



# Eastern Regional News

Eastern Bird Banding Association

Founded 1923

## Atlantic Flyway Review: Region IV Piedmont

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Banders have been watching the temperatures and the precipitation as the season progressed. A warm May, especially in the northeastern states, may have encouraged some of the Neotropical migrants to continue spreading their nesting range northward. It was a wet nesting season, twice the normal precipitation, all the way from South Carolina to the Canadian boundary. Temperatures were 2 to 5 degrees above normal in the southeast in September, then close to normal throughout October. Precipitation did not cause a problem except in South Carolina where 11.6 inches of rain fell on 3 Oct. November temperatures were two to four degrees below normal at the banding stations and rainfall at most stations was normal. Jim Gruber, in his report for Foreman's Branch, explains very clearly why we had a scarcity of heavy migration dates in the southeastern coastal states this fall.

Netting effort at most stations that operated both years was similar to autumn of 2014 but was nearly doubled at Harford Glen, increased by 21 percent at Foreman's Branch, and dropped by 28 percent at Jekyll Island. The number of birds banded declined at all stations except Jekyll Island (Table 1). The scarcity of cold fronts this season resulted in no two stations reporting the same day as their most active one.

The chief weather event of the season was the historic flood that engulfed South Carolina at the beginning of October. This was caused by a stalled low pressure area over Alabama and the west side of a strong

nor'easter offshore that together forced an atmospheric "river" of moist tropical air to continue flowing over South Carolina. The effect was exaggerated by the presence of Hurricane Joaquin. Read about the effects of the flooding in the report from Kiawah Island in Charleston, SC.

I thank the editors of *Weatherwise* for continuing to send me a free subscription as a "retired" life member of the American Meteorological Society. I thank all the station operators and their bandaides for the hundreds of hours setting up and operating their banding stations. I thank my daughter Jane Robbins and my son, Stuart for assembling the various fragments of this report while I was hospitalized, and I thank bander Michael Lutmerding for reviewing an earlier draft of this report.

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Hurricane Irene and wet weather that we endured afterward in October affected days in which we could operate and we suspect it affected survivorship of local avian residents. Anecdotal local reports of reductions in American Goldfinch sightings in the field, at feeders, and at our nets suggested that long periods of wet weather were unusually hard on their reproductive efforts. Again, numbers were slightly down from previous years, predominantly because of early closures and cancellations, though numbers captured per 100 net-hours reached normal levels. Best days had fewer birds and species than in previous years and our typical busy sparrow day in October came and went with little notice

Again, this year's results were consistent in the decreasing numbers of many species previously more common. Numbers of local residents were down: e.g. Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, and Carolina Chickadee. Fortunately, Lincoln's Sparrows were captured this year – a species often missed in previous years. Welcomed birds included Gray-cheeked Thrush, Tennessee Warbler, and Black-throated Blue Warbler. Typically, Fox Sparrows are captured as they begin their southward migration. This year was the first when none were captured or observed.

Recently, building-related mortalities have been investigated by volunteers with Lights Out Baltimore

and Lights Out DC. Starting before dawn, volunteers drive or walk the same route in both cities and collect dead birds found. Jay Rubinoff, Les Eastman, Bob Werlein and I were warmly received by Wendy Olsson (Baltimore) and Anne Lewis where we aged the birds collected. Though our statistical analyses are yet outstanding, we hope to learn if mortalities follow the same age-related trends as our banding data – stay tuned.

Many thanks go out to our regular volunteers: Suzanne Procell, Jerry Strickroth, Les Eastman, Jay Rubinoff, Dr. Bob Werlein and the staff at Eden Mill Nature Center.

Table 1. AFR Region IV - Fall 2015 Summary

	Eden Mill	Harford Glen	Patuxent Powerline	Foreman's Branch	Captain Sam's	Little Bear	Jekyll Island
First Day	30 Aug	28 Sep	18 Aug	1 Aug	15 Aug	7 Sep	27 Sep
Last Day	24 Oct	15 Dec	16 Nov	30 Nov	30 Nov	17 Nov	18 Oct
Days Open	8	16	42	105	98	57	22
No. Nets Used	13	6 to 14	26	9 to 92	25	10 to 16	17
Net Hours	373	2,071	3,461	32,709	12,116	3,552	1,223
No. Best Day	51	59	72	340	435	118	278
Best Day Date	Oct 17	Nov 5	Oct 26	Oct 18	Oct 6	Oct 13	Oct 12
Most Species	15	16	22	35	28	23	23
" " Date	Oct 13	Nov 5	Oct 6	Sep 12	5 & 7 Oct	15 Oct	12 Oct
Banded 2014	220	970	2,210	10,402	5,086		1,377
Banded 2015		551	1,426	8,807	4,770	2,370	1,497
Species 2014	37	63	73	123	80	0	46
Species 2015		39	73	115	83	70	49
B/100nh 2014	61.1	82.8	63.5	38.5	55.6		81.35
B/100nh 2015		26.6	41.2	26.9	49	78.2	122.4
% HY 2014	85%	51%	70%	82%	81!	0	88%
% HY 2015	82%	58%	67%	84%	84%	85%	80%

