

The Warbler



Beautiful Wilson's warbler captured at the LSLBO banding lab this spring.

Executive Director Update: Patti Campsall

I can't believe that it has been a year since the last Warbler newsletter. It has been another hectic year of excitement and growth for the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory, especially our new role at the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation (BCBC). The year has just "flown" by...and we were so busy that we missed our winter edition of the newsletter. So I thought that I would share some of the highlights of our year with you (better late than never).

Did you know.....

- **Over 12,000 people** have visited the BCBC since the LSLBO began operation of the centre in June 2006.
- **BCBC visitation increased by 56%** in the second year of operation thanks to all the hard work of our dedicated staff.

- The LSLBO is celebrating it's **SUMMER 2008 15th year** of continuous migration monitoring this summer and our Bander in Charge was even highlighted in a **National Geographic** Wild Chronicles video project.
- We have now banded **99 different species** with the recent Three-toed woodpecker captured during MAPS.
- The LSLBO hosted the **6th General Meeting of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network** last fall.
- The first peer-reviewed article from the LSLBO's Canada Warbler Study was published last December in the Wilson's Journal of Ornithology: **"Migration timing of Canada Warblers near the northern edge of their breeding range"** by D.T. Tyler Flockhart, MSc.
- BCBC staff provided **education and interpretive programming to over 9000 people** last year.
- Our **year-round community outreach program** for the Slave Lake area has continued to flourish with the addition of winter snowshoe hikes and bark carving courses.

And of course we can't think about last year without remembering the tragic loss

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of our executive assistant and friend, Sara Scobie. As a long term legacy for Sara, we have formally established the Sara Scobie Memorial Fund to help support the special research and education programs that she loved so much. To date, this fund has helped to support the initial development of a new *Discovery Centre* with hands-on activities for the entire family as well as a *Reading Corner* at the BCBC. Also, our new interpretive trail was officially dedicated as the Sara Scobie Songbird Trail this spring. For more information on the Sara Scobie Memorial Fund, please visit the LSLBO website: www.lslbo.org



Future Initiatives:

We know that you have been enjoying the short BCBC email updates that we have been sending out so we have decided to set up a **boreal bird blog site** this fall for the BCBC and LSLBO. We are hoping that it will help our staff and members share stories, pictures and information. For those low tech fans (like my husband), we will be publishing the Warbler on a more frequent basis...we promise!

This fall, the LSLBO is completing its 15th year of migration monitoring on Lesser Slave Lake, so it will be time to celebrate

our successes as well as take a good look at the data we have collected. We have one of the longest continuous avian population data sets in the boreal forest, and we need to see what that data is telling us. This fall, Richard Krikun, LSLBO Bander in Charge, will be completing a **15 year Technical Report** and we promise to keep you posted on the results. As for the celebrating part, there are plans to organize a **special social evening** in conjunction with our Northern Saw-whet Owl program. Stay tuned for more information.

With the arrival of our new education team leader, Chris Dodds - AB Parks, we will be expanding our education programs. We are excited to announce that the BCBC will be able to offer **video conferencing education programs** to students across the province this fall. Also, we will be expanding our community outreach programming. Special **Art Courses** will be offered as well as several joint programs with the Slave Lake Adult Education Committee. And of course, we are busy planning new activities for our members. If you have any ideas on things that you would like to see happening out at the BCBC, please give me a call anytime.

The BCBC is more than just a building. I have always said that the centre is truly at its best when it is alive with excited visitors...and we are making that happen!! The LSLBO has been an integral part of the success of the new centre and I want to thank all the LSLBO/BCBC members, volunteers and staff who have supported the centre and myself personally during these hectic first few years. We couldn't have done it without you. Thank you!!
Patti



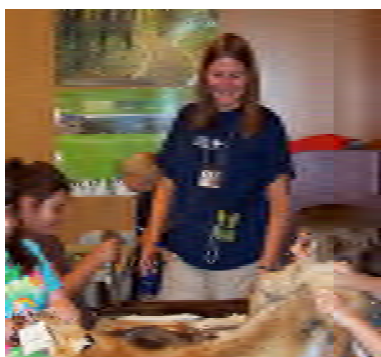
Faces at the Boreal Centre!

