

# The Warbler



Special Edition- September 2008

## LSLBO bands our 50,000th bird this week!!



### Banding Details:

Band no: 2291-00970  
Date: September 29, 2008  
Time Captured: 13:10  
Netlane: 6  
Species: Downy woodpecker  
Age: Hatch year (juvenile)  
Sex: Female  
Bander: Richard Krikun, BIC  
Wing: 97 mm  
Weight: 28.0g

September 29th was a very exciting day at the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory when Bander-in-Charge Richard Krikun banded the LSLBO's **50 000<sup>th</sup> bird**; a female **downy woodpecker** captured on the second to last net check of the day! The LSLBO began banding operations along the shores of Slave Lake in 1993 and we were just in the process of wrapping up our 15<sup>th</sup> year of migration monitoring in the Slave Lake area.

**The chase:** Excitement spread throughout the Boreal Centre that morning when Richard called to share the news that he had just caught our 49 999<sup>th</sup> bird. We knew that we were getting close, but we had resigned ourselves to the fact that it wouldn't happen until the spring. So when the staff received the phone call, we were all caught off guard. The entire office was quickly abuzz with anticipation as we all raced to write down our guesses on the species of the next bird. Although there were many great guesses, no one at the office was able to claim the bragging rights for guessing the species of this special bird. Some notable near-misses include Executive Director Patti Campsall who guessed that it would be her favourite bird; a black-capped chickadee. A chickadee

was caught at the same time as the woodpecker but unfortunately it was a recapture so it didn't count. Board member Ronda Groom's pick of a northern saw-whet owl was also very close; a saw-whet was actually the 50 001<sup>st</sup> bird for the LSLBO.

**Downy Woodpecker Info:** With the fall migration all but over now, we knew that it was probably going to be a resident bird. The downy woodpecker is one of the most common woodpecker species in Alberta and a resident bird species that spends the entire cold winter with us. Although they are commonly observed in the forests near Slave Lake, they are not caught regularly at the LSLBO. Less than 50 downy woodpeckers have been banded during the LSLBO's 15 seasons of operation. The downy woodpecker has a reputation as one of the most painful birds for banders. They get this reputation from their classic woodpecker pecking. These birds have a bill strong enough to drill holes in trees, and when they apply that wonderful strength and skill to the back of a bander's hand, results can be quite painful and even a little bloody. Richard has the war wounds this week to prove it. But that's okay because we still love them just the same.

**Other banding highlights this season:** This notable catch tops off an already exciting year full of many new birds for Richard and the LSLBO. This season Richard has had the opportunity to band four species that were new to him, one of which was also new to observatory!



**New banded species for the LSLBO:**

- ✓ July 22<sup>nd</sup> – The LSLBO caught and banded its first **Three-toed Woodpecker** during the MAPS program. Look left to see a very happy bander! This brings our **total species banded to 99 at the LSLBO.**

**New species for our Bander in Charge:**

- ✓ August 23<sup>rd</sup> –Richard banded his first ever **Pileated Woodpecker**; it was the second ever pileated woodpecker caught at the LSLBO.
- ✓ September 10<sup>th</sup> – Richard banded his first **Vesper Sparrow**, also the second one ever caught at the lab.
- ✓ September 26<sup>th</sup> – Richard banded his first ever **Harris's Sparrow**, the sixth of that species banded at the LSLBO.

**New birds for our LSLBO check list:** We observed some new birds hanging around the LSLBO banding lab as well. New birds include the first sighting of a **Brant** in the area; the brant is a large dark coloured goose that nests in the high arctic and typically migrates along the west coast. Also sighted was the first **Lark Sparrow** at the LSLBO, which is a species that is typically found in the badlands area of Alberta. We also spotted our first **Glaucous gull**, a west-coast gull species. These three new species put our bird checklist count to **247 species.**

**Other cool sightings this summer:** A **Western Meadowlark** was spotted at the lab this spring. Being a prairie bird so we don't get to see this one very often in the boreal forest. We received a call from a bird watcher in Joussard that they had a **Band-tailed Pigeon** in their yard this spring.

Also, **Lapland longspurs** were observed by Richard this spring as they passed through on their way north to the arctic tundra to breed.

All of this action at the banding lab means that we will be to spend the winter updating our checklists, brochures, and websites with all these new numbers.

## THANK YOU:

This is a major milestone for our banding program and as we celebrate this week, we have been taking the opportunity to reflect on all who made this event possible. The LSLBO would like to thank the many members, volunteers, staff and supporters who have provided incredible support and assistance to our research program over the last 15 years. A special thank you to Frank Fraser, Steve Lane, Stefan Jungkind and Marion Whitby who helped make the vision of the LSLBO a reality back in the very beginning. We want to acknowledge the Beaverhill Bird Observatory for all of their assistance during those early days and continued support during our research programs. We would like to thank the current and former LSLBO board members and staff who have worked tirelessly to get the organization to where it is now. Their passion, dedication and energy have been infectious. Former Bander in Charge Jul Wojnowski has continued to play an important mentorship role for our banding staff, even after he left our lab. A huge thank-you to our LSLBO members who continue to support the society every year. You have played a critical support role for the LSLBO and we value your commitment to the society. And we would especially like to thank all the volunteers who continue to help us out whenever we need assistance. Whether it is working at our banding program, volunteering at Songbird Festival, or helping with any other event; we are always overwhelmed by all the people ready to help (and have some fun). Who would have dreamt that we would go from banding in a lawn chair to celebrating the banding of 50,000 birds at the new Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation in just 15 short seasons. We can't begin to list all the people who have contributed to our success, but we want to send a very sincere thank you for everything that you have done for us. We couldn't have done it without you!

Finally, we would like to recognize some of the wonderful organizations that have supported LSLBO over the past 15 seasons. Thank you for your continued support of the research and education programs of the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory.

