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# Atlantic Flyway Review: Spring 1998

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Perhaps we should have known better than to initiate a spring migration banding cooperative reporting project during El Niño! Spring migration 1998 was almost a nonevent, ornithologically speaking. Almost every banding station reported a disappointing, even disastrous banding season. At Braddock Bay, at an open house in celebration of International Migratory Bird Day, with over 50 visitors present, during what should have been the peak of migration, we caught just three birds during 168 net hours, and two of these were retraps!

The number of birds banded during spring at the stations reporting results for both 1997 and 1998 dropped from 15,464 to 8,970. The number of species dropped from an average of 68.5 in 1997 to 55.8 in 1998. Birds/100 net hour ratios dropped from 61.1 in '97 to 41.5 in '98.

While this was not the "Silent Spring" we all fear, it was puzzling, and banders spent many hours theorizing on the reasons for their empty nets. Most blamed El Niño. During the peak May migration period, there were a series of days with winds from the wrong direction and 300 miles of rain to the south. This may have caused migrants to either fly ahead of the bad weather or stall where they were and then fly on by when the weather finally broke, or take slightly different migration paths than normal. Birds appeared on breeding territory in normal numbers and right on schedule. They just never stopped en-route at any banding stations!

We also might have expected that more stations would have captured some of the northward-bound winter finches from the masses that invaded during the winter of 1997-98. But only Hebron reported any of these species in any numbers.

Sixteen banding stations reported for this initial Spring Atlantic Flyway Review. We are interested in adding additional stations. I will send instructions and a reporting form to anyone who would like to contribute to this cooperative migration monitoring

report. Many thanks to all those banders, assistants, and to the many volunteers who contributed their time and effort to this project.

A list of the most commonly banded species at each station appears in the narrative for that station.

**Lewiston** **431-0790**  
Niagara County, NY  
**Jerald J. Farrell**

The 1998 spring banding season started on 6 May. Foliage was at least two weeks ahead of normal but signs of an earlier-than-normal migration were not apparent. After deciding to start banding on this date, only FIVE birds were caught during 100 net hours! And things certainly did not improve after that.

41 Gray Catbird  
25 Wood Thrush  
11 Common Yellowthroat  
10 American Robin  
9 Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
9 Myrtle Warbler  
7 Chestnut-sided Warbler  
6 Magnolia Warbler  
6 American Redstart  
6 Common Grackle

This was by far the worst spring experienced at this station. An average year would be 400 total birds banded. There have not been many years when birds/ 100 net hours dropped below 50. This year showed only 18.1 birds/ 100 NH.

I can sum up this spring by stating that Wood Thrush, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, catbird, and Black-and-white Warbler arrived on schedule, with average numbers being recorded. Other warbler species never did appear in any numbers. There were 73 Magnolia Warblers banded during spring 1997 (top warbler at this station) but only six banded in 1998. Ovenbirds dropped from 25 in spring 1997 to just one in 1998 and Nashville Warbler showed the same decline (51 in 1997, one in 1998).

**Table 1. Spring 1998 EBBA Banding Summary.**

	Lewiston NY	Braddock Bay NY	Ruthven ONT	Selkirk ONT	Long Point ONT	Kestrel Haven NY	Presque Isle PA
Incl. Dates	5/6 - 5/30	4/20 - 6/12	4/1 - 5/28	3/10 - 6/6	3/25 - 6/12	4/22 - 5/30	3/29 - 5/30
Total Days	13	46	40	90	205*	26	14
Nets Used	15-20	16-25	10-14	1-15	0-38	4-6	3-14
Totl. Net Hrs	998	6803	2055	6911	11,855	243	937
No. Traps	0	0	3	4	3**	0	0
% Cap. in Traps	0.0	0.0	17.0	9.8	20.0	0.0	0.0
Best Day # (date)	22 (5/30)	149 (5/25)	43 (5/14)	124(4/29)	N/A	27 (4/22)	112 (5/15)
Totl. Banded '97	503	3703	576	1653	N/A	3310	648
Totl. Banded '98	181	2523	513	1222	10,979	219	505
Totl. Species '97	49	85	67	76	N/A	54	72
Totl. Species '98	38	80	68	72	110	44	58
Brds/100 nh '97	55.8	65.9	39	N/A	N/A	90	N/A
Brds/100 nh '98	18.1	37.1	20.5	16	74.75	90	53.9

