

**Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory
Burdett, Schuyler County, NY
John and Sue Gregoire
4226-07645**

Khmo@empacc.net

SPRING 2009 Atlantic Flyway Review Report

This was again dismal spring. Over 23 springs we have seen an increasingly disturbing pattern of fewer and fewer species and individuals. To make that worse, our daily point counts no longer add all that much to the banding data. Were it not for hundreds of American Goldfinch and Pine Siskins migration would have been a non-event. There was a very large surge during a warm period in early and mid April when we were not banding.

We banded 779 individuals of 46 species in 22 days of operation. We also had 103 repeats, 104 returns, and 7 hummingbirds not banded. Our measure of efficiency was 145 birds per 100 net hours for newly banded birds and 185 birds/100 NH overall. Our best day was 3 May with 107 banded and our most species diverse day was also 03 May with 20 species banded. Our efficiency was quite high as we used only 10 nets and often closed because of high winds arising within an hour or so of opening. We banded only eight warbler species, all but one local breeders.

The story of winter/spring was the amazing invasion of Pine Siskins. Several researchers are attempting to consolidate data on the probable millions of birds that blanketed the entire country. Here we routinely hosted flocks of 50 to 200 birds. White-winged Crossbills feeding on our larch cones often augmented the thrill. Once the cold passed and we were able to band, it became apparent that most of these birds were retreating to the north.

We banded 159 siskins and now, in early June, have but one pair remaining and probably breeding. Of the birds banded 51 were male and 102 female with 6 of unknown sex. This breaks down further to 85 second year birds and 74 after second year birds. Of the total we had 8 of the Green Morph siskins, beautiful birds with much more yellow as well as other identifying characteristics.

As these birds passed through we noted an ever increasing number of females that presented with partial to fully developed brood patches, an indication of biological preparedness while enroute a breeding site – wherever that may be. There's some contention that proposes such birds breed within 50 or 100 miles of this location but that is relatively unproven by observation. Several pairs have been documented as breeding here in Central New York, some as early as April. We believe most of the females will breed on traditional breeding grounds but expect some reports of breeding confirmed in many southern states because of the sheer numbers. On 4 May we banded a female

with a desiccated brood patch implying that she completed breeding at some point to our south.

Our age data as reported in Table 2 is somewhat skewed due to an ongoing study that has revealed covert feather shape to be a less than accurate age criterion in some species. Last spring we reported on the inaccuracy of using covert shape for ageing and data from last fall and this spring continue to support that finding. This is particularly true in American Goldfinch so we now age all adult females as AHY.

One new form was added to the cumulative station list of 132 species plus 6 forms; point count cumulative remains at 220 species seen at Kestrel Haven. Abnormalities were unremarkable and no significant health or parasite problems were noted. We did have two juncos present with unusual white markings. One had white eye rings, throat and forehead while the other had white slash forward of and above the right eye; this appears to be common in the species as the local bird lists have reported at least three other such finds this spring. As usual, the real pleasure of this spring was in our returns.

We enjoyed 104 returning individuals! Of that number, 36 were at least 4 years of age or older. The eldest return was a Yellow Warbler at over 8 years of age. The elders were:

- A Downy Woodpecker at 4 years old.
- Three Black-capped Chickadees at 4, 4+ (2) and 6 years old.
- Two American Robins at 4 and 5+ years old.
- Two Gray Catbirds at 4 and 5 years old.
- Three Yellow Warblers at 4 (2), **and 8+** years old.
- Two Common Yellowthroat at 4+ and 5+ years old.
- Two Rose-breasted Grosbeak at 4 years old.
- Six Song Sparrow at 4 (4), 4+ **and 7** years old.
- A Chipping Sparrow at **6+** years old.
- A White-throated Sparrow at 5 years old.
- A Red-winged Blackbird at 6 years old.
- Three Baltimore Orioles at 4(2) and 5 years old.
- Nine American Goldfinches at 4 (6), 5 (2), and 6+ years old.

We had a report of an American Goldfinch banded here on 14 May 2008 that was found dead in central South Carolina on 12 March 2009.

