

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update: August 1 to 7, 2005

Fall migration, my favourite time for banding. Many think the spring is great because of all the brightly colored birds, but the fall is when the challenge truly begins. Drab warblers, streaky sparrows, and juvenile plumage make for intensive identifying. In fact, we had one warbler that I was not able to identify, at least not in enough time before I felt it should be released. It was in heavy molt, had no tail spots, an olive colored tail. I could not tell whether it had wing bars or not due to all the coverts being in pin, its undertail was pale yellow, and it had these strange patches of orange/yellow feathers coming in on the chest. When later I spent some time going through the books, I found that the Common Yellowthroat sometimes has a tinge of orange/red in some of the breast feathers. But we managed to ID and band all the other birds that came through.

We had 164 birds in the nets, and we banded 142. Nice to see 18 different species!!! My favourites, the young grosbeaks with their hint of bright pink plumage coming in and the adult male Cedar Waxwing. Of course the chickadees are always fun, as they peck your fingers while you try and get them out from the nets. But I won't complain about their tiny bills after one of the grosbeaks latched onto my finger (ouch).



Table 1. Results from mist netting at BLAB and WEIR from July 26 and 29, 2005 respectively.

Species	Banded	Recapture	Other	TOTAL
Alder Flycatcher	1	0	0	1
Trail's Flycatcher	7	0	0	7
Least Flycatcher	66	7	0	73
Black-capped Chickadee	8	4	0	12
House Wren	2	0	1	3
American Robin	0	3	1	4
Veery	0	1	0	1
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	4	0	0	4
Cedar Waxwing	1	0	0	1
Red-eyed Vireo	1	0	0	1
Tennessee Warbler	8	0	0	8
Yellow Warbler	30	3	0	33
Ovenbird	1	0	0	1
American Redstart	1	0	0	1
*Warbler sp.	0	0	1	1
Clay-colored Sparrow	3	0	0	3
Song Sparrow	8	0	0	8
American Goldfinch	1	1	0	2
TOTAL	142	19	3	164

* unable to determine species due to heavy molt (most probably a Common Yellowthroat), not banded

So the birds are now steady in the nets, we are catching between 30 and 50 a day now. And the bug numbers (mosquitoes and flies) are going down due to the cooler weather at night. Good time to come out and visit us at the lab. Stay tuned for the next weekly instalment!!

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Photo: C. Priestley