the Sand Bluff Birder

the official newsletter of the Sand Bluff Bird Observatory—online edition December 2025

STATION MASTER'S FALL 2025 REPORT

As our season ends, I sit back and relax thinking about how the fall season turned out. Our numbers this fall turned out to be better than expected with the 620 Slate-colored Juncos exceeding our expectations.

We also had our challenges. Often visitors will ask "Where does the data go?" that we collect. The Bird Banding Lab under the USGS is the collection site for all data we (and fellow U.S. banders) send by way of the Banders Portal. When the government shut down for 43 days data submission was held up until the Bird Banding Lab reopened.

Consequently, another issue we had was with the bands. As the season progressed our supply of bands went down faster than usual due to a larger number of different species being captured. I had ordered a supply of the band size used on Juncos but didn't receive them because of the shutdown. When the Lab reopened, they informed me that I needed to use up the 1,200 bands I had before they would send more. They didn't know I was already down to the last 100 in that one size that we use on sparrows. Fortunately, we did not run out of bands.

Now that I have submitted data for 2,000 birds, I can replenish our supply for 2026 and hope there are no more problems with government shutdowns.

One thing I never want to forget is to thank all the veteran volunteers that help check nets and do the grunt work. This fall we were pleased to have new volunteers that wanted to learn how to take birds out of nets and banding techniques. Many of them came from surrounding states to learn while not receiving any compensation. I sincerely THANK YOU.

Thanks to all for a great season.
_____Mike Eickman, President

4th Uji Riverbank Swallow Roosting Survey Participation in Kyoto

_____Averi Bronnimann, senior at Hononegah High School

This summer, I participated in the 4th Uji Riverbank Swallow Roosting Survey with the Yamashina Bird Institute, thanks to my host family, who reached out to the bird banders during my exchange trip to Japan. Mr. Sugawa and Mr. Karino, the principal bird banders, instructed me on their bird banding techniques.

My host family drove me to a field of tall, green reeds southwest of Ujigawa Park, where I met with Takao Maeda, Daichi Tsujimoto, Takahiro Ota, and other bird banders. Mr. Karino and Mr. Sugawa were mobile, storing their nets and banding equipment in their cars and changing locations based on their research. The banding area itself included tables, chairs, tarps, a tent, and various banding materials. To deter mosquitos and other pesky bugs, the bird banders not only used ample amounts of bug spray but also burned a mosquito coil (蚊取り線香 - katari senkō). The banders then cut a mist net path through the reeds with Japanese sickles (鎌 - kama).

Afterwards, we set up the nets, Mr. Sugawa and Mr. Karino using slightly differing processes. Both used collapsible poles that stood four meters tall, each composed of nine segments connected with tape. These poles allowed for a single net, consisting of four shelves of 36 mm mesh mist netting, to be strung between them, either extending above the reeds to catch swallows or lowered into the reeds to capture other birds, mainly the Great Reed Warbler (オオヨシキリ - ooyoshikiri). Mr. Sugawa secured the nets with ropes tied from the tops of the poles to the reed stalks, while Mr. Karino drove metal stakes into the ground to support the poles. Once we finished setting up the poles, mist nets, and ropes, we placed a flag to indicate that swallow banding was underway.

We then waited for a designated period for the nets to fill with Great Reed Warblers before collecting the birds and placing them in cloth bags with drawstrings to close the tops. After that, we raised the nets to their full height to catch swallows during the next run, putting as many as ten swallows in each bag and using headlamps after night fell. Returning to the banding tables, we prepared to begin banding. (Continued on page 3) *Photos provided by Averi Bronnimann*

FALL 2025 BANDING RESULTS

TOTAL NEW BIRDS:	3206
TOTAL RETRAPS	680
TOTAL FOR 2025	6413
FALL 2025 100+ SPECIES	
SLATE-COLORED JUNCO	620
GRAY CATBIRD	297
SWAINSON'S THRUSH	244
HERMIT THRUSH	140
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	123
CHIPPING SPARROW	113
RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET	102
AMERICAN REDSTART	102
MAGNOLIA WARBLER	101

2026 Annual Board Meeting

The SBBO annual meeting will be held at the Roscoe Township Offices, 5792 Elevator Rd., Roscoe, IL on January 17, 2026 at 10:00 am. Snacks are welcome. The meeting is open to the public.

