

of the banding station. A surprisingly low number of Black-throated Blue Warblers were banded: only 29; but their numbers were also extremely low at the nearby Kiptopeke Banding Station. The big species this season, and again, not unexpected because of the habitat, was Myrtle Warbler; the season total of 5,032 was huge. On most days after mid October, nets had to be closed early when Myrtles started to hit just to keep a level of banding sanity.

Highlights this season included banding two Clay-colored Sparrows, a rare migrant through the area. Also a flicker intergrade was banded, the fourth intergrade I have seen/banded on the Shore in the last nine years! The 18 Yellow Warblers were extremely high and the two Purple Finches and one Tree Swallow were not expected. And in the same category, a lone Seaside Sparrow was also banded. Being located so close to the Delmarva tip and in shrub/scrub habitat, raptors were extremely common as well. A total of 33 Sharp-shinned Hawks and six Cooper's Hawks were banded (and do not ask how many got out!). And in the highlight heartbreakers category, the near captures of a Green Heron (2 feet away before it popped out), a Merlin (same 2 feet), and a Black-billed Cuckoo (12 feet before it flapped out). How they still sting!

This project was a collaboration between the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge and the Center for Conservation Biology at William and Mary. I thank both of them for their support, supplies, and their continuing strive for habitat improvement. Their dedication for the betterment of wildlife on the Eastern Shore and their continuing research on species of greatest concern should be applauded by all.

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In Fall 2009 the Kiptopeke Banding Station was in operation for its 47<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, dating back to 1963. The season started on 18 Aug and ran

through 22 Nov. The station operated for 93 of those days, capturing a total of 89 species, with a Yellow-throated Warbler on 9 Sep being perhaps the most unusual species caught. A total of 4,119 individuals were banded this season, just 57% of the season average of 7,167 since 1997 when the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory took over operation of the station. This decline was reflected clearly in the station's most common species, the Myrtle Warbler. The total of 1,749 was 51% of the 1997-2008 average of 3,429. The drop is the more notable since the station increased the number of nets from 22 to 24 this season, with the two nets ranking 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in capture totals. These nets extended the station west to include a patch of developing scrub along the beach, and perhaps partially compensated for a loss of scrub habitat at the station in recent years. The incorporation of some additional nets lanes in the scrub on the station's eastern boundary is planned for fall 2010.

Finally, it is notable that Jethro Runco, Kiptopeke lead bander from 2001-2008, moved on to other opportunities this past fall, and it has been suggested that he took the birds with him. In any case, his birding and banding skill, unfailing good humor, and magnetic personality are missed by many. Ann Gilmore did an excellent job as the lead bander this season, ably supported during the busier month of October by veteran bander Peter Doherty. Sarah Bastarache served as the station's banding intern. Many able and dedicated volunteers once again lent their time and skills to the operation, and indeed, the station could not operate without them. As always, we extend our deepest thanks to them.

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This was the first year of banding on Kiawah Island, an 8,000-ac barrier island and residential/resort community approximately 20 mi southeast of