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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV Piedmont-Coastal Plain, Fall 2012 Jekyll Island Banding Station

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New in 2012 was the creation of the Kiawah Island Banding Station Blog. The blog was setup to highlight our banding activities during fall migration. The blog was updated daily with the banding totals for each day, photos, interesting anecdotes, and occasionally information on ageing and sexing certain species. The blog can be viewed at <http://www.kiawahislandbanding.blogspot.com>. Please follow along with us in 2013!

We would like to express gratitude to the Kiawah Conservancy for supporting our project by providing the funding to purchase banding supplies and to allow the hiring of three bird banding technicians. This allowed us to expand our effort to band daily. DeeAnne Meliopoulos, Meghan Oberkircher, and Michael Novak were a great addition to the team, and their hard work (for very little pay) was greatly appreciated! Additionally, we thank Kiawah Development Partners for permission to conduct our research on their property. We would also like to thank all of the volunteers who participated during our banding season.

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Weather effects were most pronounced this year. Only two days of the banding schedule were missed this year because of poor weather, one of which was the passage of Hurricane Sandy close offshore. The biggest effect was the timing of the fronts throughout the fall. The majority of fronts moved through the area 1-2 days after a banding session. It was an unusually warm fall with temperatures remaining warm until mid-January. The recent weather patterns and tree pest effects are beginning to be seen on the site. Red Bay Blight is beginning to be noticeable, with over 50 trees affected. An
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increasing number of Wax Myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*) trees are succumbing to wind (possibly due to low rainfall).

The fall was mostly characterized by consistently low-to-moderate numbers of birds with an unusual shift in the highest catch day from early October to early November (Table 1), resulting from a front arriving the day before the banding session. However, the day of greatest species diversity continued to be in early October. The number of birds banded this fall decreased by approximately one-third from 2011, due primarily to these effects despite a similar effort. There was a similar decrease in the number of species caught (Table 1). This can be seen by the presence of the resident Northern Cardinal and the winter visitor Swamp Sparrow in the top ten species list and the loss of Red-eyed Vireo from the rankings (Table 2). The top four most numerous migrant species in Table 2 are showing a decreasing trend in the number of hatch-year birds caught.

A Common Yellowthroat was trapped on 24 Nov and a Black-throated Blue Warbler on 3 Nov. Both records are the latest for these species since 2005 and are probably due to the unusually warm fall.

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The year 2012 was a successful one at the Jekyll Island Banding Station. We were open for one week longer than last year, for a total of three weeks, from 30 Sep 2012 to 21 Oct 2012. During that time, we banded 1,328 birds and had 39 recaptures. This is an increase of about 300 birds from 2011; however, we would have expected a greater increase with an entire extra week of banding. We did have one very slow day on 2 Oct 2012 as there were 8-12 mph southeastern winds which affected our capture rate and we banded only four birds on that day. On our busiest day this year, 9 Oct 2012, we banded 132 birds of 22 species. We kept the nets open from 7:10AM until 7:00PM with only a two-hour break

highest total since the 31 banded in 2008. Red-eyed Vireos regained their position in the top ten species banded, after declining at our site for several years. Swainson's Warblers shattered their previous high of 23 (2011), with 28 banded during fall 2012. Some of the other species banded in record or near-record numbers in 2012 can be attributed to the new net in the willow edge of a pond, as compared to the other nets that are within a small hardwood forest. Flycatchers were well-represented in this location; most dramatically the 20 Eastern Phoebes captured in 2012 is ten times the previous highs of two (2002, 2008). We banded 18 Traill's Flycatchers and were able to key out one Willow and two Alder flycatchers using Pyle (1997). The other individuals were either intermediates or the extra measurements were not taken.

We captured 18 returning birds of seven species, including a Western Palm Warbler banded in 2010. The oldest return was of a wintering Ovenbird, banded as a hatching-year bird in 2004. No foreign recoveries were captured this fall.

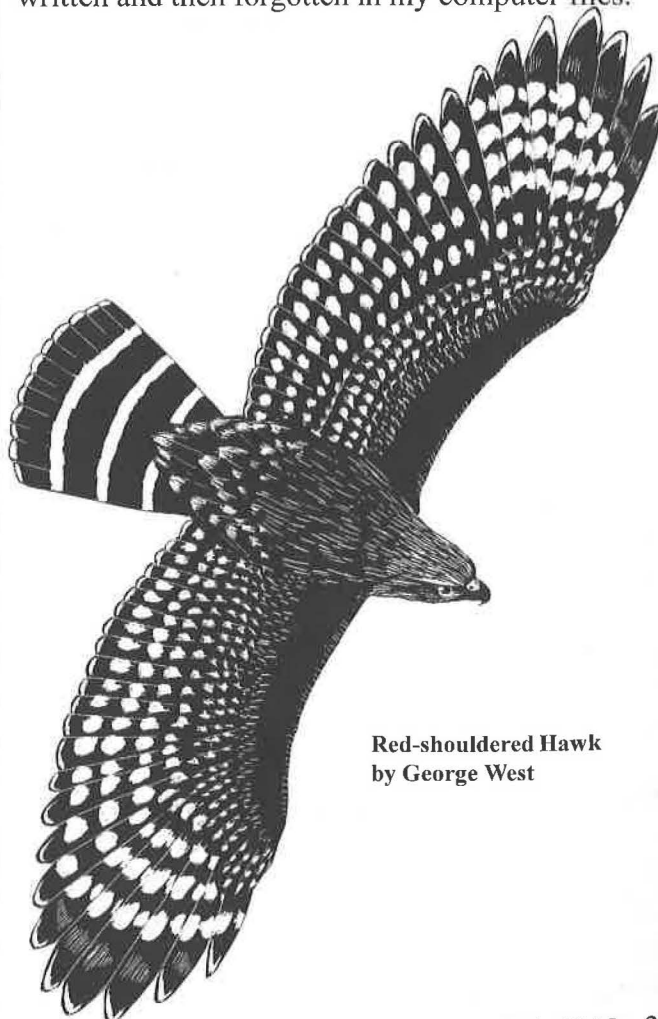
This project would not be possible without the assistance of the dedicated volunteer extractors and banders-in training for the 2012 season: Thanks go to David Schafter, James Currie, Rangel Diaz, Mike Diaz, and Jim King. Special thanks go to David Foster, the park manager, for continuing to support our project.

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After years of below-average rainfall, the year 2012 was almost normal in this respect and, perhaps not surprisingly, migratory thrushes were back among the top ten species banded. However, my banding total continues to remain at about 50% of what I reported a decade or so ago. The main reason is my retreat to our backyard and the adjacent edge of the patch of mixed woods to the south of which, in the past, I had covered an about 300-m long and 50-m wide strip, including a small temporary bog with

shrubs and deciduous trees. For the most part I blame advancing age that made it difficult to visit the nets on a sufficiently regular schedule, and this became a deciding issue when I discovered roaming cats and dogs in the woods and Red-shouldered Hawks surveying the bog. Unfortunately, prowling neighborhood cats increasingly are a problem near our home as well.

Considering these circumstances, I have decided to make this my last contribution to the Flyway Review of the *North American Bird Bander* that I have enjoyed reading and contributing to for over two decades. Let me use this occasion to express my gratitude for the efforts of the various coordinators I had the pleasure of working with, who kept this feature of the journal alive. Chan Robbins deserves special thanks for being my editor during the recent past and for reminding me this year that I had not submitted my report which, it turned out, I had written and then forgotten in my computer files.



Red-shouldered Hawk
by George West