\* station days

\*\* 4730 ground-trap and J-trap hours; 851 Heligoland trap drives

**Table 1. Spring 1998 EBBA Banding Summary (cont'd.)**

	Hebron PA	Big Run PA	Powder-mill PA	Bedford Valley PA	Island Beach NJ	Calmes Neck VA	Greenwell MD
Incl. Dates	3/1- 5/31	3/30 - 5/25	4/1 - 5/31	4/25 - 6/8	3/28 - 6/6	4/20 - 5/30	3/28 - 5/30
Total Days	28	37	58	15	26	26	22
Nets Used	1-13	10-14	2-55	3-12	3-16	11-17	4-6
Totl. Net Hrs	N/A	2667	11,085	547	1065	6076	264
No. Traps	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
% Cap. in Traps	35	0	0	0	0	0	0
Best Day # (date)	52 (4/11)	58 (5/15)	71 (5/7)	21 (4/25)	172 (5/16)	33 (4/28)	26 (5/23)
Totl. Banded '97	411	404	2422	N/A	1187	647	N/A
Totl. Banded '98	362	509	1665	128	951	320	152
Totl. Species '97	49	63	98	N/A	69	72	N/A
Totl. Species '98	39	58	94	30	63	49	38
Brds/100 nh '97	N/A	21	44	N/A	112	N/A	N/A
Brds/100 nh '98	N/A	19	17	23.4	89	5.3	58

**Braddock Bay Bird Observatory** 431-0774  
Monroe County, NY  
*Elizabeth W. Brooks, compiler*

At Braddock Bay, we called the spring of 1998 a "turkey" of a season. That is because about our only excitement all spring was a turkey that was momentarily caught in one of our nets and then left a hole big enough for a bander to crawl through!

309 Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
170 Magnolia Warbler  
167 American Redstart  
150 Gray Catbird  
150 Yellow Warbler  
135 Common Yellowthroat  
119 Black-capped Chickadee  
88 White-throated Sparrow  
84 Traill's Flycatcher  
81 Cedar Waxwing

Banding was done by David Bonter, Robert McKinney, Sharon Skelly, Patricia Stanko, and myself for the 14th consecutive year of spring migration monitoring. Unfortunately, we were unable to open the station until 20 April and may have missed one or two waves of early migrants. Nevertheless, 6,803 net hours of operation only yielded 2,523 birds with a capture efficiency ratio of 37.1 birds/ 100 net hours, the lowest ever at the station.

There were 80 species banded, including Gray-checked/Bicknell's Thrush, a new species, which brought the cumulative spring list to 125 forms. There were 50 returns, including a Yellow Warbler in its seventh year, a Downy Woodpecker and grackle in their sixth year, and a robin, starling, and cardinal, all in their fifth year. We recorded fat and mass changes in over 300 birds that repeated during the season. Ten male and 12 female Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were released unbanded as well as several Yellow Warblers with scaly leg.

Volunteers conducted a route census for the second spring, and a record of casual daily observations was kept in addition to the banding totals.

Normally, we have from one to four days of 300+ birds banded; but in this highly atypical year, our best day was only 149 birds. On many days we

had more banders, assistants, and visitors than we had birds.

Violent thunderstorms ripped through the station on 29 and 31 May, downing several large trees and destroying three closed nets as well as bending nearly double an aerial net pole.

On the positive side, over 200 visitors signed our guestbook, and we presented banding education programs for eight organizations or groups. Four students participated in our Bander Training Course. Our spring 1998 interns were David Bonter and Cathy Spahn.

Appreciation to the many volunteers who conducted the route censuses, tended net lanes, scribed, and assisted in so many helpful ways: Cynthia Brewster, Mark Conti, Jon Dombrowski, Luke Donius, Bob Dows, Terri Donovan, Jason Franz, Myrt Harding, Peter Jones, Karen Koehler, Mike Lanzone, John Lehr, Pat Lovallo, Chita McKinney, John and Suzanne Olson, Eldon Remy, David Semple, Jeanne Skelly, Doug and Lois Smith, Carol Southby, Lloyd Swart, Chris Webber, Andy Wegman, and Martha Zettel. A special vote of thanks to Bob and Charlene Reed for providing housing and to Bill and June Kaiser for permission to band on their land. The migration monitoring research is supported by the memberships and donations to Braddock Bay Bird Observatory.

