

2016

Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV (Piedmont)- Fall 2015- Foreman's Branch Bird Observatory

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392-0762

Although I had mentioned that the constant and dramatic changes in the environment and encroachment in and surrounding Harford Glen should have eased sufficiently to provide some consistency in data, the fall of 2014 managed to deny that happening. A combination of more classes of students and good weather allowed us to increase effort by 46% with some fascinating results. On the other hand, 2015, with plenty of rain, resulted in a 34% decrease in effort and a 42% decline in birds banded.

The number of birds per 100 net-hour, which had been close to our recent average of 67.8 and prior ten-year average of 67.7, dropped to a low of 26.6 which we attribute mainly to weather. Whether it is an indication of the effects of climate change is left to wiser analysis.

We were also accompanied on several days this year by two different students who have shown an intense interest in the birds. Hunter Anderson, a seventh grader, has demonstrated skill in bird identification and is learning to attend nets. Natalie Jacobs, a freshman in the Natural Resource / Agricultural Studies program, is using her experience at Harford Glen as part of her high school project to observe, participate and report on the banding process.

Ken and I are indebted to Amanda Koss, our assisting teacher who is learning to band, and our volunteers: Eileen Frey, Jane Scocca, Jean Wheeler, Dennis Kirkwood, Dave Larkin, Al Conrad and our stalwart Phil Powers, without whom we would not be able to keep the banding station operational.

This report includes Ken's apologies to Jean Wheeler for not properly listing her as a volunteer in 2013 and 2014 and confusing her name with that of a retired volunteer, also a Jean.

Patuxent Powerline Right-of-Way 390-0764
Patuxent Research Refuge
Laurel, Prince George's C., 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 2007-2015, 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 and 2014 since our 2013 season was truncated.

This – our 33rd year – was our worst by far since 2007 with 1,426 bandings and only 73 species, our second lowest species total. Unlike last year, which had a slow start but a strong finish, this year was dramatically down the whole season.

Highlights included a Black-billed Cuckoo and a Pine Warbler. We had NO 100+ banding days, a first for this station. Despite the poor season, we had a few high counts. Acadian Flycatcher (10), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (18), Eastern Wood Pewee (12), Northern Waterthrush (8) and Rose-breasted Grosbeak (4). Low counts were too numerous to mention.

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. 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: Jo Anna Lutmerding, Matt Rogosky and Bruce Peterjohn. Thanks to banders-in-training Jasmine Rajbhandary and Jennifer McKay and to other staff who lent assistance.

Foreman's Branch 391-0760
Bird Observatory
Banders: J.G. Gruber, M.E. Gimpel, D.M. Small, A.C. Spears

It was the 18th fall banding season for Foreman's Branch Bird Observatory. Productivity was down 30% and the total catch down 11% despite an increase of nearly 5700 net hours and 20% more days than in 2014. We continued to operate the nets as we have in the past two years by closing early afternoon and avoiding less productive mid-to-late fronts that did not

originate from the north or northwest but from a more northerly direction with numerous weather systems also coming out of the southwest. Fronts that did originate from a northerly direction tended to stall off the east coast and throw back easterly winds right after the passage of the front. East winds bring very few migrants to this station. El Nino was responsible for these weather patterns. Banding highlights were very few this year. While we heard a few hundred Pine Siskins fly over the station, we caught only one for the fall on 26 Oct. Another notable catch for the season was a Summer Tanager banded on 22 Aug and recovered a month later dead in North Carolina, for a first station recovery of that species. One each Philadelphia Vireo was banded on September 20 and 25. Our third Lawrence's Warbler for the station was banded on 14 Aug and single Orange-crowned Warblers on 18 Oct and 11 Nov were notable. Both nuthatches were absent from the nets this fall. Very few species achieved new high fall totals but a number of species like Northern Mockingbird hit new fall lows with only 16 of this species banded.

We would like to thank our Washington College intern, Mike Hudson, for his dedication and hard work this fall at Foreman's Branch. In June, we added a new full-time staff member to Foreman's Branch, Amanda Spears, as both a bander and researcher. She will be analyzing 16 years of banding data from the station and writing a summary of it. In addition to the banders already listed above, the following people volunteered many hours helping at the station: Harry Sears, Greg Cole, Hanson Robbins, Jeannine Fleegle, Jennie Carr, Kailani Clarke, Mike Hudson, Andrew Wade, Rachel Field, Vincent and Carly Fumo, Sammy Ocher, Eli Anders and Anne and Brennan O'Connor.

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The chief weather event of the season was the historic flood that engulfed South Carolina at the beginning of October.

New this year was the addition of a new banding site on the east end of the island – Little Bear. The two banding sites are located at each end of the island about 13 km. Both sites are situated in coastal scrub/shrub and high

marsh habitats; however, the Little Bear site is in an earlier stage of succession. Collectively, we banded 7,140 birds and had 1,533 recaptures of 93 different species at both sites.

Captian Sam's (west end of Island)

Nets were opened for a total of 98 days (out of a possible 108) from 14 Aug through 30 Nov. We had five more rain days this year compared to last year, including a three-day stretch (3-5 Oct) when we received around 20 in. of rain. In combination with extremely high tides this created catastrophic flooding in the area. We banded 4,770 new birds and had 1,122 recaptures of 83 different species. The most commonly banded species were Common Yellowthroats (1,266), Gray Catbirds (843), and Yellow-rumped Warblers (55). These three species made up 57% of all the birds banded this season. We also had many recaptures of birds banded in previous seasons.

We increased our effort from 11,565.6 to 12,115.6 net-hours despite banding fewer days than last year. This increase was due to the addition of two new nets, bringing us to a total of 25 nets. We banded 316 fewer birds this fall compared to last year and the capture rate decreased 6.6 birds/100 nh from 55.3 last year. This increase can partly be attributed to the large decrease in Yellow-rumped Warblers this fall. For the first time in several years, the capture rate of recaptures also decreased by 2.2 birds/100 nh. The capture rate of recaptures is usually fairly constant varying by only a few tenths each season.

There were 10 days when over 100 birds were banded, with three days exceeding 200 birds. The best day was 6 Oct when we banded 436 birds and had 20 recaptures. This was by far the biggest day we have ever had at KIBS!

We banded two species never before banded at KIBS: Black-billed Cuckoo and Lincoln's Sparrow. No vagrants were banded this year, but some rare and notable species were the Black-billed Cuckoo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Swainson's, Blue-winged, and Bay-breasted warblers, and Lincoln's Sparrows. Notable species absent this year were Eastern Kingbird, Brown Creeper, Wood Thrush, and Chestnut-sided and Canada Warblers.

Little Bear (east end of Island)

Nets were opened for 57 days (out of a possible 72) from 7 Sep to 17 Nov. Fifteen days were cancelled due to rain, wind, and/or flooding. The Little Bear site was shut down 3-12 Oct due to extensive flooding of the Ocean Course which is the only way to access it. This was unfortunate because the days after the rain