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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV Piedmont-Coastal Plain, Fall 2013 Tomoka Basin Bird Banding Station

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major cold fronts patterning more to our south. Three species made up 61% of the season's catch: Common Yellowthroats (25%), Yellow-rumped Warblers (23%), and Gray Catbirds (13%). We banded nine species never before captured at the station: Eastern Whip-poor-will, Willow Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Bay-breasted Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Grasshopper Sparrow, Orchard Oriole (first for fall), and Bobolink. The two most surprising species banded were the MacGillivray's Warbler (first time this species has been observed in South Carolina) and the Ash-throated Flycatcher. Additionally, we banded our 3rd Bell's Vireo in as many seasons.

We had 1,144 recaptures (1,021 repeats, 122 returns, one foreign recapture) during the 2013 fall season. Of the 122 returns, 89 were from migrant species (46 Yellow-rumped Warblers, 18 Painted Buntings, nine Gray Catbirds, four White-throated Sparrows, three Swamp Sparrows, three Song Sparrows, two White-eyed Vireos, two Hermit Thrushes, one Common Yellow-throat, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk). Interestingly enough, of the 3,419 Common Yellowthroats banded at KIBS in the past five years, this was the first return that we have had. The one foreign recapture this season was from a Painted Bunting that was banded on 12 Jul 2011 on neighboring Seabrook Island (less than three-fourths mile from KIBS).

New in 2012, was the creation of the Kiawah Island Banding Station Blog. The blog was set up to highlight our banding activities during fall migration. The blog is updated daily with the banding totals for each day, photos, interesting anecdotes, and occasionally information of ageing and sexing certain species. The blog can be viewed at www.kiawahislandbanding.blogspot.com. Please follow along with us in 2014!

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 four bird banding technicians. This allowed us to expand our effort to band daily. Mattie VandenBoom, Claire Stuyck, Josh Lefever, and Vicki Morgan 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 the volunteers who participated during our banding season.

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The 2013 banding season yielded a higher total number of birds banded than the previous several years, but interestingly with slightly lower species diversity. We were open for a total of 22 days, and banded 1408 birds of 42 species.

On our busiest day this year, we banded 293 birds – a steep increase from the 132 birds banded on the busiest day of the 2012 season. More birds could have been captured, but so many were caught during the first hour that we closed the nets for safety reasons. On the second busiest day, we banded 270 birds but were able to keep most of the nets open as usual. Birds were captured more steadily throughout the day rather than in large numbers all at once, so we could band and process more safely and efficiently. Common Yellowthroats made up the majority of captures on these busy days, making up 59% of total birds banded on the first and 43% on the second, as well as being our top species for the season with a total of 500 banded.

We seemed to miss the Yellow-rumped Warbler migration this season, as we banded only eight for the entire three weeks, and they were all captured during the last week. The previous year, we saw very few Yellow-rumped Warblers until the last few days, when they arrived in abundance. It is possible that the main bulk of their migration arrived after the close of the season.

Tomoka Basin Banding Station **292-0810**
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The fall season at Tomoka Basin Banding Station started just after a prescribed control burn took

place on half the land in which I band. This was not expected but has turned out to have a most interesting outcome. The net lane goes right down the middle of the burned and unburned halves, allowing a unique look at how birds react to the change. It also allowed for flycatchers to hunt in a relatively open area not present before, drawing in more than ever before.

What I observed and was able to document from preburn records and a fall of banding postburn was that with the exception of the flycatchers, almost all the birds were caught in the upper section of the lane utilizing the areas that contained nets 1-4. Nets 5-10 were all exposed to the burn area on the west side of the nets as one looks south down the lanes. Every single bird was caught on the west side of the nets as they arrived from the river towards the mainland, passing through the burned out area in an attempt to get to the other side of the nets where they could see foliage for cover and for food. Gray Catbirds are normally caught all through the area in any given net 1-10. This fall they were exclusively caught in nets 1-4 where there was foliage on both sides of the nets. I also had a higher number of species than usual but lower numbers for each species with the exception of the Veery. I caught more this fall than any other period since banding begun in 2004.

For two weeks before I had to close for good on 10 Nov 2013 I was not catching any birds anywhere in the banding area. The last bird caught was a recaptured Carolina Wren. On 23 Oct I did catch my first ever Bicknell's Thrush, and thus, for the first time ever I caught the Hermit, Swainson's, Wood, Gray-cheeked and Bicknell's thrushes in the same fall. American Robins had not arrived in Florida yet and Eastern Bluebirds have never been seen in or near Tomoka State Park.

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are rare in the part of the park where I band. As I was closing one of the nets, actually folding it into the bag, a hatch year male Rose-breasted Grosbeak flew out of the shrubs (from west to east) into one of the panels. I am not sure who was more surprised, him or me. He left with a band!

As new growth fills in where the burn occurred it will be most interesting to see how the birds react to the change, and if the high number of flycatchers (Eastern Wood Pewees, Least Flycatchers, Eastern Phoebe) continues. Will the birds return to their usual behavior of using both sides of the nets as they hunt for food? And will lower numbers of each species return to previous levels? The burn had to be done and it has presented a most interesting opportunity to study the effects.

Many thanks, as always, to the graciousness of the park rangers, my volunteers Bill Horton, Bert and Heike Charest, and my student from Bethune Cookman University, Sierra Tariaferro, who all made my job much easier.

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Cape Florida is in its twelfth 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 23 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 2013 and the station was open on all but seven days until we closed on 9 Nov. The total of nets was 23, with a new lane added in edge habitat between the hammock and the willow scrub along the edge of a small pond. Nets were opened from first light until early afternoon on most days.

The 2013 fall season was notable for its lack of tropical weather. We had a series of weak, dissipating fronts move down the state from late August through the end of the season in early November, and the local weather was generally on the rainy side. Our peak period came a week later than usual due to the lack of strong fronts, with our busiest day on 24 Oct when 156 birds were banded.