

Hawk Ridge Fall Passerine Banding Report 2024

It was another unusual year at Hawk Ridge, with warmer and drier conditions than usual through the season. We also had less days with strong winds. As a result, we were able to band for 65 days from August 6th through October 27th at the main station. We were also able to band for three late season days at Moose Valley, primarily for redpolls. We had very few washouts or rained out days, which was good for numbers but kept the banding team busy.

October was fairly typical with decreasing numbers of warblers migrating as most of them had already moved south as the month progressed. We did have decent numbers of Hermit Thrushes (60), White-Throated Sparrows (60), Ruby-Crowned Kinglets (43), Fox Sparrows (40), and Slate-Colored Juncos (42). We also managed to band a Wilson's Snipe at the main station and Kara Beer caught a Northern Shrike at Moose Valley in one of the raptor nets. Our totals for October were 371 birds banded of 32 species, and we banded a total of 15 days.

For the season, we banded an astonishing 2181 birds over 65 days. This included 406 American Redstarts, 166 Swainson's Thrushes, 171 Magnolia Warblers, 158 White-Throated Sparrows, and 95 Nashville Warblers. A look at our passerine banding data from 2012 to the present shows that 2024 was definitely an exceptional year for Hermit Thrushes- we captured 89 compared to an average number of 27 over 13 years. We seem to always also have a lot of Swainson's Thrushes, but the 166 we caught this year is a fraction of the 2023 total of 351. But overall the total was higher than a normal at 117 being the average number of Swainson's Thrushes in the last 13 years. American Redstarts were also significantly above normal numbers this year with 406 captured compared to an average of 210 over the last 13 years.

Surprisingly, the overall sense was that daily numbers of most birds were down, It was an exceptionally wet early breeding season this year, and our MAPS capture numbers told us that birds were not as successful in raising young as they normally are, at least in this area, so this might provide some evidence for smaller than normal numbers. We were glad to still see plenty of young birds coming through this fall- presumably from areas to the north of us. We are noticing a gradual increase in more temperate species in our area over time. This includes more Gray Catbirds (29), another Wood Thrush for the this fall, our first banded House Finch at the ridge, as well as five Scarlet Tanagers banded. We also caught in this summer during MAPS and in the early fall our first hybrid Golden-Winged/Blue-Winged Warblers; this probably indicates that Blue-Winged warblers are breeding closer to our area than in the past.

None of this would be possible without our great crew. Thanks especially to our naturalists, banders, trainees, and the dedicated volunteers who make it all work. We look forward to MAPS 2025 which begins in early June.

Margie and David