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Kestrel Haven Statistical Summaries Spring 2009:

Table I: Operations

First Day 14 April: Last 26 May
 Total Days in Operation 22
 Range of No. Nets Used 1 to 10
 Total Net Hours for Season* 537.5
 Number of Traps in Use 0 ** % of Total caught in traps N/A
 Largest Daily Catch 107 on 03 May
 Best Species Diversity: 20 species on 03 May
 Number birds banded 2008: 506; Number birds banded 2009: 779
 Total Species 2008: 53 Total Species 2009: 46
 Birds/100 net hours 2008: 105 Birds/100 net hours 2009: 145
 Species above 2 S.D. in 2009: N/A
 Species below 2 S.D. in 2009: N/A
 Weather influence ranking (+ or - or?)***: Mostly negative

* Based on 1 4-shelf 12m net x 1 hour of netting = 1 net hour (adjusted Accordingly for shorter or longer nets)

** List number and types used

*** Were general weather conditions overall during the season a negative or Positive or inconclusive factor in banding results?

Table II: List of Ten Most Commonly Banded Species Spring 2009

	Species	Number	%SY	%ASY	%AHY
1.	AMGO	310	36	24	40
2.	PISI	159	54	46	00
3.	SCJU	36	36	61	03
4.	WTSP	27	41	59	00
5.	PUFI	25	72	28	00
6.	CHSP	20	15	85	00
7.	EWCS	19	00	00	100
8.	SOSP	18	00	00	100
9.	BLJA	16	63	25	00
10.	BCCH	14	00	00	100

* See text

Overall % SY = 38

The following were handled at Kestrel Haven during the Spring 2009 season:

Mourning Dove	3	Cedar Waxwing	7
Cooper's Hawk	0	Red-eyed Vireo	0
Eastern Screech Owl	0	Philadelphia Vireo	0
Black-billed Cuckoo	0	Warbling Vireo	0
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	Blue-headed Vireo	0
Downy Woodpecker	10	Black-and-White Warbler	0
Hairy Woodpecker	1	Blue-winged Warbler	3
PILEATED WOODPECKER	0	Nashville Warbler	2
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1	Tennessee Warbler	1
Eastern Kingbird	0	Cape May Warbler	0
Great-crested Flycatcher	0	Yellow Warbler	14
Eastern Phoebe	2	Myrtle Warbler	7
Eastern Wood-Pewee	0	Magnolia Warbler	0
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	0	Chestnut-sided Warbler	0
Acadian Flycatcher	1	Bay-breasted Warbler	0
Traill's Flycatcher	2	Blackpoll Warbler	0
Least Flycatcher	0	Blackburnian Warbler	0
Blue Jay	17	Black-throated Green Warbler	0
European Starling	4	Pine Warbler	0
Brown-headed Cowbird	1	Western Palm Warbler	0
Red-winged Blackbird	10	Prairie Warbler	0
Baltimore Oriole	4	Ovenbird	0
Common Grackle	14	Mourning Warbler	0
Purple Finch	26	Common Yellowthroat	13
House Finch	1	Hooded Warbler	0
American Goldfinch	337	Wilson's Warbler	0
Pine Siskin	159	Canada Warbler	0
Savannah Sparrow	0	American Redstart	1
Eastern White-crowned Sparrow	19	Gray Catbird	14
White-throated Sparrow	28	Brown Thrasher	0
American Tree Sparrow	0	House Wren	4
Chipping Sparrow	21	Winter Wren	0
Field Sparrow	6	Brown Creeper	0
Slate-colored Junco	38	White-breasted Nuthatch	0
Song Sparrow	30	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
Lincoln's Sparrow	0	Eastern Tufted Titmouse	2
Swamp Sparrow	3	Black-capped Chickadee	30
Fox Sparrow	0	Golden-crowned Kinglet	0
Eastern Towhee	1	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	12
Northern Cardinal	4	Wood Thrush	0
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	4	Veery	0

Indigo Bunting	0	Gray-cheeked Thrush	0
Scarlet Tanager	0	Swainson's Thrush	0
Tree Swallow	4	Hermit Thrush	0
House Sparrow	1	American Robin	17
Northern Waterthrush	1	Eastern Bluebird	0