Table 2. AFR IV. Ten Most Commonly Banded Birds, Fall 2015

Eden Mill	% HY	Harford Glen	% HY	Patuxent Powerline	% HY	Foreman's Branch	% HY	Captain Sam's	% HY	Little Bear	% HY	Jekyll Island	% HY
51 WTSP (1)	73	120 WTSP (2)	58	175 WTSP (2)	53	1179 SOSP (1)	86	1266 COYE (1)	92.3	563 GRCA	96	691 COYE (2)	76
23 GRCA (2)	97	69 SCIU (2)	29	173 RCKI (1)	74	1161 WTSP (2)	78	643 GRCA (2)	97	424 COYE	93	196 WPWA (2)	92
23 NOCA (5)	74	59 NOCA (7)	29	152 GRCA (4)	83	697 COYE (4)	84	595 YRWA (3)	71.3	423 MYWA	69	194 GRCA (3)	95
19 SOSP (6)	95	56 SOSP (5)	33	100 COYE (5)	57	523 RCKI (3)	68	241 AMRE (7)	79.7	78 PABU	74	51 AMRE (5)	84
13 COYE (3)	85	29 SWSP (6)	65	80 SCIU (2)	49	437 GRCA (7)	75	189 REVI (6)	89.4	72 AMRO	85	51 PABU (4)	82
8 MYWA (10)	100	24 INBU (12)	42	61 EATO (0)	85	338 SWSP (9)	93	147 PABU (4)	89.1	69 NOCA	62	43 BTBW (7)	58
7 SWSP	86	19 AMGO (1)	17	55 SOSP (9)	65	295 SCIU (5)	85	145 BTBW	57.2	68 REVI	90	35 NOCA (8)	46
6 TUTI	100	19 GRCA (4)	33	50 REVI (10)	70	277 INBU (6)	87	142 RCKI (10)	72.5	68 WPWA	99	28 WEVI	75
4 CARW (7)	75	17 RCKI (10)	50	42 MAWA (6)	69	247 FISP (8)	77	138 PRAW (5)	81.2	66 SWSP	71	24 BAWW	83
4 WEVI (10)	100	13 RWBL (39)	15	40 HETH (7)	84	244 AMGO (10)	56	101 NOWA (9)	63.3	45 RCKI	78	22 INBU (10)	100

**Harford Glen**  
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392-0762

Although I had mentioned that the constant and dramatic changes in the environment and encroachment in and surrounding Harford Glen should have eased sufficiently to provide some consistency in data, the fall of 2014 managed to deny that happening. A combination of more classes of students and good weather allowed us to increase effort by 46% with some fascinating results. On the other hand, 2015, with plenty of rain, resulted in a 34% decrease in effort and a 42% decline in birds banded.

The number of birds per 100 net-hour, which had been close to our recent average of 67.8 and prior ten-year average of 67.7, dropped to a low of 26.6 which we attribute mainly to weather. Whether it is an indication of the effects of climate change is left to wiser analysis.

We were also accompanied on several days this year by two different students who have shown an intense interest in the birds. Hunter Anderson, a seventh grader, has demonstrated skill in bird identification and is learning to attend nets. Natalie Jacobs, a freshman in the Natural Resource / Agricultural Studies program, is using her experience at Harford Glen as part of her high school project to observe, participate and report on the banding process.

Ken and I are indebted to Amanda Koss, our assisting teacher who is learning to band, and our volunteers: Eileen Frey, Jane Scocca, Jean Wheeler, Dennis Kirkwood, Dave Larkin, Al Conrad and our stalwart Phil Powers, without whom we would not be able to keep the banding station operational.

This report includes Ken's apologies to Jean Wheeler for not properly listing her as a volunteer in 2013 and 2014 and confusing her name with that of a retired volunteer, also a Jean.

**Patuxent Powerline Right-of-Way** 390-0764  
Patuxent Research Refuge  
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This station is in a power line right-of-way that bisects an upland deciduous forest. It has operated since 1980, except for 2004-2006. The habitat is dominated by a dense six- to eight-foot high canopy of shrubs and is an

excellent source of shelter and food for breeding and migrating birds. Twenty-six nets are arrayed along a one-half mile east-west axis. Nets were opened by dawn and closed about 3.5 hours later. From 2007-2015, we have operated fairly consistently seven days in August and November and 14 days in September and October for a total of 42 days, generally on a M/W/F schedule. In 2013 however, due to the government shutdown, we banded only 35 days. Any comparisons to previous levels of activity refer to the years 2007-2012 and 2014 since our 2013 season was truncated.

