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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV Piedmont-Coastal Plain, Fall 2013 Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park

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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.

The rainfall was sporadic, and we were able to stay open for at least part of all but 4 days of the season, although nets were closed quickly in downpours many times. We missed a small push of Myrtle Warblers and other short distance migrants in early November when strong winds from a high pressure system closed the site for 3 days. The total b/100 nh, 25, was lower than the 11-year average of 33 b/100 nh, and the total captured in 2013, 2,128 individuals of 61 species, is a little above the 2006 to 2013 average of 1,940 birds per season.

We had several interesting captures in 2013 despite the dull weather. Three species were banded for the first time at Cape Florida during the 2013 season. A Brown Thrasher, banded on 22 Oct, is an uncommon south Florida resident and is very rare at the Cape. A possible Cassin's Vireo, one of three species that make up the Solitary Vireo complex, was banded on 29 Sep, at least five weeks earlier than the common Blue-headed Vireo arrives in our area. The third new species was a complete surprise: a Ruddy Quail-Dove was banded on 3 Oct and she was still onsite after we closed for the season. This species is widespread in the Caribbean and Latin America, but this is one of only a half-dozen records for the U.S. and the first banding record. We were quiet about the presence of this bird as it would be difficult to maintain mistnetting operations if birders descended on the study site in great numbers. The bird's shyness also made her hard to relocate.

Other unusual captures included a late Golden-winged Warbler on 1 Nov and a leucistic adult male American Redstart with a mottled white head and a few white flight feathers. We banded our second ever Wilson's Warbler on 23 Oct and our third Ruby-crowned Kinglet on 31 Oct. A Western Tanager was onsite but managed to dodge the nets for several days in October.

The big story for 2013 among the more abundant species was Gray Catbird taking the number one species banded title away from Black-throated Blue Warbler for the first time in 12 years, with 358

captures to 324. Ovenbird was third with 317 captures; a slightly above average number for that species. Flycatcher and thrush numbers in general were slightly down, but the group most noticeable by their absence were hawks. We banded only two Sharp-shinned Hawks the whole season, and there were very few days when we saw lots of raptors in the sky. Winds may have kept them moving through the mainland rather than out to Key Biscayne. The new net locations in scrubbiest habitat increased the capture of certain species, such as Painted Bunting (38; previous high 35 in 2006) and Western Palm Warbler (72; previous high 41 in 2012). It is nice to sample more of these abundant birds that do not come inside the hammock in great numbers. Site records were also broken for Worm-eating Warbler (138; 132 in 2011) and Swainson's Warbler (33; 28 in 2012). Swainson's Warbler also broke a daily record, with seven banded on 26 Aug. It has been a while since we have had a hurricane and the canopy has recovered while the trees, all hand-planted since 1994, are maturing. This is probably making the site more attractive to some species, less attractive to others, and making it harder to catch certain other species that are still present.

We captured 16 returning birds of five species, with Ovenbirds banded in the last two years making up nearly half of these. The oldest returns included a resident Northern Cardinal banded in 2005, which had to be rebanded as he had chewed on his band for the last eight years and it was nearly unreadable. Another old recapture was a wintering Gray Catbird, banded as an adult in spring 2007. 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 2013 season: thanks go to Ranger Diaz, Mike Diaz, Jim King, Marc Kramer, Eliana Ardila, Miriam Avello, Mario, Nico and Lucas Porcelli, Mike Bush, Jenn Sweatman, Barb and Ted Center, Sandy Milledge, Vera and Ian Jarrett, Frank Schena, Kelley Erickson, Celeste De Palma, Lindsey Wilcox, Mark Lopez, and David Lotker. Special thanks go to David Foster the Park manager for continuing to