

The Warbler



Executive Director Update: Patti Campsall

As many of you already know, I recently took up the challenges of the LSLBO Executive Director position in January after working as an educator with the organization since the summer of 2005. I accepted the position because of my love for environmental education, the great research initiatives taking place here, and all the amazing opportunities that the new Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation (BCBC) provides the LSLBO and the broader birding community. They say "If you build it...they will come" and that has definitely been true for the first year of operation for the new centre.

A strong partnership with Alberta Parks created this new year round education and research facility. It now provides the LSLBO and Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park the opportunity to tell our story 365 days a year. We have only been open for a year and already we have a long list of highlights:

EDUCATION:

- Over **3600 visitors** to our centre from all across the world. They came from:
 - 78 Alberta communities
 - all provinces and territories
 - Nine states in the United States
 - And countries from around the world including.... Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Swit-

zerland, Mexico, and Poland.

- Visitors have been amazed by the centre and all the exciting things that are happening here.

- In our first year of operation, over **10,000 people** took part in a wide range of education and outreach programming by the BCBC education team.
- This spring alone, **over 1700 children** participated in exciting fieldtrips, banding lab tours, and classroom presentations provided by BCBC educators. Led by Jeff Manchak, the BCBC has built a strong curriculum based education program that can be delivered year round. Highlights include our new **Bird Banding 101** program and the "**LEEDing the way**" program focusing on the eco-friendly features of the new building.
- Last fall, we started up a **Junior Bird Club** for kids and now we have kicked off our "adult" **BCBC bird club** to give our members and their families a chance to socialize and learn more about birds in the Boreal Forest. New members are always welcome.
- Over the winter, **special community events** took place at the BCBC including Christmas in the Park, Frost Fest, and cross country skiing.

SUMMER 2007

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RESEARCH:

- The LSLBO has now officially banded **over 46,000 birds** since we started in 1994 including over 1000 birds during our 2007 spring migration monitoring program.
- Our **first visiting researchers** arrived at the BCBC to use our field station for their scientific research (see page 9). It was a great success (except for the frost), and we will busy promoting the centre for next summer.
- **A Northern saw whet owl banded by Richard Krikun in 2005 was re-captured** this spring in Saskatchewan. LSLBO recaptures by other banding stations is very rare and always exciting.
- The LSLBO shared our avian research expertise by completed **Owl Monitoring Surveys** for Tolko Industries and Vanderwell Contractors Ltd this spring.
- Our new on-site accommodation, **The Nest: a boreal hostel** opened for business in the fall of 2006. It was pri-

marily built to house visiting researchers, but it is available for short term bookings by tourists or local residents. Since it opened, it has been the site for relaxing corporate retreats, family get-togethers, quiet holidays and even a small wedding last month.

As you can see, the LSLBO has enjoyed many successes this year. Strong education and research programs combined with the new Boreal Centre has greatly raised public awareness in our society and the Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park.

We would like to thank all of our members for their continued support. Your LSLBO membership and more importantly, your personal support in our programs are why we have been able to accomplish so much since we started in 1994.

Thank you for everything.
Patti and the LSLBO Board.



Nocturnal Migration Monitoring Station coming to the BCBC.

This may look like your basic clay flowerpot on a roof, but this is really a high-tech nocturnal migration monitoring station. The LSLBO is working with Dr. Jeff Wells from the Boreal Songbird Initiative on setting up a local listening station to record the night sounds of migratory birds travelling over Slave Lake. Different birds have different sounds and our researchers will be working to determine what species are travelling overhead after hours. We hope to have it up and operational for Fall Migration. Stay tuned for the results.

For more information on these stations, check out **www.oldbird.org**.

