

LESSER SLAVE LAKE BIRD OBSERVATORY

The Warbler



SPRING 2005
LSLBO No. 7

Chairman's Remarks

Robert W. Deacon

Welcome to Spring in the land of ice and snow. It really is that rarest of birds, an early end to winter's woes. All of you out there with feeders have probably noticed a marked increase in our feathered visitors and what seems to be early increases in migration levels. We look forward to a successful migration monitoring season and welcome our new Bander-in-Charge Richard Krikun and his assistant Sara Bumstead to the LSLBO station.

Business began earlier than usual this year, with a contract for Owl Surveys for the local forest products companies followed by another contract to perform breeding birds surveys beginning in late May. Our Executive Director, Amy Wotton, has indeed been busy beating the bushes for additional sources of revenue but more importantly establishing and expanding upon our relationships with local and international forest products companies. These contracts could well assist in our efforts to become self sufficient in order to guarantee our core research.

During the first five months of 2005 we have developed several new public presentations in cooperation with Alberta Parks staff - Jeff Manchak. The educational and entertaining evenings were hosted by Northern Lakes College and attracted increasing numbers of interested birders. The

Owl presentation, Winter Birds and the 25 most common Songbird sessions were well worth the time and we hope to be able to video tape our next program for further distribution.

Our continued efforts to secure an acceptable bid to construct the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation should have born fruit by the time of this issues publication. The third call for tender was closed on May 6 with two invited bidders. After a final review the week of May 30, selection will be made and construction can begin, hopefully by in July with completion scheduled for February 2006. This is the plan barring any more unforeseen delays. The group involved in this process has to be congratulated and applauded for their continued support of the core project. Alberta Community Development along with Alberta Infrastructure and our architects Manasc-Issac have gone the extra mile to get the plans off the table and out into the work site. It will be a day to celebrate when the heavy equipment arrives to continue the ground breaking started in October 2004. With that being said, I hope to be able to post progress reports and pictures on our web site over the next 8 months to keep you all informed.

I hope you all have a good summer birding!

NESTED IN THIS ISSUE:

Chairman's Remarks	1
Festival History	2
Board of Directors	3
Owl Monitoring	4
Feature Bird	5
Links for the Birds	5
Membership	6

This Just In!

Over 600 birds have been banded at the Lily Creek Banding Lab during the spring migration in 2005, and final numbers are being tallied! Thank you to all of the volunteers who have lent their time and skill to the LSLBO. We appreciate it!

LSLBO Songbird Festival: A Short History

The Songbird Festival, held at the observatory site on the east shore of Lesser Slave Lake, was first organized in 1995. The festival was held for the first five years on the long weekend in May, but weather considerations resulted in a change to the first weekend in June in 2000. Attendance at festivals has always been something to celebrate, from approximately 300 participants at the first festival to over five hundred participants in 2004. Increasingly, the festival draws a significant numbers of out of town guests, estimated at approximately half the festival participants in recent years.

The festival programs focus on outdoor birding activities. Bird banding demonstrations, tropical bird safaris (birding hikes in various settings) and a Sunday morning hike to Lily Lake have always been popular features. Guest experts participate in bird hikes and bird banding demonstrations and give talks. Children's activities at the festival include building bird houses and a human banding station. Newer activities added in recent years are the "habitat at home" presentations, where participants learn how to create bird friendly yards, "birding for beginners", and the participation of the Wildbird General Store of Edmonton who provide a "bird boutique" at the festival site.

A fund raising banquet was organized for the 1995 to 2002 festivals, and featured some excellent guest speakers and performers:

- 1995 Dr. Jim Butler, University of Alberta
- 1996 Precipice Theatre
- 1997 Dr. Jack Clements, Founder of Wild-

bird General Store and Dr. Richard Thomas, Scientist with Alberta Environmental Protection

- 1998 Roger Gagne
- 1999 Brian Keating, Director of Calgary Zoo
- 2000 Candace Savage, Author
- 2001 John Rappole, Smithsonian Institute
- 2002 Dr. C. J. Ralph, Humboldt State University/Klamath Bird Observatory

Funds for the observatory were also raised at banquets through silent auctions, in the first year offering wild fowl art. In subsequent years a wide variety of donations from local and Edmonton businesses were included in the silent auctions. In 2003 and 2004 a pancake breakfast was added to the on-site festival program.

Special guests gave informative presentations at a number of the festivals. In 1996 Myrna Pearman of

Ellis Bird Farm gave a presentation, and Margaret Chandler, Editor of Encompass Magazine offered a slide show and talk. Peter Brown of CBC Radio was the guest MC at the 1999 banquet, and Lisa Priestly of Bird Studies Canada and Phil Penner of Federation of Alberta Naturalists both gave informative talks at the 2003 festival. Phil Penner spoke about the Breeding Bird Atlas Project. The Beaver Hill Observatory collaborated with the LSLBO in 2003 and 2004, with a presentation focusing on the saw-whet owl in 2004. In 2004, festival participants also viewed the film "Winged Migration" at Northern Lakes College.

The LSLBO Songbird Festival has grown to be a popular and successful spring event in the Lesser Slave Lake area, attracting large numbers of local residents and visitors who come to enjoy a day with the birds.



Faces at the LSLBO

As you all know, the LSLBO has a very dedicated Board of Directors. These individuals put in countless hours into an organization that is important to them. We are very please to have these people on "our team".



Bob Deacon has been on the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory board of directors for the past 5 years. Most recently, he has been a driving force in the activities surrounding the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation. He has put in countless hours in meetings and planning sessions acting as a voice for the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory.

