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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region III (Western Ridge) Fall 2015- Powdermill Nature Reserve

Luke DeGroote

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56th fall season ran from 15 Aug to 15 Nov at Old Cut, Aug 10 to Sept 15 at Breakwater, and Aug 15 to Nov 11 at the Tip. Thirty volunteers, representing five countries, logged over 13,000 hours collecting migration data on over 250 species and banded 10,967 birds of 124 species. Twenty-four volunteer 'Friends' of LPBO helped to serve over 900 visitors and an additional 400 students of all ages who enjoyed banding demonstrations.

Birding Highlights: The fall season was slower than average, with very few big days. Nonetheless, there were some interesting highlights: Long Point's second ever Neotropic Cormorant was photographed off the Tip on 26 Aug. Two Eared Grebes were seen in the Outer Bay on 2 Nov. A Northern Gannet flew past the Tip 16 Oct. There were two Cattle Egrets seen 17 Oct; one flew over Old Cut, and another was seen from Concession Road 1. An American Avocet was seen briefly at the Tip 20 Aug. A Franklin's Gull, part of large irruption into eastern North America, was seen flying off Hastings Drive 14 Nov. Three Sabine's Gulls were seen from the Tip 29 Sep, 12 and 13 Oct. A White-winged Dove was seen by multiple observers at the Tip on 22-23 Oct. A Western Kingbird was at Breakwater 6 Sep. Single Common Ravens were seen at the Tip on 21-28 Sep and 14 Oct. One Loggerhead Shrike was detected in the area by the Motus Wildlife Tracking System at the BSC Headquarters 10 Sep. A Townsend's Solitaire was seen at the Tip 23 Oct. A flock of 10 Bohemian Waxwings flew over Old Cut 14 Nov. A Dickcissel was at the Tip 5 Oct. A Nelson's Sparrow was found at the Tip 18-19 Oct. A Yellow-headed Blackbird flew over Old Cut 5 Sep, while another flew over the Tip 26 Oct.

The Arboretum at Penn State 404-0775
State College, Centre County, PA
Nick T. Kerlin, Bander
bluebird6771@verizon.net
Dr. Margaret Brittingham, Chief Assistant

The banding program is part of the Avian Education Program of The Arboretum at Penn State (main campus at University Park). Banding was first conducted on a trial basis at this location in the fall of 2010.

Weather conditions were generally favorable with just one day cancelled due to rain. There were a total of 39

local recaptures this season, but no foreign recaptures. The five "best captures" (based upon past presence and existing habitat) were Sharp-shinned Hawk, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Mourning Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, and Worm-eating Warbler.

The banding site was open for public visitation during all hours of operation, with organized group tours through prior arrangement. A total of 103 people visited during the period.

A "Bander-in-Training" class was conducted on 10 Sep to acquire new volunteers to help with banding operations. Fourteen people attended, most of whom volunteered time on additional days with hands-on training and assistance to the banding operations.

"Bird Banding at the Arboretum at Penn State – Volunteer Guide," a 33-page guide (prepared by Jill Koren, Elora Grahame, Jackson Martini, Nick Kerlin and Margaret Brittingham) was published by Penn State Extension and made available to banding volunteers. The booklet covers banding program objectives, protocol and procedures.

Seven community volunteers and 21 Penn State students (most from the Wildlife and Fisheries major) contributed 454 hours of time to banding operations and public outreach activities during the season. Major assistance was provided by Dr. Margaret Brittingham (Arboretum Avian Education Program coordinator, Professor of Wildlife Resources), Shari Edelson (Director of Horticulture/Curator of The Arboretum at Penn State), Penn State Operation and Physical Plant employees (trail maintenance/support).

