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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV Piedmont-Coastal Plain- Fall 2014

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ATLANTIC FLYWAY REVIEW:

Region IV Piedmont—Coastal Plain

Fall 2014

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Atlantic Flyway Review dates back to the first volume of *North American Bird Bander* in 1976, when a dozen Maryland stations plus Chincoteague, Virginia, constituted Region V and no stations reported from south of Virginia. By 1977 the boundaries were changed and the mountains of Maryland and Virginia (west of Interstate 81) were changed to what was then Region IV. Another change in 1975 moved the piedmont and coastal plains of the southeastern states from Region V to a new Region IV. None of the original stations in our region are still active.

Although July surprised us with Hurricane Arthur, tornadoes and record-breaking rainfall along the Atlantic coast, our coastal strip enjoyed close to normal rainfall and temperatures in August, a wet September with normal temperatures, and a very wet October that remained slightly warmer than normal from the Carolinas north through Maine.

Net-hours were slightly higher than last year at most stations except at Foreman's Branch where nets were closed early on non-productive afternoons. Total bandings at these eight stations showed an increase of 11.5%. Again this year no two stations shared the same most active day; the best days ranged from 20 Sep to 11 Nov, both in Maryland. Species diversity was highest from 29 Sep to 25 Oct. No two stations had the same species as their most common bird: sparrows, finches, and kinglets being at the Maryland stations and warblers more prevalent in the south.

Assuming no significant difference in coverage between 2013 and 2014, the greatest increases in 2014 were: 474 more Gray Catbirds at Kiawah; 279 more juncos and 190 more Song Sparrows at Foreman's; and 240 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 167 more White-throated Sparrows, and 151 more

Slate-colored Juncos at Patuxent. The greatest declines noted was a decrease of 452 Indigo Buntings (50%) at Foreman's Branch. As always, several stations reported banding a few species that are rarely encountered in this region: 13 Connecticut Warblers at Patuxent, Bicknell's Thrush and Clay-colored Sparrow at Foreman's Branch; Clapper Rail and Sedge Wren at Kiawah Island; and a Gray Kingbird and an Ash-throated Flycatcher at Cape Florida.

Michelle Davis was the only bander to mention longevity records this year. Her oldest returning birds this season were an eight-year-old Northern Cardinal and an eight-year-old Gray Catbird. Maren Gimpel, Daniel Small, and James Gruber are to be congratulated on the publication of "Winter Site Fidelity of Six Sparrow Species in Maryland" (based on 1,291 return records) in the Apr-Jun 2014 issue of *North American Bird Bander*.

I thank each of the station leaders for their interesting reports year after year and for the role each one is playing to increase public awareness of the natural world and how we can protect it. And thanks to Michael Lutmerding for his helpful suggestions for additions and corrections to this report.

Eden Mill 394-0762
Pylesville, Harford Co., MD
Mark S. Johnson
Mark.S.Johnson.civ@mail.mil

Banding activity at Eden Mill was variable this year because of changes in the weather and volunteer availability. Most days were overcast and cool and several were with precipitation which limited the number of nets that were opened. However, the number of birds captured per net-hour was fairly consistent with previous years.

Species diversity in sparrows and warblers was down this year. We captured relatively fewer Song, Lincoln's and Swamp sparrows, though White-throated Sparrow was our most common species, back to the 'top spot' it held in previous years. We captured only seven warbler

Table 1. AFR Region IV - Fall 2014 Summary.