By Nicole Linfoot, Boreal Centre information officer.

Chris Dodds- Leaving his beloved Lake Superior, Chris came out to the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation in April as the new Alberta Parks **Heritage Appreciation Supervisor**. Chris feels that it is his personal mission to get everyone at the Boreal Centre outside and active, including every staff member. His enthusiasm is contagious and it's obvious why he's so good at his job.



Tim Pittman- This summer's **Conservation Officer** is all the way from Ontario. Tim always has a smile on his face (except when he's doing paperwork on bear sightings) and his love for his job is obvious. He especially enjoys going the extra mile and helping out with children's programming at the centre.



Cori Klassen- Cori is seemingly always busy with a wide array of programs for school children and public of all ages. She is the **Boreal Educator** at the centre and she also works for the Lesser Slave Forest Education Society as part of our special educational partnership.

Ian Watson- Our summer **Boreal Interpreter** also comes to us from Ontario...do you see a trend? Ian is one of the nicest guys you will ever meet...he is seemingly incapable of getting angry. He is always laughing, smiling and kids love him.



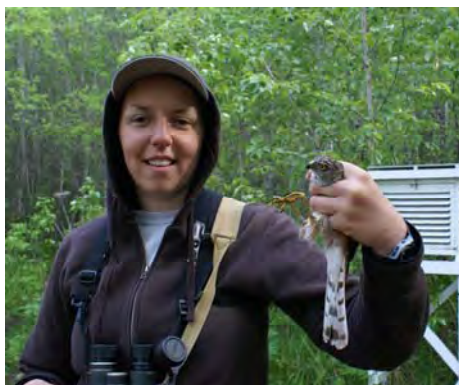
Richard Krikun- Back for his fifth season with the LSLBO, our **Bander in Charge** still loves his job as much as he did the first day he arrived in Slave Lake. Every cool new bird in the nets is like Christmas all over again and it's hard not to get infected and inspired by his love for birds.

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Patti Campsall— Our indispensable **Executive Director** at the Centre. Patti's love for birds, children, and education are obvious as she tries to stay active in everything happening at the centre. We don't know where she gets her energy!

Tim Landon— This is Tim's third season here as the **Seasonal Park Interpreter** at the Boreal Centre, and he is happy to be back at his "dream job". As in previous years he always has a smile on his face and continues to entertain everyone with his wonderful music (gotta love that red guitar!).



Aurore Perot— This years **Assistant Bander** with the LSLBO comes to us all the way from France. Aurore's fun-loving spirit is infectious and she is always looking for a new game, whether its Frisbee, juggling, or axe throwing! She is equally enthusiastic about birds and loves working with them. She has provided great support for our research program.

Angella Powell— Angella is a full-time volunteer and **Artist in Residence** at the Centre. She looks after the Nest: A Boreal Hostel, as well as finds time to crochet and paint wonderful pieces of art to add to our gift store. She is extremely giving, taught everyone how to crochet, and bakes an amazing loaf of bread!!



Nicole Linfoot— Lastly, myself, the **Information Officer**. I came to work here after falling in love with the Centre when I came up here with my college for a field trip. I love going out to the banding lab on my days off and getting the chance to work with the birds.

14th Annual Songbird Festival May 31 and June 1, 2008

By Patti Campsall

Over 200 people headed out to the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation to take part in this annual celebration of spring migration. Saturday was a relaxed and friendly day involving: eating tasty pancakes in the early hours of the morning, enjoying a leisurely boreal bird experience hike with fellow enthusiasts, catching the excitement of our research staff on a banding lab tour, learning something new about the boreal forest or alternative energy at a free workshop and listening to children have fun, especially building the amazing birdhouses donated every year by the Walde Family. We even had some special feathered mascots show up...a complete surprise and the hit of the day for our young visitors.

