



Atlantic Flyway Review

A REVIEW OF OPERATION RECOVERY AND RELATED SUBJECTS

Edited by Frederick S. Schaeffer



You can imagine how relieved I felt, when I saw my first Tree Swallow flock of the year, inspecting the 24 nest boxes which I had put up in late March for a breeding study at my banding locality. That was on April 12, just a week before the Annual Meeting. After a winter of gross inactivity save for the Christmas counts, my spring fever knows no bounds. Despite this, we still have to cover several reports of the 1968 O.R. season. This issue's reports will take up most of this column as several stations should have been in the two previous issues. Approximately 85% of the station leaders responded and have or will have their reports printed in this column. I just think it's great, and again, my thanks to all concerned.

In the next issue we customarily plan to publish requests for help by various stations. Stations needing help, please drop me a line by June 20th at the latest so that they may be included. Please advise what sort of help you need and the principal activities being carried out. It would help if your phone number is included also. If you have any questions, or requests for information (on study programs others could undertake for you), please let me know. Also in the next issue will be comments on some of the basic Operation Recovery procedures.

The Annual Meeting was most enjoyable - I was happy to have the chance to meet so many of you. So much more was accomplished through conversation than by correspondence.

Some corrections are needed on the map published on page 85 of the last issue: Leroy Wilcox's Tiana Beach O.R. station was in operation in 1968 and is located on Long Island, just below the #12 dot on the map. The #5 dot (Lincoln, Mass.) should have been labelled Sudbury, Mass. or Round Hill O.R. Finally, the #26 dot on my map for Allegheny Front, W. Va., is slightly too much to the west and should be relocated just below the most western boundary of Maryland.

The station reports follow...

SOMESVILLE, MT. DESERT I. - Maine - Mrs. Robert W. Patterson

The banding station at Somesville, in existence since 1958, has participated in Operation Recovery for the last ten years, with the exception of 1966. It is a solo operation, with only occasional help from my husband or a visiting bander. Somesville is in the town of Mount Desert, nearly in the center of Mount Desert Island, and at the northerly end of Somes Sound. My nets are within a few hundred yards of salt water, adjacent to a brook, and on the lowland of the brook valley. The surround-

ings are attractive to many species, but the station is sort of a sampling affair, since Somesville is not on the avian Route 1. Growth is on the high side - large alders, small poplar, birch and maple. Higher land and higher trees, mostly coniferous, surround the valley, and nets at ground level are not as productive as higher sets. In 1963, permanent poles (1" pipes) 20 feet high were installed, and all netting has been in the same location since that year. Processing is done at a sheltered "desk" nearby, where for the last two years all birds have been weighed, measured and skulled.

The type of growth, the brook, and a "drip" piped from a hillside spring may help to account for a fairly high percentage of warblers. O.R. birds in 1968 were 54% warblers, 55% in 1967. Myrtles, however, so common at other coastal stations, have never topped my warbler list. The most numerous species in 1968 were all warblers: Blackpoll 158, Parula 69; Myrtle 62; Black-throated Green 56; and Nashville 51. This year's rarity was a Blue-winged Warbler, first for Mount Desert Island, and probably for Maine. It was duly photographed, along with the inevitable fingernails.

In 1968 O.R. banding was done on 46 days in the period from August 16 to October 18. Birds banded totalled 1064; net hours 1532; and species 60. Per 100 net hours, August produced 69 birds, September 74, and October 44. There were eight returns, but no foreign retraps.

NANTUCKET - Massachusetts - Edith Andrews

The feeling on Nantucket this past fall (1968) was that migrations were more like the "old days" when the little pine woods at the end of Hummock Pond were hopping with warblers. The cold fronts reached us and with them came the small land birds.

A total of 1958 individuals of 74 species were banded in 913 net hours compared with 1591 individuals in 805 net hours in 1967. Actually there was a decrease in the number taken in October but a tremendous increase in August and September, according to the following breakdown:

	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>
August	0	125
September	280	888
October	1311	945

The decrease in numbers in October is due to the lack of Myrtle Warblers. One to five nets were operated a total of 49 days from August 5 through October 30. The most abundant species in August were Yellowthroat (31), Catbird (30) and Cape May Warbler (15). In September, American Redstart headed the list with 98, followed by Blackpoll Warbler (67) and

Cape May Warbler (58). Myrtle Warbler (267) and Golden-crowned Kinglet (168) were again the most abundant in October. The Myrtle total is very low compared to 1967 (637 in October) but the area where Myrtles are thickest did not have proper coverage. Almost all of the warblers banded in 1968 showed an increase in numbers over the same species in 1967. There was more of everything. Two highlights for the season were Prothonotary Warbler and Cardinal, the latter being a new species for the station. Notably absent from the 1968 list is Blue-winged Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat. Nantucket did not have the Black-capped Chickadee invasion that occurred at Manomet and Martha's Vineyard.

