

ALLEGHENY FRONT MIGRATION OBSERVATORY

Fall Migration, 2006

Grant County, West Virginia

Our 49th year of bird banding at Allegheny Front Migration Observatory (AFMO), 10 miles southeast of Davis, WV, began on August 13 and ended on October 15. A total of 6784 birds were banded this fall of 86 species with a station effort of 7790.3 net hours, giving a capture rate of 87.1 birds per 100 net hours. This year resulted in a much better ratio than 64.2 birds per 100 net hours last year and 55.2 in 2004. This year was the best year for total number of birds banded since 1999 when 8585 birds were banded.

The station was open for 54 days and closed for 8 days due to bad weather. In order to catch many birds in our mist nets, there needs to be a westerly wind. Of the 26 days when over 100 birds were banded, all but 2 days had westerly winds, and those 2 were calm. There were 16 days this fall when over 100 birds were captured and banded, 4 days over 200, 3 days over 300, 2 days over 400, and one day over 500. No doubt, October 4 was the best flight day when 497 birds were banded, but due to extremely heavy westerly winds, the most exposed south nets were open for only a couple of hours, so many, many more migrating birds were seen but not caught and banded that day.

The only prolonged wet period this fall was for 4 days (August 31—September 3), when Hurricane Ernesto went up the east coast of the United States. The best-extended flight period was September 25—28, when 1269 birds were banded. Another good flight period was October 1—4, when 1117 birds were banded.

The Blackpoll Warbler was the most numerous species this year with 1390 banded, which is 141.7% above the 10-year running average. It has been the leader for the past 2 out of 10 years. The Black-throated Blue Warbler, the usual leader, was the 2nd highest with 1293 banded (64.8% above the 10-year average), and the Black-throated Green Warbler was 3rd highest with 616 banded (43.6% above the 10-year average). The Dark-eyed Junco was 4th highest with 410 banded (92.4% over the 10-year average), and the Tennessee Warbler was 5th highest with 314 banded (10.1% over the 10-year average). The total of the top five species banded was 4023, which is 59.3% of the total birds banded this season.

The most unexpected capture this fall was a female Green-winged Teal, making it the 120th species banded at AFMO since 1958. Two Teals were seen flying together, but only one was caught in net and then banded by Fred McCullough.

Last year a bilateral gynandromorphic (male and female) Black-throated Blue Warbler was banded, and we caught and banded another one this year. The right half of the bird's body was male and the left half was female, the opposite of last year's warbler.

The Flyover Count was started in 1990 and has continued every year during the banding season at AFMO. Results from this season's counting of 4 selected species which make up the majority of the Count are: 282 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (17-year average 449), 1596 Blue Jays (17-year average 5917), 2224 American Goldfinches (17-year average 2952) and 610 Monarch Butterflies (17-year average 1107).

Some bird species are very strong fliers and often fly too high to be caught in the nets. Three species should especially be recognized this fall because of their high numbers recorded in our Flyover Count. We counted 264 Northern Flickers (peak-18 on October 2), 261 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (peak-55 on September 28), and 252 American Robins (peak-18 on August 24). Why so many Robins were seen coming up the ravine at the banding station so early this fall is a big question, as October has always been considered their main migration period.

This fall, 1093 people signed our visitor's book. These visitors came from 24 states, Washington DC and 3 foreign countries, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Georgia and United Kingdom. As usual several elementary and middle schools, and colleges including the Highland Adventist School from Elkins, WV, Pendleton County Middle School from Franklin, WV, Bridgewater College Ecology Class, Eastern Mennonite University, Georgetown University, West Virginia University Adventure Program, and West Virginia Wesleyan College visited the station.

We thank the personnel of Monongahela National Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson, Cheat/Potomac District Ranger Jeff Hammes, Special Use Manager, Laura Hise, Forestry Technician Ed Lang and all others for their cooperation and help. We also thank the West Virginia D.N.R. for the use of their building for storage of our banding shed, and the Brooks Bird Club, members of the Audubon Naturalist Society, The Nature Conservancy, WV Highlands Conservancy and many visitors and volunteers for their financial support. It is our only means of replacing the mist nets and everyone's support is much appreciated.