	Eden Mill	Harford Glen	Patuxent Powerline	Foreman's Branch	Kiawah Island	Jekyll Island	Tomoka Basin	Cape Florida
First Day	1 Sep	2 Sep	15 Aug	3 Aug	15 Aug	3 Aug	7 Sep	15 Aug
Last Day	1 Nov	18 Dec	14 Nov	30 Nov	30 Nov	30 Nov	21 Nov	7 Nov
Days Open	10	23	42	87	103	22	43	83
No. Nets Used	3.5 to 15.5	5 to 14	26	9 to 92	23	17	6 to 10	23
Net Hours	419	1,172	3,483	27,029	11,565.6	1,692.30	1,872	10,540
No. Best Day	37	189	159	425	274	185	14	102
Best Day Date	20 Sep	11 Nov	31 Oct	20 Oct	1 Oct	4 Oct	7 Nov	25 Oct
Most Species	14	20	27	40	29	19	7	21
" " Date	6 Sep	14 Oct	14 Oct	29 Sep	5&17 Oct	1&17 Oct	20 Oct	25 Oct
Banded 2013	258	663	1,630	9,378	4,529	1,408	147	2,128
Banded 2014	220	970	2,210	10,402	5,086	1,377	170	2,029
Species 2013	45	43	78	117	82	42	32	61
Species 2014	37	63	73	123	80	46	36	54
B/100nh 2013	53.3	82.9	55.7	27.4	59.2	133.99	9.3	25
B/100nh 2014	61.1	82.8	63.5	38.5	55.6	81.35	10	21
% HY 2013	85%	50%	74%	89%	82.8%	86%	56%	60.6%
% HY 2014	-	51%	70%	82%	81.4%	88%	68%	54.2%

Table 2. AFR IV. Ten Most Commonly Banded Species, Fall 2014.

	Eden Mill	Harford Glen	% HY	Patuxent Powerline	% HY	Foreman's Branch	% HY	Kiawah Island	% HY	Jekyll Island	% HY	Tomoka Basin	% HY	Cape Florida	% HY
1. 43 WTSP(3)	75	128 AMGO (6)	34	304 RCKI (8)	56	1,374 SOSP (1)	86	1,217 COYE (1)	83.3	468 WPWA (2)	95.1	37 MYWA	95.1	294 OVEN (3)	49.3
2. 33 GRCA (1)	90	126 WTSP (1)	75	277 WTSP (3)	59	1,254 WTSP(2)	78	1,046 GRCA (3)	91.2	371 COYE (1)	83.6	18 OVEN (2)	83.6	268 BTBW (2)	54.9
3. 16 COYE (8)	94	104 SCJU (3)	34	219 SCJU (4)	65	728 RCKI (4)	84	842 MYWA (2)	77.2	133 GRCA (3)	90.2	12 BTBW (1)	90.2	229 GRCA (1)	82.1
4. 14 MAWA (7)	100	78 GRCA (4)	62	175 GRCA (6)	84	594 COYE (5)	68	210 PABU (4)	93.3	58 PABU (4)	89.7	11 WEVI	89.7	217 AMRE (4)	35.9
5. 12 NOCA (2)	90	78 SOSP (5)	42	146 COYE (7)	57	581 SCJU (8)	75	188 PRAW (6)	77.1	53 AMRE (6)	83.0	8 GRCA	83.0	158 COYE (6)	72.8
6. 11 SOSP (4)	91	53 SWSP (9)	75	81 MAWA (1)	64	451 INBU (3)	93	185 REVI (5)	85.4	50 WEVI (10)	88.0	0 AMRE (3)	88.0	142 WEWA (5)	33.8
7. 10 CARW (6)	78	47 NOCA (2)	64	74 HEITH (9)	91	382 GRCA (9)	85	182 AMRE (7)	80.1	41 BTBW (5)	82.9	0 COYE (4)	82.9	120 BAWW (7)	37.5
8.. 8 CACH	100	33 COYE (10)	39	72 TEWA (3)	76	322 FISP (7)	87	95 WPWA *	83.2	22 NOCA (7)	40.9	0 VEER (5)	40.9	77 NOWA (8)	37.7
9. 7 INBU (10)	67	27 MYWA (13)	42	64 SOSP	70	269 SWSP (6)	77	94 NOWA	58.5	21 REVI	100		100	67 NOPA (10)	53.7
10. 6 MYWA	83	27 RCKI (14)	88	63 REVI (2)	70	261 AMGO	56	80 RCKI (10)	69.6	16 INBU (8)	93.8		93.8	56 WPWA (9)	78.6

(#) Indicates placement on list in 2013.
* Includes both WPWA & YPWAs.

species. We did encounter more Magnolia Warblers this year, making them our fourth most banded species. We also captured many more Common Yellowthroats this year, all HY birds, which may suggest successful reproduction in the area.

It was a good year for *Empidonax* flycatchers as we captured every species that was possible, including Least, Yellow-bellied, Acadian, and Traill's (we hoped that at least some of the Traill's were Alder and some Willow; the latter breeds in the area). We captured another Sharp-shinned Hawk, which is always exciting.

