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## Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV Piedmont-Coastal Plain, Fall 2012 Tomoka Basin Bird Banding Station

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at about 1:30PM, and our capture rate was still high even in the afternoon. Conditions were good for birds on that day with 3-6 mph north-northwest winds and a morning temperature of 61°F (16.1 C)

We banded a total of 45 species this year, only one more than last year's total of 44 species. One of the most interesting birds we banded this year was a Dusky Flycatcher, which was a new species for Georgia! We were able to identify the bird definitively only through a series of several careful measurements to separate it from the other Empids. Another interesting bird was a recaptured Northern Cardinal that turned out to have been banded originally at JIBS in 2005, making her seven years old!

We hope to be able to keep the station open for three weeks again in future years. Being open for a longer time during the migration season contributes to the quality and amount of data collected. Trends can be seen more clearly even in a single season when banding is performed over a longer period of time. For instance, we did not capture or even see any Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers until 17 Oct 2012, and just a few days later on 21 Oct 2012 we banded 49 of them, after having the nets open for only two hours. If it were possible to keep the station open for several weeks, trends of peak dates could be established more easily for many species migrating across the island.

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This fall I banded in Bulow Creek State Park (BCSP) half of the time and at Tomoka State Park (TSP) the other half. Just east of Boardman Pond and observation platform, the Bulow Creek area has always been known for excellent birding. Birds were present high in the canopy but few were low enough to be captured. Many days we did not catch any birds at all at BCSP, so the majority of the birds being reported were banded at TSP. There were a number of days we saw no migrant activity in the canopy at all. A nice number of visitors came by at

Bulow while hiking the trail and watched what we were doing. If we had no birds we did explain what we do anyway. The number of flies around was nearly unbearable. I have decided that I will not return to this site.

Comparing the numbers of fall 2011 when 323 birds were banded, to the numbers for this year, they fall short by 1/3 at only 224. The wind was high many of the days and many days were very hot. A noticeable reduction in birds seen on any given day was quite disturbing. Much of what happens, or doesn't happen, in the Tomoka Basin is related to weather systems. Birds need fronts to bring them to us. Often there are none and the birds are able to fly longer distances and need fewer stops. We may just be located in such an area that birds have no need to refresh at this point in their journey. This fall we saw no Wood Thrushes after having seven come through in 2011. The number of Yellow-rumped Warblers was nearly half of what were caught in 2011. It will be interesting to see, as weather changes from what it was several years ago and it is warmer and drier longer, if the descending trend continues. It is well documented that many species are in decline, some severely so, and we may well be documenting this trend right here in the Tomoka Basin.

Halifax River Audubon did a field trip to the BCSP banding site in October with 18 people present. Several saw a life bird when an Indigo Bunting was captured and banded. Ray Scory brought his birding class to the station on Helicopter Island in November where we were banding a number of Yellow-rumped Warblers that day. Because the wind picked up and rain was threatening, I closed the nets early and joined them in birding Tomoka State Park.

A group of students from University of Florida visited the banding stations for two days and had an opportunity to see the difference between the Bulow Creek Station and the Tomoka Station. Neither day was stellar but, because they were also interested in habitat, they were not at all

disappointed. We did catch some life birds for several of the students and everyone got to release at least one bird.

Site fidelity once again is documented in the recapturing of a female Black-and-white Warbler on 8 Nov 2012 that had been banded as a hatch-year bird on 5 Nov 2011. She was recaptured two more times on 8 Nov 2012 and 20 Nov 2012. She was caught in the same net on all three occasions. Three Yellow-rumped Warblers, that were banded originally in November of 2011 as hatch-year birds, returned this fall in November. This is the largest number of any species to be recaptured in one season. The odd thing this fall was there were no juniper berries to be had anywhere in the entire park. The yellow-rumps solely relied on insects and wax myrtle berries and consequently departed earlier from Helicopter Island than in previous years and their numbers were down as well. Although the number of birds being banded is declining, I look forward to what next fall will present in total numbers and numbers of species. It is a puzzle we are in the middle of and it is exciting to be part of helping to solve it. We have a healthy park that may one day be the oasis in the desert.

**Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park 254-0800**

Key Biscayne, Miami-Dade Co., FL

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Cape Florida is in its eleventh 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 15 Aug 2012 and the station was open on all but seven days, until we closed on 9 Nov. The total number of nets was 22, same as in 2011, with one lane in a new habitat. This net location is in willow scrub along the edge of a pond and it increased our captures of certain species such

as Prairie and Palm warblers, *Empidonax* flycatchers and Eastern Phoebes. Nets were opened from first light until early afternoon on most days.

The 2012 fall season was influenced by the passage of two tropical systems: Isaac in late August and Sandy in late October. There was a substantial fallout of birds (American Redstarts, Northern Parulas and Northern Waterthrushes were prevalent) while the station was closed due to the inclement weather from the August storm. Sandy gave us some rain and several days of strong northwest winds that made mist netting difficult or impossible, but trans-continental migration had mostly finished by then and short-distance wintering species moved in. The rest of the season was notable for the lack of west or northwest winds, and subsequently a lack of high-volume 'fallout' days. The busiest day was 7 Oct, when 100 birds were banded. However, we also had very few extremely slow days, as the migrants seemed to work their way down the Florida peninsula in a steady stream all season long with few weather blocks. The total birds/100 net hours, 22, was lower than the 10-year average of 33 b/100nh, and the total captured in 2012, 1,767 individuals of 57 species, is below the 2006 to 2012 average of 1,913 birds per season.

One species was banded for the first time at Cape Florida during the 2012 season: Yellow-green Vireo, a Central American species that is a rare visitor to southern Florida. We banded the site's second Black-billed Cuckoo; however, we banded no Yellow-billed Cuckoos in 2012, although they were seen onsite. An adult male Connecticut Warbler was an unusual banding for fall. A Chuck-will's-widow was captured with a Northern Waterthrush halfway down its throat.

Most species were caught in average numbers during the 2012 season. Black-and-white Warbler numbers were lower than average (66 in 2012; 106 avg) while Northern Waterthrush (76 in 2012; 59 avg) and Worm-eating Warbler (121 in 2012; 96 avg) numbers were above average. The 14 Chuck-will's-widows banded in 2012 were the second