This—our 33<sup>rd</sup> year—was our worst by far since 2007 with 1,426 bandings and only 73 species, our second lowest species total. Unlike last year, which had a slow start but a strong finish, this year was dramatically down the whole season.

Highlights included a Black-billed Cuckoo and a Pine Warbler. We had NO 100+ banding days, a first for this station. Despite the poor season, we had a few high counts. Acadian Flycatcher (10), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (18), Eastern Wood Pewee (12), Northern Waterthrush (8) and Rose-breasted Grosbeak (4). Low counts were too numerous to mention.

The station continues to be a focal point for visitors from foreign banding programs as well as serving as a training and educational site for interested staff. Because the station is located in an area of the refuge that is closed to the general public, we cannot encourage outside participation. Researchers however, wishing to visit the site are encouraged to contact Danny Bystrak at dbystrak@usgs.gov.

Greatly assisting in this effort were: Jo Anna Lutmerding, Matt Rogosky and Bruce Peterjohn. Thanks to banders-in-training Jasmine Rajbhandary and Jennifer McKay and to other staff who lent assistance.

**Foreman's Branch** 391-0760  
**Bird Observatory**  
**Banders: J.G. Gruber, M.E. Gimpel, D.M. Small, A.C. Spears**

It was the 18<sup>th</sup> fall banding season for Foreman's Branch Bird Observatory. Productivity was down 30% and the total catch down 11% despite an increase of nearly 5700 net hours and 20% more days than in 2014. We continued to operate the nets as we have in the past two years by closing early afternoon and avoiding less productive mid-to-late fronts that did not

originate from the north or northwest but from a more northerly direction with numerous weather systems also coming out of the southwest. Fronts that did originate from a northerly direction tended to stall off the east coast and throw back easterly winds right after the passage of the front. East winds bring very few migrants to this station. El Nino was responsible for these weather patterns. Banding highlights were very few this year. While we heard a few hundred Pine Siskins fly over the station, we caught only one for the fall on 26 Oct. Another notable catch for the season was a Summer Tanager banded on 22 Aug and recovered a month later dead in North Carolina, for a first station recovery of that species. One each Philadelphia Vireo was banded on September 20 and 25. Our third Lawrence's Warbler for the station was banded on 14 Aug and single Orange-crowned Warblers on 18 Oct and 11 Nov were notable. Both nuthatches were absent from the nets this fall. Very few species achieved new high fall totals but a number of species like Northern Mockingbird hit new fall lows with only 16 of this species banded.

We would like to thank our Washington College intern, Mike Hudson, for his dedication and hard work this fall at Foreman's Branch. In June, we added a new full-time staff member to Foreman's Branch, Amanda Spears, as both a bander and researcher. She will be analyzing 16 years of banding data from the station and writing a summary of it. In addition to the banders already listed above, the following people volunteered many hours helping at the station: Harry Sears, Greg Cole, Hanson Robbins, Jeannine Fleegle, Jennie Carr, Kailani Clarke, Mike Hudson, Andrew Wade, Rachel Field, Vincent and Carly Fumo, Sammy Ocher, Eli Anders and Anne and Brennan O'Connor.

**Kiawah Island** 326-0801  
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The chief weather event of the season was the historic flood that engulfed South Carolina at the beginning of October.

New this year was the addition of a new banding site on the east end of the island—Little Bear. The two banding sites are located at each end of the island about 13 km. Both sites are situated in coastal scrub/shrub and high

marsh habitats; however, the Little Bear site is in an earlier stage of succession. Collectively, we banded 7,140 birds and had 1,533 recaptures of 93 different species at both sites.

#### **Captian Sam's (west end of Island)**

Nets were opened for a total of 98 days (out of a possible 108) from 14 Aug through 30 Nov. We had five more rain days this year compared to last year, including a three-day stretch (3-5 Oct) when we received around 20 in. of rain. In combination with extremely high tides this created catastrophic flooding in the area. We banded 4,770 new birds and had 1,122 recaptures of 83 different species. The most commonly banded species were Common Yellowthroats (1,266), Gray Catbirds (843), and Yellow-rumped Warblers (55). These three species made up 57% of all the birds banded this season. We also had many recaptures of birds banded in previous seasons.

We increased our effort from 11,565.6 to 12,115.6 net-hours despite banding fewer days than last year. This increase was due to the addition of two new nets, bringing us to a total of 25 nets. We banded 316 fewer birds this fall compared to last year and the capture rate decreased 6.6 birds/100 nh from 55.3 last year. This increase can partly be attributed to the large decrease in Yellow-rumped Warblers this fall. For the first time in several years, the capture rate of recaptures also decreased by 2.2 birds/100 nh. The capture rate of recaptures is usually fairly constant varying by only a few tenths each season.

