

SPRING 2017 (APRIL 15—JUNE 15)

banding summary

About 82,970 spring migrant landbirds have been banded at Manomet to date. The spring and fall migration banding program commenced here at the (then) Ernst House porch in the fall of 1966. We are thus in our 52nd year of data collection and education programs at this site. This spring we continued to run 50 mist nets on the same dates and in the same locations as the previous years, giving us an unparalleled comparison of range expansions and contractions, yearly variation of migration, and long-term population change. We have detected an earlier arrival (by 0.78 days per decade) in all spring migrants since 1970, a trend which correlates strongly with measures of climate change over that same time period. South American wintering migrants do not show this trend towards earlier arrival, perhaps indicating that they use internal “clock” cues to initiate migration in spring, not variations in temperature or day length.

We held onsite banding demonstrations for over 300 visitors, including: Manomet members, schools, universities, and photographers. Informal presentations included those given to members, visiting scientists, and birders. An adult female Blue Grosbeak was only our 3rd ever banded (one in Sep. 1974 and one in May 1978). The first wave of strong migration started on May 2nd, and SW winds scattered 25+ Blue Grosbeaks into New England and the Maritimes. Meanwhile, one or two pairs now maintain a tenuous breeding foothold in Massachusetts—a trend? There was a happy coincidence of spectacular warblers and busy days at the nets this spring. The Blackburnian Warbler shown above dropped in on a rather hot, slow-migration day and was the 4th of the season, a decade plus record for a species that largely avoids the SE coast of New England and heads for home in the diminishing Eastern Hemlock forests, far to the north and west of Manomet.



The banding lab's 1,500th new capture for the 2017 spring season: a Blackburnian Warbler. Photo by Emily Renaud, Manomet Staff

NEW BANDINGS	1,622
REPEAT CAPTURES	820
TOTAL HANDLED	2,442 BIRDS OF 82 SPECIES

Spring 2017 followed the (now it seems usual) cold, lingering winter with remarkably few migrants through April. The first blast of warm SW winds from 1st to 4th May gave us our first 100+ bird day. Another doldrum featuring cold, rainy weather and NE winds persisted until the dam broke in mid-late May and we experienced three days in a row with 220 or more new migrants each day during the peak period for Neotropical migrant warblers. The final flurry of migration starting 1st June featured flycatchers galore. Birds per net hour (a measure of comparative effort) were well above average, while the 82 species

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handled were more than all of the last 10 springs. Underlying this year's weather effects is a significant long-term decline in all migrant birds, spring and fall, since we started standardized banding in 1970. However, that declining trend levelled off in the mid-1990s and banding totals for both spring and fall migration have held steady for the last 20+ years.

Our busiest days were 17th May (285 total captures, 267 new bandings), 18th May (265 captures), 19th May (239), 1st June (121) and 2nd May (106). When compared with the previous ten springs, 14 species exceeded record high numbers and there were no record lows. Apart from the Blue Grosbeak and Blackburnian Warblers, unusual captures included two Warbling Vireos, a Hooded Warbler on 18th May, three Bay-breasted Warblers, and a Saltmarsh Sparrow on 18th May. Our last new species for the season was an immature European Starling on 15th June, the first spring starling banded since 2001. Our most abundant captures of the season were:

Gray Catbird (320)
 American Redstart (159)
 Magnolia Warbler (152)
 Common Yellowthroat (139)

White-throated Sparrow (93)
 Black-and-white Warbler (67)
 Ovenbird (36)
 Canada Warbler (33)



Our first Blue Grosbeak for 39 years – a female in definitive alternate plumage showing broadly-tipped and colorfully fringed wing covers. Photo by Lauren diBiccari, Manomet Staff.

Notable recaptures this spring (124 from previous seasons) included two 10-year-old Common Grackles, an eight-year-old Northern Cardinal and a seven-year-old Common Yellowthroat. We also recaptured five 5-year-old birds (a chickadee and four catbirds), seven 4-year-old birds and twenty-four 3-year-olds. Winter resident Song and White-throated Sparrows and Slate-colored Juncos made it through the winter in good numbers. Recaptured resident Carolina Wrens are now two- and one-year-olds, reflecting a slow recovery after the extirpation during the snowy winters a few years back and in particular the winter of 2014/15. A 2nd-year catbird we banded on 18th May 2017 was recovered on 27th May by Sue Finnegan of Wing Island Banding Station at Brewster, Cape Cod.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped make the spring 2017 migration banding and education season such a success. We are also greatly indebted for recent financial support from Manomet members and:

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Lauren diBiccari, Maina Handmaker, and Evan Dalton were the indefatigable staff banders and teachers this spring, with timely assistance by Elsa Chen and Sarah Duff.

Trevor Lloyd-Evans