Establishing a Bird Banding Station in Yellowstone National Park

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although Yellowstone National Park is known for its wildlife, relatively little is known about the park's songbird populations and, although measures of songbird abundance and diversity are monitored across a variety of habitats, the park lacks basic demographic information about many of its breeding songbird species. By establishing a songbird banding station, we hoped to complement ongoing songbird research within the park, while gaining better information on songbird productivity, survival, age-ratios, and turnover between breeding seasons.

In the spring of 2018, with funding from the Meg and Bert Raynes Wildlife Fund, we established a songbird banding station in a willow-lined corridor on Yellowstone's northern range, following the standardized MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) protocol (DeSante et al. 2018). MAPS banding data was collected from June through early August and data from this period was submitted to the Institute for Bird Populations. To capture information about the use of willows by songbirds during fall migration, we continued regular banding efforts through the end of September. We operated the banding station on 12 days in total and banded 290 individuals belonging to 31 species of songbirds.

In 2019, and into the foreseeable future, we aim to continue banding station efforts, allowing for the continued collection of diversity and demographic data including both reproduction and, through the recapture of previously banded birds, survival. This demographic data will supplement the abundance and diversity data acquired from ongoing point count surveys and provide a baseline from which to compare future songbird population trends.


Photo: D. Smith