

**KESTREL HAVEN AVIAN MIGRATION OBSERVATORY**  
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### **Fall 2003 Migration Banding Report**

It was a spectacular season of superlatives in all respects! We broke all station records but one by a very large margin, added five new species and enjoyed superb returns.

Numbers in parenthesis equal previous records. This season we banded 5,760 new birds (3,629) of 107 species (95) in 120 days (113) of operation. We also had 1,421 repeats, 136 returns (115), one foreign retrap and, 400 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (208). The hummingbirds were not banded nor were six other birds of various species that presented with severe pox, which greatly increased the diameters of their tarsi. The total birds netted was 7,724 making our measure of efficiency 117 birds/100 net hours for newly banded birds and 157 birds/100 NH overall. Hatching year birds were on the 18-year norm of 87%.

We added Belted Kingfisher, American Crow, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Louisiana Waterthrush and Clay-colored Sparrow to bring the station total to 129 species and five forms.

We had 39 days with more than 50 birds banded of which 13 days were over 100 banded and two were over 200! Our ten most frequently banded birds in aggregate exceeded previous season records. To top that off, we had a total of 14 species banded in numbers exceeding 100. Monthly totals were: July 642 (658), August 815 (789), September 1,682 (1,095) and November 890 (315). The period 16 September through 16 October was particularly bountiful with many 100 plus days strung together.

The primary reason for this abundance is best answered by the superb weather conditions for banding, which we encountered every month. There were many frontal systems that persisted either just to our south or directly overhead which caused extended stopovers here. Additionally, the wrap-around winds from coastal systems added to the bird flow and species abundance. We did have one very powerful and traditional Northwest front that brought our sixth Gamble's White-crowned Sparrow. Thanks to the blocking systems many of the species that normally overfly this station, such as thrushes, were banded in record numbers.

Once again we had strong indicators of global warming. This season's abundance of American Goldfinch continues an increasing population trend. We banded 2,235 this year. From 1986 through 1997 we had banded 1,745 while the period 1998 through 2003 total increased to 6,036! A similar though less spectacular rise has been evidenced with Baltimore Orioles. From 1986 through 1997 we had banded 146 while the period 1998 through 2003 total is 300. This year we accounted for 74. A few other species are beginning to demonstrate similar trends but we've insufficient data to comment.

We trapped a color-banded House Finch that had been banded earlier this year in Ithaca, NY. The BBL reported five encounters: an American Tree Sparrow was found 90 miles NNE and was in its 4<sup>th</sup> year; an American Goldfinch was recovered in central Florida, a distance of 900 miles to the South, two months after its banding; another goldfinch was found the 20 miles to our East; a Slate-colored Junco was recovered in North Carolina which is 450 miles to our South and, an American Robin was found in Southwestern Louisiana four years after it's banding here. The latter represents a distance of over 1,200 miles.

Of the 136 returns, 40 individuals of 13 species were recaptured at ages of four years or more, the eldest of which was an eleven-year-old Gray Catbird. A second catbird was ten. Others were: a Downy Woodpecker at 7+ years; an Eastern Kingbird at 5+; a Blue Jay at 4; a Purple Finch at 4; fourteen American Goldfinch at 4 (7), 4+ (3), 5,5+ and 6 years of age; a Song Sparrow at 4; two Yellow Warblers at 4 and 6+; a Chestnut-sided Warbler at 4+; seven Common Yellowthroats at 4+(2), 5+(3) and 6 (2) years; five Gray Catbirds at 5, 6, 6+,10 and 11 years; an Eastern Tufted Titmouse at 4; three Black-capped Chickadees at 4, 5 and 9; and, two American Robins at 4 and 4+ years of age.

We thought we had a record in the catbird but later found that a Gray Catbird banded as a SY-U by the late Gladys Cole in Maryland on 13 May 1984, was retrapped by Nick Pulcinella at Island Beach, NJ on 4 May 2001, which made the bird over 17 years old!

