

During the fall 2005 banding season, four banders operated banding stations at four locations at Island Beach State Park, between 16 Aug and 19 Nov. One or more of those stations was in operation on 63 days during that 96 day period; this is five days more than our previous high for number of days operated. There were 11 banding days in August, 24 in September, 15 in October and 13 in November. There were four days with three of the stations in operation simultaneously, 15 days with two stations active and the remaining 44 days with only a single station active. Banders participating this season were Mary Doscher, Jennifer Hanley, Robert Pantle, and Robert Yunick. Assisting this season were Rebecca Beer, Ted Hicks and Alex Tongas. In the discussion that follows, when referring to prior years data, prior year averages are based on the eighteen-year period 1987-2004.

Our total of 3926 birds banded was 71% of our long-term average; however, our 183 b/100nh was 119% of average. Both the raw total and the b/100nh were the highest since 1994. The discrepancy between the percentages for captures and b/100nh are attributable to a relatively low number of days in which multiple stations were operated—the four individuals banding this year were just over half of our long-term average of seven banders per season. However, following a long-term downward trend in capture rates at this site, this is the first time in over 15 years in which we have experienced a b/100nh above the average for all prior years.

The following table summarizes the best days of the season (>200 banded, >25 species or b/100nh >35).

Date (# stations operating)	# Species	# Birds	# Birds/100nh	Comments
Oct 16 (3)	28	358	637	highest species total
Oct 17 (3)	25	318	681	
Oct 18 (1)	22	356	780	highest capture rate
Oct 19 (3)	23	365	554	
Oct 20 (3)	24	482	664	highest number banded
Oct 28 (1)	14	63	525	
Oct 29 (2)	21	152	364	

Through the early part of October, the passage of the remnants of several hurricanes severely curtailed banding, but following the passage of these weather systems, the bottled-up birds to the north provided five straight days of exceptional flights as seen in the table above. In addition, this delay in migration also provided better numbers of birds moving through in early November than typical for this location.

Birds of note this year included a Cooper's Hawk, four Northern Saw-whet Owls, 135 Hermit Thrushes (highest total ever) and one Kentucky Warbler.

Among the 20 species that are most frequently captured at Island Beach in the fall, half had above-average capture rates this season and half were below average. Most notable were Hermit Thrush, Northern Waterthrush, Song Sparrow and Swamp Sparrow, all with capture rates more than three times their average. Exceptional on the low end were both Golden- and Ruby-crowned kinglets that were captured at about half of their average rates. Among species that are not in our "top 20," Winter Wrens (150% of average) and Ovenbirds (220% of average) also put in strong showings this year.



Northern Saw-whet Owl
by George West