covert shape for ageing and data from last fall and this spring continue to support that finding. This is particularly true in American Goldfinch, so we now age all adult females as AHY.

One new form was added to the cumulative station list of 132 species plus six forms; point count cumulative remains at 220 species seen at Kestrel

Haven. Abnormalities were unremarkable and no significant health or parasite problems were noted. We did have two juncos present with unusual white markings. One had a white eye rings, throat and forehead while the other had a white slash forward of and above the right eye; this appears to be common in the species as the local bird lists have reported at least three other such finds this spring. As usual, the real pleasure of this spring was in our returns.

We enjoyed 104 returning individuals! Of that number, 36 were at least four years of age or older. The eldest return was a Yellow Warbler at over eight years of age. The elders were:

- A Downy Woodpecker at 4 years old.
- Three Black-capped Chickadees at 4, 4+ (2) and 6 years old.
- Two American Robins at 4 and 5+ years old.
- Two Gray Catbirds at 4 and 5 years old.
- Three Yellow Warblers at 4 (2), **and 8+** years old.
- Two Common Yellowthroat at 4+ and 5+ years old.
- Two Rose-breasted Grosbeak at 4 years old.
- Six Song Sparrow at 4 (4), 4+ **and 7** years old.
- A Chipping Sparrow at **6+** years old.
- A White-throated Sparrow at 5 years old.
- A Red-winged Blackbird at 6 years old.
- Three Baltimore Orioles at 4(2) and 5 years old.
- Nine American Goldfinches at 4 (6), 5 (2), and 6+ years old.

We had a report of an American Goldfinch banded here on 14 May 2008 that was found dead in central South Carolina on 12 Mar 2009.

We thank A.L. Donahue, Bob and Judy Cosgriff, David Guaspari, Jay Schissel, and Ruth Young for their financial support; as well as Doris Cohrs, Barlow Rhodes and Stillman's Greenhouse for their advice, assistance, and support. Thanks to Vicky Kelly for her continued maintenance of our website.