13th Annual Songbird Festival

June 2-3, 2007

By Patti Campsall



The Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation was host to the 13th Annual Songbird Festival last month. Avid birders from across Alberta including Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary showed up bright and early for the “early bird hikes” (and of course the pancake breakfast!!). Later in the morning, a steady crowd of local residents came out to enjoy the facility and the many family friendly activities. Over the weekend, we had over 400 people participate in Songbird Events including:

Saturday:

Songbird Festival including Pancake breakfast, guided hikes, BCBC tours, Banding Lab Tours, children’s activities, bird house building, and special workshop including:

- Kelly Harlton—Wildside Wilderness Connections
- Cathy Wilcox—Grouard Historical Village, Northern Lakes College
- Jeff Manchak—Alberta Parks, Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park

Sunday:

Special Banding Lab Tours

3rd Annual Bird Run/Walk on the Trans-Canada trail at the BCBC.

Guided Hike to Lily Lake.

We would like to send a huge thank you to all the staff, volunteers and local supporters who helped make this event such a great success. We couldn’t have done it without you.



Above: The lucky banding lab tour group that were visiting Richard when he caught the 1000th spring migration bird!!

Right: Andrew Seal with his finished bird house





*Above: Kelly Harlton introducing his workshop group to the plants of the boreal forest.
Above right: Pancakes anyone!!
Right: 35 racers ready to depart on the 3rd Annual Bird Run/Walk at the BCBC.
Lower Left: the perfect BCBC kids craft—plastic pop bottle recycled into a bird feeder
Lower Right: the Meehan's from Calgary heading off on a guided hike at Songbird Festival*

Songbird Festival pictures by Pat Potvin.





Meet the summer staff at the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation!!

Left to Right:

Richard Krikun—Bander in Charge is returning for his 4th season with the LSLBO. His excitement in his job is infectious!!

Cori Klassen—Boreal Educator is being kept busy with school fieldtrips, classroom presentations and a summer day camp with the LSLBO and Lesser Slave Lake Education Society.

Meribeth Stott—Boreal Interpreter: she comes to us all the way from Ontario and has been a great addition to our education team

Tim Landon—Park Interpreter has returned for his second season in his “dream job”. We look forward to his creative singing talents at the amphitheatre programs.



Photo by Tim Landon



Photo by Tim Landon

Tyler Flockhart—Assistant Bander is hard at work right now on the LSLBO Canada warbler study and other special research projects at our lab.



Sara Scobie—Information Officer is bringing her bird banding experience from the lab last year to the visitors to the centre this summer. A great addition to the centre!

Education

BCBC/Parks Education Team enjoys a busy spring

Jeff Manchak—Visitor Service Specialist, Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park.

Spring has come and gone for the Education team here at the Boreal Centre and boy was it a busy one! On April 30th we welcomed a new staff member, Boreal Interpreter Meribeth Stott, to our education team for the summer. She hails from Ontario and has made an absolutely wonderful addition to our happy little family. A familiar face, Tim Landon is back for another summer as the Seasonal Park Interpreter for Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park and, as usual, is captivating and inspiring every audience he has.

On May 15th, we kicked off the programming season with our Environmental Education programs. From that point until the 26th of June we were run off our feet trying to keep up with the demand from the schools. During that stretch we delivered



Jeff Manchak passing out the highlight of our banding lab tours...GUMMY WORMS!!

over 48 hours of programming to nearly 750 participants. It was so busy we had to turn some groups away! What a year!

For the second year in a row, we have shared the services of a Boreal Educator with another of our educational partners, the Lesser Slave Forest Education Society. Since she started in March, Cori Klassen has provided exciting fieldtrips about the boreal forest to over 1000 participants.

We're now working our way through a busy summer schedule with two new evening programs, new guided walks and a smattering of new point duty programs. It's shaping up to be a busy summer full of happy visitors!

Here are some photographic highlights from our Spring Environmental Education programs.



Meribeth Stott with a Grade 2 class from St. Mary's of the Lake School talking about all the cool insects they will discover on their fieldtrip at the BCBC.



