

2016

Atlantic Flyway Review: Region III (Western Ridge) Fall 2015- Ruthven Park

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birds banded of 34 total species. As in the past few years the migrant warblers were again absent. There were only 14 species of warblers totaling 31 birds. I have put together a bar graph showing total birds banded for each of the 40 years. It tells the story and reason for the decline at the Lewiston Station. Citizen housing (26 acres) and a golf course (247 acres) within a quarter of a mile of the banding site do not make for good bird numbers.

This fall I had local recaptures of five Black-capped Chickadees and one Blue Jay.

Again this year we had good numbers of kids and adults attend the banding session with the Purple Martins. I did not encourage the visitors to the mist netting because the bird numbers were so low, but two adults who had been to the station in previous years called and were accommodated.

Ruthven Park

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Haldimand County, ON

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Fall 2015 will be remembered for its good weather: little rain, clear skies, and warm temperatures (right into the first week of November we had highs of 16° on 6 Nov). In fact, we missed only one full day of banding due to inclement weather. Unfortunately, these kinds of conditions do not make for very good banding at Ruthven as migrants tend to “fly over” getting as far as they can, taking advantage of the conditions. Poor weather often results in “fall-outs” migrants (most of which fly at night) come to ground when confronted with bad weather fronts. These can result in large banding numbers. We had no discernible fall-outs this season.

Our fruit crop was mediocre at best; in fact, our wild grape crop was poor (for a second year in a row). So numbers of fruit-eating migrants were down. Despite these two factors we had a fairly good season, banding 3,441 birds of 88 species. This is our sixth highest total going back to 1996. This was achieved through hard work/good coverage. We ran nets whenever we could. Our full complement of nets numbered 21.

Banding highlights included three Golden-winged Warblers, a species that used to be fairly common in the area in the 1980's but has been forced out by Blue-winged Warblers. The last time we even saw Golden-winged was 2001. Another notable bird captured was a male Hooded Warbler.

One of the most popular banding activities is the capture of Northern Saw-whet Owls in October/early November. This is a species whose numbers fluctuate depending on food availability in their northern breeding grounds. We had an “average” season, banding 42 here at Ruthven and another 10 at Taquanyah Conservation Area (about 10 kilometers away).

The most significant event this season was the development of a banding/birding group for young people ranging in age from 11 to 18. We consistently had seven youngsters out on weekends with a membership of nine. Some came from as far away as Kitchener and Toronto. The name of this group was the BAGend Baggers—the significance arising from the first initials of the three most consistent banders (Ben, Alessandra, and Giovanni). Further, it was a fellowship of the Ring(er)s. [Ringer is the term used in Great Britain/Europe for bander.] The group ran their own nets and banded with separate bands (so as not to skew our data) but under my direct supervision. The Baggers banded 343 birds of 43 species but helped out (a lot at times) with the main banding program.

We continue to have a strong base of volunteers with individuals putting in 1,602 hours (this does NOT include paid hours). Last year we had 1,355 volunteer hours so this is a significant increase. The number of visitors was 871; this is down significantly from the 1,140 we had last year. The reason was the greatly decreased number of bookings by school groups due to the labour unrest in the Public School System....something completely out of our hands.

Many thanks to the many volunteers who helped out this season and to Ruthven/Grand River Land Trust for their continuing support in so many ways.