Visitors especially enjoyed the special workshops held on Saturday morning. Northern Lakes College staff from the Grouard Historical Village traveled from the other side of the lake to share their knowledge of medicinal plants as well as highlight the many uses of moose by First Nation people. Kelly Harlton with Wildside Wilderness Connection took visitors for a "walk on the wild side" and introduced them to some of the secrets to wilderness survival including how to make a willow whistle. Dave McConnell and Margaret Cardinal hosted a virtual tour of their Jousard home which is "off the grid" and a true example of living a green lifestyle. And we finished off the day with a special presentation by our own former Bander in Charge, Tyler Flockhart on the latest results of the LSLBO's Canada Warbler study. He revealed some incredible video

footage of the nesting behavior of this special species. The Canada warbler was recently listed as threatened by COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of endangered Wildlife in Canada), so it was very exciting to hear about this important and unique LSLBO study; the only one of its kind studying this species. We were very thrilled that Tyler took time out of his honeymoon to spend with us at Songbird Festival. Thank you to all the presenters who generously donated their time

On Sunday, the LSLBO hosted the 4th Annual Bird Run/Walk with a great crowd turning up to enjoy the Trans-Canada trail at the BCBC. In recognition of their completion of this fun event, each runner/walker became the proud parent of a beautiful Ovenbird through the LSLBO Adopt a Bird program. Sunday banding lab tours and a hike on the Whispering Sands trail at Devonshire beach closed out another successful Songbird Festival

Mark it in your calendars, the 15th Annual Songbird Festival will be held on June 6 & 7, 2009.



Our little owl mascot, Zoe Ey enjoys a tasty pancake breakfast.

2007 Songbird Festival Highlights

Top Left: Tim Landon from the BCBC gets ready to head out on a Boreal Bird Experience hike with some keen birders of all ages.

Middle left: Lawrence Loyie (Northern Lakes College) sharing First Nations traditions at the workshop tent.

Middle right: Tyler Flockhart, LSLBO, reveals the secret breeding life of the Canada Warbler.

Lower left: Happy crafters create a colourful bird mobile.

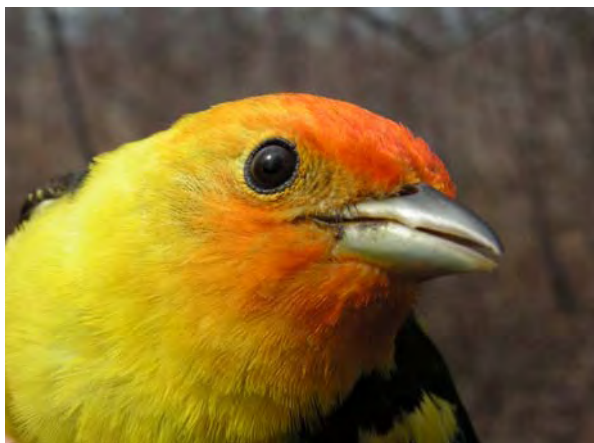
Lower right: Volunteers Karina Gramiak and Chad Knoot sell tickets to build a special LSLBO birdhouse.



Monitoring Activities at the LSLBO

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

From mid-April to mid-October the LSLBO's migration monitoring station is in full operation. The LSLBO conducts five projects throughout the six months of operation, which keeps the banders busy counting and banding birds nearly every day. 2008 marks the 15th year that the LSLBO has been conducting monitoring programs. Since 1994 the LSLBO has focused on the three core monitoring programs: spring migration, fall migration, and the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program. The goal of these three programs is long-term population monitoring during migration and on the breeding grounds. Long-term monitoring is critical in determining population trends of migrant songbirds. The longer and more complete the data set is, the more precise the trends become. We follow strict protocols in all monitoring activities to ensure that the data is comparable between years. Banding and visual counts are used to estimate the populations of birds during a season then the data is compared with previous years to determine if there is any change in the populations of species being monitored. Although the monitoring programs at the LSLBO are very important, there are some perks to the job. Counting birds is a great way to spend a summer and banding lets you enjoy the brilliant plumages that these songbirds possess.