*Above: Grade one students practicing their net extraction techniques with replica birds.
Below: Success at last!. Note the proper use of the "photographers grip" on her bird. .*



*Top: How far does your bird fly in the winter?
Middle: Tim Landon with a local grade one class
enjoying our bird beak adaptation activity
Bottom: Cori Klassen and Meribeth Stott celebrating
the end of another successful fieldtrip day.*



BIRD CLUB UPDATES:

Junior Bird Club

The Junior Bird Club just celebrated it's first birthday!! A small, but hearty group of kids (and parents) took part in lots of exciting birding activities over the last year, but the highlight was definitely the trip to the Royal Alberta Museum last fall for a behind the scenes tour. The club members were in seventh heaven checking out all the extraordinary birds in the huge storage room and the live insects in the lab. We could have stayed there all day!! This spring, we sent out an invitation for new members to our members and we are happy to say that we had some new faces at our spring waterfowl watching evening at the Point. The kids were thrilled as a flock of pelicans glided overhead and a majestic Bald eagle stood watch on a tree behind us.



Right: First outing for the new BCBC Bird Club

BCBC Bird Club.

We have just kicked off the BCBC bird club geared for our adult members. This informal bird club is designed to get our LSLBO members together to share their interest and excitement in birding. We held our first outing this spring just in time to watch the annual migration of Tundra Swans through Slave Lake. We watched over 300 swans pass overhead that evening. There is lots of interest in this club and we are really excited about future outings with this fun group.

If you or your children are interested in joining either of these clubs, please call 849-8240 for more information.

Stay tuned for upcoming events!!

Left: Junior Bird Club Waterfowl Watching Fieldtrip at the Point.

*Back left to right: Kimberley, Nykaea, Rachel, Tim, Jeff
Front left to right: Patti, Chad.*



Research World

Project Cloudberry

Nina Hobbhahn

This summer, the BCBC was host to our first visiting researchers at our new BCBC research field station. Nina Hobbhahn & Magdalene Leung from the University of Calgary spent three short weeks in Northern Alberta and here is their story.

Between May 28 and June 13, 2007, some of you might have seen a small white car that looks like a shoebox on wheels in and around Slave Lake. The car (aka "The Box", a white Chevrolet HHR) may be mistaken for a tourist car, but was most often parked near bogs – much to the puzzlement of oil and gas workers! It contained two researchers from the University of Calgary and a lot of equipment needed for research work. Most importantly: Hip-waders and bug shirts! My field assistant Magdalene and I, Nina, came to Slave Lake to conduct a research project on the pollination biology of the cloudberry. The scientific name of the cloudberry is *Rubus chamaemorus*. It belongs to the rose family, which also includes roses, strawberries, apples, pears, and cherries. The cloudberry is a typical bog species that occurs together with peat mosses, blueberries, and cranberries. It has rather inconspicuous white flowers, but it is different from most species of flowering plants in that its flowers are either male or female. The flowers of most flowering plants combine both male organs (the stamens) and the female organ (the pistil) in each flower, but the cloudberry is an exception. Most flowers also produce nectar to reward the pollinators for their services, the transfer of pollen between flowers so that the plants can pro-

duce seeds. In the cloudberry only the male flowers reward pollinators with nectar and pollen, whereas the female flowers produce only the tiniest amount of nectar, and no pollen. I was interested in how the female flowers can get away with basically not rewarding their pollinators – bumblebees and flies are very eager to collect rewards from flowers, because they constitute food for the pollinators and their offspring, and discriminate against flowers that do not offer rewards for the services received, i.e. the "cheaters".