So many species were banded at numbers greater than two S.D.s over the 18-year norm that we'll only touch the highlights here. We banded two Red-tailed Hawks, our first since 1988. Thrush numbers were much greater than normal with Gray-cheeked banded at 5 times its norm and a single Bicknell's Thrush. We missed Philadelphia Vireo for the first time. We enjoyed a remarkable 30 species of warbler, eight at S.D.s of 2 and Nashville, Western Palm and Hooded at 3 S.D.s above the norm. Orioles, cardinals and grosbeaks were all here at twice their usual numbers while White-throated Sparrows made their largest appearance ever. We had several small flocks of Pine Siskins and, of course, all those goldfinch! On a sad note, as intensive agriculture supportive of dairy farms continues to expand in this overall region we are losing more and more grassland nesting species. The concomitant loss of hedgerows is also causing a noticeable loss of species and numbers. At times we think we'd prefer "farmette" subdivision to these super large mono-cropped dairy fields. The area has gone from picturesque hedgerowed farms to something resembling the tundra or huge mid-western cornfields and all are frequently harvested with greater precision than ever before leaving neither room nor time for nesting and no food for survivors.

One adult flicker intergrade was banded this year, which continues a growing trend in this region. Most disturbing were the many bill deformities and cases of avian pox and scaly leg we encountered this season. Nine birds presented with some form of bill problem with crossed bills in Cedar Waxwing, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Cardinal, Mourning Warbler and House Finch. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks presented with bill tumors and excessive keratinization of the upper mandible. Pox was present on seven species. Despite the overall wet spring and summer, hypoboscid flies were light as were feather mites. Towards the end of the season we had a large influx of dispersing House Finches, with many of them displaying symptoms (conjunctivitis) of mycoplasma infection. We also captured one goldfinch that presented with conjunctivitis.

Our third year of identifying and marking dragonflies resulted in the netting of 104 individuals of 14 species. The station total of odonates is now at 56 species. Incidental to banding, we netted *Anax junius*, *Aeshna constricta*, *canadensis* and *umbrosa*, *Epiaeshna heros*, *Boyeria vinosa*, *Cordulegaster maculata*, *Libellula lydia*, *pulchella* and *luctuosa*, *Sympetrum internum* and *vicinum* and *Lestes congener* and *unguiculatus*.

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**Station Operating Statistics:**

Start: 4 July  
 Stop: 26 November  
 Days of Operation: 120  
 Nets Used: 2 to 28  
 Net Hours 2002: 3,542  
 Net Hours 2003: 4,921  
 Best Day: 205 on 12 October  
 Reason: 24 species overall  
 Best Diversity: 25 species on 21 and 26 September  
 Banded 2002: 3,630  
 Banded 2003: 5,760  
 Species 2002: 94  
 Species 2003: 107  
 Birds/100NH 2002: 103  
 Birds/100NH 2003: 117  
 %HY 2002: 89  
 %HY 2003: 87

**Most Frequently Banded Species:**

Rank	Species	Number	%HY	Decoded
1.	AMGO(1)	1932	92	American Goldfinch
2.	SOSP(2)	425	96	Song Sparrow
3.	COYE(3)	320	93	Common Yellowthroat
4.	WTSP(7)	256	99	White-throated Sparrow
5.	GRCA(6)	205	84	Gray Catbird
6.	SCJU(4)	203	78	Slate-colored Junco
7.	CEDW(8)	184	24	Cedar Waxwing
8.	YWAR(10)	154	85	Yellow Warbler
9.	MYWA	143	88	Myrtle (yellow-rumped) Warbler
10,	RCKI(5)	132	99	Ruby-crowned Kinglet

(#) = ranking last fall

Percent of total banded: 68.6%

**Notable additions:**

11.	HOFI	122	93	House Finch
12.	AMRO	117	86	American Robin
13.	RBGR	112	80	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
14.	EWCS	102	63	Eastern White-crowned Sparrow