

2012

Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV Piedmont-Coastal Plain, Fall 2011 Jekyll Island Banding Station

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Recommended Citation

Pitman, Evan (2012) "Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV Piedmont-Coastal Plain, Fall 2011 Jekyll Island Banding Station," *North American Bird Bander*. Vol. 37 : Iss. 2 , Article 20.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/nabb/vol37/iss2/20>

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The top-ranked four of the ten most numerous migrants remained the same as in 2010; only the order changed between Myrtle Warbler and American Redstart. The lower five were completely different from those in 2010 (Table 2). This fall produced five new species banded, including an interesting species for coastal South Carolina: a hatch-year Mourning Warbler. This brought the total of species banded at this site since 2005 to 89. The proportion of hatch-year birds dropped by 8% to 86% (Table 1). The other new species added were Orchard Oriole, Canada Warbler, and Bay-breasted Warbler. The most common migrant was the Gray Catbird, which retained its top ranking (Table 2).

A preliminary analysis suggested that the overall level of retraps remained approximately consistent with the effort expended.

Many thanks to the Charleston County Parks & Recreation Commission for permission to band on the site. As usual, I express my appreciation of the volunteers who helped keep the site going.

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My first year as Master Bander at the Jekyll Island Banding Station was 2011 and it was a good beginning. We caught more birds than we did last year and managed to catch a few cold fronts which boosted the total number of birds banded. On 6 and 7 Oct there was a small cold front bringing in the birds; however, on 10 Oct there was a thunderstorm which caused us to lose a day of banding. On our final days of banding we caught another weather system starting on 14 Oct, and on 15 Oct, our biggest day, we banded nearly a quarter of our total for the season. The last day, 16 Oct, could have been another 200 bird day; however, we were out of time and needed to dismantle the station and head home.

We did have two new records for the state of Georgia: a Prothonotary Warbler (PROW) on 12 Oct was a new late date in the state and a second PROW on 14

Oct was a newer later date for the state. Other interesting news is that we banded a Red-eyed Vireo on 6 Oct and it was found dead on 21 Oct in Wilmington, NC, which is nearly 300 miles in the wrong direction! More research is needed for weather conditions during that entire time period; however, it was a hatch-year bird and could have been navigationally deficient.

Sadly, the former Master Bander, Chris Pitman, my father, has Parkinson's and needed to retire. He is doing ok, but is no longer able to safely handle birds on a daily basis. He will continue to assist me with the station.

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Of the 55 Black-throated Blue Warblers banded, 12 were of the Appalachian race, more than the total of all other years combined. Banding in a slightly different area of the park could have accounted for this number, assuming they normally come through this area. My theory is that just before the birds began their migration, Hurricane Irene hit the northeast and may have pushed their migration pattern slightly off from previous years. This is definitely a new question that will be pursued in future years.

Looking at the top ten species caught this fall, it is clear there has been a huge change in what is coming through the park. Most the species were timed to arrival dates of previous years. It is the lower numbers of so many species that is puzzling. This was a higher-than-normal species count from other years, including the two new species caught. On the whole, migration seemed small as viewed by birders in the field, yet I had a higher number of new birds banded.

Two new sites were used this fall due to the policy changes for state parks. One of my new sites was the same habitat as a section (called south area) used last year: a mix of pine and hardwoods with one side exposed to marsh. The other area used was a much older growth of hardwoods with less mid-level