The hypothesis of my study, which is part of my PhD on pollination biology, was that the female cloudberry flowers can get away with cheating because they need only very few pollinator visits to receive enough pollen for full fruit set. To find out whether this hypothesis is true, I set up some experiments in a beautiful bog north of the old Smith Highway. The experiments are very simple and consist in marking target flowers and examining pollen removal in male flowers and pollen deposition in female flowers when the

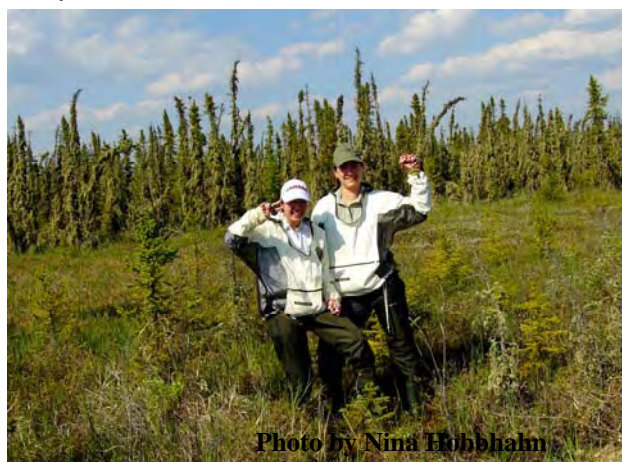


Photo by Nina Hobbhahn

Nina and Maggie in their fashionable bug shirts and hip waders. Welcome to Northern Alberta!!

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flowers wilt, and fruit set in the female flowers. These experiments provide only very basic information about the pollination biology of the species, and I had planned many more experiments and observation of pollinator behavior, but unfortunately a frost killed all flowers, so that I didn't have flowers to conduct further experiments with. The cloudberry produces its flower buds in the fall of the previous year and brings out the flowers before the leaves in spring, so that a spring frost can mean a complete failure of sexual reproduction in this species. However, the cloudberry also reproduces asexually through underground runners (similar to the strawberry, which produces above-ground runners), so that a failure of sexual reproduction is not fatal – the plants simply produce more buds in fall and hope for a frost-free spring next year! For Magdalene and me the frost meant that we had to leave beautiful Slave Lake and

return to Calgary to examine the data we got in the laboratory. We hope to get more data on the pollination biology of the cloudberry next year!

We greatly enjoyed our stay in the Boreal Centre of Bird Conservation and Slave Lake – the BCBC staff was incredibly helpful and supportive, and accommodation, office, and laboratory facilities enable productive research work. The surroundings of Slave Lake have just the right mixture of wilderness and accessibility, so that different types of habitat (e.g. bogs, swamps, forest patches) are easily accessible, and all land owners and users we met were very friendly and supportive. We will recommend the station and area to other researchers from a range of Canadian universities – maybe Slave Lake will soon experience an influx of researchers! But hopefully they will have a vehicle that is better suited to Northern Albertan conditions than our white shoe-box!

Thank you very much for having us in the BCBC and all your help and support!

Nina Hobbhahn & Magdalene Leung



Above: the female cloudberry flower...just before the frost.

Right: Maggie stretched out on top of their research field vehicle affectionately known as "the box"

Photos by Nina Hobbhahn



The 2007 Spring Banding Season at the LSLBO

**By Richard Krikun,
LSLBO Bander in Charge**

The LSLBO opened for its 14th year of spring migration monitoring on April 24th. This is the usual time of year that the banding station opens the mistnets. It became quickly apparent that some of the early spring migrants had already arrived on the first morning. An eastern phoebe was singing near the banding lab, a few song sparrows were spotted along the shore, American robins were milling around the parking area, a lone yellow-rumped warbler flew overhead, and flocks of greater white-fronted geese migrated past the observatory. Except for those few observations, bird activity was generally low, which is what we expect and want. Our goal is to start monitoring before the bulk of migration begins. However, it would have been nice to have been able to open the banding lab a few days earlier. A weather front hit Slave Lake bringing cold temperatures and snow, which temporarily grounded the migrating dark-eyed juncos. For three or four days there were hundreds of junco's foraging in the grass and emptying local birdfeeders. Unfortunately, the banders were still working on other projects and were not able to open the nets until the after the majority of the juncos had already passed through.