Thanks to the efforts of Troop 899 and a new Eagle Scout, net lanes were expanded northeast of the pavilion, closer to Big Branch. Unfortunately, these additional net lanes were not very productive, likely because of the height of the surrounding vegetation and possibly the steep terrain. We continued to benefit from new Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) students who show interest. Thanks to their enthusiasm, we continue to develop new research questions and strive to develop the next generation of prospective wildlife biologists as much as we can.

As always, many thanks go out to our regular volunteers: Suzanne Procell, Jerry Strickroth, Bob Werrlein and Dennis Kirkwood and the staff at Eden Mill Nature Center.

Harford Glen
Abingdon, Harford Co., MD
Susan B. Heselton
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392-0762

The constant and dramatic changes in the environment and encroachment in and around Harford Glen appear to have eased enough to provide some consistency in data. Therefore, I decided to venture forth with another contribution to the AFR reports.

However, once the data were tabulated it became apparent that there is still considerable variation in the avian populations at Harford Glen. It has been a few years since the major disturbances (consisting of encroaching developments at the Glen's borders, lumbering of the pine woods adjacent to the banding area that were under attack by the Pine Bark Beetle, and repeated flooding of the net area) occurred before, so we should be stabilizing.

I am indebted to my husband, Amanda Koss (the Harford Glen teacher who works with us) and our volunteers: Eileen Frey, Jane Scocca, Jean Williams, Dennis Kirkwood, Dave Larkin, and Phil Powers without whom we would not be able to keep the banding station operational.

Patuxent Powerline Right-of-Way 390-0764
Patuxent Research Refuge
Laurel, Prince George's Co., MD
Danny Bystrak
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This station is in a power line right-of-way that bisects an upland deciduous forest. It has operated since 1980, except for 2004-2006. The habitat is dominated by a dense six- to eight-foot high canopy of shrubs and is an excellent source of shelter and food for breeding and migrating birds. Twenty-six nets are arrayed along a one-half mile east-west axis. Nets were opened by dawn and closed about 3.5 hours later. From 2007-2014, we have operated fairly consistently seven days in August and November and 14 days in September and October for a total of 42 days, generally on a M/W/F schedule. In 2013 however, due to the government shutdown, we banded only 35 days. Any comparisons to previous levels of activity refer to the years 2007-2012, since our 2013 season was truncated.

This—our 32nd year—was our best since 2007, with 2,210 bandings but only 73 species, our second lowest species total. It was a season with two very different halves. The first half dominated by warblers, Gray Catbirds, and Red-eyed Vireos found us far below our previous mid-season average; whereas, the second half of the season, dominated by sparrows and kinglets, found us setting a new high for the second half of the season.

Numerous highlights included banding our first Pine Siskin since 1980. This is the 124th species on this station's fall banding list. We had five 100+ banding days, all in the latter half of October. These five days accounted for almost 30% of this season's bandings. The previous year, with the most 100+ days, was 2012 with three. Ten species set new end-of-season highs. Particularly noteworthy were: Slate-colored Junco (219, previous best 160), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (304), Song Sparrow (68), Connecticut Warbler (13), Common Yellowthroat (146), and Black-throated Blue Warbler (43). We set species-specific single day banding records for: Connecticut Warbler (5), Northern Parula (6), Cape May Warbler (3), Song Sparrow (14) and Slate-colored Junco (58). On 13 Nov we were joined by a Barred Owl that perched about 30 feet away from our banding desk. It seemed to show little interest in us or what we were doing.

Our 549 warbler bandings of 28 species accounted for 25% of all of our bandings which is their historical norm. *Mimids* (notably Gray Catbirds) were at 8%, down from a norm of 12%; sparrows at 31% up from their norm of 25%. All other families were +/- one to two percent of norm.

The station continues to be a focal point for visitors from foreign banding programs as well as serving as a training and educational site for interested staff. We have two experienced volunteers as well as employees to help with set-up, data entry, bird extraction, etc. Because the station is located in an area of the refuge that is closed to the general public, we cannot encourage outside participation. Researchers, however, wishing to visit the site are encouraged to contact Danny Bystrak at dbystrak@usgs.gov.