SPECIES	COUNT	SPECIES	COUNT	SPECIES	COUNT
BLACKBIRD, RED-WINGED	0	OWL, NORTHERN SAW-WHET	30	VIREO, YELLOW-THROATED	2
BLUEBIRD, EASTERN	31	PARULA, NORTHERN	2	WARBLER, BAY-BREASTED	14
BUNTING, INDIGO	29	PEEWEE, EASTERN WOOD	13	WARBLER, BLACK AND WHITE	26
CARDINAL, NORTHERN	17	PHOEBE, EASTERN	17	WARBLER, BLACKBURNIAN	1
CATBIRD, GRAY	297	REDSTART, AMERICAN	102	WARBLER, BLACKPOLL	1
CHAT, YELLOW-BREASTED	0	ROBIN, AMERICAN	38	WARBLER, BLACK-THROATED BLUE	7
CHICKADEE, BLACK-CAPPED	23	SANDPIPER, SOLITARY	0	WARBLER, BLACK-THROATED GREEN	3
COWBIRD, BROWN-HEADED	0	SAPSUCKER, YELLOW-BELLIED	2	WARBLER, BLUE-WINGED	4
CREEPER, BROWN	16	SPARROW, AMERICAN TREE	44	WARBLER, CANADA	9
CUCKOO, BLACK-BILLED	0	SPARROW, CHIPPING	113	WARBLER, CAPE MAY	2
CUCKOO, YELLOW-BILLED	0	SPARROW, CLAY-COLORED	0	WARBLER, CHESTNUT-SIDED	9
DOVE, MOURNING	2	SPARROW, FIELD	85	WARBLER, CONNECTICUT	1
FINCH, HOUSE	2	SPARROW, FOX	30	WARBLER, GOLDEN-WINGED	13
FINCH, PURPLE	7	SPARROW, GRASSHOPPER	0	WARBLER, HOODED	1
FLICKER, YELLOW-SHAFTED	12	SPARROW, HENSLOW'S	0	WARBLER, KENTUCKY	0
FLYCATCHER, ACADIAN	0	SPARROW, LARK	0	WARBLER, MAGNOLIA	101
FLYCATCHER, GREAT-CRESTED	1	SPARROW, LINCOLN'S	22	WARBLER, MOURNING	5
FLYCATCHER, LEAST	10	SPARROW, SAVANNAH	0	WARBLER, MYRTLE	43
FLYCATCHER, OLIVE-SIDED	0	SPARROW, SONG	43	WARBLER, NASHVILLE	30
FLYCATCHER, TRAILL'S	13	SPARROW, SWAMP	19	WARBLER, ORANGE-CROWNED	15
FLYCATCHER, YELLOW-BELLIED	12	SPARROW, VESPER	0	WARBLER, PINE	0
GNATCATCHER, BLUE-GRAY	1	SPARROW, WHITE-CROWNED	15	WARBLER, PROTHONOTARY	0
GOLDFINCH, AMERICAN	87	SPARROW, WHITE-THROATED	123	WARBLER, TENNESSEE	49
GRACKLE, COMMON	0	SWALLOW, CLIFF	0	WARBLER, WESTERN PALM	21
GROSBEAK, BLUE	0	SWALLOW, TREE	0	WARBLER, WILSON'S	9
GROSBEAK, ROSE-BREASTED	38	TANAGER, SCARLET	4	WARBLER, YELLOW	1
HAWK, COOPER'S	0	TANAGER, SUMMER	0	WATERTHRUSH, NORTHERN	7
HAWK, RED-TAILED	7	THRASHER, BROWN	6	WAXWING, CEDAR	15
HAWK, SHARP-SHINNED	3	THRUSH, GRAY-CHEEKED	28	WHIP-POOR-WILL, EASTERN	2
JAY, BLUE	5	THRUSH, HERMIT	140	WOODCOCK, AMERICAN	2
JUNCO, OREGON	0	THRUSH, SWAINSON'S	244	WOODPECKER, DOWNY	20
JUNCO, SLATE-COLORED	620	THRUSH, WOOD	21	WOODPECKER, HAIRY	4
KINGBIRD, EASTERN	3	TITMOUSE, TUFTED	3	WOODPECKER, RED-HEADED	2
KINGLET, GOLDEN-CROWNED	65	TOWHEE, EASTERN	4	WOODPECKER, RED-BELLIED	5
KINGLET, RUBY-CROWNED	102	VEERY	14	WOODPECKER, PILEATED	1
MEADOWLARK, EASTERN	0	VIREO, BELL'S	0	WREN, NORTHERN HOUSE	61
NUTHATCH, RED-BREASTED	1	VIREO, BLUE-HEADED	2	WREN, WINTER	11
NUTHATCH, WHITE-BREASTED	11	VIREO, PHILADELPHIA	5	YELLOWTHROAT, COMMON	26
ORIOLE, BALTIMORE	11	VIREO, RED-EYED	11	VIREO, CASSIN'S (RARE)	0
ORIOLE, ORCHARD	0	VIREO, WHITE-EYED	0	FALL 2025 TOTAL NEW BIRDS	3206
OVENBIRD	76	VIREO, WARBLING	1	FALL 2025 TOTAL RETRAPS	680

PLEASE HELP US ... in any way you can

Our non-profit organization survives because of private contributions of time and money from friends just like you. Please examine the list below and help us continue our important banding program by making your contribution!

Please return this form to: Sand Bluff Bird Observatory, P. O. Box 2, Seward, IL 61077 or donate through PayPal on our website: sandbluff.org

- ☐ Enclosed is a (tax-deductible) contribution of
  - ☐ $10.00 (Subscriber)
  - ☐ $25.00 (Donor)
  - ☐ $50.00 (Supporting Member)
  - ☐ $100.00 (Net Sponsor)
  - ☐ $250.00 (Sustaining Member)
- ☐ Please do not share /publish my contact information

- ☐ Enclosed is a (tax-deductible) donation of _____
  - ☐ in memory/honor of _____
  - ☐ for the Sand Bluff Bird Observatory Endowment Fund
  - ☐ for the Sand Bluff Bird Observatory Scholarship Fund
- ☐ I'd like to learn more about volunteering, please call me!
- ☐ Please contact me to schedule a program/tour for my group!

