

Photo Salon: Cape Florida



Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park is home to a relatively new banding station, known affectionately as "Cape Florida" or "South Florida Bird Observatory," that has already in its four fall seasons (2002–2005) turned up some interesting records, among them Zenaida Dove, LaSagra's Flycatcher, and Western Spindalis. Fall 2005 was no exception, with Thick-billed Vireo, Townsend's Warbler, and Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher among the highlights. This collection of rarities is most remarkable in context: the station has banded just 4029 individual birds in 12,123 net-hours, among them a host of Caribbean-wintering Neotropical migrants. The station is located on the western (here the left) side of the peninsula, in native woodland. *Photograph by Graham Hitchen.*



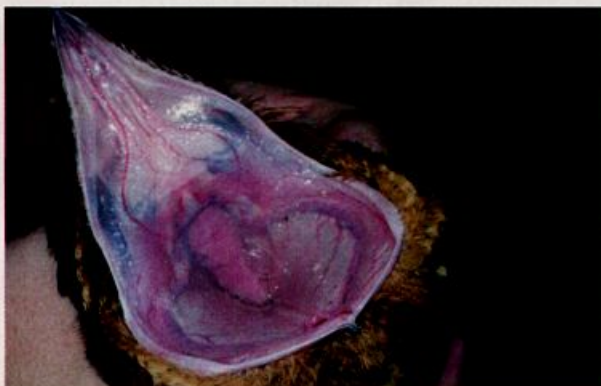
Adding spice to any bander's day are the least-common warblers, such as this male Golden-winged Warbler (21 September 2005; top) and this Townsend's Warbler (4 November 2005; bottom). A MacGillivray's Warbler was banded, but not captured, just a day after the Golden-winged, but a Mourning and two Connecticut Warblers were banded that day. *Photographs by Robin Diaz.*



Warblers that winter largely in the West Indies are seen in southern Florida during both fall and spring migrations. But capture rates, for instance, of Cape May Warbler (male, 12 October 2004; upper left) and Black-throated Blue Warbler (male of the Appalachian subspecies *cairnsi*; 16 September 2005; upper right)—both Neotropical migrants that winter mostly in the Caribbean—are surprisingly different at Cape Florida. The former is relatively rare (9 captures), the latter the most common warbler captured (707), even outnumbering the abundant Ovenbird (672). Species that winter both on Caribbean islands and the Caribbean slope of Mexico and Central America, such as Worm-eating Warbler (28 September 2004; lower left) and Swainson's Warbler (14 September 2004), have also turned out to be more common than Cape May Warbler, with 205 and 42 captures, respectively. *Photographs by Robin Diaz.*



Cape Florida's position, as well as its habitat, make it a magnet both for local birds and for migrants and vagrants, whether from the Bahamas (just 100-200 km distant) or farther away. This Thick-billed Vireo (7 November 2005; right; upper left) represented just the fourth verified record for Florida (a White-eyed Vireo makes a nice comparison, 26 October 2005; center), whereas this Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (8 October 2005; lower left) was just the fifth for Florida. Photographs by Robin Diaz.



Most birders observe nightjars only as moth-like apparitions rising off roadsides, but banders see them in the light of day. This female Chuck-will's-widow (upper left) was banded 12 September 2005; another female, banded 29 September 2004 (two views), shows the enormous gape, large enough to swallow a warbler whole, as this species sometimes does. Seventeen "Chucks" have been caught at Cape Florida, but just one Whip-poor-will, this bird 26 October 2005, a male (lower right). Photographs by Robin Diaz.