Powdermill Nature Reserve 400-0791
Rector, Westmoreland County, PA
Bander(s)/Compiler: Luke DeGroot
degrootel@carnegiemnh.org
Chief Assistants: Mary Shidel, Nick Glover, Elizabeth Abraham, Laura Gomez Murillo

This Fall we banded 6,024 new birds, which turned out to be the second-lowest capture rate in the last ten years. The pace at the lab did not seem that much slower though, as we made up for it in recaptured birds. Our total of 2,949 recaps made it the *best* season for recaps in those same ten years, bringing the total number of birds caught in our nets to just under 9,000. Although the

early fall was on par for an average season, weather in October brought high winds on many banding days that kept more exposed nets closed and/or forced an early closure. Of the 30 banding days in October and November, we closed early on almost half (14 days) and our notes reference "increasing wind throughout the session" for another eight banding days.

No species were below 2 SD, but several came in significantly above average totals: Carolina Wren (n=18), Eastern Screech Owl (n=3), Hairy Woodpecker (n=8), Northern Flicker (n=7) Warbling Vireo (n=6) and Yellow Palm Warbler (n=4).

An adult male Baltimore Oriole recaptured on 11 Aug was originally banded on 7 May 2011 as an after-second-year bird, which places him at over ten years old this season. It was the first time he had returned to Powdermill since that first encounter.

We had one foreign recovery this fall: on 3 Nov 2015 we recovered a Northern Saw-whet Owl originally banded (and hatched) in 2012. The original encounter was in Garrett County, Maryland. A Lincoln's Sparrow banded at Powdermill on 2 Oct 2015 was recaptured just eight days later on 10 Oct in Cincinnati, Ohio (almost 300 km WSW).

We had 271 visitors at the lab during the fall banding season, including classes from three nearby universities, several local schools and many families and friends. In September, seven people participated in our Advanced Bander Training Workshop.

Mt. Nebo WMA Banding Station 392-0792
Garrett County, Oakland, MD
Connie Skipper, Fran Pope
connieskipper@hohnet.com

This was the fifteenth season of fall banding at Mt. Nebo WMA. The station was open 26 days from 17 Aug through 31 Oct. A total of 786 birds were banded of 63 species. The station effort was 1495 net hours with a capture rate of 53 b/100 nhs. American Tree Sparrow was added to the station list this year bringing the station total to 99 species.

A good food supply is one of the reasons why we chose to band in Mt. Nebo WMA. The hedgerow

composition is of invasive nonnative species including multi-flora rose, autumn olive and honeysuckle sp. These species have dependable crops of berries and the hedgerows are low enough that birds attracted to them are often caught in the nets.

In July 2015, we discovered that a section of the invasive species in the banding field had been sprayed with herbicides and was completely dead. Nine of our 17 ½ historic net locations were now completely in the open. We did not re-erect those nets. Instead, we placed 2 ½ nets in a new location in the green part of the field. On one level, we applaud the efforts to rid public areas of invasive species. However, we were distressed that our station, which has operated fifteen years with the same net locations, was so disrupted. Surprisingly, however, this year had the highest number of b/100 nh.

There was a good apple, thornberry, black cherry, and rose hip crop. Several plots adjacent to our nets were planted with millet. This resulted in good sparrow numbers.

The top-ten list had no surprises. Gray Catbirds were number one, as they have been in eight of 15 years. The top three species banded were Gray Catbird (16% of the total), Song Sparrow (14%), and White-throated Sparrow (10%). The remaining top ten species in descending order were Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Common Yellowthroat, Cedar Waxwing, Swamp Sparrow, American Robin, Slate-colored Junco and Purple Finch.

This was a disappointing warbler year. We banded 121 warblers, 15% of the new bandings. Common Yellowthroats comprised 28% of the total warblers. Three warbler species usually make the top ten.

The largest daily catch was 67 birds on 16 Oct with 18 species. Ruby-crowned Kinglets comprised 16% of the total catch that day. On 5 Oct, 54 birds of 19 species were banded. Twelve Sep had the highest species diversity with 49 birds of 22 species banded.

Fran Pope was unable to help most of the fall season. Therefore, we had less than half the net hours that we normally work. Taking that into consideration, it was a banner Gray Catbird year with 127 bandings. In the 15