

Bird Banding at the Allegra Collister Nature Preserve Report: Spring 2005

Important Note about the Allegra Collister Nature Preserve: It is clear that the Allegra Collister Nature Preserve holds an attraction for many birds, and other creatures too. Because of its value as a study site for a variety of disciplines, the BCNA has negotiated for, and administers, a conservation easement for this critical habitat. It is **private property**. It is important that the landowner's wishes be respected, and the intent of the agreement honored. Unless accompanied by an authorized BCNA site custodian, written permission must be obtained prior to entering the property. Requests for access must be submitted, in writing, to the president of the BCNA, or to a designated authorizer / site custodian. **Trespassers will be prosecuted.** The complete access protocol is available upon request.

May 5th (Cinco de Mayo) was the first day of banding. A lot of grass/weed cutting and brush whacking was necessary before nets were put in place. Then, several wet or windy days interrupted our planned efforts. Although everyone was eager and prepared to begin banding at an earlier date, either the weather or other scheduling conflicts interfered.

I think this spring season can best be described as disappointing. Some said it was a "peculiar" season. Others felt it was just "atypical" or part of a normal cycle. Anyway, the birds didn't fill our nets or fulfill our expectations. We did hear from fellow birders in the field who also believed it was a slow season. Our experiences at the nets seemed to echo what was being reported in many areas of the state.

After 17 days (75 hours) of open nets, only 293 unbanded birds were captured, banded, examined and released. Only 40 species were accounted for; none of them new to the gulch.

However, a noteworthy event occurred on May 26th! This team of banders banded it's 10,000th bird at ACNP!! A goal achieved! A milestone realized! A male Bullock's Oriole holds the distinction of being our 10,000th. Band number 1781-55450. We hope to revisit him again in many seasons to come. Will it require another fifteen years to band our 20,000th??

The most noteworthy birds of the season were two male Chestnut-sided Warblers and a Palm Warbler. Surprisingly, the most abundant *Empidonax* was the Willow Flycatcher with 15 birds captured (more than any previous season). Three Least Flycatchers is a good showing for the species. Western Wood Peewee was also high with 17. A male American Kestrel was startled when it found itself captive after attacking a netted Black-capped Chickadee. Three Brown-headed Cowbirds after having only 1 or 2 in recent seasons. Red-breasted Nuthatch was a bit unusual for the spring season. No unexpected species were added to the list of birds sighted. Both Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Bobolink were heard and seen by the banders.

Certainly, many more birds have been banded at the site; especially by Allegra Collister. Other banders of record are Tony Esposito, Craig Williams and Charlie Chase. But, this team has persisted in its unflagging effort for the last fifteen years. Our overall numbers fall short of those produced by other larger stations. None the less, we have contributed a remarkable collection of data for a small but critical piece of Boulder County habitat. Combined with the pre-1991 data, it will be possible to produce a site profile that could be of enormous interest to a variety of investigators.

While attending a net one day, we heard squeaks coming from the grasses only a few feet away. What is it, a mouse or a vole? At first glance, it was a snake! But, snakes don't squeak?! After carefully parting the grasses, we discovered a "dark brown" snake had caught a vole and was in the process of swallowing its still kicking prey. We slowly backed away so that the "diner" wouldn't be unduly disturbed at its meal time.

We have a new fence! Thanks to the generous contribution of the landowner, Mr. Guercio, and the financial support of BCNA; our wish has become a reality. Where the terrain was suitable, an attractive "buck-rail" fence was installed. Five strand barbed-wire was strung along the more rugged and less accessible property line. Access is through one of two gates that were included. Both gates will remain locked except while approved work or studies are in progress. We feel that our stored equipment is better protected now; and, the site and its inhabitants are less likely to be disturbed by unwanted intruders. Perhaps, there might be an added benefit, people will be less inclined to throw out their trash along the road.

In this anniversary year, we would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge the fact that the banding operation is sustained because of the cooperation and support of many individuals and organizations. We've already mentioned the landowner, Mr. Guercio; and BCNA, the administrator of the vital ACNP conservation easement. RMBO sponsors the necessary banding permits, provides the bands (through the NBBL), maintains local records and is the resource for technical information. We couldn't band without the cooperation of our good neighbor across St. Vrain Road> Our "office" picnic table was a gift from one of the home improvement stores. Boulder County road maintenance supervisors and crews helped by picking up illegally dumped large items or collected full trash bags our volunteers worked to fill with roadside rubbish. How about the visitors who show their appreciation by making a donation. And, the eco-symposium attendees who donated to the cause. Of course, the list goes on. Sometimes, just the moral support we receive gives us the boost we need. We thank everyone who has made it possible for the banders to continue their pursuit of learning and understanding our birds.

As always, members of BCNA, their families and friends, are welcome to observe or participate in the bird banding activities. Or, there are a lot of bugs, butterflies, dragon flies and other critters that still need to be studied. Choose your project and get it going. Also, volunteers are usually needed for a variety maintenance chores. If you would like to be involved, contact any BCNA board member or call Joe Harrison.

The Bird Banders: Virginia Dionigi, Tony Esposito, Joe Harrison, Maggie Boswell, Tom Delaney, DeAnna Williams

[Banding Summary for 1991-Spring 2005](#) PDF 119 kB

[Sights table, Spring 2005](#) PDF 81 kB