

Brown Creeper's migratory route fidelity and urban fatality

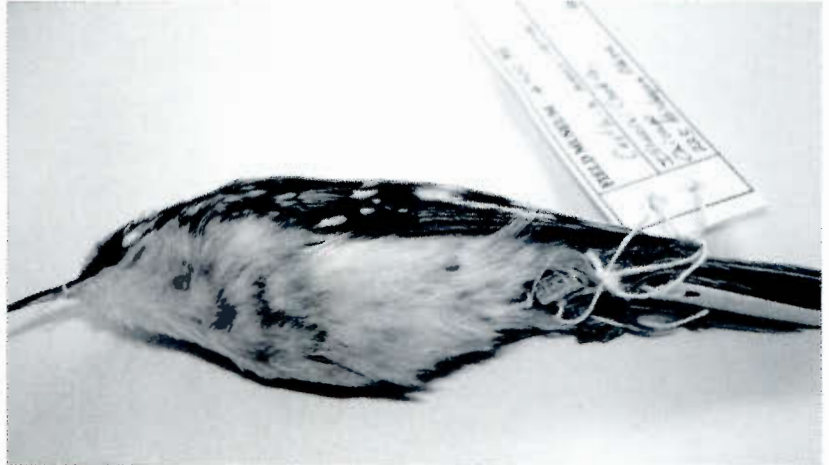
by Annette Prince

Brown Creeper found dead on 17 April 2009.

This bird was banded 17 April 2008 in the same vicinity where it was discovered dead 17 April 2009.

The specimen is now at The Field Museum.

Photo by Mary Hennen.



The epic journeys of migratory songbirds have long-fascinated scientists and hobbyists alike. Through scientific research and citizen science, understanding of this phenomenon continues to grow. A finding of Chicago Bird Collision Monitors recently highlighted one specific aspect of bird migration – that of migratory route fidelity.

Chicago Bird Collision Monitors (CBCM) is a non-profit bird conservation project that operates under the auspices of the Chicago Audubon Society. CBCM's mission is to promote migratory bird safety in urban environments through rescue, advocacy, education and outreach. During spring and fall migration, CBCM volunteers patrol downtown Chicago looking for birds that have suffered collisions due to hazardous glass, lighting, landscaping and building design.

Injured birds are taken to Willowbrook Wildlife Center in Glen Ellyn, Illinois for assessment

and care. Dead birds are taken to The Field Museum where they become part of the museum's research, education and display collections.

Since 2002, CBCM has rescued and salvaged thousands of dead and injured birds, representing more than 145 species. White-throated Sparrow, Ovenbird and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker are the species found in the greatest numbers each season. Other species frequently collected include: Brown Creeper, Hermit Thrush, Dark-eyed Junco, Swainson's Thrush, American Woodcock, Swamp Sparrow and Nashville Warbler. Rarer species recovered have included Cerulean Warbler, Yellow Rail and even a Painted Bunting found in spring 2010.

In 2007, CBCM, in partnership with Willowbrook Wildlife Center, started a program to band collision-injured birds before releasing them after treatment and recovery. Although the odds of recapturing a banded songbird are very low – on

average, only about 1 in 10,000 is ever encountered a second time, according to the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center – relocating even one of these migrants contributes valuable information about its survival and migration patterns.

CBCM spring 2008 data and band records document the rescue of a collision-injured Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*), a species listed as threatened in Illinois. Volunteer Laura Muraoka found the creeper at 6:40 a.m. on 17 April 2008 at 303 E. Wacker Drive. The creeper survived its injuries and was banded and released the same day.

CBCM spring 2009 records document that at 7 a.m. on 17 April 2009 – exactly one year later to the day – this same Brown Creeper was found only two blocks away, at 225 Michigan Plaza by volunteer David Stagman. Unfortunately the bird was dead.