

2018

Atlantic Flyway Review: (Western Ridge) Region III- Fall 2016- Allegheny Front Dolly Sods

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Recommended Citation

Pattison, Joan Bell and Schnopp, Todd (2018) "Atlantic Flyway Review: (Western Ridge) Region III- Fall 2016- Allegheny Front Dolly Sods," *North American Bird Bander*. Vol. 43 : Iss. 2 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/nabb/vol43/iss2/7>

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We had 312 visitors at the lab during the fall banding season, including classes from four nearby universities, several local schools and many families. In September, seven people participated in our Advanced Bander Training Workshop. Additionally, we hosted a North American Banding Council (NABC) certification session attended by 10 candidates and evaluated by 10 trainers with over 200 years of combined banding experience. One candidate was certified at the trainer level, three candidates at the bander level, and five candidates at the assistant level.

The Arboretum at Penn State 404-0775
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Chief Assistant Dr. Margaret Brittingham

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. Overall it was a mediocre season in numbers and species. Weather conditions had no effect on banding totals, as there was no presence of any major weather influence. One and a half days were rescheduled due to rain and another day was shortened by two hours for the same reason.

For the first time in seven seasons of fall banding, no Song Sparrows were caught. Noteworthy, since in three of the previous years they were in the top five banded birds. Result of a natural population down trend? Missed because of "wrong" day for banding when they moved through the area? Did other stations find this species in lower numbers? The "five best birds" (based upon past presence and volunteers' preference) were Connecticut Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow and Purple Finch.

There were no foreign (outside of local area) recaptures. Forty-seven birds were recaptured on one or more days after being banded at the Arboretum. Noteworthy local recaptures included a Blue Jay — banded 8 Oct 2010 as a HY bird and a Northern Cardinal - banded 15 Apr 2011 as AHY (after hatch year) bird.

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The banding site was open for public visitation during all hours of operation with organized group programs through prior arrangement. A total of 149 people visited during the period. Daily summaries were posted on the local State College Bird Club listserv.

Eight community volunteers and 26 Penn State students (most from the Wildlife and Fisheries major) contributed 476 hours of time to banding operations and public outreach activities during the season. The annual "Bander-in-Training" program had 12 participants with three continuing to assist beyond the minimum required three days. Special thanks to Dr. Margaret Brittingham (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).

Allegheny Front 390-0791
Dolly Sods, Grantco CO, WV
Migration Observatory Banding Station
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Allegheny Front Migration Observatory (AFMO) is located at Dolly Sods, Grant County, West Virginia. AFMO is 10 km southeast of Davis, WV, high on top of the Allegheny Front in the Monongahela National Forest. This fall, AFMO opened on 13 Aug and closed on 2 Oct 2016. AFMO is the oldest, continuous bird banding station in North America. This was our 59th consecutive year of bird banding at AFMO. A total of 5,423 birds were banded representing 77 species with a Station effort of 88 birds per 100 net hours.

A total of 266,759 birds have been banded since Ralph K. Bell founded AFMO and banded his first bird on 8 Sep 1958. A total of 125 species have been banded since 1958.

The overall percentage of hatch-year birds (using known age birds only) was 69.8% compared with 83.06% in 2015 and 75.84% in 2014. There were

8 days this fall when over 100 birds were banded, 5 days over 200 were banded, 1 day 395 were banded, one day 406 were banded, 1 day 522 were banded, and one day (on the 24 Sep) 829 were banded. The station was open for 45 days and closed for six days due to rain and/or fog and mist.

1. Black-throated Blue Warbler was the most numerous species this year with 1082 birds banded (14.7% under the 10-year average from 2006 to 2015, although we banded more of this species than we did on each of the past 3 years).

2. Blackpoll Warbler was second with 858 birds banded (13.3% over the 10-year average).

3. Cape May Warbler was third with 565 birds banded (186.1% over the 10-year average). Note: The last time we banded over 500 Cape May Warblers was in 1991.

4. Black-throated Green was 4th with 457 birds banded (33.9% under the 10-year average).

5. Tennessee Warbler was 5th with 443 birds banded (23.5% over the 10-year average).

The total number of these top five species is 3405, which is 63% of the birds banded this fall. The next highest number of birds banded were Swainson's Thrush (371)-100% over the 10-year average; Blackburnian Warbler (267)-33.5% over the 10-year average, Magnolia Warbler (232), Ovenbird (169), Common Yellowthroat (117), Bay-breasted Warbler (109).

The "Fall Flyover Count" at AFMO was started by Ralph K. Bell in 1990. Some of the results from the 2016 Count are as follows: 197 Ruby-throated Hummingbird (158 in 2015), 27-year average: 364, 347 Blue Jay (159 in 2015), 27-year average: 4,623, 353 American Goldfinch (294 in 2015); 27-year average 2,358 Monarch Butterflies (145 in 2015), 27-year average 893; 211 Broad-winged Hawks (1650 in 2015)

This fall, 748 people signed our AFMO Visitor's Book. These visitors came from 14 different states and Washington, DC. Groups that visited AFMO learned about birds and nature from our experienced volunteers. Some groups that visited were the Ralph K. Bell Bird Club, Waynesburg, PA; Canaan Valley Resort Nature Trip; Highland Adventist School, Elkins, WV; Cameron HS Science Classes, Cameron, WV; Allegheny/Garrett Counties Bird Club, MD; and John Marshall High School, Glendale, WV. Thanks to the personnel of the Monongahela National Forest: Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson; Realty Specialist/Special Use Manager, Todd Hess; District Manager, M. Troy Waskey; Develop Recreation Manager, Zach Adkins; Forest Technician, John Waggy and all others that gave their cooperation and help. Thanks to the West Virginia DNR for the use of their building for storage of the bird banding shed. Thanks to the Ralph K. Bell Bird Club and other groups, visitors and volunteers for their financial support, which is our only means of replacing the 30 mist nets we use at AFMO.

The banders who participated this fall were Beth Ritter (Campground Host with Randy Ritter), Todd Schmopp (AFMO Co-Leader), Fred and Carol McCullough, Charles Ziegenfus, Bob Dean, LeJay Graffious, Jeff and Sheila Berry (AFMO Resident Managers). The scheduled volunteers who tended nets, kept records, and helped in many ways were Tom and Dawn Fox, Jose Martins, Tom and Debbie Long, Bill Beatty, Jan Runyan, Maggi Per, Jackie Burns, Stephen Sushinski and Tim Newlin. Thanks to Tom Fox and his crew for the big job of clearing the net lanes so we could begin banding; LeJay Graffious, Todd Schnopp and their helpers for erecting the banding shed in August and taking it down in October; and Luke Pattison for contributing his computer expertise to his grandfather's AFMO Research Project. Thanks to all of the dedicated volunteers who gave their time and expertise in many ways and in most cases for many years to help continue the research Ralph K. Bell envisioned for AFMO at Dolly Sods, West Virginia.