

Bird Field Note  
Songbird banding, field observations  
Eric Rasmussen, 06/12/15



We captured 46 birds of 17 species on our first day of summer banding, despite an ominous forecast and occasional bouts of rain. This species richness exceeded any summer banding session in 2014. We were surprised at the high number of Cedar Waxwings; we normally catch high numbers of this species later in the summer and early fall. The two Willow Flycatchers were the first 2015 record of this species on the northern floodplain, according to eBird data.

**Bird Species captured and banded during the June 2<sup>nd</sup> session**

<b>Species Name</b>	<b>Number</b>
Cedar Waxwing	11
House Wren	7
Gray Catbird	7
Yellow Warbler	3
Wilson's Warbler	2
Willow Flycatcher	2
Spotted Towhee	2
MacGillivray's Warbler	2
Black-chinned Hummingbird	2
Swainson's Thrush	1
Red-naped Sapsucker	1
Dusky Flycatcher	1
Common Yellowthroat	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Black-headed Grosbeak	1
American Robin	1
American Goldfinch	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46</b>



Common Yellowthroat (left)  
American Goldfinch (right)



Two of the waxwings had atypical plumage characteristics. One individual's tail had several waxy tips, a trait typically associated with their wings. A second individual showed abnormal tail pigmentation. Birds with abnormal pigmentation are described as melanistic if their feathers possess too much pigment, or leucistic if they have an absence of melanin. This Cedar Waxwing's tail has both melanistic and leucistic feathers. The gray feather in the center of the tail is the typical color of waxwing rectrices.





We retrieved a second pinpoint unit from this Gray Catbird. We know of at least one other catbird with a unit and will target trap that bird in the near future.



## Field Observations

Western Kingbirds fly-catch the abundant emerged insects.





While Western Kingbirds use drier habitats, the Eastern Kingbird prefers more vegetation.





Another flycatcher joins the action. This Ash-throated Flycatcher is only the 4<sup>th</sup> eBird record for Montana. Their range includes the desert southwest and extends north to southern Idaho and Wyoming. I observed this individual in the Northern Floodplain for 20 seconds before it flew off.





It's a tough world for insects when flycatchers hunt the air and birds like American Robins scour the ground.





Male Lazuli Buntings loudly sing from forest edges and shrubby draws. The inconspicuous females tend their nests.







A male Western Tanager (above) watches over his mate while she plucks and maneuvers small twigs for a nest (below).





A female Rufous Hummingbird drinks at the high-elevation hummingbird station. Hummingbird detections increased the last two weeks at both sites. The lower site saw a big pulse this week with at least three distinct individuals of each common species: Calliope, Rufous, and Black-chinned. Three Calliope females dominated the upper site, until the recent arrival of a male Calliope and the one Rufous female. I also observed a female Broad-tailed Hummingbird at the upper site this week, a first for MPG Ranch.



Male Black-chinned Hummingbirds have a purple gorget (throat feathers), visible only when light hits just right.





A female Yellow-rumped Warbler looks inquisitive when I refill the hummingbird feeders.

