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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV Piedmont-Coastal Plain, Fall 2012 Foreman's Branch Bird Observatory

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Patuxent Powerline Right-of-Way 390-0764

Patuxent Research Refuge

Laurel, Prince George's Co., MD

Danny Bystrak

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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 five-year period of 2007-2011.

We had a record-setting season banding 2,193 birds of 82 species compared to our average of 1,819 birds of 75 species. The most significant surprise this season was banding 165 Tennessee Warblers. Our average is fewer than eight per season! These numbers have not been seen at this station since the early 1980s. This increase is probably due to an outbreak of spruce budworms in southwest Quebec that started in 2006 and by 2010 had encompassed about 2,320 square miles.

We set new end-of-season high records for 25 of the 82 species banded. Eleven of those 25 were warbler species. Other warbler species with high numbers included Black-throated Green and Magnolia warblers. Warblers accounted for 33% of all bandings compared to an average of 23%. We set new end-of-season low records for seven of the 82 species banded. Four of the seven were sparrow species. Despite a robust sparrow season in 2011 (led by white-throats), we had a very poor sparrow (particularly white-throats) season this year. On average, sparrows account for 27% of our bandings; this season they accounted for only 17%. We surmise that Hurricane Sandy, which came through our area on 29 Oct, may have negatively impacted our sparrow numbers to some degree.

Other notable bandings included: (1) two Gray Catbirds with small white throat patches; (2) a Least Flycatcher banded on 1 Nov which is very late for any empid. The previously latest Least Flycatcher banding was 1 Oct; (3) we banded five Yellow-billed Cuckoos this year, our average being fewer than one per season; and (4) we banded 65 Ruby-crowned Kinglets on 15 Oct, our best single day since 2007 but only the seventh best since 1980. In 2012 we had 358 recaptures of 254 individual birds of 34 species. Three of those recaptures were banded by us in 2007 – one White-throated Sparrow and two Hermit Thrushes.

The station continues to be a focal point for visitors from foreign banding programs, as well as serve as a frequent training and educational site for interested staff. We also have two experienced volunteers as well as employees to help with setup, data entry, bird extraction, etc. Because the station is located in an area of the refuge that is closed to the general public, we cannot encourage outside participation. Researchers, however, wishing to visit the site are encouraged to contact Danny Bystrak at *dbystrak@usgs.gov*. Interested banders wishing to follow our Fall and Spring banding effort may go to http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/homepage/BBL_Banding/BBLBanding.cfm. We post our banding results and pictorial highlights on a fairly timely basis.

Greatly assisting in this effort were: Sandy Teliak (who also wrote this report), Mike Quinlan, Jo Anna Lutmerding and Bruce Peterjohn. Our thanks also to the other Patuxent staff who lent assistance.

Foreman's Branch Bird Observatory

391-0760

Chestertown, Queen Anne's Co., MD

Banders: **J. G. Gruber*, P. Gruber, M. Gimpel, D. Small, W. Snyder, A. Spears, R. Field,**

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This was the 15th fall banding season for Foreman's Branch Bird Observatory. Productivity was slightly higher than our 10-year average. Species diversity was above average. The weather was warmer than

normal for most of the fall. Hurricane Sandy kept us closed for three days due to wind. Most cold fronts that came through the area had a decidedly west-southwest bend to them by the time they arrived in Maryland. Despite this, we had a phenomenal finch flight. Purple Finches and Pine Siskins not only set new record fall banding totals, but also yearly banding totals for Foreman's Branch.

Banding highlights include the following record-breaking fall totals: Pine Siskin 572 (170 banded on 1 Nov), Purple Finch 234, Semipalmated Sandpiper 8, Northern Saw-whet Owl 275, Northern Rough-winged Swallow 114, Philadelphia Vireo 6, Magnolia Warbler 301, Winter Wren 53, and Golden-crowned Kinglet 294. Other notable highlights included two Red-tailed Hawks, a Clay-colored Sparrow on 7 Oct, a Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow on 21 Nov, and after an absence of two years, a Vesper Sparrow on 4 Nov. We had one large surprise in the nets this fall. A Turkey Vulture was captured on 11 Sep. It was released without banding. It did not create any large holes in the net but did leave behind its lunch. It made the net smell very bad for several weeks afterwards until we had a good soaking rain.

In addition to the banders already listed, the following people volunteered many hours helping at the station: Harry Sears, Henry Davis, Hanson Robbins, Jeanine Fleegle, Bernie Lohr, and Anne and Brennan O'Connor.

Kiawah Island Banding Station 326-0801

Kiawah Island, Charleston County, SC

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Town of Kiawah Island

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Kiawah Island, SC 29455

This was the fourth fall banding season on Kiawah Island. Kiawah Island is an 8,000 acre barrier island and residential/resort community located approximately 20 miles southeast of Charleston, SC. The banding site is situated at the extreme western end of the island in secondary dune scrub/

shrub and high marsh with wax-myrtle, sea ox-eye, and marsh-elder being the dominant plant species. We operated 17 nets daily, weather permitting, from 15 Aug through 30 Nov. Nets were generally opened 30 minutes before sunrise and closed approximately 5 to 6 hours later.

We operated for 98 days resulting in 7,220.6 net-hours (nh); a large increase from the 56 days of operation and 2,409.8 nh logged last fall. A total of 4,719 new individuals were banded and 879 birds were recaptured. The capture rate for new birds was 65.4 b/100nh, with an additional 12.2 birds/100nh as recaptures. Eighty-seven species were banded and two additional species were captured as recaptures. Three species made up 64% of the season's catch: Common Yellowthroats (28%), Yellow-rumped Warblers (23%), and Gray Catbirds (13%). We banded 19 species never before captured at the station: Virginia Rail, Chuck-will's-widow, Philadelphia Vireo, Tree Swallow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Nashville Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Kentucky Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Canada Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, and Dark-eyed Junco. Without a doubt, the large number of new species banded was an artifact of the increased effort of banding daily. Probably the best bird of the fall was a Bell's Vireo banded on 9 Sep. This is the station's second Bell's Vireo in as many fall seasons! Last year's was the first Bell's Vireo ever banded in South Carolina.

We had 879 recaptures (766 repeats, 105 returns, 8 foreign recaptures) during the 2012 fall season. Of the 105 returns, 74 were from migrant species (56 Yellow-rumped Warblers, 7 Painted Buntings, 5 Gray Catbirds, 2 House Wrens, 1 White-eyed Vireo, 1 Orange-crowned Warbler, 1 Swamp Sparrow, and 1 Song Sparrow). Six of the 7 foreign recaptures were Painted Buntings that were banded locally but not at the KIBS. The other however, was a true long-distance recovery. It was a Myrtle Warbler that was banded at Braddock Bay Obs. on 3 Oct 2012 and recaptured at KIBS on 5 Nov 2012.