**Ruthven Park** 425-0795  
Haldimand County, Ontario, Canada  
*Rick Ludkin*

This was the year that we were ready but spring passed us by! Ten net lanes and three ground traps were open and ready to go on 1 April and our small crew of eager volunteers was in place. At no time in April were we "inundated" (best day was 22 banded on 29 April), but we did catch birds steadily. As a result, we more than doubled last year's output: 231 vs 92 (even though the capture rate was very similar—20/100 nh in 1998 vs 19/100 nh in '97). We were greatly assisted this season by the use of three simple ground traps given to us by John Miles, our Haldimand Bird Observatory compatriot at Selkirk. We banded 52 birds in April caught with the traps.

- 50 Slate-colored Junco
- 48 American Goldfinch
- 34 Gray Catbird
- 26 Song Sparrow
- 26 Yellow Warbler
- 25 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- 22 Baltimore Oriole
- 20 Mourning Dove
- 18 White-throated Sparrow
- 18 American Robin

May came with great expectations: last May was unseasonably cold, but we still managed to band 484. So this year, with the extended warm weather, we were figuring on a lot more — right? Wrong! The way we see it, the birds took advantage of the early warm weather and flew over us in order to get started on the breeding grounds. Our major “push” occurred on 14-15 May with 43 and 40 birds banded, respectively. Our May total was only 282 birds. Last year we banded 207 warblers; this year only 68 (of which about 40% were Yellow Warblers).

We had wonderful volunteer support from Loretta Mousseau, Marg Ludkin, Sharon McBurney, Maureen Moore and Don Bull.

I would like to thank the Grand River Land Trust (manager Ron Pine) for access to Ruthven Park and their continuing support of this endeavour. This project was supported financially by the James L. Baillie Fund of Bird Studies Canada with funds raised through the annual Baillie Birdathon; by Canada Trust’s Friends of the Environment Fund; by the Ministry of Natural Resources (CWIP); and by donations from the Haldimand Bird Observatory’s friends and members.

**Selkirk Provincial Park** **424-0795**  
 Haldimand-Norfolk Counties, Ontario, Canada  
**John Miles, bander**  
 Jamie and Steve Miles, assistants

The Selkirk banding station is located in the southwest part of the park. The banding area is a mono growth of about 25-year-old white pine. Along the west side is an overgrown fence row of hawthorns, large oaks and shagbark hickory trees. The east side of the pines is a thin belt of hawthorns border-

ing the cattail marsh of the mouth of Spring Creek. The net lanes are in natural openings in the pine plantation and along the west hedgerow. The natural openings occurred as these are the natural drainage courses from the field to the west of the park and the planted trees had been drowned out. This was not discovered until after the station was set up. However, this was the mandate under which the station was given permission to operate. Consequently, the net lanes can and do become very muddy especially in early spring. Once the heavy clay soil dries out it becomes as hard as concrete—or at least brick.

- 171 White-throated Sparrow
- 150 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- 114 Slate-colored Junco
- 73 Golden-crowned Kinglet
- 65 Hermit Thrush
- 62 Song Sparrow
- 60 American Robin
- 38 Gray Catbird
- 35 Swainson’s Thrush
- 30 American Tree Sparrow

Both March and April were good for banding this year; but after 7 May, the number of birds in the banding area was very poor. While there was variety, there were no numbers. Consequently, there were no peak days of 100 or more birds banded in May this year.

Twenty volunteers assisted for one or more days this spring.

**Long Point Bird Observatory** **423-0800**  
 Haldimand-Norfolk R.M., **423-0801**  
 Ontario, Canada **423-0802**  
**Jul Wojnowski, Christine Jamieson**

The spring migration season at Long Point was as interesting as ever. Weather, of course, was the hot topic again. This time, El Niño was the focal point of discussion. We suspect that some of the shorter distance migrants took advantage of the warm March to move northward somewhat early. The longer-distance migrants presumably left the tropics at a normal time and probably encountered poor weather on the way up, as arrival dates for many warblers were a few days later than normal.

1334 White-throated Sparrow  
664 Slate-colored Junco  
645 Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
639 Red-winged Blackbird  
556 Magnolia Warbler  
503 Golden-crowned Kinglet  
471 Blue Jay  
420 Yellow Warbler  
315 Hermit Thrush  
280 Gray Catbird

Migration monitoring at the Old Cut Field Station began on 25 March, just a few days after a late snowstorm, in an otherwise very mild winter and early spring. In just a couple of days, early migrants, such as Fox Sparrow, Northern Flicker, and Yellow-rumped Warbler, started to arrive. A few very early Tree Swallows were seen on 27 March. By the end of March, over 400 birds had been banded.