SIASCONSETT - Nantucket Island, Mass. - Mrs. Roy Larsen

Siasconsett is a small station on Nantucket Island, but nevertheless of interest to us. Unfortunately (for us) Mrs. Larsen was out of town and therefore was only able to send me a small summary. She had a Clay-colored Sparrow in October. The Black-capped Chickadee invasion so evident in other parts of New England did not hit Nantucket - an example of the interest of negative information. Siasconsett banded a total of 494 birds of 55 species, of which White-throated Sparrow (60) topped the list; then Slate-colored Junco (54) and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (53). A Solitary Vireo was banded in September. - FSS.

BLOCK ISLAND - Rhode Island - Elise M. Dickerson

I feel scarcely qualified to comment on the 1968 season at Block Island because I was present on 30 of the 67 days the station was in operation. During the last week in September and the first week of October I was battling an early bout with the "Hong Kong flu" and spent the balance of the season recuperating while visiting my daughter in California. However, highly competent banders took over the banding, netting and, most importantly, the record keeping and compiled the summary from which I will comment - which was here to greet me when I arrived home from California.

The most unusual aspect of the 1968 migration at Block Island was the unprecedented numbers of thrushes. This does not show on the annual summary sheet because of the worst catastrophe that has befallen our station: my able co-director, Mrs. Elise Lapham, ran out of size 1B bands! Through a comedy of errors of telephone calls and letters, it was a whole week before she was re-supplied and she had had to release hundreds of thrushes unbanded. And, because my bands always accompany me wherever I go, here I sat with scads of 1B's which I would have loved for her to be using.

A total of 5806 birds of 100 species (and two subspecies) was banded at Block Island in 1968. Unlike some of the other coastal stations, the yield (birds per 100 net hours) rose from 85 to 150. As usual, the Yellow-throat was our most numerous bird with 1012 banded; next in line were the

Myrtles with 847 and Catbirds with 523. Myrtle Warblers were about one fourth less than in 1967 and Catbirds about four times more. Song Sparrows remained stable with 343 banded in 1967 and 344 in 1968. Our great rarity was a Brewster's Warbler banded and photographed by Mrs. Lapham on August 23rd. Only in eight other instances has this warbler been sight-recorded in Rhode Island. Red-eyed Vireos climbed from 66 in 1967 to 315 in 1968 and Red-breasted Nuthatches from 2 to 73. The most remarkable comparison between the two years, however, is that between birds per net hour which increased dramatically.

Taken altogether, the most noteworthy fact at BIOR in 1968 stands out like the proverbial sore thumb: more birds banded, more numerous species, more birds per net hour - all of which point to the fact that this station does better when the "boss" is away!

ISLAND BEACH - New Jersey - Mabel Warburton

Operation Recovery at Island Beach covered a period of 65 days from August 25 to November 1, with only two interruptions. There were no heavy rains, hurricanes nor other phenomena to hinder netting and no days were lost due to the weather. We began with one bander on August 25, jumped to 10 on the 14th and 15th of September, and averaged four a day for the season. Helpers were plentiful and much appreciated. New (to IBOR) banders were Corkran, Kennison, T. Davis, Savell and Price (a printed summary is available listing banders and birds banded. -Ed.). Visitors came in great numbers; the interested, the curious and the accidental. School children arrived by the busload. Numbers banded ran higher than last season and high hopes were held for a record year of banding but these were shattered by an exceptionally slow final week.

Red-breasted Nuthatches made an early appearance on August 26 and continued in good numbers throughout. Brown Creepers, as usual, were abundant (2060, peak day 489 on Sept. 27). There was a marked scarcity of unusual or rare species; two of note were the Painted Bunting captured by Dorothy Bordner on Sept. 8 and Ipswich Sparrow by John Miller. A new species for IBOR was the Greater Yellowlegs, taken also by John Miller, on Sept. 5.

At no time was processing of every bird attempted; the layout of the station and density of migration at Island Beach preclude this. Rather, species of special interest to banders were chosen and the following projects were carried on: special studies on Scarlet Tanager, Rufous-sided Towhee and Gray-cheeked Thrush; collection of foot-pox samples (6 were taken) and of ticks and mites. Bat-banding was done with special bands furnished by Dorothy Bordner. Bruce Adams ran special heavy-duty wide-mesh nets (see EBBA News, 31(5):203 for his article on this project) and caught the station's only Long-eared Owl on October 21.

In all, there were 32 species of warblers. The peak day was September 14 with a total of 2012 birds banded. The total for the season was 26,988, the second highest for Island Beach in its 13 years of operation.

