

2013

Atlantic Flyway Review: Region III (Western Ridge)- Fall 2012 Ruthven Park

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The 2012 fall banding season started on 25 Jun when the Purple Martin nesting boxes were lowered for the banding of the young. This brings the five-year-total of Purple Martin young (L) banded to 304. At the present time, we have two groups of gourds totaling 24 nesting boxes.

The mist netting was done on 12 days starting on 28 Aug and ending on 22 Oct, with a total of 329 birds banded of 40 species. There were four local retraps (one catbird and three Black-capped Chickadees). The weather this fall was very good and all planned banding days were conducted without any problems.

Again this year we had groups of 10-12 attend the Purple Martin banding, with many children attending. There were six different people that observed the mist netting, handling, and banding of birds.

Ruthven Park**425-0795**

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In many ways 2013 was an exceptional year: most birds banded in the fall (5,195 vs 4,763 in 2010); most species banded (92 including our first Merlin and second Yellow-breasted Chat and Hooded Warbler); record September (1,980); and a record November (507).

There are a couple of factors that impacted these numbers. Probably the main one is that we have ramped up the number of nets we use—the 25 nets now in use will be the norm going forward. I have been able to do this as retirement has given me more time (I do not have to close in a rush and hurry off to work) and, for a long time, I have wanted to get a sense of what birds use our Butterfly

Meadow, a five-acre plot that is being maintained as habitat for butterflies. To do this, I ran a five-net chain across it and ran the chain for 13 days (it is very susceptible to winds). We caught 314 birds of 34 species, including the majority of Orange-crowned and Western Palm warblers.

Another factor was an irruption of northern birds. We banded record numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches (19), Pine Siskins (216), and even six Evening Grosbeaks (It was only the second time we have encountered them in 19 years of operation).

But the biggest factor was the 1,316 American Goldfinches we banded—1,316, more than 2 SD's above the mean going back to 1999. I have no idea why it was such a good year for this species.

Interestingly, our season record would have been much higher if we had had a good wild grape crop. For the past two falls we have banded an average of more than 500 Cedar Waxwings. But this year, we had NO wild grapes due to weather anomalies in the spring and our Cedar Waxwing number “plunged” to 196.

This banding program could not get by without the massive effort of its associated volunteers: 40 people put in 1,561 hours to help us do the work. Thanks to them all!!

We would also like to thank the Lower Grand River Land Trust (Ruthven Park) and the Haldimand Bird Observatory for their ongoing support.

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Number wise, this was our second best fall season in 13 years. We continue to encourage volunteers from distant parts and this fall we welcomed Erin Moffatt from Kitchener, Kate Channel from British