Western Tanager

The two other projects conducted by the LSLBO were implemented in 2004. The first was the Canada Warbler Project. Little is known about the breeding ecology of the Canada warblers and their populations are in decline so the LSLBO is in a position to collect some very important data on this species. Canada warblers breed in high densities in the forest surrounding the banding lab so the ability to gather data is quite easy and can be incorporated into the other monitoring projects. The goal of the project is to track territories, locate nests, monitor nests, and observe general behaviour of the birds. Unfortunately, this project is very time consuming and with the manpower available, it is impossible to make this study as rigorous as we would like. But from the data collected so far, some very interesting information has been gathered. For instance, we know that nestlings are able to leave the nest at eight days old and female Canada warblers have one of the shortest stays on the breeding grounds of all songbird species.



A three day old Canada Warbler

Northern saw-whet owl fall migration monitoring was also started up at the LSLBO in 2004. This project involves banding migrating saw-whets every night through September and October. There are more owls out there than people tend to think. Between 2004 and 2007, the LSLBO has banded 533 northern saw-whet owls, that's an average of 133 every year. This is a great project because it gives you the excuse to stay up ridiculously late to watch the stars, and sometimes northern lights, and look at owls. The focus species of the project is saw-whet owls, but a few other interesting things have turned up in the nets.

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We have captured long-eared owls, a barred owl, three northern flying squirrels, and a handful of bats.



Barred Owl

In the 15 years that the LSLBO has been operating we have banded over 49,000 birds. The 50,000 should occur sometime late in fall 2008. The top species banded are yellow-rumped warblers, yellow warblers, Tennessee warblers, American redstarts and Swainson's thrush. These five species make up almost half of all the birds banded at the LSLBO. Ninety nine (99) different species have been banded at the station. New species in the nets are becoming rare, but these new species can still surprise you in the nets. The newest species occurred on July 22, 2008 at one

of the MAPS stations. The LSLBO banded its first three-toed woodpecker. For any bird enthusiast, encountering a new species is a wonderful event. For banders, being able to band a new species is just as good.



Three-toed Woodpecker



The LSLBO hosted the 6th General Meeting of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network in October 2007. Representatives from 18 banding stations across Canada shared highlights of their research programs and learned about new initiatives. It was a wonderful opportunity to share information and ideas.

Education World

By Chris Dodds
Heritage Appreciation Supervisor (and
BCBC education team leader)

Well hello, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Chris Dodds and I am the new Heritage Appreciation Supervisor for Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park. I have just recently migrated here from Ontario, and feel as if I am still just a fledging here in Alberta. Luckily, everyone here at the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation is incredibly helpful. We have a great education team, Tim Landon has returned for another season as the Parks Interpreter, and joining him is Ian Watson, as the LSLBO Boreal Interpreter. Cori Klassen, as the Boreal Educator has been a great help as well. All four of us and sometimes even Nicole Linfoot, have been busy delivering programs this spring. Demand continues to increase for our environmental education programs, and it will hopefully increase in the future. We are currently full swing into our summer interpretation schedule, with four amphitheatre shows, two new family programs, and a smattering of point duties and hikes. So if you find yourself looking for something to do on a Saturday night, come on down to the amphitheatre and check out one of our shows. This winter will see the addition of a video conference studio to the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation. With this technology we now have the ability to reach schools all over Alberta and even Canada...digitally bringing the BCBC to students everywhere.

Being new to the Boreal Centre of Bird Conservation, and this being my first article in the Warbler, I thought I would start off by providing some of my first impres-

sions of this wonderful place;

- First off, Slave Lake is not a small town, anyplace with a Wal-mart, Tim Horton's and a Sobeys's should be just called a town.
- To be a Bird Bander, you must have the unique skill of keeping odd hours. Waking up at 4:00 am is not for the faint of heart.
- In April, it is still possible to get snowed in and trapped at the Boreal Centre. (After three days and a few unsuccessful escape attempts, we were finally rescued by the Ministry of Transportation snowplough)

Even though I have only been at the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation for four months, I feel as if I have been welcomed into a new family. Everyone here is extremely friendly and helpful. Above all, I would just like to say that it is a privilege to work here at the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation, and I am looking forward to the many exciting opportunities here.