During the first week of April, the Tip and Breakwater stations were opened. Flickers, sapsuckers and robins started pouring in during the second week of April. Many sparrow species were being observed and junco numbers were peaking.

The fourth week of April, when we normally expect to see first arrivals of several warbler species, held poor weather, with winds predominantly from the northeast, delaying northbound migrants. It was only in the last few days of April that the first Northern Waterthrush, Black-throated Green and Black-and-white Warblers, and other species, started to arrive.

By the first week of May, several species of Neotropical migrants, such as Swainson's Thrush, Veery, Wood Thrush, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and almost all the common warbler species, were making first appearances, despite rain, showers, mist, or fog being recorded daily almost until the middle of the month. During this week, over 2,000 birds were banded, with over one-third of them being White-throated Sparrows, a species which normally peaks in mid-to-late April.

Strong winds from the east and northeast combined with several days of rain slowed migration dramatically in the second week of May, but a high pressure system arriving on the 13<sup>th</sup> brought an impressive movement of several species. The Tip

saw peak numbers of Yellow Warblers (510), Scarlet Tanager (25), and Rose-breasted Grosbeak (30), while the crew there was busy banding 167 birds. At Old Cut the pace was even more furious with a tally of 207 birds banded. Breakwater experienced a slower banding pace on that day, but people there were busy counting the 250 Baltimore Orioles flying through.

By the last week of May and into June, late arriving species, such as Canada, Mourning, and Wilson's warblers, were peaking; but for the most part, things were winding down. Stations were banding about 20 birds a day. The normal June fallout of Red-eyed Vireos and flycatchers was a few days later than usual. In anticipation of this, stations stayed open a few days later in the season than normal. We were not disappointed. On the morning of 11 June, the Tip station was enshrouded in a fog and mist which brought with it the last big day of the season. Several flycatcher species were recorded in season-high numbers including: Eastern Wood-Pewee (40), Yellow-bellied (25), Alder (7) and Willow (6) flycatchers, as well as 35 Red-eyed Vireos.

Our volunteer help was again outstanding. Volunteer field biologists in spring 1998 came from across Canada and as far as the UK and New Zealand! Their help in the migration monitoring program, the Tree Swallow Project, and the Breeding Bird Census, made these programs a continued success. Their efforts were much appreciated.

The following assisted for one to three months: Susan Anderson, Simon Bonner, Dave Bostock, Wendy Dunford, Helen Hermansen, Jackie Lewis, James Lidster, Hugh MacArthur, Kimberley Meadows, Kate McIntyre, Steve Mulkeen, Carolyn Murphy, Jim Tietz, and Dave Woodward. Serving for two to four weeks were Hanneke Brooymans, Brenda Carter, Mark Gardiner, Graeme Gibson, Rob Maciver, Paul Prior, and Anik Wagner.

Appreciation also to Caleb Alexander, Grahame Booth, Mireille Chalifour, Christie Chute, Peter Coe, Bruce Cooper, Audrey Heagy, Elena Johnson, June Kasperski, Nicole Kopysh, Denis Lepage, Linda McLaren, Ted Madeford, Dawn Miles, Dave Mudd, Ricadina Pereira, Brad Smith, Andrea Spender, and John Todd.

**Kestrel Haven Avian Farm  
Migration Observatory**  
Burdett, Schuyler County, NY  
*John and Sue Gregoire*

422-0764

Some migrants arrived or passed through in brief spurts before the banding period began, but the latter part of April and all of May was close to the proverbial "Silent Spring." Weather patterns were reminiscent of fall and strong winds predominated. Despite running a much-reduced station and modifying operating protocol to running a few nets in sheltered areas, we had but one day when we could band for a full morning; mostly we closed after an hour or so due to unsafe conditions.

- 41 American Goldfinch
- 30 White-throated Sparrow
- 14 Red-winged Blackbird
- 14 American Robin
- 13 Gray Catbird
- 12 Song Sparrow
- 10 Yellow Warbler
- 8 Cedar Waxwing
- 7 Common Yellowthroat
- 6 Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Except for arrivals of the more common nesting species, migration did not happen here. We banded just 23 warblers (six, if one excludes yellowthroat and Yellow Warbler); no vireos, three migratory thrush, and only three each of Lincoln and White-crowned sparrows. The latter two species are usually abundant throughout May. While our modifications in operation and small sample size preclude a meaningful statistical presentation, one can fairly sum up the spring migration as the worst since we began spring banding in 1987.

