

# **Lincoln Land Community College Bird Banding Station (LLCC BBS)**

**Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield, IL**  
**(Coordinates: 394-0893)**

## **Report and Results, Spring 2014**

**Lincoln Land Association of Bird Banders**  
**Vernon Kleen, Bander/Coordinator**  
**Federal Permit # 08355**

The Lincoln Land Community College bird banding station (LLCC BBS), which was initiated in September, 2012, began its fourth overall season and second spring season of operations on Monday, 24 March 2014. Last year's spring season had been scheduled to begin the last Monday of March as well but was delayed a week because of the record-setting, late-season, 17-inch snowfall that day. The banding site was the same as the three previous seasons, primarily the northern edge of the LLCC property (just north of the baseball fields and northeast of the campus lake). The purposes established for the station are to use bird banding as a tool to: a) document, quantify and monitor bird populations that permanently live in or visit the site during the spring and fall migratory seasons, and b) provide educational opportunities for students, staff and others interested in learning more about birds and their environments. Objectives include: 1) documenting, quantifying and monitoring the seasonal bird populations; 2) comparing seasonal results with similar projects or studies at other Illinois or national sites; 3) publishing project results; and 4) providing "hands-on" experiences to students, staff and others who visit the station.

As in past seasons, mist nets were set to capture birds from dawn until about 11:00 a.m. on days without rain, strong winds, or below freezing temperatures. This spring, from 5½ to 28½ mist nets were used on 47 mornings (weekdays and some Saturdays) from 24 March through 24 May, for a total 4182 net hours of operation. [One net hour is the use of one standard, 12-meter x 2 meter mist net for one hour during daylight hours.] The habitats in which nets were placed consisted of the same four components (and, in most cases, the same locations) as in previous seasons; i.e., a) an older, regenerated, deciduous woods with a dense honeysuckle understory and a moderately-sloped ravine, including a narrow stream that flows from the campus lake (below the dam) to Lake Springfield (off campus); b) the forest edge and its adjacent grassy lane; c) a small, managed prairie; and d) a small area in the vicinity of a group of bird feeders close to the lake. To capture birds, net "lanes" were prepared within which nets were stretched between 10' aluminum poles (½" ENT conduit) placed vertically in the ground. The nets were then "unfurled" (usually before dawn) and "furled" at the end of the daily banding session. (Furling prevents the accidental capture of birds when not in operation). The Bander's Code of Ethics – as developed and promoted by the North American Bird Banding Council (2001) – was adopted as the standard for banding operations. Station and banding protocols have also been established as a formal part of banding operations.

Because April was rather damp and cool (morning temperatures occasionally in the low-to-mid 30s) migrant birds were slow in arriving. May banding was also seriously affected by extremely strong winds and periodic rain and thunderstorms which greatly reduced the potential of capturing birds.

The final tally for this spring's operations was 1391 birds of 82 species banded on 47 days with an average of 30 birds newly banded per day and 0.33 newly banded birds per net hour. Another 213 birds were captured as **returns** (birds that had been banded 90 or more days earlier, several of which had been banded in the fall of 2012) and 464 as **repeats** (recaptured within 90 days of the banding date). With the capture of a returning Winter Wren and Baltimore Oriole, both banded in 2013, the total species captured this spring was 84. During the spring migration it's expected that there will be several days in which 100 or more birds can be banded. In 2013 there were none, but this spring there were two, 5 & 6 May, with the high total of 139 on the 5<sup>th</sup>. The lowest single-day totals for the season (0 & 1 birds) were on 16 & 1 April, respectively (when the winds were extremely strong or rain was threatening and the station was shut down shortly after it had been opened). Some of the most surprising species captured this spring were a male Wood Duck, a Green Heron, an Eastern Kingbird, a Yellow-throated Warbler, two Clay-colored Sparrows and a Blue Grosbeak. All but the Clay-colored Sparrows were first-time captures for the station. High numbers were obtained for both the White-crowned Sparrow (with 52 on 5 May) and Dark-eyed Junco. On the negative side, four birds, all in the same day and net line, were casualties of

