

Vischer Ferry, N.Y.

For the third year in a row, the fall banding at Vischer Ferry Wildlife Management Area produced an above-average yield of birds. We banded 1804 birds in 1923 net-hours (94 birds/100 net-hours), compared to 93 b/Cn-h in 1973 and 113 b/Cn-h in 1972. In addition, we handled 338 repeat and return captures for a total handling rate of 11 b/Cn-h. For the first time in 10 years no new species was banded, however, a Carolina wren caught on 10/13 would have been species number 111 had it not escaped from the gathering cage.

We banded generally on the same schedule of Friday evening - Saturday morning in September and Saturday evening - Sunday morning in October as in previous years. We were rained out on two weekends in September. Despite this, we accumulated about the same number of net-hours as last year because Pantle and Covert ran additional nets. With the exception of Covert's lane extension and a new lane cut by Pantle, we ran all of the other net lanes that we have run in recent years.

As in other years, our best bird takes were made immediately preceding frontal passage, or before dark after passage during the day. Our poorest takes occurred under conditions of northwest wind after frontal passage due to the departure of birds with the front.

Our best dates were 10/20 (254 b/Cn-h), 10/5 (184 b/Cn-h), 9/28 (178 b/Cn-h) and 10/13 (162 b/Cn-h). The highest species tally, 33, was attained on 9/8 and 9/29.

Abundance - Because rainy weather prevented our banding on two September weekends, the break in continuity makes it difficult to compare all of this year's data with those of previous years. Nevertheless, some comparisons are possible.

This year's catch of five saw-whet owls exceeded the previous maximum of four set in 1970 and 1968. Also more numerous compared to last year were black-capped chickadee (33 vs. 15), winter wren (a new max. of 34 exceeding last year's record 30); the late thrushes did well, robin (88 a new high vs. 83), hermit thrush (62 a new record vs. 35), but the other thrushes except for veery were lower in number most likely due to our lack of banding effort in September. Golden-crowned (7 vs. 1) and ruby-crowned kinglets (58 vs. 45) set new records. Cedar waxwings were at their lowest in nine years.

The September banding interruption affected almost all of our warbler totals negatively, so that it is impossible to comment on decreases of these species. Only one species, Tennessee warbler, set a new max. of five vs. three previously.

Rusty blackbirds were captured for the first time in four years probably as a result of partial flooding of the banding area caused by dredging on the river. The cardinal take of 18 exceeded the previous max. by one. Rose-breasted grosbeak increased (31 vs. 23). The purple finch flight appeared to be heavy and we took 101 of this species, second only to 126 in 1971. Goldfinches were scarce. White-throated sparrows were abundant (623 vs. 520), and compared to last year, so were swamp (64 vs. 16) and song sparrows (153 vs. 133).

No Vischer Ferry-banded birds were reported recovered in the past year and no foreign-banded birds were recaptured this fall, however, some interesting returns were obtained. In addition to the return of a number of resident species, there were four returns from species normally thought of as migrant, but which have given some indication of being possible local breeders. A brown creeper that was banded as an HY U on the very early date of 8/9/69 and which returned on 9/18/71 was again recaptured on 10/14/73. An HY U white-throated sparrow that was banded on 10/16/71, and repeated on 10/23/71 was recaptured on 10/14/73 and again on 10/21/73. Another white-throat banded on 5/10/72 was recaptured on 10/20/73. These are the first such recaptures of white-throats banded in previous years. A purple finch banded as an HY U on 10/16/71 was recaptured as an AHY M on 10/6/73. It is the first return of this species.

The banding was done by myself, Will D. Merritt, Jr., Rita and Robert J. Pantle, and James C. Covert III. Our thanks are extended to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for the use of the area for banding.

In addition to the banding reported here, banding demonstrations were conducted for the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club and a number of other individuals. Also, birds were supplied to researchers at the State University of New York at Albany under the direction of Dr. Kenneth Able, and to Donald Riker of Cornell University for the purpose of continuing studies on avian orientation.