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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV Piedmont-Coastal Plain, Fall 2012 Robbins Nest

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Weather and birds seemed to cooperate this year relative to last year. Birds per net-hour and relative numbers of AHY vs. HYs suggested a relatively productive year. We captured 11 species of warblers including Nashville, Canada, and Black-and-white, with record numbers of Magnolia and Common Yellowthroats. We captured a record nine Yellow-breasted Chats; however, only one was captured in the fall, which is rare given our late August start date and given that many breed on site. Again this year we banded a Philadelphia Vireo as well as three other vireo species. Fox Sparrows returned this year after none was banded the previous year.

After ten years of making the top spot in our most commonly banded species, White-throated Sparrows sank second to Gray Catbirds in 2012. A student from a local science magnet school reviewed our data and found trends suggesting increases in Gray Catbird captures relative to effort, though not significant ($p > 0.14$). Other non-significant positive trends included Tufted Titmouse and Northern Cardinal. Inclusion of more years of data will help ascertain whether these trends are meaningful.

Other notable changes not mentioned previously included very few Swamp Sparrows, which do tend to be irruptive based on the experience of previous years. It is amazing that though the habitat is changing, the most commonly banded species tend to be relatively consistent. Clearly, invasive plants do provide an important source of food for many migrants using this area, though strides are being made to slowly increase productive native plant densities while incrementally reducing invasive individuals. It is clear to us it will be an enduring effort that must be phased in to reduce detrimental effects to migrants as they fuel up.

As always, many thanks go out to our regular volunteers: Suzanne Procell, Jerry Strickroth, Les Eastman, Jay Rubinoff, Susan Hood, Bob Werlein and the staff at Eden Mill Nature Center.

Robbins Nest**390-0765**

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The 29 Jun *derecho* that raced from Iowa to the mid-Atlantic coast in a mere 18 hours, felling millions of trees and causing nearly 3.7 million power outages, blocked net lane eight with a huge limb that it ripped from one of my many tall oak trees. Fortunately, my nets were all safely in the house, and my son came over promptly with his chain saw to clear the net lane and the adjacent trail. After breaking my hip in the spring and having to walk with a cane, I had some doubts about whether to band another season. But when you have formed a habit for 75 years, it is hard to stop—especially when your daughter offers to help you every day.

We tried again to follow the same schedule as the Patuxent Powerline station and with half their number of nets. I checked the two nets in front of the house and the ones back in the woods, while Jane checked the ones in the middle. We kept in touch by cell phone so I could call her if I needed help with a bird tangled near ground level and she could call me if she needed help. We brought all birds to the house where I could sit and band them while she did the weighing and record keeping.

Banding was very slow in August and the first half of September, with no more than four birds per day. The rest of September and October were back to normal until persistent rain from Superstorm Sandy closed our station for a whole week. Our best day of the whole season, with 22 birds, was 1 Nov, the day after Sandy. Last year the White-throated Sparrow fell from the second most common bird to seventh place, and this year it is missing from the top ten. New to the top ten list is the Blue Jay. My oldest of ten returns this year was a cardinal banded as an adult in 2007.