Happy Birding



Local grade 2 students search for insects on the Songbird Trail during a spring fieldtrip.

The Death of Sammy and Sally Spruce



The Boreal Forest Discovery Camp presents

“ A Forest Bureau of Investigation Mystery”

By Cori Klassen a.k.a. Inspector Killdeer

It was a hot and sunny day in July when the **Forest Bureau of Investigation (FBI)** got the call. Two Spruce trees had died in the forest near the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation and foul play was suspected. Senior Agents Queen Bee, Captain Alder and Inspector Killdeer brought their team of junior agents in training from the Slave Lake Summer Splash Program to the BCBC and with their assistance this baffling mystery began to unravel.

After carefully examining the evidence at the crime scene, the agents had a good idea on the identity of the prime suspects in the investigation. With the help of Conservation Officer Tim Pittman, the suspects were rounded up and interrogated by the junior agents. Wally the woodpecker, Charlie the carpenter ant, Happy Hiker, Park Patrolman Paul, Samantha Squirrel and Bertie the Beaver all gave details of their relationship with Sammy and Sally and provided information about their whereabouts at the time of death.

The agents then studied the physical evidence which included: a thorough investigation of Sammy and Sally's neighbourhood, what type of soil they lived in, any next of kin, life history, and known associates. They also learned about the animals of the boreal forest and examined the wildlife signs in the area to see what impact they might have had on the victims.

Armed with their new found wealth of knowledge, the junior agents were ready to report their findings. Through their investigation, they discovered both Wally the Woodpecker and Charlie the Carpenter Ant clearly played a part in the death of Sammy and Sally Spruce. Unfortunately before their arrest, both suspects fled the scene and are still at large.

If you know the whereabouts of these individuals, or if you have a forest mystery that needs solving, please contact Queen Bee at the Lesser Slave Forest Education Society.

The Death of Sammy and Sally Spruce Continued....



Above left —Collecting evidence at the scene of the crime: how old was Sammy when he died...count the rings!!



Above right—Agents learn about the wildlife that live in the boreal forest. Who was at the crime scene? What evidence did they leave behind?

Right— FBI Junior Agents help Queen Bee and Conservation Officer Tim Pittman interrogate Happy Hiker (one of the prime suspects) at the BCBC. Did she have an alibi for the time of the murder?!!



Below—The happy graduation class for the 2008 Forest Bureau of Investigation celebrate another successfully solved case.



My summer with the "Bee C Bee C"

by Ian Watson, Boreal Interpreter.



Above: Ian shares the secrets of the birds and the bees with visitors at the Marten River Campground. As you can see, he has quickly learnt how to draw an audience with his stylish bee costume.

Hi everyone! My name is Ian Watson and I'm the Boreal Interpreter for the summer. And what a summer it has been!

My first two months were spent furiously planning new programs, learning lines as well as leading environmental education programs and learning the ropes around the Boreal Centre. Some of the environmental education programs I took part in included tours of our banding lab, Bird Banding 101, Bear Awareness, Nature Explorers and Lost in the Woods. Talk about busy!

Now that camping season has arrived, I've been spending most of my time putting on programs at the Marten River

campground. This summer, I'm taking part in Blackpoll Express; a theatrical performance chronicling the journey of one little blackpoll warbler on migration. I'm also running a point duty on pollinators and a guided hike on the uses of plants. In addition to all of that, I've also created two family programs; one on bird ID (Name That Bird – An Avian Whodunit) and the other on soils (The Dirt on Soil Science). I always love to have new, enthusiastic participants at my programs so if you're looking for something fun to do this summer, please keep an eye out for our events posters around Slave Lake and the Marten River campground.

I hope to see you!

Community Outreach Program

Over the past winter, one of our major goals was to build a strong relationship between the local community of Slave Lake and the new Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation. Our staff worked very hard to develop new partnerships and programs, and here are a few of the highlights of the past year.



Above: The BCBC hosted the Slave Lake Corporate Challenge this spring. Participants were put through a rigorous set of challenges designed to test their team work and mental prowess including: a very challenging bird ID test, speed bird banding, nest building (see above), and a hunt for rare birds hidden around the centre.



