



## **NJMC announces early findings of its first-ever bird-banding study**

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The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) today announced preliminary findings of its first-ever landfill bird-habitat study.

During the study, conducted in the spring and fall of this year, a total of 4,032 birds were weighed, measured and banded, including 23 species of warblers and 583 Savannah Sparrows, a threatened species in New Jersey. The findings are proof of the Meadowlands' importance as a crucial resting and refueling stop for migratory birds.

The bird-banding concluded on Nov. 20, with – appropriately enough – a Winter Wren as one of the final birds.

NJMC naturalists conducted the study on the Erie Landfill in North Arlington to see how migratory birds are using the habitat on landfills.

“As the environmental stewards of the region, we are putting old landfills to new uses,” said Robert Ceberio, Executive Director of the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission. “We not only are capping and closing those landfills, but we are also making the most of them – whether it’s installing solar panels or helping migratory and threatened species.”

In all, 88 species of birds were recorded, including five birds on New Jersey’s threatened, endangered, or special-concern lists – the American Kestrel, the Savannah Sparrow, the Grasshopper Sparrow, the Vesper Sparrow and the Bobolink.

Although the naturalists are just beginning to sift through all the data, they say that the research is already paying dividends. They have learned, for example, that landfills should be planted with diverse grasses to attract certain birds.

For example, Savannah Sparrows – one of the species that the naturalists want to attract – like to feed both on common mugwort and on less dense landfill grasses, such as foxtail and switchgrass.

The NJMC plans to use the findings to decide what vegetation to plant after a landfill closes, in order to help migratory birds as they come through.

The Commission oversees the 30.4-square-mile Meadowlands District, which includes parts of 14 municipalities along the Hackensack River. The district provides habitat for 26 threatened and endangered species of birds.

Since the NJMC was created nearly 40 years ago, the agency – originally known as the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission – has closed 580 acres of orphaned landfills.

*High-resolution images and the full list of species banded are available upon request. Contact Jim Wright at the numbers above. Pictured on the first page: a just-banded American Kestrel.*

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