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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV Piedmont-Coastal Plain, Fall 2011 Robbins Nest

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Eden Mill**394-0762**

Pylesville, Harford Co., MD

Mark S. Johnson

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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.

Robbins Nest**390-0765**

Laurel, Prince Georges Co., MD

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This was my 75th year of banding and the 50th 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

day even though the winter white-throats and juncos had not arrived.

Patuxent Powerline Right-of-Way 390-0764

Patuxent Research Refuge
Laurel, Prince George's Co., MD

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This station is in a powerline right-of-way that bisects an upland deciduous forest. It has operated since 1980, except for 2004-2006. Twenty-six nets are arrayed along a one-half mile east-west axis. Dense six- to eight-foot high shrubs dominate the habitat. Since 2007 we have consistently operated seven days in August and November and 14 days in September and October for a total of 42 days, generally on a M/W/F schedule. Nets were opened by dawn and closed about 3.5 hours later. All references to averages refer to the 2007 to 2010 period.

Despite record-setting rainfall in August and September from Tropical Storms Irene and Lee and two lingering low-pressure systems, we banded 1,831 birds of 71 species compared to our average of 1,816 birds/76 species. Families within 1-2% of their previous averages were warblers (24%), vireos (4%), thrushes (9%) and mimids (12%). We saw a substantial increase in sparrows from an average of 26% of total birds banded to 32%. This was the result of a record number of White-throated Sparrows (297, previous high 254 in 2009) and Eastern Towhees (69, previous high 55 in 2009). Kinglets saw a substantial decline to 11% of all birds banded from an average of 16%. This decline was the result of record low numbers of Golden-crowned Kinglets (21) which is surprising given that we had a record high (102) in 2010.

Species showing marked declines from their averages and setting new seasonal lows included: Black-throated Green (following a record high in 2010) and Chestnut-sided warblers; Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, Blue Jay, and the aforementioned Golden-crowned Kinglet. Species well above average and setting new seasonal highs were: Tennessee, Canada, Blackpoll, Mourning, and

Myrtle Warblers; Gray-checked and Hermit thrushes; White-crowned Sparrow, and the aforementioned White-throated Sparrow and Eastern Towhee. Of particular note, from 2007-2009 we averaged only two Tennessees per season, yet in 2010 we banded 12 and in 2011 banded 19. This year's two Mourning Warblers were the first since 2003. The three White-crowned Sparrows banded this season bring our station's total to 16—out of 85,320 bandings since 1980!

In 2011, with 1,831 bandings, we had 348 recaptures of 220 individual birds of 29 species. We did have some notable banding days. On 26 Oct, we banded 162 birds of which 61 were White-throated Sparrows. Our previous single day high since 2007 was 139 on 30 Sep 2011 (our best ever was 203 on 14 Oct 2001). Our previous single best White-throated Sparrow day ever since 1980 was 55 on 16 Oct 2000. Likewise, on 30 Sep we banded 80 Gray Catbirds. Our previous highest single day since 1980 was 27 Gray Catbirds on 11 Oct 1987. Kiptopeke and Robbins Nest also experienced relatively high Gray Catbird numbers on or about 30 Sep as well.

Greatly assisting in this effort were: Sandy Teliak (who wrote this report), Mike Quinlan, Jo Anna Lutmerding and Bruce Peterjohn. Special thanks to Deanna Dawson who filled in as bander-in-charge on occasion. Our thanks also to many others who lent assistance.

Foreman's Branch

391-0760

Bird Observatory

Chestertown, Queen Anne's County, MD

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Foreman's Branch completed its 14th fall banding season this year. Productivity was back near the ten-year average. Species diversity was also near average. Weather was very wet with extremely heavy rains at times after the second week of August. Tropical systems aside, we experienced numerous one-day rainfalls of more than 3" and two one-day rainfalls in excess of 12". This led to some flooding of