Above: Frost Fest 2008 participants check out an old hollow Poplar tree during a snow show hike on the Songbird Trail.



Above: The BCBC helped organize the Home Energy Alternative Tradeshaw held in Slave Lake this spring. Staff and volunteers hosted a tradeshaw booth, building tours, a kids kornor program, and poster contest. But the highlight for attendees was our composting toilet at the booth!

Left: Terry Kristoff teaching fire lighting survival skills during our Christmas in the Park last December.



Above: Local firefighters from ASRD came to the BCBC to teach the Slave Lake Boys and Girls Club about fire suppression methods as a part of our Boreal Adventure Day program
Below: Beginning bark carver Kim Klassen works on her "wood spirit" carving during one of three workshops hosted at the BCBC last winter.



Above: Carol Kelly from the Medicine River Rehabilitation Centre introduced Otis, a Great Horned Owl at a special presentation to highlight the important work of this organization.



Above: Local quilters took over the BCBC during a "Quilting Chicks Retweet" in the spring.

Below: Richard Krikun demonstrates how to band a Northern Saw-whet owl to our Junior Bird Club.



Summer time is for the birds!



It's summer time in the boreal forest and although most birds have fledged and left the nest, some juveniles are still living with their parents. Every summer, the LSLBO/BCBC gets calls about baby birds that people have found and they want to know how to look after them. Remember that although baby birds can be noisy and often look abandoned, they usually have parents that are caring for them! Please don't try to rescue or adopt baby birds unless you have **SOLID** evidence that the parents are dead or have been chased off. Much as we try, we can't provide the care that a mother bird gives to them. It is very difficult to foster a young bird and the success rate can be very low.

Secrets on the Trail

Cool Orchids!



Spotted coralroot (picture on the right) are very common small orchids that can be found in the Slave Lake area, but **Striped coralroot** (the one on the left) is a plant of the extreme southern parts of Alberta according to most plant field guides. Because of the vast difference in range between these two species, you can imagine Nicole's excitement this spring when she found this little striped coralfoot so far out of its natural range.

So pretty!!

Photo Credit: Nicole Linfoot



THANK YOU!!

Summer is a time when wonderful surprises arrive every day with each wave of migration. But it wasn't just interesting migratory birds that arrived at the centre this year!!

One of the best surprises was when Aaron Lehman, retired Slave Lake teacher and LSLBO member recently donated a lifetime of sample collecting to the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation. His treasures included: bones and skulls from a wide variety of animals, tracks, nests, shells, furs, rocks, botanical samples and much more. Aaron's collection will be enjoyed by the many children and adults taking part in the education programs at the BCBC as well as summer visitors from around the world. Through a special educational partnership, these resources will also be shared with the Lesser Slave Forest Education Society education programs. Both organizations would like to thank Aaron Lehman for his wonderful donation to our community. We would also like to acknowledge some of the other wonderful gifts that we have recently received. You have all helped to make our summer at the BCBC!!

Aaron Lehman presenting his collection to the BCBC including a huge moose skull to Patti Campsall and Tim Landon, AB Parks.



Former Slave Lake resident Gerry Labrie donated a beautiful hand-carved Western Tanager to the LSLBO this spring. It is a true work of art and we will display it proudly at the new centre.



Ken Orich, LSLBO member and avid birder recently retired from the Forest Service, but before he departed, he presented his collection of raptors to the LSLBO. They have already been a great addition to our education programs.

Sometimes our gifts come in the form of wonderful, giving people. The Walsh family from Ardrossan volunteer at the BCBC as part of the Alberta Parks Volunteer Host program. They had so much fun last summer that they decided to spend the entire month of July with us this year. They are a wonderful addition to our family at the centre!!



If you haven't been to the BCBC lately, you need to come and check out the creative and colourful displays created by our young summer volunteers. They were a wonderful spark of energy and excitement. Thank you!! (left to right) Michael Walsh, Beth Richels, Becky Walsh, Iris Koester, and Allison Richels.



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