

Nov. ~ Dec.

A Bird Bander's Diary

By Ralph K. Bell



December 1970.... EBBA's president, Emil J. Berger, in his comments in the last issue of EBBA News commented as follows (in part)... "Every bander's log is full of facts. Every fact is part of a fascinating jigsaw puzzle. Every bit of information left buried is a hole in the picture we are all trying to piece together." Emil is quite right and in my column this time I'll give some of the results and observations at our Allegheny Front (Mountain) Migration Observatory (AFMO) as Dr. George A. Hall has aptly named our old Red Creek Campground O.R. Station. Although George Hall and myself are listed as the so-called leaders of this particular project, it is the dedicated effort of all the banders of the Brooks Bird Club, especially Connie Katholi, Jack Linehan, John Morgan, Anne Shreve and Cora Williams that have provided the data that is becoming more meaningful each year.

None of us are real sure why some species migrate through our netting area and others avoid it almost completely. We have no solid answers but I will list some of the things that take place there in the hopes that others will examine the material at hand and express their views. By pooling our thought it is hoped that we can eventually come up with some meaningful answers to this migration puzzle.

There seem to be at least 6 warbler species which use the mountain flyway in greater numbers than the Atlantic coast as a regular avenue of travel to their wintering grounds. I am including another species in this list - the Bay-breasted Warbler. We usually get this species in good numbers but this fall's total of 206 is higher than usual. The big day for the Bay-breast this fall was September 17 when 47 were captured. At least seven other species seem to prefer the coastal route. The following chart illustrates this.

	Red Creek	Block Isl	Island Bch	Ocean Cty	Powder*	
	1970	1968	1968	1968	1968	
Tennessee Warbler	254	123	15	79	26	38
Cape May Warbler	207	47	41	212	108	21
Black-thr. Blue Warb.	319	165	34	273	138	8
Black-thr. Grn Warbl.	143	167	11	102	12	39
Blackburnian Warbler	147	137	8	29	9	4
Bay-breasted Warbler	206	75	9	44	25	10
Blackpoll Warbler	321	129	36	271	250	59
Black & White Warbler	10	11	31	312	134	9
Nashville Warbler	28	32	33	103	19	81
Magnolia Warbler	86	93	33	368	173	228
Myrtle Warbler	2	8	847	2023	3005	187
Ovenbird	55	44	28	269	167	35
Yellowthroat	44	35	1012	1724	205	286
Redstart	22	9	129	1533	504	64
Days of Operation	31	22	67	80	57	201
Maximum No. of nets	12	14	20	80	44	?
Total Net Hours	1521	1879	3879	14905	9794	?

*Powdermill Natural Preserve
(annual totals)

Evidently the leading line concept has merit - especially with some species for our mountain ridge and on the shore line of the Atlantic Coast. I have used data from banding stations that seemed pertinent for this brief study. The Powdermill totals (whole year) were used to show the sharp contrast with warbler captures when there is no leading line.

The year 1968 was picked because 1969 was not a normal year at Red Creek due to the excessive cloud cover and the 1970 comparisons could not be used because not all of the data is presently available to me.

It is especially interesting to note that all seven species we capture in large numbers do nest in evergreens, at least in part of their range. The Magnolia and Myrtle Warblers are the only species in the second group that nest mainly in evergreens and the Magnolia is also quite common at our station. If we operated every day there is no doubt the total capture of this species would be much higher. This leaves the Myrtle Warbler as an "evergreen species" and it is only this warbler of the group which winters in numbers in the United States. Perhaps this should tell us something.

I have so many other comments and observations to make about our mountain flyway that the subject will continue in the next issue.

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