

Waterfowl Banding Operation  
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
 Habitat and Population Evaluation Team  
 Fergus Falls, Minnesota  
 October 20, 2009

Each year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian Wildlife Service, state, and provincial wildlife agencies band nearly one million migratory birds across North America. Original objectives of banding, or ringing, were to detect specific nesting and wintering areas, and to help determine migration corridors birds commonly used between these two areas. Today, duck band recovery data is used primarily to analyze harvest and survival rates. These calculations, in turn, help to determine the impact hunting has on waterfowl populations. When bands recovered by hunters or recaptured by other banders are reported, we can learn the birds' age and where it is at a specific time of the year. Recoveries from hunters provide information on where and when birds from a specific population are harvested. This is important for monitoring most populations of ducks and geese, but particularly important for species like wood ducks (the target species in our banding program). Wood ducks generally frequent wooded and shrubby wetlands, areas where traditional survey techniques do not typically reflect accurate bird numbers.

This summer the Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) captured and banded a total of 639 ducks. Of the total number of ducks captured, 600 were wood ducks. A breakdown of age and sex for wood ducks is as follow:

**Wood Duck 2009**

Sex	After Hatch Year	Hatch Year	Local	Total
Male	321	92	20	433
Female	51	93	23	167
Total	372	185	43	<b>600</b>

A summary of all ducks banded by HAPET in 2009 is presented in the following table:

**Total Ducks Banded 2009**

Species	Sex	After Hatch Year	Hatch Year	Local	Total
Canvasback	Female	0	1	1	2
Mallard	Male	8	1	5	14
Mallard	Female	3	9	11	23
Wood duck	Male	321	92	20	433
Wood duck	Female	51	93	23	167
	Total	383	196	60	<b>639</b>

Swim-in traps were operated at 15 locations, south and west of Fergus Falls, for a total of 58 trap nights. Predators continue to be of concern. Raccoon problems were held in check through the use of live traps. Mink, a frequent problem in past years, were not a problem during this year's banding operations.

**Recovery highlights for 2009 are as follows:**

-During trapping efforts for MWA's "Woodie Camp" we recaptured an adult female wood duck that was wearing a reward band and missing its regular band. This hen had been banded by HAPET staff on 9/20/2003 as a juvenile. The bird was recaptured on 9/14/2009, making the bird 6 years old; at the same site it had originally been banded.

-An adult female that HAPET originally banded on 8/11/2004 was recaptured twice this year. The hen was recaptured on 8/6 and recaptured again on 8/19 at different trap locations. This hen was an adult when first banded. Upon recapture she showed signs of longevity and also an unidentified physical ailment in her left eye.



**Outreach Events:**

This year HAPET continued to get youngsters involved with banding activities with the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade Prairie Sciences Classes and Minnesota Waterfowl Association’s “Woodie Camp” at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center.

**Minnesota Waterfowl Association’s “Woodie Camp”**



(Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)



(Photo credit: Minnesota Waterfowl Association)

On August 14<sup>th</sup> 2009 approximately 50 campers attending “Woodie Camp” participated in banding activities lead by HAPET staff.



(Photo credit: Minnesota Waterfowl Association)

Waterfowl banding continues to be a highlight for youth attending Minnesota Waterfowl Association’s “Woodie Camp”.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Prairie Science Classes

The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center's Adams Pond continues to serve as a classroom for the students of the Fergus Falls School District, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade Prairie Science Classes (PSC). On September 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> HAPET provided, in total, 240 students with the opportunity to band wild ducks as part of HAPET's educational outreach project with the school and PWLC. Students were divided into teams of 4 with each member assigned a different set of duties. Seventy two wood ducks were banded, measured, weighed, and released as part of this program. Related follow up activities include various math, science and writing assignments. HAPET's participation with this activity fits well with the PSC fall semester theme of migration and wetlands. It also helps fulfill one of the goals of the PSC: Increase student motivation and engagement through the use of authentic projects, field based learning experiences and relevant local context.



(Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

HAPET biological technician Fred Oslund answers questions while discussing the differences between a drake and hen wood duck.



(Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)



(Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

Fifth Grade PSC Students take various measurements, make observations, and record data on each duck that they band.



(Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)



(Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

Prairie science students are instructed on proper handling and banding techniques of wild ducks.



(Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)



(Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

After banding and collecting all measurements Prairie Science Students release their ducks.

HAPET staff wishes to acknowledge the cooperation and support provided by the staff of the Fergus Falls Wetland Management District and Prairie Wetland Learning Center. We thank Dick Anderson, Mike Haarstad, Ottertail County Pheasants Forever Chapter, and the Fergus Falls Fish and Game Club for allowing us access to their properties. We also appreciate the banding assistance provided by a number of dedicated volunteers.