The volunteer banders who participated this year were Bob Dean, Ken & Sue Heselton, Fred & Carol McCullough, Randy & Beth Ritter, Charles Ziegenfus and station leaders Ralph K. Bell and Joan Bell Pattison. Bill Agee and Ken Heselton contributed many, many hours of computer time and expertise. LeJay Graffious was responsible for erecting and removing the banding shed with the help of other volunteers. The scheduled volunteers who helped this year for extended periods of time were as follows: Bill Beatty, Kathleen Dullnig, Tom & Dawn Fox, Walter Fye, Kathleen Larken, Jack & Joleene Minear, Tim Newlin, Don Pattison, Carl & Joan Rowe, Todd & Kim Schnopp and Stephen Sushinski. We want to thank the above volunteers and many other kind and interested people who helped us this year.

Ralph K. Bell and
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FALL 2006 FLYOVER COUNT AT AFMO

RALPH K. BELL

This fall is the 17th year (since 1990) that volunteers have kept a count of fall migrants observed going southwestward at the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory (AFMO) on Dolly Sods, WV. All migrants may not have been noted on exceptionally high volume bird-banding days, as volunteers were very busy. Some Monarch Butterflies may have been missed as many go through late in the afternoon.

The flyover count was coordinated by Donald Pattison and assisted by Maggi Perl, Joan Rowe, Todd & Kim Schnopp, Stephen Sushinski and many other interested people. This count was carried out from 13 August through 15 October. AFMO was closed for the season on October 15. Snow and cold weather can be a real problem after the middle of October on Dolly Sods.

The count of the usual selected flyover species for this season is as follows:

282	Ruby-throated Hummingbirds	(17-year average	449)
1,596	Blue Jays	(17-year average	5,917)
2,224	American Goldfinches	(17-year average	2,952)
610	Monarch Butterflies	(17-year average	1,107)

Many other species were recorded. They are as follows:

Blue-winged Teal 2 (one banded)	American Kestrel 21	Tree Swallow 138
Common Loon 1	Merlin 19	Barn Swallow 58
Great Blue Heron 1	Peregrine Falcon 1	Red-breasted Nuthatch 8
Black Vulture 4	Yellow-billed Cuckoo 6	White-breasted Nuthatch 3
Turkey Vulture 11	Common Nighthawk 16	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 1
Osprey 17	Chimney Swift 14	American Robin 252
Bald Eagle 5	Red Headed Woodpecker 1	Gray Catbird 2
Northern Harrier 4	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 1	Brown Thrasher 1
Sharp-shinned Hawk 47	Downy Woodpecker 1	Cedar Waxwing 1,242
Copied Hawk 6	Hairy Woodpecker 4	Scarlet Tanager 16
Red-shouldered Hawk 3	Northern Flicker 264	Rose-breasted Grosbeak 261
Broad-winged Hawk 864	Eastern Phoebe 5	Purple Finch 8
Red-tailed Hawk 6	Eastern Kingbird 1	Dragonflies 68
Golden Eagle 2	American Crow 2	

Two migrating species that came up through the slight gap in the mountain ridge at the banding station this fall apparently in greater numbers than usual were the Northern Flicker and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The total count of Flickers this fall was 264, with 180 counted on 2 October. Forty Flickers were counted last fall, and 32 in 2004. The Rose-breasted Grosbeak count this fall was 261, with 55 counted on 28 September. A total of 70 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were counted last fall, and 55 in 2004.

Many thanks to all who helped with the Flyover Count.

