

Bonderman Bird Banding Field Station at Rio Mesa, Spring 2017

Report 2, April 13th - April 23rd

Banding Team: Kylynn Clare, Miranda Castillo, Travis Farwell

Summary:

The last ten days started out slow with a slight peak in productivity towards the end of the work week. Migration is just now beginning to hit us with sightings of Yellow Warblers and Lazuli Buntings along with Western Kingbirds, Violet-Green Swallows, and even an Eastern Kingbird, none of which have been caught (yet).

Of the birds we did catch, we added Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers (below, left), a Virginia's Warbler (below, right), and a Common Yellowthroat to our list all of whom have returned on long trips from the Neotropics. We also added the first hummingbirds of the season, two male Black-chinned Hummingbirds, to our list of processed birds.



The most exciting catch this week was a male Common Yellowthroat. They are migrants from South America and are also summer residents here in Moab, Utah and can be found nesting in this area. We see this bird semi-frequently, but they never cease to lose our attention with their bright and beautiful plumage.



An interesting bit of information about this bird: studies and observations in the field have lead many ornithologists to believe that larger masks in males correlates to higher rates of reproductive success. This suggests that females have been selecting for this trait and is therefore an example of sexual selection in birds.

Grand total:

Nets 1-16: The total number of processed birds for this week is 44 individual birds which includes 8 recaps and 13 new species for this season.

Net 17: Net 17 has caught 2 birds this week, a Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow, and a female Red-naped Sapsucker. The sapsucker, seen below, is a new species for this season.



Groups and Visitors:

Groups have made way for individual volunteers and visitors this week as we have had a few experienced birders come visit the station. Will Britton, an avid birder and a soon-to-be bird bander for another station elsewhere, came to Rio Mesa to see the birds up close and to get some bird banding practice in before he heads off to his station in May. Here is a close-up picture of a Gray Vireo we caught during Will's visit, a bird he was particularly excited to see.



This Gray Vireo demonstrates some key characteristics in identifying members of its family. Vireos can be identified by their hooked bill and the presence of an eye-ring which can be seen in this photo.

Dan Errichetti and Mark Grigg are birders from Salt Lake who also came for a visit and were able to see a Pink-sided Dark-eyed Junco, a Song Sparrow (our first of the season), and a Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher up close. Here is a photo of the Song Sparrow we caught that day:



Finally, we received a visit from the master bander this station operates under, Dr. Çağan Şekercioğlu, who made a trip down to the station along with his wife, Tanya Williams, and mother, Lale Şekercioğlu, who came all the way from Istanbul, Turkey. Çağan seems to have brought us some luck as summer migrants, including the Virginia's Warbler and Common Yellowthroat, began to move into our area the day he arrived with his family.

Final remarks:

We are very eager to see what summer migrants we catch this upcoming week. Each day we hear more and more birds entering the area and our species count continues to rise. We expect to catch several of these birds from this point on as many of the summer migrants reside in this area until they head back to their winter grounds. Here's to another great week of banding!