The banding crew this year consisted of two full time staff. I have become quite attached to the LSLBO and returned for my fourth summer banding. The banding assistant for 2007 saw the return of Tyler Flockhart to the LSLBO. Tyler banded at the station from 2002 to 2004. Tyler had just completed his Masters degree at the

University of Saskatchewan and was looking forward to a relaxing summer of birding and to band a pile of Canada warblers, allegedly his favorite songbird. The banding station also had the support from the staff at the Boreal Centre and a volunteer from Calgary.



Tyler holding one of his beloved Canada warblers

Monitoring activities were conducted everyday from April 24th to June 10th. Daily monitoring included banding, conducting the standardized migration counts, and documenting observations. After 48 days of mistnetting, we had banded 1085. This is the fifth highest spring banding total in the LSLBO's record books. Banding was steady throughout the entire spring period. Typically, during periods of heavy songbird passage, there can be a few days when the mistnets are dripping with birds and things can quickly turn quite

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hectic. But this did not occur this spring, the busiest day of the spring was 82 birds banded, a reasonably busy day, but not too crazy. The diversity of species captured in the nets was good with 48 different species banded. The top five species banded this spring were: Swainson's thrush (145), white-throated sparrow (136), American redstart (89), least flycatcher (62), and black-capped chickadee (55).



A Swainson's thrush, the top species banded this spring.

Now that the banding totals and species lists have been compiled, we can look at some of the more interesting birds that were captured over the course of the spring. We banded the LSLBO's very first spring boreal chickadee and only the second spring bay-breasted warbler - a beautiful female in breeding plumage. Unfortunately, we did not capture any birds that would be considered unusual or rare in this area. A number of species broke previous LSLBO spring banding records (the number banded this spring is in parenthesis): black-capped chickadee (55), common yellowthroat (37), mourning

warbler (30), ovenbird (44), Lincoln's sparrow (43), white-throated sparrow (136), song sparrow (22), and western tanager (3). While these birds reached all time LSLBO highs, a few species that are normally abundant in the nets were almost absent. Only 9 yellow warblers, 37 yellow-rumped warblers, and 13 chipping sparrows were banded. These are very low banding totals for species which can be potentially captured in the hundreds in a spring.

While not banding, we spend our time identifying and counting the birds that are migrating through the area, and give a broader picture as to the true migratory count than banding alone would provide. For instance, while chipping sparrows and yellow-rumped warblers had low banding totals, there were several days during the spring where these two species were migrating over in the hundreds. While the list of species counted is far too long to summarize in this article, there were three particularly noteworthy observations to share. A Townsend's solitaire paused for a short rest on April 27th, a three-toed woodpecker flew past on May 10th, and a trumpeter swan was seen swimming in front of the lab on May 27th.



A female bay-breasted warbler

Peter Pyle Banding Workshop—May 4-6, 2007

By Patti Campsall

This spring, the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory hosted a very special Bird Banding Workshop at the new Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation. Twenty banders from across Western Canada came to our centre to learn from Peter Pyle, the guru of bird banding. He is the author of *Identification Guide of North American Birds*...the “bible” that sits on every bird bander’s desk. It was an intense three days of identifying, aging and sexing birds based on molting patterns and feather quality. Unfortunately, it rained all day Saturday forcing indoor sessions with “birds on a stick”, but Sunday morning was absolutely beautiful and they had the chance to spend time out at our lab. Previous workshops with Peter have been “skunked” for live birds, but we are happy to report that the LSLBO pulled through with over 20 birds in the nets that morning thanks to an influx of White-throated sparrows. Way to go Richard and Tyler!! The participants were thrilled with the workshop and the facilities at the BCBC. It was a great warm-up to the Annual General Meeting for the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network that will be hosted by the BCBC this October.



Above: Workshop participants at BCBC

Below: Peter Pyle (centre) checking out another White-throated sparrow.



Above: Peter Pyle working with students in the BCBC lab.

Below: What do you use when it is raining...birds on a stick.