**ALLEGHENY FRONT MIGRATION OBSERVATORY CUMULATIVE TOTALS
1958-2006**

TOTAL SPECIES 120 (plus 2 hybrids)		TOTAL INDIVIDUALS 212,344	
1 American Green-winged Teal	826	Brown Creeper	26664
94 Sharp-shinned Hawk	35	Carolina Wren	27
3 Cooper's Hawk	9	Bewick's Wren	1307
2 American Kestrel	68	House Wren	1554
8 Merlin	552	Winter Wren	213
35 American Woodcock	6116	Golden-crowned Kinglet	4054
16 Black-billed Cuckoo	3736	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	117
12 Yellow-billed Cuckoo	104	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	23
9 Eastern Screech-Owl	420	Veery	18
81 Northern Saw-whet Owl	661	Gray-cheeked Thrush	357
18 Whip-poor-will	13371	Swainson's Thrush	29
32 Ruby-throated Hummingbird	1192	Hermitt Thrush	5417
6 Red-headed Woodpecker	1299	Wood Thrush	406
5 Red-bellied Woodpecker	872	American Robin	1157
179 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	Varied Thrush	577
218 Downy Woodpecker	749	Gray Catbird	3
25 Hairy Woodpecker	143	Brown Thrasher	614
59 Northern Flicker	17	European Starling	932
2 Olive-sided Flycatcher	1	American Pipit	76
162 Eastern Wood Pewee	369	Cedar Waxwing	309
153 Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	42	Blue-winged Warbler	46
31 Acadian Flycatcher	52	Golden-winged Warbler	180
48 Trail's Flycatcher	4	Brewster's Warbler	2
142 Least Flycatcher	1	Lawrence's Warbler	90
2 Empidonax (sp?)	22797	Tennessee Warbler	563
43 Eastern Phoebe	42	Orange-crowned Warbler	359
2 Great Crested Flycatcher	2485	Nashville Warbler	508
1 Eastern Kingbird	219	Northern Parula	1515
18 White-eyed Vireo	17	Yellow Warbler	213
495 Blue-headed Vireo	1845	Chestnut-sided Warbler	6453
55 Yellow-throated Vireo	8898	Magnolia Warbler	11
7 Warbling Vireo	15934	Cape May Warbler	1652
733 Philadelphia Vireo	27144	Black-throated Blue Warbler	136
2392 Red-eyed Vireo	957	Yellow-rumped Warbler	7
4097 Blue Jay	15758	Black-throated Green Warbler	1
1 American Crow	9080	Blackburnian Warbler	9
932 Black-capped Chickadee	2	Yellow-throated Warbler	30
7 Carolina Chickadee	28	Pine Warbler	305
208 Tufted Titmouse	40	Prairie Warbler	1
793 Red-breasted Nuthatch	273	Palm Warbler	61
142 White-breasted Nuthatch	7637	Bay-breasted Warbler	1283
		Blackpoll Warbler	
		Cerulean Warbler	
		Black-and-white Warbler	
		American Redstart	
		Worm-eating Warbler	
		Ovenbird	
		Northern Waterthrush	
		Louisiana Waterthrush	
		Kentucky Warbler	
		Connecticut Warbler	
		Mourning Warbler	
		Common Yellowthroat	
		Hooded Warbler	
		Wilson's Warbler	
		Canada Warbler	
		Yellow-breasted Chat	
		Scarlet Tanager	
		Eastern Towhee	
		Chipping Sparrow	
		Field Sparrow	
		Vesper Sparrow	
		Savannah Sparrow	
		Henslow's Sparrow	
		Fox Sparrow	
		Song Sparrow	
		Lincoln's Sparrow	
		Swamp Sparrow	
		White-throated Sparrow	
		White-crowned Sparrow	
		Dark-eyed Junco	
		Northern Cardinal	
		Rose-breasted Grosbeak	
		Indigo Bunting	
		Rusty Blackbird	
		Common Grackle	
		Brown-headed Cowbird	
		Baltimore Oriole	
		Purple Finch	
		Red Crossbill	
		Pine Siskin	
		American Goldfinch	