There were 10 days when over 100 birds were banded, with three days exceeding 200 birds. The best day was 6 Oct when we banded 436 birds and had 20 recaptures. This was by far the biggest day we have ever had at KIBS!

We banded two species never before banded at KIBS: Black-billed Cuckoo and Lincoln's Sparrow. No vagrants were banded this year, but some rare and notable species were the Black-billed Cuckoo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Swainson's, Blue-winged, and Bay-breasted warblers, and Lincoln's Sparrows. Notable species absent this year were Eastern Kingbird, Brown Creeper, Wood Thrush, and Chestnut-sided and Canada Warblers.

#### **Little Bear (east end of Island)**

Nets were opened for 57 days (out of a possible 72) from 7 Sep to 17 Nov. Fifteen days were cancelled due to rain, wind, and/or flooding. The Little Bear site was shut down 3-12 Oct due to extensive flooding of the Ocean Course which is the only way to access it. This was unfortunate because the days after the rain

stopped, beginning on 6 Oct, Captain Sam's experienced huge volumes of birds moving through. Little Bear missed out on all this activity, but it was surely nice to have all hands on deck at Captain Sam's during that time.

We banded 2,370 new birds and had 410 recaptures of 70 different species. The most commonly banded species were Gray Catbirds (563), Common Yellowthroats (424), and Yellow-rumped Warblers (423). Those three species combined made up 59% of all the birds banded this season.

We logged 3,552.4 nh out at Little Bear this fall. We started with 10 nets, but that number increased to 16 as the season progressed and we learned more about the site.

Little Bear had a very good capture rate at 76.2 birds/100 nh – much higher than at Captain Sam's. There were 11 days when over 75 birds were banded with three over 100. The best day was 13 Oct, when we banded 116 birds and had five recaptures.

We banded three species never before banded at KIBS during this first fall at Little Bear: Green Heron, Saltmarsh Sparrow, and Seaside Sparrow.

No vagrants were banded this year, but some rare and notable species were banded including Green Heron, Eastern Kingbird, Tufted Titmouse, Blue-winged, Chestnut-sided, and Black-throated Green warblers, and Clay-colored, Saltmarsh, Seaside, and Lincoln's sparrows.

I thank all those who made this season such a great success: the banding assistants (Mattie VandenBoom, Chris Snook, Sean McElaney, Casey Weissburg, Michael Gamble, Nancy Raginski, and Ryan Donnelly), the Kiawah Island Conservancy for providing funding for the hiring and housing of seven banding assistants; the Town of Kiawah Island for allowing me to take on an extremely time-consuming project, and the funding for one banding assistant; Kiawah Partners for allowing access to their property; and finally to all the volunteers who donated their time to either come out and help or just to observe.

**Jekyl Island Banding Station**                      **310-0812**  
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During the 2015 fall migration season, the Jekyl Island Banding Station banded a total of 1,497 birds of 49

species. We welcomed a new sub-bander, Darlene Moore, to our regular volunteer staff. She has quite a bit of experience volunteering at banding stations in several states and we are excited to have her knowledge, energy, and dedication at JIBS. We also had the support of many wonderful visitors, volunteers, and staff throughout the 22-day banding season.

Common Yellowthroats remained the most numerous species, with a total of 693 banded. This is an increase of 54% from last year's total of 371, and this year Yellowthroats made up a significant percentage of our catch every day, with the most in one day being 192 on 6 Oct. This year also saw a higher percentage of adult birds banded, as last season 84% of birds were hatch-year birds and this season only 76% were hatch-year. We banded 196 Western Palm Warblers this year, which is far below the usual capture rate for this species. Palm Warblers remained our second most abundant species, but only by two individuals, narrowly surpassing Gray Catbirds, of which we banded 194. This is highly unusual, and compared to the 2014 season, when a total of 468 were banded, it appears that Palm migration peaked about a week later this year on 12 Oct with 48 Palms; whereas last year the peak was 169 on 4 Oct. The significance and cause of this difference cannot be determined for certain from this data, but weather patterns may have played a role. Theoretically, global climate change will have a greater impact on species that reside closer to the Earth's poles, and could affect the timing of migration. We need to have continued monitoring for this pattern.

While Palm Warblers were represented in much lower numbers this year, other species were in greater abundance than they have been in several years. Yellow-billed Cuckoos are not generally captured or even observed every year, but this season we banded a total of eight, six of which were on : 6 Oct. Common Ground-doves are seen and heard regularly, but only one or two are generally banded each year. However, this season we caught six individuals across five days. Other uncommon species banded this year included Baltimore Oriole, Bobolink, Blue Grosbeak, and Blackpoll, Bay-breasted, and Blackburnian warblers. Of course, few inferences can be based on these individual data points, but they are amusing to note.