In the News:

Alberta Trapper Association Annual Convention — High Prairie, AB June 23, 2007

The Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory received an award of recognition at the recent Alberta Trappers Association Annual Convention in High Prairie. For the last three years, the LSLBO has been providing a free bird house building activity for the children of the convention participants. Since the LSLBO started, we have built a total of 225 bird houses at this event. A special thank you goes out to the Walde Family (Darrel, Joanne, Fred and Elvera) for creating the bird house kits that were used for this event as well as our annual Songbird Festival.



Above left: Gordy Klassen, President of the ATA presenting Patti Campsall with a recognition plaque for the LSLBO.



Above right: Cole Cross, son of a High Prairie Fish and Wildlife Officer with his finished birdhouse.

Right: The Arnell family from Slave Lake volunteered to help build birdhouses at the convention. Once again, it was the "hit" of the day as we spent 6 hours helping the kids construct their works of art.

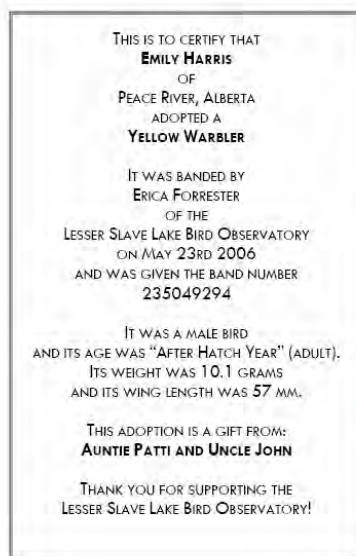


ADOPT A BOREAL BIRD!!

Do you have someone in your life who has everything they need...and you never know what to get them for a gift? Why don't you send them an "Adopt a Boreal Bird" from the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory.

You can adopt a range of birds species that have been banded at the LSLBO banding lab including Northern Saw-Whet Owl, Sharp Shinned Hawk, Canada Warbler, Yellow-rumped warbler, Black-Capped Chickadee, and American Redstart. Prices range from \$10.00 to \$50.00 depending on the species selected. You receive a special "Certificate of Adoption" with a picture of your adopted bird as well as updates if it is ever recaptured in the future.

For more information on the Adopt a Boreal Bird program, you can contact us at 849-8240 or email us at info@borealbirdcentre.ca



The Yellow warbler is one of western Alberta's most common wood warblers and they are easily spotted in the forest. Often called "wild canaries", the breeding males have a gorgeous red streaked breast, bright yellow body and mossy green wings. They frequent the interior forest where the males love to forage high in the trees where they perform their territorial displays and songs. Their favourite foods are caterpillars, inchworms, beetles and aphids, but they will also eat berries. They are frequent victims of the Brown-headed cowbirds who lay their eggs in the Yellow warblers nest in the hope that these diligent parents will foster their young. Fortunately, the Yellow warblers can recognise the foreign eggs and build a new cup-shaped nest right on top of the old ones leaving the cow bird eggs to die. They incubate 4-5 eggs for about 12 days. These tiny birds would have spent the winter as far south as Peru, Bolivia and the Brazilian Amazon and as you prepare for summer holidays, they will complete their 5000 mile round trip journey back to the northern forests.



This "Adopt a Boreal Bird" program directly supports the many research initiatives of the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory. The LSLBO is the northernmost member of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network. Our focus is to promote bird conservation through research and education. Each year, we learn more about our banded birds through a variety of research programs including our Migration Monitoring program, the Canada warbler study, and the Northern Saw-whet Owl Fall banding program. Since 1984, we have banded over 45,000 birds. To learn more about the research programs of the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory, you can check out our website at: www.lslbo.org

Crows at Tolko Industries OSB Mill, Slave Lake.



Warren Sand has been watching a pair of crows nest at the old Tolko mill for the last three years. He sent in some pictures from this years batch. The top picture was taken on May 31st. The bottom picture shows the last young crow ready to leave the nest on July 4th.



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