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## Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV Piedmont-Coastal Plain, Fall 2011 Eden Mill

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Hurricane Irene and wet weather that we endured afterward in October affected days in which we could operate and we suspect it affected survivorship of local avian residents. Anecdotal local reports of reductions in American Goldfinch sightings in the field, at feeders, and at our nets suggested that long periods of wet weather were unusually hard on their reproductive efforts. Again, numbers were slightly down from previous years, predominantly because of early closures and cancellations, though numbers captured per 100 net-hours reached normal levels. Best days had fewer birds and species than in previous years and our typical busy sparrow day in October came and went with little notice.

Again, this year's results were consistent in the decreasing numbers of many species previously more common. Numbers of local residents were down; e.g., Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, and Carolina Chickadee. Fortunately, Lincoln's Sparrows were captured this year—a species often missed in previous years. Welcomed birds included Gray-cheeked Thrush, Tennessee Warbler, and Black-throated Blue Warbler. Typically, Fox Sparrows are captured as they begin their southward migration. This year was the first when none were captured or observed.

Recently, building-related mortalities have been investigated by volunteers with Lights Out Baltimore and Lights Out DC. Starting before dawn, volunteers drive or walk the same route in both cities and collect dead birds found. Jay Rubinoff, Les Eastman, Bob Werlein and I were warmly received by Wendy Olsson (Baltimore) and Anne Lewis, where we aged the birds collected. Though our statistical analyses are yet outstanding, we hope to learn if mortalities follow the same age-related trends as our banding data—stay tuned.

Many thanks to our regular volunteers: Suzanne Procell, Jerry Strickroth, Les Eastman, Jay Rubinoff,

Bob Werlein, and the staff at Eden Mill Nature Center.

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This was my 75<sup>th</sup> year of banding and the 50<sup>th</sup> year at my current 2½-ac residential site at the brink of the Patuxent River gorge, six miles upstream from Danny Bysrak's Patuxent Powerline station. During these 50 years, the front half of the property has gradually changed from lawns, fruit trees, vegetable garden, and Virginia pines to primarily shrubbery, blackberries, young holly trees, other deciduous saplings, and a borderline of hemlocks. The back half, which is a steep slope to the river, is still in mature oak-hickory-tuliptree forest, with nine species of native oaks, undisturbed except for loss from disease of the dogwood understory and loss of the shrub layer through an over population of deer.

Frequent heavy rains in August and September 2011 forced many deviations from our M/W/F banding schedule. Unprecedented continuous warm weather from October into the winter months here and to the north of us, coupled with ample food supplies to the north, prevented many winter finches and sparrows from coming this far south.

Expected species that were missed this year: all flycatchers, all vireos, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, mockingbird, thrasher, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Myrtle Warbler, redstart, Canada Warbler, towhee, Chipping, Field, Fox, and Swamp sparrows, junco, all blackbirds and orioles, and all finches. Nearby stations do not necessarily share heavy flights of migrants. On 26 Oct, when the Patuxent Powerline station banded their record 61 White-throated Sparrows, we did not catch a single one.

The oldest of 14 returns was a robin banded in October of 2007. Two deer did minor damage to nets. A black bear, our first locally, was seen one mile upriver on 5 Dec. No unbanded birds were captured after 5 Dec, so the station was considered closed that