Greatly assisting in this effort were: Sandy Teliak (who wrote this report), Mike Quinlan, Jo Anna Lutmerding and Bruce Peterjohn. Thanks to banders-in-training Matt Rogosky, Jasmine Rajbhandary and Jennifer McKay and to other staff who lent assistance.

**Foreman's Branch
Bird Observatory**

Kingstown, Queen Anne's Co., MD

Banders: J. G. Gruber*, P. Gruber. M. Gimpel, D. Small, A. C. Spears

*P.O.Box 560, Chestertown, MD 21620

This was the 17th fall banding season for Foreman's Branch Bird Observatory. Productivity was higher than our 10-year average because of a large reduction in net-hours. We did not keep nets open as long into less productive afternoon hours as we have in the past. Total number of birds banded did not suffer greatly from this decision and productivity per 100 net-hours increased. Species diversity was slightly above the average of 120.

The fall weather was overall unremarkable in comparison to the past five years. Banding highlights were few. Notable catches for the season were our second only Barred Owl on 26 Oct, a station record high total of 242 Purple Finches, a Clay-colored Sparrow on 5 Nov, a single Yellow-throated Vireo on 7 Sep, and a Marsh Wren on 24 Sep. Notably absent from the nets this fall was the Red-breasted Nuthatch; a few individuals passed through the banding station, but they were scarce throughout the local area all season. Bicknell's Thrush was caught three times this fall with one each on 28 Sep, 2 Oct, and 5 Oct.

We thank our Washington College intern, Christie Phebus, for her dedication and hard work at Foreman's Branch over the past three years. She graduates in the spring of 2015 with a B.S. in Environmental Studies and we shall miss her and all her hard work at the station. In addition to the banders already listed above the following people volunteered many hours helping at the station: Harry Sears, Henry Davis, Greg Cole, Hanson Robbins, Jeannine Fleegle, Jennie Carr, Kailani Clarke, Andrew Wade, Kathy Thornton, and Anne and Brennan O'Connor.

**Kiawah Island
Banding Station (KIBS)**

Town of Kiawah Island, Charleston County, SC

Aaron Given

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21 Beachwalker Drive, Kiawah Island, SC 29455

www.kiawahislandbanding.blogspot.com

This was the sixth fall banding season on Kiawah Island and the third in which we have banded daily. Kiawah Island is an 8,000 ac barrier island and residential/resort community located approximately 20 mi southeast of Charleston, SC. The banding site is situated at the extreme western end of the island in secondary dune scrub/shrub and high marsh with wax-myrtle, sea ox-eye, and marsh-elder being the dominate plant species. We operated 23 nets daily, weather permitting, from 15 Aug through 30 Nov. Nets were generally opened 30 min before sunrise and closed approximately 5-6 hr later.

We operated for 103 days resulting in 11,565.6 net-hours (nh). A total of 5,086 new individuals were banded and 1,312 birds were recaptured of 80 different species. The capture rate for new birds was 44.0 birds/100nh with an additional 11.3 birds/100 nh as recaptures. Our capture rate decreased by 3.7 birds/100nh from last year despite banding over 500 more individuals compared to last fall. This is most likely an artifact of an increase in effort due to being open five more days than the previous fall and the addition of three new nets. Three species made up 61% of the season's catch: Common Yellowthroats (23.9%), Gray Catbirds (20.6%), and Yellow-rumped Warblers (16.6%). We banded six species never before captured at the station: Cooper's Hawk, Eastern Screech-Owl, Clapper Rail, Sedge Wren, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

We had 1,312 recaptures (1,215 repeats, 95 returns, 2 potential foreign recaptures) during the 2014 fall season. Of the 95 returns, 64 were from migrant species (28 Yellow-rumped Warblers, 16 Painted Buntings, 7 Gray Catbirds, 4 Swamp Sparrows, 2 White-throated Sparrows, 2 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 1 Song Sparrow, 1 House Wren, 1 Hermit Thrush, 1 Common Yellowthroat, and 1 Prothonotary Warbler). All returning migrants, with the exception of the Prothonotary Warbler, potentially either wintered or breed on Kiawah Island. The returning Prothonotary Warbler is exceptional as it truly showed site fidelity to a stop-over site. The two potential foreign recapture this season were both

Painted Buntings. At the time of this report, I was still waiting to hear back from the BBL on the origin of the two birds.

