

# Atlantic Flyway Report: Region I, 1985

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Unfortunately we are missing some reports that in prior years have been important to the overall comparisons of the New England coastal area. The weather differences from the Isles of Shoals down the coast to Block Island seem to have a direct bearing on the numbers of birds.

I found the report of Cardinals and Mockingbirds from David Holmes interesting. Our "southern" birds are extending their territories farther and farther north. In 1962

a great stir was caused with the finding of a Cardinal in Greenwich, CT.

It would be hard to compare the activities of one station to another. The days of operation vary from 25 to 67 although they all basically open near the last 7-10 days of August. Between the length of time in operation and the weather differences, there is no common basis other than being coastal.

Overall, the Gray Catbird is the only common species to be reported in all station reports of the top 10.

**Table 1. Summaries for Region I, 1985.**

	Block Island, RI	Kingston, RI	Nantucket, MA	Manomet, MA	Rockport, MA	Appledore Island, ME
Days of operation	43	64	37	60	87	25
Number of nets used	3-10	2-4	2-15	50	8	6-8
Total net-hours	not reported	803	2345	26,707	4757	1506
Largest Daily Catch	124	65	109	347	46	153
Birds banded, 1984	995	457	1209	2597	1218	1539
Birds banded, 1985	1313	540	881	3775	886	
Different Species, 1984	62	48	65	90	71	53
Different Species, 1985	70	49	74	99	68	67
Birds/100 n.h. 1984	29	60	48	8.88	27	99
Birds/100 n.h. 1985	40	67	37	14.1	18	104

**Table 2. Most common species caught, 1985.**

Block Island, RI		Kingston, RI		Nantucket, MA	
Yel-rumped Warbler	378	Dark-eyed Junco	105	Yel-rump Warbl.	328
Gray Catbird	356	Gray Catbird	72	Com. Yellowthroat	72
Red-eyed Vireo	50	Wht-thr Sparrow	67	Gray Catbird	44
Dark-eyed Junco	41	Com. Yellowthroat	43	R-b Nuthatch	42
Amer. Redstart	35	B-c. Chickadee	35	Cape May Warb.	42
G-c Kinglet	31	Yel-rumped Warb.	34	Bay-brsted Warb.	35
R-b Nuthatch	30	Hermit Thrush	14	Amer. Redstart	31
Com. Yellowthroat	27	B & W Warbler	13	Song Sparrow	27
Brown Creeper	24	Tufted Titmouse	12	Red-eyed Vireo	15
B & W Warbler	23	G-c Kinglet	11		

  

Rockport, MA		Appledore Island, MA		Manomet, MA	
Gray Catbird	156	Amer. Redstart	240	Black-capped Chickadee	1,677
Wht-thr Sparrow	95	N. Waterthrush	208	Gray Catbird	419
Amer. Robin	92	Com. Yellowthroat	86	White-throated Sparrow	144
House Finch	86	Cape May Warb.	83	American Robin	124
B-c Chickadee	75	Red-eyed Vireo	80	Tufted Titmouse	105
Song Sparrow	52	Traill's Flyctch	58	American Redstart	97
D-e Junco	40	Song Sparrow	53	Myrtle Warbler	96
Mockingbird	28	Gray Catbird	51	Purple Finch	74
Yel-rump Warbler	22	Least Flyctch	51	Song Sparrow	69
Cardinal	21	Yellow Warbler	47	Blue Jay	62

**Block Island, RI**  
**Elise Lapham**

This was a better year than 1984 with 1313 new birds banded, 90 repeats, 8 returns, and 264 Yellow-rumped Warblers released unbanded; a total of 1675 birds handled (1465 in 1984). There were 4 fewer banding days in 1985 but about the same number of net hours. Seventy species were the highest number since 1981.

The nets are run close to our house through different habitats. Three are strung between Japanese Black Pines and Autumn Olives adjacent to mowed lawns. Four border a swamp which is fast filling in with wild rose bushes and poison ivy. Three others run down a hill by apple trees, shadbushes and chokecherries.

There were only three nights/days of NW winds 6, 11, & 17 October. For the last three years there have been hardly any NW winds during the migration periods. Usually the winds have been SW. It is hard to tell whether we are netting fewer birds because they are not there or because of the weather and winds. It is only after strong NW winds that the young birds are blown across the water and we have an influx. About 98% of the birds we catch in the fall are immatures; the older birds appear to have learned not to travel so close to the coast.