the banding operations; until 17 May there had been no known injuries or casualties of birds at the station; however, on that date, four birds died from a very “unexpected” cause: DEER. Deer have routinely run through and caused major damage to several nets, but they had not been directly responsible for the death of birds until that day -- when they actually attempted to eat the four birds that were in the nets. This situation is not unheard of, but I’ve only encountered it one previous time in five decades. To rectify the problem, the affected nets were monitored more frequently during the remainder of the season and any deer in the area were gently chased from the area (although that is not an easy solution since the deer there are so tame). Even with these casualties, the station continued to maintain its extremely favorable record for bird safety; if it hadn’t been for those four birds, there would have been no known casualties this spring.

The following table identifies the 10 most common species banded this spring and compares them with (a) those of last spring and (b) what, in a normal year, would usually be the 10 most common species (in somewhat descending order):

#### The 10 most commonly banded species

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>
Dark-eyed Junco	177	76
American Goldfinch	106	83
White-throated Sparrow	101	69
Swamp Sparrow	98	46
White-crowned Sparrow	91	n/a
Swainson’s Thrush	61	n/a
House Finch	57	n/a
Song Sparrow	56	n/a
Gray Catbird	46	53
Northern Cardinal	42	n/a

#### Species typically in the top 10 (all spring years combined)

White-throated Sparrow
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Indigo Bunting
Swamp Sparrow
American Goldfinch
Hermit Thrush
Common Grackle
Nashville Warbler
Tennessee Warbler

The complete list of species captured this spring and the number of each banded is provided in the large table at the end of this report. The seven previously unbanded species are identified in **bold face** and bring the station total up to 101 for the four banding seasons. The 82 species banded (+ 2 additional species captured) creates a real challenge for future seasons; the previous seasonal high (tied in both the spring and fall of 2013) was 70. The 1391 birds banded (with 4182 net hours) in 47 days surpassed the spring 2013 total by more than 300 birds (with 3110 net hours) in 40 days, but was short of the seasonal high of 1902 of last fall (with 5600 net hours) in 64 days. The average of 0.33 birds per net hour this spring is par (0.35 & 0.34) with the two previous seasons as well as the four season average of 0.35. Since this was only the fourth banding season and only the second spring season, it was easy to achieve a large number of new records. Those records are identified in the table below as follows: “\*\*\*” new high for all seasons (32 records including the seven new species); \* new high for a spring season (11 records); “T” ties previous high for all seasons (5 records); and, “t” ties previous high for just spring seasons (5 records).

A new, independent, feature of the banding station this spring was the addition of a “blackbird” decoy trap. It is a walk-in unit that measures 8’ x 16’ x 5.5’ and was placed in a remote corner of the LLCC campus. Most of the 117 birds captured and banded were “blackbirds” (82 grackles, 28 cowbirds and 2 Red-winged Blackbirds); however, a cardinal, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, and, surprisingly, 3 Cooper’s Hawks found their way in as well. Another interesting note, one grackle was captured in and released from the trap nine times and five others were captured and released three or more times. It will be interesting to see how well the trap does in the fall.

As last year, the primary issue affecting banding operations again this year was the number of deer. The only hope remains that they learn to know where the nets are when they are furled (and readily visible) and avoid them when unfurled (not visible). However, when the deer are caught off-guard (which they sometimes are), they disperse quickly - and a net in their departure path doesn’t stop them. Several more nets were lost this spring and others damaged as a result of deer running through them. Strong winds also affected the success of banding operations.

Acknowledgments: Many thanks to everyone who helped organize and volunteered time at the LLCC banding station. Special thanks, once again, to a) Lincoln Land Community College for permitting the banding station to operate (in particular Dr. Charlotte Warren, Dr. Eileen Tepatti, Bill Bade and Dave Bretscher); b) Anthony Rothering (LLCC Biology Faculty) for near-daily assistance in all aspects of the project from beginning to end; c) to other consistent assistants (especially Anna Kozlov, Jim Mordacq, Jen Pendleton, Butch Tetzlaff and Susan Shaw); and d) to everyone

else who helped and/or visited (including 170+ LLCC classroom students, at least 6 LLCC classes , 5 UIS grad students and one ISU senior) any time during the season.