Daily point counts supported net observations. As of 1 June, we had not seen some 30 species and many breeding species had not arrived. Weather was strange, with winds from the northwest, a fall jet stream configuration, and extreme heating throughout May. Compare that with a return to parka and gloves on 1 June!

The joy of the season was in our 87 returns. The eldest was a 10+ year old Red-winged Blackbird. Seventeen Song Sparrow and 17 chickadees returned, the eldest of which were five and four+ years

old, respectively. Outstanding among returnees were a seven+ year old Yellow Warbler, Downy Woodpecker, and catbird. Many others were four-to-six-year returns. We had our second Veery return.

As newly fledged young became apparent, we could no longer keep an open station in anticipation of late migrants. We closed and took down nets on 31 May just a few hours before the area was subjected to severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. The National Weather Service described this event as "the worst in ten years"—somewhat akin to the whole 1998 spring migration!

**Presque Isle**  
Erie, Erie County, PA  
*Ronald F. Leberman*

420-0800

This is our first official report for spring bandings at Presque Isle State Park. Net lanes are the same as used for the fall operation. The station was in operation 14 days from 29 March to 30 May. A total of 505 birds of 58 species were tagged and released during 937 net hours.

- 93 Yellow Warbler
- 61 Gray Catbird
- 40 Magnolia Warbler
- 27 White-throated Sparrow
- 18 Common Yellowthroat
- 18 American Redstart
- 15 Lincoln's Sparrow
- 15 Veery
- 14 Wood Thrush
- 11 Song Sparrow
- 11 Golden-crowned Kinglet
- 11 Swainson's Thrush

Although March was fairly mild, the ground remained frozen so that I was unable to set up nets except for one day. April was wet and very windy; May was mild to warm and not quite so wet.

The station had 150 visitors who signed the register. This included several bird banders who were attending the annual meeting of the Eastern Bird Banding Association at nearby Villa Maria College on 17-18 April. We were unable to set up any nets due to extremely wet and windy conditions that weekend.

We are thankful for those that gave of their time and effort: Mrs. Thelma Patton, Harley and Karen Winleblack, and Sally Senger.

**Hebron 415-0780**

Coudersport, Potter County, PA

**David W. Hauber, Bander**

Gary Witmer and family, Norm Lewis, Assistants

Birds started to return early; then we had a period of wet, cold, weather, especially in the South. When the birds were able to migrate again, it seemed that they overflowed us in a rush to get to their nesting territories.

- 97 Slate-colored Junco
- 54 Common Redpoll
- 31 American Goldfinch
- 30 Song Sparrow
- 21 Purple Finch
- 17 Black-capped Chickadee
- 12 White-throated Sparrow
- 11 Evening Grosbeak
- 11 Red-winged Blackbird
- 8 Common Grackle

During the spring '97 season, we banded at least one of 13 species of warblers. In the '98 season, we banded at least one of only five species. Though our total numbers of birds banded (362 in '98, 411 in '97) weren't off as much as some banding locations, we were definitely down on our species count. Our winter finch captures (40% of the 'top ten' total) help explain our good numbers.

A Sharp-shinned Hawk, which was caught and banded, killed a Red-winged Blackbird when it came to the net.

**Big Run 410-0801**

New Castle, Lawrence County, PA

**Robert C. Baldesberger, Jr., Bander**

Elizabeth and Pat Baldesberger, Assistants

Big Run monitored spring 1998's migration from 30 March until 25 May. The area's temperatures were slightly higher and precipitation was lower than average. Migration was steady and gradual, and no major movements were noted.

- 55 American Goldfinch
- 46 Gray Catbird
- 41 Common Yellowthroat
- 31 Field Sparrow
- 24 Wood Thrush
- 23 Blue-winged Warbler
- 23 White-throated Sparrow
- 20 Song Sparrow
- 18 Yellow Warbler
- 17 Myrtle Warbler

Ten to 14 nets were open on 37 days for a total of 2667 net hours. Eleven of the nets were in the same locations as last spring. The three nets that were repositioned with positive expectations (that did not materialize) will be returned to their original locations next spring.