Most of the warbler counts were down with the exceptions of Black-and-whites 23 (10 in 1984) and Palms 14 (4 in 1984). Yellow-rumps were about the same. A plus was 24 Brown Creepers (13 in 1984) and 30 Red-breasted Nuthatches (0 in 1984). Golden-crowned Kinglets increased to 31 (24 in 1984) but Ruby-crowns were 10 less, perhaps this was because we did not band in November.

A Marsh Wren was the first in several years and an Oranged-crowned Warbler was a rare catch for this station.

Interesting returns of 1985: A Gray Catbird banded in the spring of 1979 returned in '81 & '85; a Yellowthroat banded as a young male in '79 was caught again this September, making him 6 years old. The longest lived bird we've encountered was another Yellowthroat banded as an adult in May 1977 returned in '79, '81 and this fall, making him at least 9 years. Jonnie Fisk caught a Catbird at Sandy Neck on the Cape this summer that we had banded in May 1983.

Hurricane Gloria brought some interesting birds to the Island but none to the nets. The most notable being a Fork-tailed Flycatcher seen by Dick Bowen, Dave Emerson, and Doug Kraus on 9 October.

I had hoped to band for a week in December but the weather was so poor I could open the nets for only one day.

**Kingston, RI 412-0713**  
**Douglas Kraus**

This station was operated in the same manner as in the past thirteen years. Nets were opened at dawn and closed at 10:00 unless activity at the nets was evident. For the years 1980-85 the birds/100 net hours are respectively: 98, 74, 74, 56, 60, and 67. Thus '85 was slightly better than '84, but much below the 25-year average for this station of 107. Observations in the field also show a decrease in the number of migrants passing through this area as compared to 15 years ago.

There were 53 repeats and 32 returns. Of the latter, 19 were of non-migratory species.

**Nantucket, MA**  
**Edith Andrews**

The Nantucket Station operated in two locations as in the past: Mothball Pines at Cisco from 26 August to 26 September for a period of 27 days and at Ice Pond Lot, Madaket from 2-30 October for a period of 10 days. At the Mothball location, 4-15 nets were used and 2-6 at Ice Pond. The largest daily catch at Mothball was 58 on 29 August with a wave of early migrants including 7 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 1 Chestnut-sided Warbler, 3 Magnolia Warblers, 5 Cape May Warblers, 13 Bay-breasted Warblers, 3 Northern Waterthrushes and 2 Yellow-breasted Chats. The largest catch at Ice Pond was 109 on 7 October. Of these, 76 were Yellow-rumps. The figures are somewhat biased as on 29 and 30 October a total of 206 Yellow-rumps were released unbanded. Of the total of 328 Yellow-rumps banded, none repeated.

Nets were set in virtually the same locations as in previous years with an exception, one was set on the muddy shore of the pond to capture shorebirds. This proved to be successful with 1 Semi-palmated Sandpiper, 7 Least Sandpipers and 1 Pectoral Sandpiper captured in 4 net hours.

In addition to the sandpipers, three other new species were added to the list for this station: Northern Harrier, Olive-sided Flycatcher and Eastern Kingbird.

Swainson's Thrushes were noticeably absent until the 26th of September when one was banded. One other was banded on 7 October making a total of two for the season. In 1984, 9 were banded, 5 during the first week of September and 4 on 23 September.

Black-throated Blue Warblers were down from 19 banded in '84 to one in '85. Blackpolls, thought to be one of our most common fall migrants, were down in numbers for the second season in a row with only 4 banded in 1985, 11 in 1984 compared to 266 in 1983, an all-time high.

Red-breasted Nuthatches were back after a complete absence in 1984. A White-winged Crossbill and 2 Common Redpolls reflect a southward movement of winter finches.

Ticks were again collected for the on-going study of the spread of Lyme disease and Babesiosis and again Lincoln's Sparrow was the most heavily infested with 13. Runner-up was a Chat with 10.

There were 85 repeats and 4 returns. Age distribution was 94.5% HY, 4% AHY, and 1.5% Unknown.

Many thanks to banders June Ficker, Jonnie Fisk and subpermittees Ginger Bladen and Robert Anderson, Gindy Bladen, Eve Chuse, Dot Davis, Angie Genovese, Leda Humphreys, Betty Kehoe, Joan Lackenbacher, Kathy Lynch, Gladys Sikora, Chris Sprague, Bob Stymeist, Lee Taylor, Ginny Tallcouch, Charlotte Weston and Penny Wilbur.