Name (please print) _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip + 4 _____

Telephone (days) _____ (evenings) _____ (email) _____

The SBBO website "www.sandbluff.org" has been updated with more options. You can now make a secure online donation through PayPal by selecting the "Support Us" page when you click on the "list" icon in the upper right corner of the website's homepage. There is also a SBBO t-shirt in multiple colors and sizes available to order online through PayPal on the "Merchandise" page.

Kyoto, continued

Several banders sat at the banding table, relaying data about the birds to the recorder, either Mr. Sugawa or Mr. Karino. During the Swallow Roosting Survey, the recorder documented the banding location, the bander's name, whether it was a recapture, the date, leg ring number, species name, sex, age, natural wing length, tail length, belly color (for Barn Swallows), molting status, and weight. The data collection varied from that at Sand Bluff: instead of weighing the birds while they remained in the bag and taring the scale, the Japanese banders used a cone to hold the birds, which was then placed on the scale for weighing. Additionally, the bands of Sand Bluff were removed by the pliers, while the Swallow Roosting Survey removed the bands from the rubber lengths by hand. The Swallow Roosting Survey also utilized a different band classification system, which ranges from band types 01 to 08

Ultimately, during the four surveys I participated in in Japan, we banded a total of 136 Barn Swallows (Hirundo rustica) (32 adults and 104 juveniles), 15 Great Reed Warblers (Acrocephalus orientalis,) 1 Japanese Bush Warbler (Horornis diphone), and 1 Eurasian Greenfinch (Chloris sinica). Despite the differences between Sand Bluff Bird Observatory and the 4th Uji Riverbank Swallow Roosting Survey, in both places I found people from far and wide, connected by their passion for birds, creating a wonderful community of knowledgeable and kind individuals.

Fall 2025 Visitors

Kathy Hoel, SBBO group visit coordinator, reported five group visits numbering 124 guests in total this past fall. One group was the Illinois Brass Touring Region who arrived on September 11 in their restored antique vehicles after an overnight stop in Rockford, IL. There were also many drop-in visitors each weekend, some repeats, some newly introduced to bird banding! Thank you all for visiting us—we loved having you.

October 17 was "Breakfast with the Birds", the annual invitational event held to thank our generous donors and our volunteers for their continued support of SBBO. It's always the most delightful morning.

Photos provided by John Longhenry

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P. O. Box 2
Seward, IL 61077

Illinois Brass Touring Region visited on 9-11-2025.
Photo provided by John Longhenry

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CLASSES AND GROUPS

This spring, SBBO is allowing small groups and drop-in visitors to observe banding. Thursday or weekend mornings, groups of 10 –15 can schedule a "group presentation". Smaller groups may join the general visitors.

Call Kathy Hoel, 815-670-0843 or e-mail kathyhoel6@gmail.com/subject: SBBO group visit, for details and to reserve your spot. Allow 1½ hours to watch the banding process and visit the nets.

Donations are gratefully accepted.

Photo by Thelma Bottum

Here's How To Reach Us!

During Operating Hours: 815-629-2671

Mailing Address: Sand Bluff Bird Observatory
P. O. Box 2
Seward, IL 61077

GPS Address: 10602 Haas Rd, Rockton, IL

Be sure to visit our website at: www.sandbluff.org

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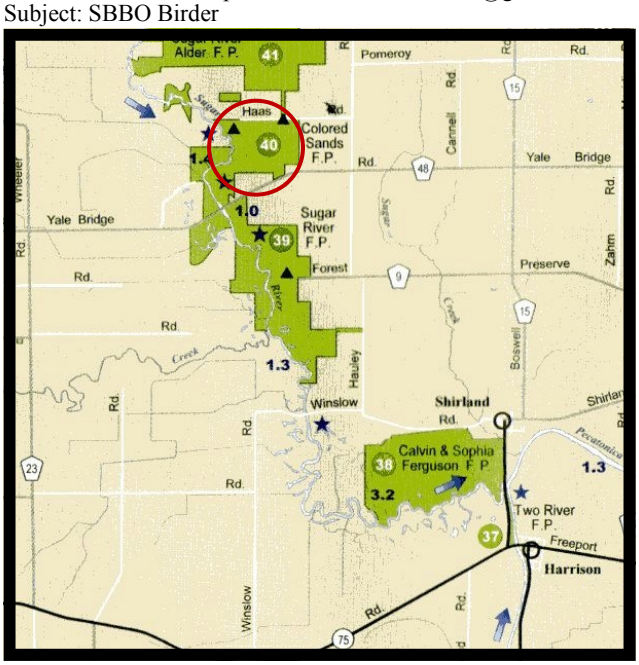

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