Of the 509 birds representing 58 species banded, 18 species were absent, several possibly due to the net changes. Fifteen new species were banded, bringing the station's cumulative spring list up to 77 species. Those considered noteworthy were two White-eyed Vireos, and one each Savannah Sparrow, Yellow-breasted Chat, Golden-winged Warbler, and Canada Warbler.

We captured 97 repeats and 42 returns. Of this season's returns, 50% were banded last spring. The oldest returns were two yellowthroats and a catbird banded in the fall of '96. No foreign birds were encountered.

No abnormalities were noted; one yellowthroat return had a small, well-healed wound on its crown.

This is Big Run's second spring in operation. Banding days and hours, number of nets, and net placement were not consistent with last spring, and most of the major changes in species numbers were due to these inconsistencies. However, these operational changes have improved the quality and amount of consistent, scientific data that can be collected in the future.

Other than with the adjoining landowners and "one-on-one" interpretations, public relations were kept to a minimum. Educational programs are only in the planning stages at this time, but future opportunities are expected with local schools and organizations.

I would like to thank George and Bonnie Casselberry for the use of their land, and their son Georgie for his keen birding ear. My special thanks go to my wife Liz, mom Pat, dad Bob, son Bobby, and daughters Meg and Kate, for all their help, support, and getting up early.

**Powdermill Nature Reserve**      **400-0791**  
Rector, Westmoreland County, PA  
**Robert C. Leberman and Robert S. Mulvihill**

A total of 1665 birds (93 species and one hybrid form) was banded at Powdermill Nature Reserve in the spring of 1998—our lowest spring total of the past ten years. In April, a few individual birds appeared at unusually early dates. But most species, and most individuals of any given species, returned approximately a week later than usual. Early May was marked by few birds. Many of the late-migrating species were even later than usual in their passage—sometimes lingering well into June (e.g., a SY-F Wilson's Warbler on 11 June). Of 46 species banded in sufficient numbers every year for comparison, totals for 14 were 1 S.D. below average, and 32 were statistically average; none was significantly above average.

196 Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
105 Chipping Sparrow  
104 Dark-eyed Junco  
79 Blue Jay  
65 Gray Catbird  
59 Common Yellowthroat  
53 Magnolia Warbler  
52 Cedar Waxwing  
51 Yellow Warbler  
50 Swamp Sparrow  
50 Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Three nets set up along the dikes of two small ponds provided a few water birds for banding this spring, including a Green Heron, American Woodcock, Solitary Sandpiper, and five Spotted Sandpipers. Nearly all of the usual flycatchers were netted in low numbers, including just two Yellow-Bellieds this season compared to 29 the previous spring. A Marsh Wren was a good catch on 14 May. Our best parulid was a female Lawrence's Warbler banded on 7 May. Two Orange-crowned Warblers (one each on 16 and 29 April) were unusual for this station in spring. However, in general, the war-

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bler flight was unimpressive, with several species (e.g. Worm-eating, Blackburnian, and Bay-breasted) missing from our catch.

The spring of 1998 was the third season for a supplementary banding study of the population biology and foraging ecology of Louisiana Waterthrushes on unpolluted and acid-polluted headwater streams on the Reserve. In addition, it was the first season for a cooperative (with Penn State and East Stroudsburg universities), EPA-funded, planned three-year study to assess the waterthrush as a possible bioindicator of the ecological condition of headwater streams throughout Pennsylvania. By the end of the spring season, we and our field assistants had banded and color-marked a total of 145 Louisiana Waterthrushes on eleven streams, both at Powdermill and elsewhere in the mountains of southwestern PA, in connection with these studies.

There were about 140 casual visitors to the banding station during this period, and we gave formal presentations to another 102 people in nine different groups. Away from Powdermill, the banders gave a lecture at the Baird Auditorium of the National Museum of Natural History, Washington D.C., as part of the Audubon Lecture Series. The talk, entitled "35 Years of Learning from Birds," summarized the Powdermill banding program's history and accomplishments and was attended by more than 125 people.

The following people volunteered anywhere from one to 12 days during our spring banding program: Kelly Caruso, Mary Helen Chiodo, Jim Gruber, George A. Hall, Randy Harrison, Carroll Labarthe, Grant Milliron, Charlotte Pryor, Matt Sarver, Janet Shaffer, Carole Shanahan, and Mike and Evaleen Watko.