I would like to express gratitude to the Kiawah Conservancy and the Town of Kiawah Island for supporting our project by providing the funding to purchase banding supplies and to allow the hiring of four bird banding technicians. Mattie VandenBoom, William Oakley, Libby Natola, and Matt Zak were a great addition to the team and their hard work was greatly appreciated! Additionally, we thank Kiawah Development Partners for permission to conduct research on their property. I would also like to thank all of the volunteers that participated during our banding season.

Please check out the KIBS blog in 2015. It 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

Jekyll Island Banding Station

310-0812

Glynn Co., GA

Evan Pitman

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This season a total of 1,377 birds were banded, which is just 31 fewer than in 2013, despite an additional 640 net hours of operation this year. While the previous few years have shown an increase in total number of birds banded, this year's decrease could be due in part to weather patterns and other variables affecting individual species migration during the weeks when the station was open.

Our busiest day in 2014 was 4 Oct, on which we banded 185 birds, which is over 100 fewer birds than on our busiest day in 2013, when we banded 295. In fact, there were two days in 2013 with more than 200 birds, and this year we did not reach that total in a single day. However, 2014 resulted in five days with more than 100 birds banded each of those days, making for less extreme variation between daily totals than in 2013. Persistent southeastern winds present this season, especially during the last week the station was open, and the absence of any major storm systems during this time could be part of the reason for less extreme migrant peaks in 2014.

Migration seemed to be steady through the dates we banded for Common Yellowthroats, Gray Catbirds, Painted Buntings, and the majority of other species banded. The Western Palm Warblers had one large push on 4 Oct accounting for nearly 90% of birds banded that day. However, the rest of the WPWAs did not appear in

great numbers until 16 Oct, when 51 were banded, and 68 were banded on the station's last day for the season, 19 Oct. Given the increase in Western Palm capture rate toward the end of the season, it is possible that they may have been migrating through later than in some other years.

Tomoka Basin Banding Station

292-0810

Ormond Beach, Volusia Co., FL

Meret S. Wilson

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This was the second fall since a control burn was conducted in Aug 2013 in the south area of Tomoka State Park (GPS: 29° 20'26.4"N 81° 05'07.8" W). The undergrowth of saw palmetto has grown back considerably. One of the results was fewer flycatchers than last fall. The Gray Catbirds returned to the lower area of the net lanes, being caught in nets 5-10 as compared to last year catch in nets 1-4 where the burn did not reach. The top five catches for the fall were very different from last year. White-eyed Vireos have never been in the top ten birds, let alone the top five. Black-throated Blue Warblers are consistently falling in numbers overall each season. At least 75% of the Black-throated Blues were of the Appalachian race. Myrtle Warblers have not been on the top five for several years until this fall. This was a surprise because there are almost no wax myrtle or juniper berries available on the south side.

Of the 36 species I captured this fall, a Cooper's Hawk and a Yellow-breasted Chat were both first-time species, bringing the total number of species banded in TSP to 87. Happily, one of the park rangers just happened to be present when the hawk hit the net. He held the hawk while I banded and measured it. The chat is the first ever recorded in the park. A Northern Harrier narrowly missed getting caught because it managed to climb out just as we rounded the corner to the net. To be on the safe side I closed that net the rest of the week.

The weather was very cooperative this fall with little wind, no rain days, and only four days that no birds were caught. Many days had only two or three catches. It was a full month before a single recapture occurred.

As always, I am grateful for the support of the rangers of Tomoka State Park and the help of my volunteers, Bill Horton and Heike and Bert Charest.

**Bill Baggs Cape Florida
State Park**

254-0800

Key Biscayne, Miami-Dade Co., FL

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Martina Hillbrand, David Schaffter

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Cape Florida is in its thirteenth 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 2014 and the station was open on all but two days until we closed on 7 Nov. Nets were opened from first light until early afternoon on most days.