A long supporter of the LSLBO, **Peter Moore** is the acting vice-chairperson of the LSLBO. Peter's has a strong background in Board governance, policy, finance and marketing. He has been involved with the LSLBO for a number of years.

No picture available



Ronda Groom, our fundraiser extraordinaire, has sought out thousands of dollars in grants and donations from organizations across the province of Alberta. She is very actively involved in seeking out different funding opportunities each year.

Chris Sepos has been involved with the LSLBO since 2002. An interest in birds and volunteer work led her to the LSLBO. She became a board member and editor for The Warbler newsletter. Chris is also an active participant in the organization of the Annual Songbird Festival each year. Recently, she also accepted the position of Treasurer on the board of directors.



Chelsea Martin is one of the newest LSLBO board members. Chelsea accepted the role of secretary in 2004. She has a background in wildlife and renewable resources. She is often seen early in the morning at the banding lab and is a familiar face in presentations offered by the LSLBO.

Once an employee of the LSLBO, **Jul Wojnowski** has recently (2004) accepted a position on the board as the Director of Field Operations and Research. Jul is well suited to this position with a strong background in ornithology, bird banding and experimental design. Jul will guide the LSLBO and make recommendations concerning our projects and data.



Fun Bird



Fastest Flyer: Peregrine Falcon in a dive 270 kilometres per hour

Fastest on Foot: Ostrich at 72 kilometres per hour

Highest Flyer: Rupell's Vulture at 11 300 metres (it collided with a plane!)

Longest Voyage: Arctic Tern can migrate 25 000 km/ year

Hooting and Tooting with the Owls The Slave Lake Owl Monitoring Program

By: Richard Krikun

Nocturnal owl surveys began in 1999 within the Slave Lake region and are conducted every three years. Routes have been established within the Forest Management Areas (FMAs) of local forestry companies. The LSLBO was contracted by both Tolko Industries and Vanderwell Contractors (1971) Ltd. to run owl surveys within their respective FMAs in early spring of 2005.



Great Grey Owl

Owl monitoring is a tool used to monitor the sustainability of various forest management practices. Conducting the surveys every three years establishes a long-term database which will help detect changes in the relative abundance, density, diversity and overall population trends of owls. The survey routes have been chosen to encompass different forest stands and forestry practices within the FMAs. The ultimate goal is to determine if any specific forestry practice has negative effects on any owl populations.



The excitement of hearing a northern pygmy owl

The methodology for surveying owls is simple; stop every 1.6 kilometres along the route and broadcast a sequence of owl calls of various species in an attempt to invoke a response. Surveys are conducted during the peak breeding period of the owls when chances of owls response is greatest. The use of owl calls is one of the most effective methods of monitoring owl populations.

A total of 21 survey routes have been established. Each route has 12 nocturnal owl stations and six diurnal stations. Each route is surveyed twice, once mid-March and then again in mid-April. The focus species for the diurnal owl surveys are the northern pygmy owl and the northern hawk owl. The focus species for the nocturnal owl surveys are the great-horned owl, great grey owl, barred owl, long-eared owl, boreal owl

Species	Number Banded
Chipping Sparrow	122
Myrtle Warbler	114
White-throated Sparrow	60
Swainson's Thrush	41
Orange-crowned Warbler	23



Orange-crowned Warbler

This Issue's Featured Bird

Wood-Warbler Family (Parulidae)

CANADA WARBLER

Wilsonia canadensis

Length: ~13-14 cm (~5¼")

Wingspan: ~20 cm (~8")

Weight: 10.3 g (0.36 oz)

The Canada Warbler is one of the most common birds caught in the nets at the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory. It is easily identified by its large, conspicuous eye ring, which gives it a rather surprised look. The male's colouration is blue-grey on the back and wings, with yellow on the belly and breast and black streaking on the breast. The female is brown on the back and wings, with fainter streaking on the breast.



Colour-banded Canada Warbler

This wood-warbler is rather inquisitive and can quite often be seen "checking out" passers-by. Keep an eye out for its yellow-grey flash!

We are near the westernmost extent of this bird's range. It breeds as far west as north-eastern BC and across the extent of the boreal forest to the east.

As with most other songbirds, the Canada Warbler has a beautiful song. It seems to say "chip ditch-ity see-witch-ity" in a lively and expressive voice.

To aid forest managers, the LSLBO has taken on what is known as "The Canada Warbler Project." The goal of this project is to use Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) and vegetative data to develop habitat models for this bird. Ultimately, a paper will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal outlining the findings and containing recommendations for forest managers in the area.

Links for the Birds

Big Country Tourism	http://www.biglakecountrytourism.com/
Bird Studies Canada	http://www.bsc-eoc.org/
Ducks Unlimited – Western Canada	http://www.ducks.ca/conserv/wbf/index.html
Federation of Alberta Naturalists	http://www.fanweb.ca
Important Bird Areas of Canada	http://www.ibacanada.com/
LSLBO	http://www.lslbo.org
Wildbird General Store	http://www.wildbirdgeneralstore.ca/

Thanks to...



Public Service Commission of Canada

Commission de la fonction publique du Canada



To become a member of the LSLBO, please fill out the information below and send this form, along with a cheque or money order to the address below.

Name: _____ Telephone: (____) _____
First Last

Address: _____
Street City Province/State Postal Code/Zip

_____ Email (optional): _____
Country

Membership Categories (please check one):

Individual	\$25	r		
Family	\$60	r	Life	\$500 r
Partner	\$50	r	Platinum	\$1000 r
Supporter	\$100	r		
Benefactor	\$250	r		

Thank you for supporting the Lesser Slave Lake Bird



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