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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV Piedmont-Coastal Plain, Fall 2011 Tomoka Basin Bird Banding Station

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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.

Jekyll Island Banding Station **310-0812**
Glynn Co., GA
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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.

Tomoka Basin Banding Station **292-0810**
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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

foliage. Migrating birds were present but extremely high. In all, only 45 birds were captured, and because of the high number of pygmy rattlesnakes, we will not use that area again. Another site will be chosen for spring banding.

One of the most exciting birds caught was the Wood Thrush. It has been five years since the last one was banded. One was exciting, but catching four more, three in one morning, was unbelievable! Another species seen, in a higher number than in all previous years put together, was the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. All were caught within the same week and several were recaptured at least once before dispersing.

I did return to Helicopter Island for the month of November to improve the number of Myrtle Warblers caught and to continue collecting the data needed for my research project where the sapsuckers, a Chipping Sparrow and three Orange-crowned Warblers were caught.

Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park 254-0800

Key Biscayne, Miami-Dade Co., FL

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Cape Florida is in its tenth year as a fall migration banding station. The park is on the southern tip of a mostly developed barrier island just off the coast of Miami. We have 22 nets set in a restored tropical hardwood hammock that is part of a multi-million dollar effort to return native vegetation to the park following Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

We started banding on 22 Aug and were open on all but six days until we closed on 11 Nov. We added two new net lanes to bring the total nets to 22, with one lane in a new habitat. This net location is in willows along the edge of a pond and it increased our captures of certain species, such as Prairie and Palm warblers, although the net was not used for half of the season because the lane flooded after heavy rains.

The 2011 fall season was active in terms of weather fronts, but with minimal tropical storm influence locally. Still, rainfall was higher than average, especially in October. Mosquitoes were horrible,

causing us to close the site for two days in early September until the wind shifted and the numbers became tolerable. A vigorous early front gave us our earliest 93-bird day, on 13 Sep. Several other frontal passages and nighttime rainfall events made for a steady season with no record-breaking days but decent numbers most days. Total birds/100 net hours (31) was up from the previous two slow years, but nothing like it was during the mid-part of the last decade when b/100nh ranged from 41 to 50. A substantial front stalled in mid-October with a persistent band of rain across the Florida Keys, so south Florida had the largest pileup of migrants in several years. We banded over 100 birds per day for five days in a row and would probably have caught more but the same individuals stayed onsite and they became net-savvy. In general, the later migrants seemed to come through early this fall and the earlier migrants were later, but the wintering species did not arrive in any numbers before we closed for the season on 11 Nov. The total of 2,244 new birds captured of 62 species was nearly double the total from 2010, however, so the banders were happy.

Three species were banded for the first time at Cape Florida during the 2011 season: Black-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Screech-Owl, and Swamp Sparrow. Yellow-billed Cuckoos were abundant this season, and one or two Mangrove Cuckoos were seen near nets but not captured. Other treats were a female Cerulean Warbler that was recaptured two more times over a two-day period, and a troublesome 'Eastern' Wood-Pewee. This bird had a mostly dark lower mandible and a darker overall plumage, especially the vest, and many of its measurements overlapped with Western Wood-Pewee; however, we felt we did not have enough conclusive information to call it Western.

Gray Catbirds doubled their previous high of 143 set in 2005, with 287 captured in 2011. Worm-eating Warblers (132) and Swainson's Warblers (23) both beat their previous highs by one bird, and the rest of the species rounding out the top ten were caught in above-average numbers. Red-eyed Vireos continue their steady decline at our site, and dropped from the top ten in 2011, to be replaced by White-eyed Vireo.