

Valley Falls State Park

Saw-whet Owl

Banding Station – 2016

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The twelve year of banding Northern Saw-whet Owls (NSWO) at Valley Falls State Park yielded 53 owls, the highest year for captures since this project began in 2005, replacing the 2007 total of 49. Banding began on 10/15/2016 and ended on 12/05/2016. The fifty-three owls captured in 2016 was 86% above the 10-year average, including two foreign recaptures and a single red phased Eastern Screech Owl.

The station operated on sixteen nights with the nets being opened for sixty-two hours. Ten of the nights yielded owls with a peak capture of twenty-six NSWO's captured on the night of November 6th, a one-night record eclipsing the previous one-night record of 17 in 2007.

The station had 120 visitors from six states, including students from the WVU Wildlife Society and various groups and organizations from all over the state. Fortunately, on three of the nights with visitors, owls were captured, with a single owl captured one night after everyone had left. A special thanks to Meghan Jensen, a graduate assistant at West Virginia University, who coordinated and ran an experimental project at Cooper's Rock State Forest for the third year. The station there only captured a couple owls on a few nights of operation, giving some WVU wildlife students some experience with this tiny eastern owl.

Of the 53 captures, 23 were adults, 30 were hatch year birds. Females again lead the way in captures in 2016 with 46, with 3 males and 4 unknowns. An owl caught on November 6th was an owl that was banded as a second-year bird in 2013 in Pennsylvania.

After twelve years of banding a total of 359 NSWOs have been captured, including 30 foreign recaptures and one return. The breakdown shows a heavy advantage for females, 75% to 8% for males. The unknown category completes the last 17%. The adult, hatch year ratio is almost even with 52% adult to 48% hatch year individuals. The station has hosted over thirteen hundred visitors from ten states and the District of Columbia.

Again, I would like to thank Valley Falls State Park superintendent, Brett Harshbarger for the use of the park facilities and allowing visitors to experience the fall migration. Without Brett's support, this operation would not be possible.

12 year totals

Females	Males	Unknown	Hatch Year	After Hatch Year	Second Year
279	26	54	177	115	67

Banding Summary for 2016

Date	NSWO caught
10/15/16	0
10/22/16	2
10/23/16	1
10/24/16	6
10/28/16	1
10/29/16	1
11/4/16	6 (1 foreign) (1 Eastern Screech Owl)
11/5/16	5
11/6/16	26 (1 foreign) RECORD NIGHT
11/7/16	4
11/11/16	0
11/17/16	1
11/18/16	0
11/21/16	0
11/22/16	0
12/5/2016	0

Total 53

Age

After hatch year (AHY).....	10	
Second year (SY).....	13	43% (adults)
Hatch year (HY).....	30	57%

Sex

Female – 46.....	88%
Male – 3.....	5%
Unknown – 4.....	7%