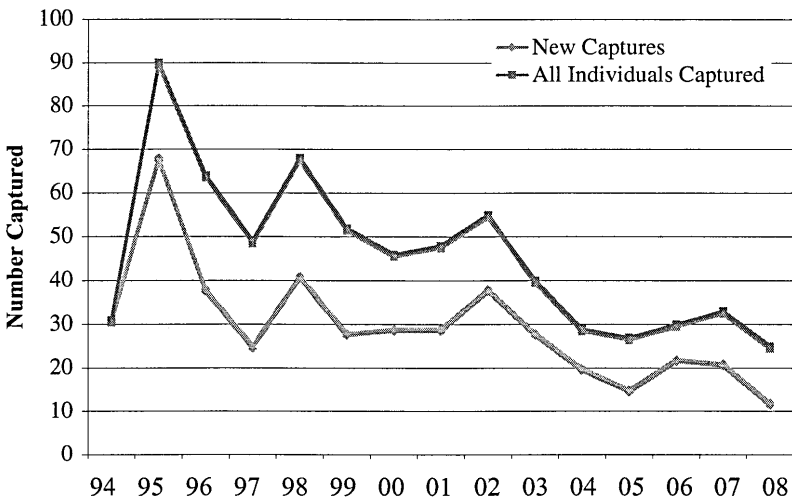


NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

DECLINING CAPTURE RATES FOR GRAY CATBIRDS BREEDING IN EASTERN SUFFOLK COUNTY, LONG ISLAND

I have operated a summer banding station in Moore's Woods, Greenport, Suffolk County, Long Island since 1994, in cooperation with the Institute for Bird Populations' MAPS program (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship). Birds are captured in 12-meter mist nets that are operated for six hours per session, starting at 10 minutes after sunrise. Each year, nine nets are set up in the same place and operated on seven evenly spaced days, in the months of June and July (breeding season).

During 2008, I banded 131 new birds, which is above the 14-year average (109.6). The recapture of 23 birds from previous seasons is below the average (29.4). New captures of three species, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker and Wood Thrush were each more than two standard deviations above their long-term averages. Only one species, Northern Cardinal, was more than one standard deviation below its 15-year average. Even so, Gray Catbird has been on a steady decline and hit a new low of 23 new captures in 2008 as compared to 90 in 1995 and a 14 year average of 31.8, as shown in the chart. Other observers have reported recent declines in breeding populations of Gray Catbirds on Long Island (e.g., Ken and Sue Feustel *The Kingbird* 57: 358).



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CALIFORNIA GULL IN CENTRAL NYS: FIRST RECORD FOR THE CAYUGA LAKE BASIN

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On November 1, 2008, I was birding with Ann Mitchell, Chris Wiley, and Shawn Billerman in Aurora Bay on the east side of Cayuga Lake. We had just left Long Point State Park where Shawn had spotted a rare Pacific Loon and were driving north into the town of Aurora when I noticed a large number of gulls on the lake and pulled the car over. This area, the mouth of Paines Creek, has a few gravel islands where geese and gulls often congregate. Getting out of the car, I made a hopeful but joking quip about "the California Gull" that we were about to see. Less than a minute after beginning to scan the flock, my absurd prediction was realized when an adult California Gull appeared in the middle of my scope's field of view, standing on the gravel with a flock of Ring-billed Gulls. I noticed the bird's larger size in comparison with Ring-billed Gulls, slightly darker gray mantle, yellowish legs, dark eye, and long yellow bill with red and black gonydeal markings. The outer primaries showed extensive black above; the undersides of the primaries were medium gray, appearing darker than Herring or Ring-billed Gulls. After I took some documentary photos, other birders began to arrive and were able to enjoy this rarity (see photo by Kevin McGowan, Fig. E, p. 53). The California Gull returned to the mouth of Paines Creek each day until November 4, the last day it was found.

This incidence constitutes the first record of California Gull for the Cayuga Lake Basin. To date, NYSARC has reviewed 36 reports of California Gull from New York and accepted 30 records. Of these 30 accepted records, only three are from locations away from Niagara County, where California Gull is now recorded annually. Two of those non-Niagara records involve the same adult California Gull that returned to Rockland Lake, Rockland County from 1978-1982, apparently the first record for the northeastern United States. The other non-Niagara record is from Elmira, Chemung County, from 1998 (NYSARC 2008: <http://www.nybirds.org/NYSARC/RecordsSummary.htm>).