**Bedford Valley**      **395-0783**  
Bedford, Bedford County, PA  
**Janet Shaffer**

This is the first regular spring migration banding for many years. I operated a MAPS station here from 1990-1995 and did saw-whet banding during October and November of 1997. The property covers six+ acres and backs up to part of Buchanan State Forest in southern Bedford County, 20 miles



north of the Maryland line. Nets are set up to sample my old field, hedge rows, and edge of mature forest.

30 Chipping Sparrow  
13 American Robin  
13 Cedar Waxwing  
11 Gray Catbird  
8 White-throated Sparrow

Banding was carried out from 25 April through 8 June, for a total of 15 days. A total of 128 new birds were banded, and there were 46 repeats. A male Indigo Bunting banded in July 1995 returned on 29 May. There were 30 species banded; warblers included Yellow, Prairie, redstart, Ovenbird, Mourning, and yellowthroat.

The largest catch was 20 on 25 April. Weather did not seem to influence operations, but several nets were in the sun by mid-morning. On 10 May I found a large garter snake with a chippy in its mouth, entangled in the bottom of the net. I had to cut the net to release the snake, but it did not release the bird. I was left with a large hole in my net, and the snake had lunch.

This season confirms what I have found in the past. Spring and fall migration through here is very spotty and there are vast forests where the birds fan out. Consequently, it is questionable as to how valuable these data are, but I will consider trying again in spring 1999.

**Island Beach State Park**                      **395-0740**  
Seaside Park, Ocean County, NJ  
**Glenn R. Mahler, compiler**

During the spring 1998 banding season, six banders operated banding stations at five locations at Island Beach State Park between 28 March and 6 June. One or more of those stations was in operation on 26 days during that 71-day period; there were two banding days in March, four in April, 19 in May, and one in June. There were eight days (all in May) when two of the stations were in operation simultaneously; on all remaining bandings days, only a single station was active. Banders participating this season were Bruce Adams, Mary Doscher, Eileen and Glenn Mahler, Lawrence Pharo, and Robert Yunick. In the following discussion, the term "recent years" will refer to the period

1987-97, during which comparable banding activities took place.

298 Gray Catbird  
186 Common Yellowthroat  
86 Magnolia Warbler  
30 Black-and-white Warbler  
30 Blackpoll Warbler  
26 Yellow Warbler  
23 Myrtle Warbler  
18 Northern Parula Warbler  
18 White-throated Sparrow  
15 Canada Warbler

Results for the season were well below average. The 951 birds banded this season was less than half of the average for recent years (2126) and was only the second time in that period with less than 1000 bandings. The 63 species for the season was below the 75 species average for the previous years and was the second lowest species total for that period. While the 26 banding days was slightly above average (23.9) and the 19 May banding day was also above average (17.4), the 1064.5 total net hours was only about 2/3 the average (1662.0). This disparity between the below-average net hours and the slightly above-average number of days of banding can be attributed to two factors. First, there were relatively few days on which more than one banding station was in operation. Second, due to inclement weather and/or the lack of major flights, the banding operations were frequently terminated earlier in the day than usual. Overall, birds banded per net hour was 0.89—only 70% of the average for recent years and was the only year in that period that the birds per net hour was below 1.0!

A prime factor affecting the migration this year was very "strange" weather during the spring. There was warm weather in the early spring, precipitating early movements of some species, followed by an extended period during the first two weeks of May when the temperatures were below average and rain occurred almost daily. In fact, during the first two weeks of May—usually an active migration period—an average of only 0.3 birds per net hour were caught. As a sign of the frustrations of this season, there were three days in which banders operated their station with no catches for the day—an event that I cannot recall having happened even once in any of the previous seasons!

There were no outstanding flight days reported this season. Peak flights were on 16 May (two stations operating) with 172 birds banded (4.1 birds/net hour) and 17 May (one station operating) with 75 birds banded (4.8 birds/net hour).

No "highlight" birds were caught. However, four species which were caught in small numbers—Gray-cheeked Thrush (7), Red-winged Blackbird (4), Yellow-billed Cuckoo (3), and Black-billed Cuckoo (2)—were "statistically significant" in that they were more than 2 S.D. above average (on a per-net-hour basis). Despite the fact that most species were captured at below-average rates, none were below 2 S.D.