The 2014 fall season continued with the recent trend of little to no tropical weather activity in south Florida. Fronts and rainy nights were also few and far between, although several decent waves of birds passed through in mid-to-late September and some rain along a boundary put down more birds in late October. Radar and field observations suggest that good numbers of birds are moving through the area, and they either continue on overhead due to favorable conditions or they land onsite but are not captured. The restored forest around the banding area is maturing; the oldest trees are nearing 20 years of age and are growing taller while the understory is thinning out. Both of these trends are probably contributing to fewer captures. The busiest day was 25 Oct with 102 new captures, but several other days were close to that peak (99 captures on 21 Sep; 90 new captures on 5 Oct). The overall respectable number of 2029 birds captured during the 2014 season was a result of the record 10,540 net hours, as the capture rate of 21 birds/100nh was the second lowest in 12 years.

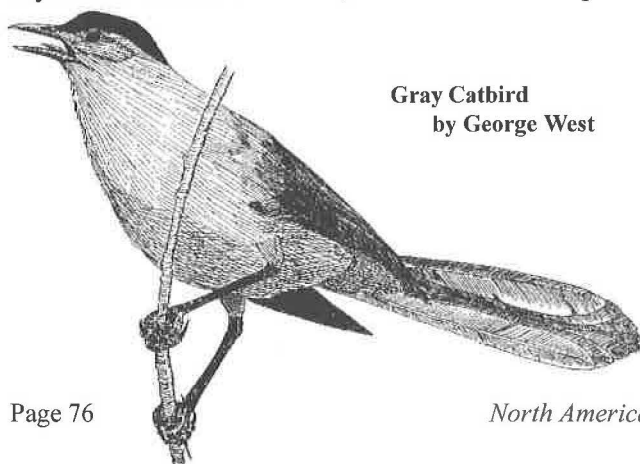
We had several interesting captures in 2014 despite the low total of 54 species banded. Three species were banded for the first time at Cape Florida during the 2014 season. Two were common local species that are not easily captured by our type of mistnetting operation; a Gray Kingbird on 4 Sep and a Barn Swallow on 2 Oct. Both birds stumbled into a net placed in a more open location in scrubby habitat adjacent to the hardwood hammock. The third species was an Ash-throated Flycatcher banded on 30 Oct, a southwestern US species

that winters occasionally in south Florida. Other unusual captures included a Wilson's Warbler banded on 17 Oct and a Lincoln's Sparrow banded on 20 Oct. Individuals of both these species have only been captured two other times in 13 years of banding.

Gray Catbirds continued to be captured more than average (229 in 2014), but were not the most abundant species banded this season as they were in 2013. Catbird bandings have been on the increase in the last several years, and have been well above the average of 147.7 since 2011. Black-throated Blue Warblers, on the other hand, have been below average the last three years with no big days where they swarmed the site. The 268 Black-throated Blue Warblers banded in 2014 are well below the record years such as the 580 banded in 2008. Ovenbirds remain the most abundant species banded at the CFBS with 294 captures in 2014. A site record was broken for Worm-eating Warbler (142; 138 in 2013) and Swainson's Warbler nearly tied (32) with the 2013 record high of 33. One individual Swainson's Warbler may be spending the winter at Cape Florida; it was originally banded on 26 Aug and was recaptured on 22 October with no significant change in weight. Another more unusual species with a strong showing in 2014 was Wood Thrush; the five banded this year compares to an average of 1.7 captures a year. All of these birds were captured between 23 and 30 Oct. On the other hand, not a single hawk was banded during the 2014 fall season, although several Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks escaped from nets. The lack of significant storms for the past nine years has allowed the canopy to recover while the hammock trees, all hand-planted since 1994, are maturing. This probably makes the site more attractive to some species, less attractive to others, and changes the capture rate of certain other species that are still present.

We captured 25 returning birds of seven species, with Ovenbirds banded in the last four years, making up nearly half of these. The two oldest returns were a resident Northern Cardinal banded in 2006 and a wintering Gray Catbird banded as an adult in spring 2007 that was also recaptured in fall 2013. 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 2014 season: thanks go to David Schaffter, Mike Diaz, Jim King, Miriam Avello, Mario, Nico and Lucas Porcelli, Mike Bush, Jenn Sweatman, Barb and Ted Center, Celeste De Palma, Elizabeth Lago, Jared Swenson, Mark Lopez, and Doug Weidemann. Special thanks go to David Foster, the Park manager, for continuing to support our project.



Gray Catbird
by George West