

# Chicagoland's First Spring Migration Bird Banding Station: First Year of Results and Comparison with Other North American Data Sets

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## Introduction

We established the Shaw Woods Avian Monitoring Project (SWAMP), in Lake Forest, Illinois, in the spring of 2002. SWAMP is a mist-netting and banding study targeted at birds that utilize woodlands as stopover sites during their spring migration, and represents the first migration banding station in the Chicagoland region (J. Pollock, D. DeCoursey pers. comm.). The twofold objectives of SWAMP are to monitor population trends of woodland migrant birds passing through the Chicagoland region during spring migration; and to study various aspects of these birds' biology as they undergo their migration, an area of study generally referred to as "stopover biology". In this paper we present the results of our first season and discuss them in comparison with six other significant North American bird data sets, including the results for May 2002 from five other spring migrant bird banding stations.

One primary goal of SWAMP is to monitor long-term and continental scale trends in North American migrant bird populations. Long-term, large-scale monitoring programs allow us to "keep our finger on the pulse" of North American bird populations, providing an essential foundation for research and conservation activities. A continent-wide, observation-based population monitoring program, namely the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), played a central role in initially establishing that many North American migrant bird populations were in decline (Robbins et al. 1989). A handful of migration banding stations have been initiated in North America over the past four decades, complementing the monitoring activity of the BBS in several important ways. Migration banding stations are generally limited to forest or shrubby habitats and understory birds, but they are better than observation-based studies for monitoring species with low detectability, and for species that breed in areas with a low density of BBS routes. Like the BBS, data from banding stations are easily standardized among years and locations, allowing



*Caleb Gordon and others work at the Shaw Woods Avian Monitoring Project banding station in Lake Forest during the wave day of 16 May 2002, when birds were captured at six times the rate of any other day. Note birds in bags awaiting processing at upper left. Photo by Blaire Skinner.*

the analysis of long-term and large-scale patterns. Unlike the BBS, data from banding stations are essentially free from observer- and identification-related error, allowing for much higher precision analysis. Hagan III et al. (1992) found that population trends reflected in migration banding data from Manomet Bird Observatory (Massachusetts) and Powdermill Nature Reserve (Pennsylvania) were not necessarily in agreement with the overall continent-wide trend from the BBS data. They concluded that the data from each of these stations yielded a much finer picture of population trends within a smaller region of North America, and that migration banding stations are an essential tool for understanding North American bird population trends.

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