

Ruthven Park Bird Banding – Fall 2023

Fall bird migration monitoring was conducted at Ruthven Park from August 3rd through November 4th, 2023. Using a small number of mist nets five days per week, and following a standard scientific protocol, a total of 1030 individuals of 69 species (and one amalgamated species (Traill’s Flycatcher*)) were banded. A summation appears in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Ruthven Park Fall 2023 Banding Totals

Mourning Dove	20	Yellow Warbler	3
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	1	Chestnut-Sided Warbler	5
Downy Woodpecker	10	Magnolia Warbler	24
“Yellow-shafted Flicker”	1	Black-throated Blue Warbler	9
Great Crested Flycatcher	2	Yellow-rumped Warbler	13
Eastern Wood Pewee	14	Black-throated Green Warbler	2
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	6	Blackburnian Warbler	3
“Traill’s Flycatcher”	4	Cape May Warbler	7
Least Flycatcher	2	Bay-breasted Warbler	5
Yellow-throated Vireo	1	Blackpoll Warbler	12
Blue-Headed Vireo	2	Black-and-white Warbler	2
Philadelphia Vireo	20	Canada Warbler	4
Warbling Vireo	8	American Redstart	12
Red-eyed Vireo	128	Ovenbird	7
Blue Jay	9	Mourning Warbler	1
Black-capped Chickadee	10	Common Yellowthroat	8
Tufted Titmouse	7	Hooded Warbler	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	53	Wilson’s Warbler	2
Golden-crowned Kinglet	14	Scarlet Tanager	5
Cedar Waxwing	140	Northern Cardinal	14
White-breasted Nuthatch	2	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5
Brown Creeper	8	Chipping Sparrow	7
House Wren	14	Field Sparrow	1
Carolina Wren	3	Fox Sparrow	1
Grey Catbird	44	Song Sparrow	19
Veery	8	Lincoln’s Sparrow	1
Grey-cheeked Thrush	17	Swamp Sparrow	1
Swainson’s Thrush	57	White-throated Sparrow	81

Hermit Thrush	24	Slate-Coloured Junco	62
Wood Thrush	1	Red-winged Blackbird	1
American Robin	25	Common Grackle	9
Blue-winged Warbler	4	Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Tennessee Warbler	8	Baltimore Oriole	2
Nashville Warbler	15	American Goldfinch	14
Orange-crowned Warbler	1		
Northern Parula	3	Species: 69+1	Individuals: 1030

The most commonly banded bird was Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*), a species named after the red, wax-like droplets that can form on the tips of the secondary flight feathers of adults. The Cedar Waxwing can be found throughout most of North America and is a regular nester at Ruthven Park. They are primarily fruit eaters, and can be found in large flocks during most of the year.

A total of 34 individuals of 19 species banded in previous seasons were recovered during the fall migratory season. The oldest was a female Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) banded as an adult at Ruthven Park in August 2018, making her at least 6 years old.

Fall migration is generally conducted at a slower pace than spring migration, with individual birds remaining in suitable habitat to feed and gain weight, when possible, before being forced to move southwards by decreasing temperatures and/or unfavourable weather conditions. An example of this is the Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*), an insectivorous bird of the forest canopy that commonly breeds in the forested habitat of Ruthven Park. A total of 17 Red-eyed Vireos were recaptured – some multiple times – throughout the fall season. On average they put on 0.32g per day, but there were several individuals that put on over 0.70g per day.

Two Mourning Doves (*Zenaida macroura*) banded at Ruthven Park were recovered in the United States during the 2023 fall migratory period. The first was banded on August 22, 2023 and was recovered near Irby, Virginia on September 16, 2023 – a straight line distance of 295km, while the second was banded on April 6th, 2022 and recovered on September 28th, 2023 near Millen, Georgia – 1146 km away. The Mourning Dove is considered a game species in both Canada and the US and both recoveries were from hunted birds.

As part of the fall migration monitoring program at Ruthven Park all species of birds encountered, including banded, observed, or heard, are quantified and recorded. A total of 130 species were recorded between August 3rd and November 4th, 2023. The most numerous was Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) with a total of 1963 records (a record represents 1 individual recorded on 1 day so a single individual could represent multiple records if present on multiple days) and an average of over 50 individuals recorded when present at Ruthven Park. Twenty-nine species were encountered on only a single day, although there may have been more than one individual present when encountered.

A particular challenge faced during the fall 2023 monitoring season was the abundance of enthusiastically voracious mosquitos. Thank you to all our volunteers who assisted with fall migration monitoring in 2023 and faced the impromptu blood donation clinic.

Spring migration monitoring is scheduled to begin April 1st, 2024 if weather permits. Please watch this space – or our banding station Instagram page ([rp_birdbanding](#)) – for details closer to this date.

*The Traill's Flycatcher is an obsolete species that was split into Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*) and Willow Flycatcher (*E. traillii*) in 1973. The two flycatchers look very similar and in the hand they are told apart by various wing and beak measurements.