The LLCC BBS is scheduled to resume this fall from about 25 August to 15 November. See you then.

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### **Total Spring 2014 Results**

#### **Bold Face = New Station Species**

\*\* new seasonal high total (32)

\* new spring season high total (11)

T ties high total all seasons (5)

t ties spring season high total (5)

<b>Wood Duck</b>	<b>1 **</b>
<b>Green Heron</b>	<b>1 **</b>
Mourning Dove	5
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	2
<u>Red-headed Woodpecker</u>	<u>2 **</u>
Red-bellied Woodpecker	4
Downy Woodpecker	4
Hairy Woodpecker	1 Tt
Northern Flicker	1
<u>Eastern Wood-Pewee</u>	<u>1 T</u>
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	1
Traill's Flycatcher	2
Least Flycatcher	3 **
Eastern Phoebe	3
<b>Great Crested Flycatcher</b>	<b>1 **</b>
<b>Eastern Kingbird</b>	<b>1 **</b>
Warbling Vireo	4 Tt
Red-eyed Vireo	2
Blue Jay	1
<u>Black-capped Chickadee</u>	<u>12 *</u>
Tufted Titmouse	1
White-breasted Nuthatch	1
Brown Creeper	1
Carolina Wren	1
<u>House Wren</u>	<u>13 *</u>
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	8
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1 Tt
Veery	4 **
Gray-cheeked Thrush	13 **
<u>Swainson's Thrush</u>	<u>61 **</u>
Hermit Thrush	16 *
Wood Thrush	2
American Robin	23
Gray Catbird	46
<u>Brown Thrasher</u>	<u>11</u>
Cedar Waxwing	1
Blue-winged Warbler	3 **
<b>Golden-winged Warbler</b>	<b>2 **</b>
Tennessee Warbler	21 **
<u>Orange-crowned Warbler</u>	<u>5 *</u>
Nashville Warbler	23 **
Yellow Warbler	1
Chestnut-sided Warbler	2
Magnolia Warbler	5
<u>Yellow-rumped Warbler</u>	<u>28</u>
Black-throated Green Warbler	1

<b>Yellow-throated Warbler</b>	<b>1 **</b>
Palm Warbler	15 **
Blackpoll Warbler	3 **
Black-and-white Warbler	5 *
<u>American Redstart</u>	<u>12 *</u>
Ovenbird	17 *
Northern Waterthrush	40 **
Louisiana Waterthrush	1 Tt
Kentucky Warbler	1
<u>Mourning Warbler</u>	<u>1 t</u>
Common Yellowthroat	26
Wilson's Warbler	1
Canada Warbler	2
Eastern Towhee	3 **
<u>American Tree Sparrow</u>	<u>8 **</u>
Chipping Sparrow	23
Clay-colored Sparrow	2 **
Field Sparrow	18 *
Savannah Sparrow	1 *
<u>Fox Sparrow</u>	<u>7 **</u>
Song Sparrow	56 *
Lincoln's Sparrow	18 **
Swamp Sparrow	98 **
White-throated Sparrow	101 **
<u>White-crowned Sparrow</u>	<u>91 **</u>
Dark-eyed Junco	177 **
Northern Cardinal	42 **
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5 **
<b>Blue Grosbeak</b>	<b>1 **</b>
<u>Indigo Bunting</u>	<u>11 **</u>
Red-winged Blackbird	31 **
Common Grackle	30
Brown-headed Cowbird	9
House Finch	57 **
<u>American Goldfinch</u>	<u>106 *</u>
House Sparrow	25

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Total Birds Banded	1391 *
Total Species	82 **

#### *Species Captured that were already banded:*

*Winter Wren*  
*Baltimore Oriole*

Total Species Captured	84
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