

Woodcock and Baltimore Oriole—and one hybrid: a Brewster's Warbler.

The top three birds this fall were White-throated Sparrows (14% of the total number banded), Gray Catbirds, and Song Sparrows. All species on the top ten list have made the list in previous years. Sparrows provided 25% of the total number banded, warblers 20%, and thrushes 11%. It was a good year for Lincoln's Sparrows. We banded 15 birds, more than the seven banded in 2004 and 2005 combined. House Wrens made a good showing with 20 individuals banded, twice the station average. Gray Catbirds (57) were present in less-than-normal numbers, the lowest number in the six years at this site.

Two birds were recaptured that had been banded in 2003: a Wood thrush and a Common Yellowthroat. We recaptured five birds banded in 2004 and seven banded in 2005.

The season was relatively uneventful, holding few surprises. One of the challenges of the season proved to be a black bear who visited the site several times as it bent poles and damaged several nets.

Eight visitors, several of whom were weekly visitors, enjoyed the birds at this station. All were grateful for the chance to increase their bird identification skills.

### **Allegheny Front Migration**

**Observatory**

**390-0791**

Grant County, WV

**AFMO Banding Leaders: *Ralph K. Bell and Joan Bell Pattison***

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Our 49<sup>th</sup> year of bird banding at Allegheny Front Migration Observatory (AFMO—founded by Ralph K. Bell on 18 Sep 1958), 10 miles southeast of Davis, WV, began on 13 Aug and ended on 15 Oct 2006. In total, 6,784 birds were banded this fall of 86 species with a station effort of 7790.3 net hours, giving a capture rate of 87.1 b/100nh. This year resulted in a much better ratio than 64.2 b/100nh last year and 55.2 in 2004. This year was the best year for total number of birds banded since 1998, when 8,585 birds were banded.

The station was open for 54 days and closed for eight days due to bad weather. In order to catch many birds in our mist nets, there needs to be a westerly wind. Of the 26 days when over 100 birds were banded, all but two days had westerly winds, and those two were calm. There were 16 days this fall when over 100 birds were captured and banded, four days over 200, three days over 300, two days over 400, and one day over 500. No doubt, 4 Oct was the best flight day, when 497 birds were banded; but due to extremely heavy westerly winds, the most exposed south nets were open for only a couple of hours, so many, many more migrating birds were seen but not caught and banded that day.

The only prolonged wet period this fall was for four days (31 Aug - 3 Sep), when Hurricane Ernesto went up the east coast of the United States. The best-extended flight period was 25 - 28 Sep, when 1,269 birds were banded. Another good flight period was 1 - 4 Oct, when 1,117 birds were banded.

The Blackpoll Warbler was the most numerous species this year with 1,390 banded, which is 141.7% above the 10-yr running average. It has been the leader for the past two out of 10 years. The Black-throated Blue Warbler, the usual leader, was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest with 1,293 banded (64.8% above the 10-yr average), and the Black-throated Green Warbler was 3<sup>rd</sup> highest with 616 banded (43.6% above the 10-yr average). The Dark-eyed Junco was 4<sup>th</sup> highest with 410 banded (92.4% over the 10-yr average), and the Tennessee Warbler was 5<sup>th</sup> highest with 314 banded (10.1% over the 10-yr average). The total of the top five species banded was 4,023, which is 59.3% of the total birds banded this season.

The most unexpected capture this fall was a female Green-winged Teal, making it the 120<sup>th</sup> species banded at AFMO since 1958. Two teal were seen flying together, but only one was caught in a net and then banded by Fred McCullough.

Last year a bilateral gynandromorphic (male and female) Black-throated Blue Warbler was banded, and we caught and banded another one this year. The right half of the bird's body was male and the left half was female, the opposite of last year's warbler.

The Flyover Count was started in 1990 and has continued every year during the banding season at AFMO. Results from this season's counting of four selected species which make up the majority of the Count are: 282 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (17-yr average 449), 1,596 Blue Jays (17-yr average 5,917), 2,224 American Goldfinches (17-yr average 2,952) and 610 Monarch Butterflies (17-yr average 1,107).

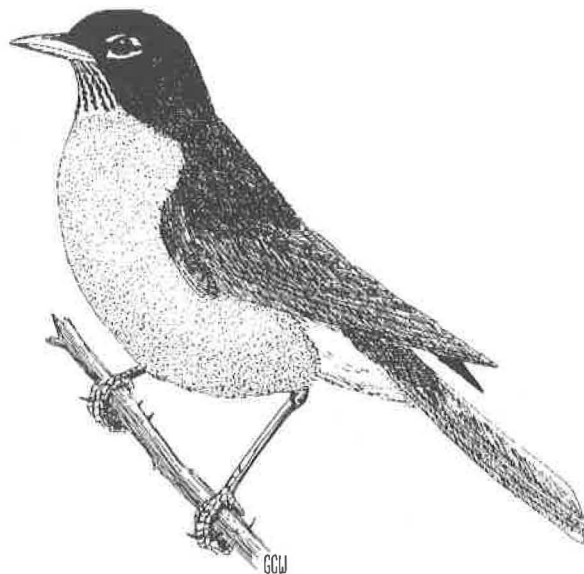
Some bird species are very strong fliers and often fly too high to be caught in the nets. Three species should especially be recognized this fall because of their high numbers recorded in our Flyover Count. We counted 264 Northern Flickers (peak: 18 on 2 Oct), 261 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (peak: 55 on 28 Sep), and 252 American Robins (peak: 18 on 24 Aug). Why so many robins were seen coming up the ravine at the banding station so early this fall is a big question, as October has always been considered their main migration period.

This fall, 1,093 people signed our visitor's book. These visitors came from 24 states, Washington DC, and three foreign countries: Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Georgia, and United Kingdom. As usual, several elementary and middle schools, and colleges, including the Highland Adventist School from Elkins, WV; Pendleton County Middle School from Franklin, WV; Bridgewater College Ecology Class; Eastern Mennonite University; Georgetown University;

West Virginia University Adventure Program; and West Virginia Wesleyan College visited the station.

We thank the personnel of Monongahela National Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson, Cheat/Potomac District Ranger Jeff Hammes, Special Use Manager Laura Hise, Forestry Technician Ed Lang and all others for their cooperation and help. We also thank the West Virginia D.N.R. for the use of their building for storage of our banding shed, and the Brooks Bird Club, members of the Audubon Naturalist Society, The Nature Conservancy, WV Highlands Conservancy, and many visitors and volunteers for their financial support. It is our only means of replacing the mist nets and everyone's support is much appreciated.

The volunteer banders who participated this year were Bob Dean, Ken & Sue Heselton, Fred & Carol McCullough, Randy & Beth Ritter, Charles Ziegenfus, and station leaders Ralph K. Bell and Joan Bell Pattison. Bill Agee and Ken Heselton contributed many, many hours of computer time and expertise. LeJay Graffious was responsible for erecting and removing the banding shed with the help of other volunteers. The scheduled volunteers who helped this year for extended periods of time were: Bill Beatty, Kathleen Dullnig, Tom & Dawn Fox, Walter Fye, Kathleen Larken, Jack & Joleene Minear, Tim Newlin, Don Pattison, Carl & Joan Rowe, Todd & Kim Schnopp, and Stephen Sushinski. We thank the above volunteers and many other kind and interested people who helped us this year.



American Robin  
by George West