CAPE MAY POINT - New Jersey - George Hitchner

Cape May Point O.R. operated from September 21 to October 12, and on November 9, in the same wooded lane established by Seth Low and used for many years. Twenty nets were operated in a continuous line throughout the daylight hours, except for short, temporary shutdowns due to a too-heavy flight of birds. A total of 2,841 birds was banded in the 23 days with 2,649 wing measurements, 2,622 fat-classed and 1,561 weighed. There were 95 repeats, two returns and no foreign retraps. Net hours came to 4,344 and there were 75 species.

Bill Clark's interesting hawk banding station was not far away and we captured a couple of his birds, as well as five Sharp-shinned Hawks and one Broad-winged Hawk, the latter a new species for the station. If we were to stack our nets, the hawk catch should increase many times as hawks fly through the trees just above our nets in good numbers.

Gray-cheeked Thrushes topped the list with 308 banded, followed by Catbird (277), Myrtle Warbler (256), Swainson's Thrush (242) and Yellow-throat (173). The American Redstart, usually on top of the list, fell to sixth place this year with 153.

Participating banders were Betty Hann, Bill Savell, Ray Margerum, Bruce Adams, Elizabeth and Bob Teulings, and George Hitchner. Ten other helpers assisted.

Summer rains turned the floor of our net lane into a green lawn which had to be mowed regularly. By September, a dry spell had set in and no banding days were lost due to rain. Working conditions were excellent, with mosquitoes in trivial numbers and cold fronts bringing us birds on September 23, 27-28; October 4-6, 9 and 10. The heaviest strike was on October 5, which found us furling and emptying nets with all holding boxes full by 7:15 am. A slightly greater number of birds (413) was banded on the following day but these were spread over the whole day and there was no need to furl the nets.

The only unusual event occurred on September 26, when a red fox discovered our operation and jumped into a couple of nets for fresh food. Philadelphia Vireos and Worm-eating Warblers resumed their scarce numbers this year (2 and 0) but a beautiful adult Mourning Warbler was a treat along with four Saw-whet Owls.

This station, like many others, needs and wants additional help to extend the season. Earlier dates will capture the warblers and fly-

catchers with good chances for Whip-poor-wills and Chuck-wills-widows, which nest in the area. Later dates will catch Woodcock and various species of owls. We have permission to camp at the operation and have done so for many years, although some prefer the soft living in nearby quarters. The area and working conditions are attractive and comfortable with much potential, for expansion of activity and species. All of the area is being taken over by the State of New Jersey so there will not be any changes to the surrounding area. Cape May Point happens to be located between two other large O.R. stations which are a bit closer to many eastern banders. Therefore, if you are willing to travel a little farther to discover a beautiful area in the shadow of Cape May lighthouse, plan to come. Talk with someone who has worked there in recent years or contact George Hitchner, 58 Kenton Ave., Pitman, N.J. 08071.

DAMSITE - Chestertown, Maryland - Dorothy A. Mendinhall

On September 9, Ed and I started erecting our net poles and on the 10th had the main area nets set. This territory is comprised of the Bay Bank section where raspberry, bayberry bushes, cherry and dogwood trees furnish food, and pine and cedar trees give cover. It was here we discovered a Cedar Waxwing's nest and banded the parent birds and one fledgling. A first for Damsite and perhaps for Kent County.

The second section was a line of five nets set between a row of boxwood and the garden asparagus lot. The third set of nets were in the preserve area where weeds flourished, pines, cedars, bayberry, dogwood, sumac, sassafras, cherry, oak and locust trees were entwined with honeysuckle, trumpet vines and briars. Later we added ten nets along the Lake Bank, two in the marsh, and finally in October did some "spot" netting between the corn field and the lespediza fields around a small pond (also in the preserve). Our minimum number of nets was 17 and maximum, 47. The loyal regulars, Kane, Emerine, Delarios, helped E.M. for one day each week while a newcomer, Pat Taylor, gave a few days for record keeping. A special bit of luck was to have Jack Linehan arrive to observe but stay for the weekend to band and Lina Whiteside from Scottsville was my relief for two days in September.

October found us with business picking up but Mel Garland arrived to share the responsibilities of banding and processing, while the Hackmans set up housekeeping for themselves at Dollsite and shouldered the task of running the nets during the day and compiling summaries at night. With this terrific crew added to the regulars and the addition of Margaret Whittum, we sailed through every day of October except the 19th. The total of new birds was 7,034 of 94 species, 815+ repeats and returns and three foreign recoveries: a Brown Creeper from IBOR, another from Ocean City, and a Song Sparrow from Tinicum Wildlife Preserve (Phila., Pa.). (Unfortunately, space limitations prevent the inclusion of the remainder of this fine report. -FSS)

...continued on page 128