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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region II (North Central) Fall 2010 Ellenville Station

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Powderhouse Road Station**420-0775**

Vestal, Broome County, NY

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Weather was a large factor in my fall banding. The total number of birds banded for MAPS was 50-100 fewer birds than usual. Danielle Kaschube, MAPS coordinator, said fewer birds were commonly reported by East Coast banding stations. We had an early spring with a five-day cold spell in May. The food supply for nestlings was down sharply, resulting in failed first broods. This cold was followed by a long, hot and dry summer. No banding was done from 9 Aug to 19 Aug (knee replacement).

We had an abundance of rain during the fall. I measured 5+ inches on 1 Oct. Leaves fell beginning in early September. There were more leaves than birds.

The lurking of last year's domestic cat was not seen until 'it' ran out of my garage on 29 Sep. On 7 Oct, I removed leaves as I went down the net lanes. The third net was full of birds (maybe 8-10). All of them were either dead or dying. I furred all my nets and did not band again.

Ellenville Station**414-0742**

Ellenville, Ulster County, NY

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For the second consecutive year, very low numbers of birds were banded in fall 2010. Although the number of days and net-hours were near usual, only 343 new birds were netted for a yield of only 33b/100nh, (only six seasons since 1970 were worse). An average of only 8.6 birds per day were caught, the 3rd lowest in 41 years. During several prolonged periods in the banding season there were no birds around. It seems probable that disturbed vegetation around the nets, shortage of fruits and presence of predators contributed to the lack of birds. Almost 68% of all new birds banded were HY, a bit above the long-term average at this station.

The vegetation around the net lanes was damaged by heavy snows in winter 2010. The snow brought down large limbs and weak trees, such as gray birches, and several large multiflora rose bushes were crushed flat. In early July I had the lanes cleared, but it was too late for this banding season, and the habitat remained quite disturbed. Many fruiting shrubs had also been impacted by the severe winter, and the summer heat and September drought further stressed them. There were no arrowwood fruits (for the second consecutive year), and very small amounts of honeysuckle, blueberry, silky dogwood, and multiflora rose.

The temperature remained above normal through the banding season. August was almost 2° F above normal and rainfall was over an inch above average. September was almost three degrees above normal, with 1.6" below average rainfall. Almost all of the rain for the month fell on the 30th, following a month-long drought. October's rainfall was over 5" above normal, making it the third wettest October since 1895. (Weather data here is from the National Regional Climate Center at Cornell.) Between rain, frequent high winds, and frost on the nets, it was difficult to get in the usual number of banding days in October, normally my most productive month.

Catbirds defied the weather and the downward trends seen in other birds, and had a very good year. Sixty-nine were banded, comprising 18% of all new birds caught. Most (89%) were HY. Warblers struck another positive note with a total of 83 individuals of 17 species (24% of all birds banded). Most were caught in near-average numbers. Two species (Northern Parula and Connecticut warblers) are rare here. Flycatcher numbers were a bit above average, thrushes were near average, and vireos, finches and sparrows were well below average.

For the third year, three or four of the same 30-mm nets were deployed not far from the same locations as above, along with a caller to bring in Northern Saw-whet Owls migrating overhead. I banded 112 new saw-whets and one Barred Owl on 23 evenings between 10 Oct and 19 Nov. Five foreign recoveries and three returns brought additional

excitement (how different from passerine banding!) The owls were enjoyed by 46 visitors. Data from owl banding is not included in the fall banding report above. Questions about the effect of evening owl banding on the nearby morning passerine banding remain unresolved.

McGill Bird Observatory 454-0739

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McGill Bird Observatory (MBO) in Montreal is a full member of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network, and the only station in Quebec to conduct standardized spring and fall migration banding programs. MBO is operated by the Migration Research Foundation (MRF), a non-profit organization dedicated to the study of wildlife movements, especially as they relate to population monitoring and conservation.

In 2010, MBO operated its sixth full Fall Migration Monitoring Program, covering the usual 13-week period from 1 Aug through 30 Oct. A one-hour census trail was walked daily, and nets were open for five hours beginning at sunrise, except when limited by inclement weather; only four days of banding were completely lost to rain, snow, or wind, and the record total of 6,061 net hours reflected the generally good weather throughout the season. Typically, all 16 nets were operated daily, except for one set of four sometimes closed due to wind, and occasional closures of others due to unusually high capture rates. All nets are 12-m Spidertech passerine nets, on standard 3-m poles. Photos are taken of each net lane annually to monitor (and allow mitigation of) habitat changes over time. This fall, bander-in-charge duties were handled primarily by Simon Duval, with some help from Marcel Gahbauer, Gay Gruner, and Lance Laviolette.

This year's total of 6,808 birds banded was a record—more than double last year's total of 3,390 and well above the previous high of 5,101 set in 2008. The rate of 112 birds banded/100 net hours was also a new record high by a large margin. Repeats (884) and returns (44) were both above average but not record high this year.

To a large extent, this year's totals are due to an exceptional movement of Yellow-rumped Warblers, including 2,359 banded, out of over 6,000 individuals observed. This fits the six-year pattern we have observed at MBO, with far more of them banded in "even" years (average 1,538) compared to "odd" years (average 110), despite comparable effort across years. Of note, several AHY females and at least one AHY male were still replacing secondaries in early October, something we have not observed in previous years. Perhaps some pairs had an extra brood this summer, accounting not only for the late molt but also for the unusual abundance of HY birds?

Aside from Yellow-rumped Warblers, we had record high banding counts for 23 other species, including 11 more warblers, most notably American Redstart (149), Tennessee Warbler (114), Common Yellowthroat (100), Western Palm Warbler (62), Northern Waterthrush (53), Black-and-white Warbler (39), Canada Warbler (35), and Chestnut-sided Warbler (33). Among other species, the most significant records were Slate-colored Junco (509, 40% above last year's record count), and Black-capped Chickadee (440, nearly double the record of 222 set in our first full fall season). We also banded our first Pine Warbler ever, increasing our count of species banded to 106.

Our peak period spanned weeks 8-10 of our 13-week season, with over 1,000 birds banded in each of those three weeks, including a record high 1,279 in week 8 (19-25 Sep), and largely coinciding with the peak of Yellow-rumped Warbler migration. However, as reported in our weekly reports (archived at <http://www.migrationresearch.org/mbo/log.html>), we had record high counts in seven out of 13 weeks, reflecting that it was a great fall for a variety of species.