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# News, Notes, Comments

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## Same-Day Recapture of a Purple Finch at Two Feeders 2.5 km Apart

On 24 May 2002 I recaptured a previously banded adult female Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*) at 1150 hours which later that same day was killed by a cat at another feeder located 2.5 km (1.6 mi) due west of my feeder/banding site, giving an indication of the distance traveled by this species while foraging. This individual was originally banded on 24 Aug 1997 as a female with a brood patch, undergoing prebasic molt including primaries, coverts and body plumage. Given the extreme wear on the tail, the bird was likely in its second year. It was recaptured 7 May 1998 not yet in breeding condition, then again on 24 May 2002 with a well defined brood patch. This capture history, along with numerous years of banding experience with this species at this station, strongly suggests that the bird was one of the local breeding population, and on that date of death was several days short of six years of age.

The banding site is located at Jenny Lake in the Adirondack Mountains, 7 km west of the village of Corinth, Saratoga County, NY, at 563 Co. Rt. 10, Corinth; and the recovery site at 744 Co. Rt. 10. The Purple Finch is the most numerous banded breeding bird at this station with over 10,000 banded since 1970. In that time, two other same-season (but not same-day) cat kills occurred at feeders 0.6 km and 1.8 km distant; and two other birds were trapped and released approximately 17 km southeast. The capture and recapture dates of these latter two birds suggest they were cases of post-breeding dispersal by young of the year in early August, and not cases of distance traveled while foraging.

I thank Dorthea Meldrum for reporting the band to New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Elizabeth O'Neill of that department for contacting the Bird Banding Laboratory, and both of them for supplying additional information making possible the exact location of the recovery.

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## Unusual Plumage of a Yellow-rumped Warbler

On 21 Oct 2002 I captured and banded a Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*) still possessing over 90% of its juvenal plumage, having replaced only the feathers of the crown and auricular areas, while showing no evidence of any molt in progress. The banding occurred at Island Beach State Park south of South Seaside Park, Ocean County, NJ.

This bird had the darkly streaked plumage of a juvenile over all of its body (except for the crown and auriculars) which included worn, loosely textured tail coverts, one worn yellow feather among the rump feathers, no yellow spot at the side of the breast, and juvenal wing coverts. Except for its head, it resembled the juvenile portrayed in Plate 12 of *A Field Guide to the Warblers of North America* (J. Dunn and K. Garrett. 1997. Boston and New York. Houghton Mifflin Company), though grayer than brown with darker, nearly black streaking. Nowhere among this retained juvenal plumage was there any appearance of newly growing pin feathers.

The crown and auriculars had undergone prebasic molt and were in basic plumage. They were pale brown in color and the usual yellow crown spot was present. There was no sheathing at the bases of these replaced feathers indicating their growth was complete. Based on this pale-brown coloration and lack of streaking or presence of any blue-gray in the crown, this bird appeared to be a female. Its unflattened wing chord was 68 mm, fat class 0 (on a 0 to 3 scale) and weight 11.5 g.

I am familiar with juvenile Yellow-rumped Warblers and their molting sequence based on banding them where the species breeds at Jenny Lake in the Adirondack Mountains near Corinth, Saratoga County, NY. Except for the molt about the head, and the added wear to the retained body plumage, this bird looked very typically like a juvenile in July or August. Notes which I have taken on normally molting juveniles from 2 Aug to 10 Sep indicate that the first stage of prebasic molt commences on the

upper sides of the breast and on the rump, followed by the back, tail coverts and dorsal wing coverts, finally on the head where crown molt starts at the base of the maxilla and works backward to conclude on the nape. Wing covert replacement can be complete before molting progresses to the nape.

Some individuals can have renewed the wing coverts and the body plumage (though still possess sheaths at the bases of some of the contour feathers) by as early as 18 Aug, while others may be only in the early stages of this molt by as late as 3 Sep. This bird at Island Beach was not a case of temporally delayed molt, rather one which had foregone all of the normal earlier stages of body and covert molt and had completed only the very last stages of head molt.

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### **Slate-colored Junco at Least Eight Years Old**

During routine winter trapping on 12 Jan 2003 at my home station, I trapped a Slate-colored Junco (SCJU) which turned out to be eight years and five months old, assuming I aged the bird correctly at initial banding on 11 Mar 1995. At that time I had judged it to be an SY male with a wing chord of 80 mm and gray-brown eye color.

A review of records showed the junco, #2131-08870, was banded with a size 1 band. It was one of 35 birds banded on that March date in 1995. Repeat records showed that the bird was encountered subsequently on 4 Jan 1997 and 2 Feb 1998, before it disappeared from the records.

At the recent encounter, the bird appeared to be in good condition with no noticeable abnormalities, except tail feathers were frayed. The bird weighed 23.9 g at 1410 hours. On the previously encountered dates, it weighed 22.8 g at 1100 hours on 4 Jan 1997 and 22.2 g at 0845 hours on 2 Feb 1998. Weight was not recorded when first banded. The "old" bird was released in fair weather (29° F) along

with 11 newly banded SCJUs and three other repeating juncos, banded in Feb 2000 and 2001.

A check of the banding office website, <[www.pwrc/usg.gov/bbl/homepage/longvree.htm](http://www.pwrc/usg.gov/bbl/homepage/longvree.htm)> showed the oldest known SCJU to be 10 yr 09 mo. This information was listed under AOU 4930-5020 and was last updated February 2002.

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### **How Many Jelly Beans Are There in The Jar?**

Here is the winter feeder watcher's equivalent of "how many jelly beans are there in the jar?" How many Downy Woodpeckers frequent the suet feeders at the Thrush Wood Banding Station?

The general rule in censusing a resident bird population is to select a three-month period in which there is little or no movement into or out of the area. In our case, we chose 26 Nov 2002 through 25 Feb 2003. Because of the severe and persistent cold weather, it was possible to trap on only 14 different days and for only a brief time each day. Only tree traps could be used as it was too cold/wet/snowy to use ground traps. No netting was possible.

So, how many different Downy Woodpeckers were using the feeders? A very little hint: we often saw five at a time. Another hint: we usually caught about 20 or 22 individuals each trapping day.

**Answer:** There were at least 62 downies in the yard! Only once was a bird caught twice in one day. Many were caught only one or two times during the winter. Ten individuals were caught from seven to nine times during the period. However, during the next several sessions after 25 Feb, three more individuals that had been banded in 1997, 1998, and 2001, respectively, were caught as was an unbanded bird. All four, and quite possibly others, were probably out there all along.