**Manomet Bird Observatory, MA 415-0703**  
**Christina T. Dowd (Staff Biologist)**

On the whole, fall banding 1985 had a rather "northern" flavor, the likes of which we have not seen since 1980, the last real "finch" year. We had our nets open on 60 days for a total of 26,707 net hours from 1 August until 15 November, about average for the last five years. The weather was also rather average, with warm Indian summer through October and only occasional blasts of northwest winds. Our November netting effort was hampered by the frequent rain, winds and chilly temperatures during the final weeks of the season. Nets were open during all daylight hours and traps were not used to avoid biasing totals/n.h. In total, we handled 5,544 birds including 3,775 new bandings of 99 species and 1,769 repeats, returns and unbanded. Forty-four percent of the new bandings were BCCH (1,677), thus our "big days" this fall were dictated by this one species: 16 Oct-347 birds handled; 10 Oct-279; 02 Oct-209; 14 Oct-108.

Species	# banded 1985	# banded 1984	1980-84 5 yr x	% change
Golden-cr. Knight	54	28	45.4	+19
Veery	1	39	21.8	-95
Swainson's Thrush	15	25	34.8	-57
Hermit Thrush	55	46	40.6	+35
Myrtle Warbler	96	478	670.0	-86
Blackpoll Warbler	47	95	150.0	-65
Black-and-white Warbler	16	40	41.4	-61
Purple Finch	74	3	25.6	+189

**Increasing Species:** It seems that in spite of the slight set-back in 1984, Golden-crowned Kinglets are continuing their increase. This fall's 54 GCKI banded represent a 19% increase over the average of the past 5 seasons (45.4). This is one species for which we have seen a steady, long-term increase since 1975. Ruby-crowned Kinglets (36 banded) were also abundant this fall. Hermit Thrushes (55 banded) were caught in increased numbers for the second autumn in a row, 35% above the previous 5 year average (40.6), and the highest number caught since 1980. Perhaps the most dramatic increase was seen in the number of Purple Finches banded (74; only 3 in 1984), the highest number banded since 1972, and a 189% increase over the previous 5 yr. average (25.6). We suspect this is a reflection of this migration's boreal character and relates to the early exhaustion of the northern seed crops rather than a resurgence of the Purple Finch breeding population in Massachusetts.

**Decreasing Species:** Though Hermit Thrushes were abundant this fall, other *Catharus* thrushes were few and far between as evidenced by the numbers of Swainson's Thrushes (15 banded = 57% decline over 5 yr. av.) and Veerys (1 banded = 95% decrease over the 5 yr. av.). The number of Blackpoll Warblers has continued to decline during the past 5 years, and the 47 banded this fall was the lowest number recorded for this species, 68% below the previous 5 yr. av. (150). Both Myrtle Warblers (-86%) and Black-and-white Warblers (-61%) were captured in record low numbers this fall, especially alarming for BAWW which were under-represented in our spring '85 totals also. Number of *Empidonax* flycatchers have remained low for the last three fall seasons.

**Less frequently caught species:** Unusual captures included a Yellow-throated Vireo, first since 1982, a HY Grasshopper Sparrow still in partial juvenal plumage and a Common Redpoll captured on November 15, the last day of netting.

**Rockport, MA 423-0703**  
**Russell T. Norris**

The Whale Cove Station has been in operation for ten years. In 1985 nets were opened on 87 days between 1 August and 15 November for a total of 4757 net hours. A few traps were also operated. A total of 866 new birds of 68 species were captured in the nets with an additional 220 taken in traps. There were 109 repeats recorded. Net hours were up slightly from 1984, but new birds netted were down 30 percent. The following table shows the birds netted, net hours, and birds per 100 net hours for the fall months of 1985 and the previous eight years.

Year	Number Banded	Net Hours	Birds per 100 n/h
1977	1386	5028	28
1978	1861	5196	36
1979	1720	4188	41
1980	2242	5195	43
1981	2222	6276	35
1982	1472	6082	24
1983	2316	5190	45
1984	1218	4525	27
1985	866	4757	18

There was considerable rainfall during the fall months of 1985 with light northwest winds on many days. Only occasionally was there a brisk flow from the north and northwest. Temperatures were about average in late August and September but October was warmer than usual. Light frosts occurred on 1 and 15 November with the first general killing frost on the 26th. Peak days were 29 October (46) and 8 October (43).

The twelve most common species netted in the fall of 1985 are shown in the following table and compared with the totals for these species in previous years.