**Calmes Neck**

**390-0775**

Boyce, Clarke County, VA

**J. William Oberman**

The spring 1998 banding season was the worst in recent memory. During the period of maximum migration at this latitude (20 April to 15 May), the sun was out very intermittently and there was one rainy day after another. Since my nets are set up around water for maximum effectiveness, nothing came down. Surprisingly, during this dreary spring, I added two new species to my banding list: Prairie Warbler and Chimney Swift.

80 Myrtle Warbler  
48 American Goldfinch  
26 Purple Finch  
22 White-throated Sparrow  
17 Red-eyed Vireo  
16 Gray Catbird  
15 Northern Cardinal  
14 Wood Thrush  
14 Indigo Bunting  
11 Chipping Sparrow

Despite the low spring yield, nesting did not seem to have suffered. This was the best year for Wood Thrush (in June) in recent memory and numbers of summer residents were up-to-par, with the possible exception of Scarlet Tanager.

**Greenwell Field Station**

**362-0763**

Hollywood, St. Mary's County, MD

**Ronald R. Runkles**

As a pilot project to investigate the potential for capturing and banding birds at Greenwell State Park, Hollywood, MD, Timothy Fabian, Martin Cribb, and I banded birds there starting on 28 March and ending on 30 May 1998. We banded on as many weekends as possible throughout the period and usually on one day during the middle of the week. We started at 0600 each day and concluded around 0900 or 1000, using four to six, 9 m (36 mm mesh) mist nets.

19 Gray Catbird  
17 White-throated Sparrow  
12 Common Yellowthroat  
8 Field Sparrow  
8 Indigo Bunting  
8 Yellow-breasted Chat  
7 Magnolia Warbler  
6 Wood Thrush  
5 Blue Grosbeak  
5 Brown Thrasher  
5 Northern Cardinal

Our Greenwell field station study plot was centered around a large field covered with tall fescue (about 60-90 cm high by 31 May). This field also included patches of milkweed. The south side of the field is bounded by a lane and hedgerow of mature black locust and wild cherry trees, where one net is set. In this hedgerow, the ground was covered by Japanese honeysuckle, poison ivy, and greenbrier. The north and east sides were bounded by edge habitat along a forest patch of mature deciduous trees. Two of the nets were set in this edge habitat. The west side was bounded by a country road. Three nets were set between the mature forest patch and an area of second growth mixed coniferous and deciduous trees about 7.5 to 11 m tall. This second growth area is just northeast of the west barn. One net was also set within this area of second growth early in the season. The dominant trees species in this area of second growth are loblolly pines (planted), tulip poplars, Virginia pines, and black locusts. The entire area covered by the net array and observations is about 4.65 hectares.

People visited our station from as far away as California, Texas, Georgia, North Carolina, and even England. We had a total of forty visitors.

Of the 11 more common species captured, seven breed within the park, two of the species are year-round residents (Field Sparrow and cardinal), one species only winters in the park (White-throated Sparrow), and one species migrates through the area, neither spending the winter nor breeding here (Magnolia Warbler).

Nothing may be said of fluctuations in avian populations for individual species or overall, because the sample of birds captured is small and because there are no data for the previous year or years. However, there was good diversity of species for our limited effort. Thirteen species of warblers were captured, with the Mourning Warbler being the rarest. The only down side is that I was expecting to capture more flycatchers of a least several species when compared to the fall 1997 migration. We captured only three Acadian Flycatchers this spring.

A general observation was that the overall health of the birds we captured and examined was very good. A fair number of birds examined showed

evidence of subcutaneous fat (28%), even when evaluated by our conservative criteria. There were few parasites—just three of the birds had ticks on their bodies, always on their faces. Two birds were injured about the face; both had been pursued into the net by another bird at the time of capture. A very late White-throated Sparrow had a broken leg, which may have accounted for its lateness.

The season was one of transition and of some frustration for us as we switched criteria for evaluating age and sex from that of the *North American Bird Banding Manual, Vol II* to that of the *Identification Guide to North American Birds, Part I* by Peter Pyle (1997). The frustration arose particularly in attempting to age birds as either SY or ASY, except when there were skull windows. One problem with using Pyle's book is that while one is researching the book on all the age and sex criteria with bird in hand, the bird is sometimes being greatly stressed. Other problems with Pyle's guide are that it is not based upon large enough samples and that the assumptions, especially pertaining to wear, may be faulty. It was obvious to us that more field research is needed, to which we are looking forward.

