



“Urban Winter Color banding Project.”

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The Puget Sound Lowlands host many populations of wintering songbirds, but little is known about how these populations use the urban environment that characterizes much of the I-5 corridor.

Puget Sound Bird Observatory has initiated a color-banding study to look at the territory size of wintering Dark-eyed Juncos, Fox Sparrows, and Black-capped and Chestnut-backed Chickadees, their social organization, and their site-fidelity.

After a pilot season in the spring of 2008, PSBO has color-banded a totals at all five sites as:

Qty	Common Name	Abbreviation	Species
171	Oregon Juncos	ORJU	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>
17	Fox Sparrows	FOSP	<i>Passerella iliaca</i>
191	Black-capped Chickadees	BCCH	<i>Poecile atricapillus</i>
55	Chestnut-backed Chickadees	CBCH	<i>Poecile rufescens</i>

Preliminary results show:

1. Strong site fidelity and year-round territoriality for the chickadees
2. High winter site-fidelity for Juncos with dramatic turnover early in the winter and return of local breeders in early/late February
3. Fox Sparrows are strikingly dependent on particular vegetation types, notably invasive Himalayan Blackberry. Fifteen of the Fox Sparrows caught by this study were using the blackberry brambles—there were no Fox Sparrows caught in sites without blackberry.

The near future of this long-term project will emphasize:

1. Re-sighting efforts and patterns of returns and habitat use at sites in single-family tracts and in large urban parks
2. Public outreach to neighbors, schools and the public to generate awareness of the needs of individual birds is also a critical component of this project.
3. Volunteers
 - 2008-2009 season (including pilot) totaled 32 volunteer for 628 hours
 - 2009-2010 season had 58 volunteers for 598 hours
 - Study total of 1,226 hours and counting (casual re-sighting under one hour not counted.)