	1985	1984	1983	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978
Gray Catbird	156	126	236	130	196	164	237	221
White-throated Sparrow	95	91	185	132	195	165	248	305
American Robin	92	73	233	221	364	62	131	158
House Finch	86	222	343	117	191	175	235	182
Black-capped Chickadee	75	27	105	70	156	258	67	60
Song Sparrow	52	50	70	96	111	154	96	135
Dark-eyed Junco	40	13	75	38	35	58	15	89
Mockingbird	28	16	42	18	76	32	15	39
Yellow-rumped Warbler	22	138	172	36	162	302	111	73
Cardinal	21	12	22	19	26	15	19	13
Northern Waterthrush	16	42	47	36	29	20	22	25
American Goldfinch	13	47	49	21	25	51	16	77

Warblers were also very much below average. The Purple Finch, House Finch and American Goldfinch were down considerably from previous years, but the House Finch still remains the most abundant bird in the Whale Cove area. Both White-throated and Song Sparrows were down 60 percent from average.

The only new species for this station banded during the fall of 1985 was a Pine Grosbeak on 1 November. An early Common Redpoll was captured on 24 October. Two Solitary Sandpipers were highlights of the fall season in September.

The fall banding season of 1985 continued the downward trend of 1984 and the number of birds handled was the lowest in the past nine years. Only three species, the Downy Woodpecker, Cardinal, and Dark-eyed Junco, showed increases over the average banding of previous years. A few species were taken at about average levels. These included the Barn Swallow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Mockingbird, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow Warbler, and Ovenbird. Nearly all other species showed a decline from the average of fall bandings since 1976. Some species showed only a slight decrease in numbers but others were drastically reduced. The *Empidonax* flycatchers continued at their low level as in 1984, and Blue Jays and Black-capped Chickadees were banded at below-average numbers. Chickadees, however, showed a substantial increase over the very low figure of last year. Robins were down 40 percent and all *Catharus* thrushes were at an all-time low. Both Kinglets were down as was the Red-eyed Vireo. Other vireos were absent except for a single Warbling. Among the warblers, the Yellow-rumped and the Northern Waterthrush were especially low, the former down 85 percent and the latter down 50 percent. The Cape May and Blackpoll

**Appledore Island, York County, Maine 425-0703  
David W. Holmes**

The Shoals Marine Lab. Banding Station enjoyed one of its best seasons ever in spite of some most peculiar weather patterns which brought us a nor'easter for a week during the four weeks the station was running. Dates of operation were 20 August through 13 September during which we lost two complete days and most of five additional days to the wind-driven rain. Nets were closed early on 13 Sept. because there were simply no birds on the Island. The good parts of the season included the number and quality of assistants, a triumph at the computer, and the species total. The standard 6 nets were run very much

as usual and because of the amount of help, the 2 nets in the bog were run roughly half the operation time. This was a mixed blessing since the normally dry bog held up to 18" of standing water for much of the season and to safely run those nets at highest water levels, one person had to be stationed there constantly to insure against accidental drownings. Consequently net hours were down a bit from last year even though more days were spent on the Island. The species total was excellent although no truly "super birds" were caught.

Net hours: 1506. New birds: 1562. Retraps: 271. Birds/100 nh: 104. Species: 66 + hybrid + Ruby-throated Hummingbird which were trapped, processed, and released unbanded.

Biggest days: 9/5-165 new birds; 9/9-153; 9/7-135; 8/23-122; 8/29-113. A notable day was 8/30 when 84 new birds were trapped in 14 net hours between rain showers.

First nettings for the station: N. Mockingbird, N. Cardinal, Hoary Bat.

Second bandings: Whip-poor-will, Yellow-throated Vireo, Brewster's and Connecticut Warblers.

Third bandings: Olive-sided Flycatcher and Worm-eating Warbler (first fall records), and Brown-headed Cowbird.

Other notes of interest: the partially albinistic Purple Finch which was a gorgeous sandy tan color all the places a normal bird would be brown, had pink bill, pink feet, and dark brown eyes.

Number comparisons: Yellow Warbler, number banded 1981-85: 0, 4, 8, 18, 47!

The ratios of Traill's and Least (50+) vs. Yellow-bellied Flycatchers (38), and Philadelphia (7) vs. Warbling (12) Vireos were reversed this year from what has been normal since 1974.

Red-eyed Vireo, birds per 100 net hours, 1981-85: 25.0, 20.0, 24.0, 8.2, 5.3!

Returns: Song Sparrow, banded 8/26/84; Common Yellowthroats, banded 9/1/84, 8/29/83, and 5/26/83.

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