

The Warbler



LSLBO beats the old station record of 26 sharp-shinned hawks banded during fall migration. 29 so far this fall and still counting!

Executive Director Update By Patti Campsall

I know that I have dedicated and passionate staff at the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation (BCBC) when I ask for newsletter articles about the exciting things happening in their world and we have a 18 page newsletter...so I will keep this short!

The LSLBO strives to provide a greater understanding of bird populations in the boreal forests of Northern Alberta, and we are pleased to report some exciting advancements in our research program. The LSLBO and Alberta Parks have partnered to develop several academic research projects that will help answer important questions related to our data collection at the LSLBO: 1) what is the effect of maturing net lane vegetation on our banding operations and 2) how can we provided better differentiation between migratory and breeding birds in our migration data using isotope analysis. Preliminary funding has been received and we are working with the University of Alberta to complete a study design for next spring season. We will keep you posted on this exciting initiative!

There is also growing interest in our field station at the Boreal Centre for Bird Conserva-

tion (BCBC). This summer, University of Calgary grad student Cory Olson and his assistant, Kirk Graff used our facility to study the roosting behaviour of bats. In the perfect blend of research and education; they agreed to present special public programs. They were the hit of the summer! It confirmed that people of all ages love cool science. Whether it is bats or our banding lab, the chance for public to be part of "science in action" is what defines our unique education programs. It is also a great way for researchers to share their love and excitement for their work.

Our world at the BCBC is a very special one. On any given day, we could be banding a remarkable bird, sharing our love for the boreal forest during an education program, observing amazing waves of migratory flocks, or chatting with special visitors about their favorite birding adventures. Word is getting out about us, and the next few years promises to be very exciting. But we couldn't do it without the support of our members and incredible volunteers. Your enthusiasm and passion for the work that we do is the fuel that keeps us going. Thank you so much and enjoy the Warbler!

Summer 2009

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Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory: A Short History continues.... and the LSLBO is born!

**Compiled in Feb, 2009
by Nanci Langford,
Former Warbler Editor**



Part 2: Creation of the LSLBO Society

In 1997, the Lesser Slave Lake group decided to create their own organization and the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory was officially incorporated as an independent society. The founding board was Marion Whitby (Chair), Frank Fraser, Steve Lane, and Stefan Jungkind. Steve Lane became the second chair of the Society, and Bob Deacon was elected to the chair at the Annual General meeting in December 1999.

The organization was founded on two major goals; research and interpretation/education. During a recent interview, Stefan Jungkind stresses that the partnership from the beginning with what is now Alberta Parks and Protected Areas, and in particular with the local Parks staff at Lesser Slave Lake, was both necessary and effective. He also credits the local paper, the Lakeside Leader, as instrumental in creating a profile for the organization. As a result, the LSLBO was able, he feels, with the support of Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, to launch itself as an independent organization much sooner than anticipated.

The leadership of June Markwart in creating a part-time AB Parks position (40% of the Visitor Services Specialist position) dedicated to the Observatory, and the team building that took place between parks personnel and observatory volunteers created the solid base for this newly independent organization.

The Society has received financial support from forestry products companies, corporations, banks, foundations, conservation organizations, families, school clubs, and individuals. Government grants are sought each summer to support student employment. Frank Fraser was the fundraiser for the first seven years and Ronda Groom took over this responsibility in 2001.

Housing the observatory staff was always a challenge in the early years and a variety of solutions such as trailers, were provided. In 2004, a new modular staff residence was purchased in conjunction with the BCBC project and moved to the proposed BCBC site. Community support for the new residence was evident as ninety-five percent of the furnishings were donated!

Maintaining and upgrading the lab were also annual activities engaging the board's attention, funds and muscle power. In 1997 the lab received a large picture window, skylight, roof rafters and new asphalt shakes. In 1998 a release hatch was added, as well as insulation, paneling and new windows, installed by Sara Wittkowski and Dennis Verbeek (who also did the 1997 renovations). In 2006 new solar panels were proudly installed by Bob Deacon and Dave McConnell.

*Stay tuned
for more
LSLBO
history in
the next edi-
tion of the
Warbler.*



Volunteer Journal

**by Sharon Kimmel,
BCBC Volunteer**

My husband Wayne and I have been camping around Alberta for many years. Wayne is an avid fly fisher and I am an amateur birder. Over the last few years we have talked often about volunteering as campground hosts in a provincial park. This year we finally filled out an application form and sent it in. When we heard from Brad Marshall, Coordinator of Volunteer Services, Alberta Parks, offering us a position at the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation on Lesser Slave Lake, I was thrilled! Here was a unique opportunity for me to learn so much more about birds and see songbirds during fall migration. Wayne had hoped for a spot that would offer more stream fishing, but was very eager to see Lesser Slave Lake, so agreed this was the spot for us.



Brad introduced us by email to Chris Dodds, Visitor Services Supervisor, Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park. Both Brad and Chris explained that our volunteer duties at the Boreal Centre would be very different than those of campground hosts. After talking by telephone to Sue

Walsh, whose family were repeat summer volunteers at the centre, I had no doubts. Sue sang the praises of the staff and the centre and assured me that we would love the experience. Our volunteer commitment at the Centre would be from July 30 until Sept. 9, 2009.

We had never been to Lesser Slave Lake before. The drive from Edmonton north was a treat in itself. What beautiful, green, lush landscape. After we arrived and got our trailer set up, Bill Walsh and son Michael took us on an orientation tour of the centre and the provincial park. Wow, so much to see and learn! We were feeling very nervous about what skills we might have to offer.



Left– Sharon with the wonderful lunch buffet that she and Wayne made for BCBC staff.

Above– Sewing beautiful bird bags for our banders.

The staff was so welcoming. Patti Campsall, Executive Director of the Centre, Charity Martin, Information Officer, and Chris Dodds were all quick to assure us that they could find lots of volunteer jobs for us. One of the first was to make a Least Fly Catcher hat for Chris to wear for a performance at the Amphitheatre at the Marten River campground. We were less than keen... neither of us being very creative and both really doubting our abilities to produce anything stage worthy. But, we holed up in the basement with a baseball cap, a glue gun, some foam, spray paint and a picture for inspiration and two long days later we emerged with what to us was a pretty sad example of theatre costuming. Everyone acted as though we did a fine job indeed.

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Chris did wear it for performances, but we are aware that we haven't been asked to produce more costumes!

Other volunteer tasks have been much more successful from our point of view and very enjoyable. They have included posting weekly event notices in the surrounding park and regional locations, working at the front desk and kiosk, greeting visitors to the centre and showing them around, working with children on various activities, proof reading articles, posters and letters, preparing The Nest for new occupants, accompanying interpreters on walks, participating in shows at the amphitheatre, taking photographs, almost capturing dragonflies, sewing bags for the banding lab, organizing the storage areas, packing up the equipment in the amphitheatre and sitting in on brainstorming sessions re: future programming.

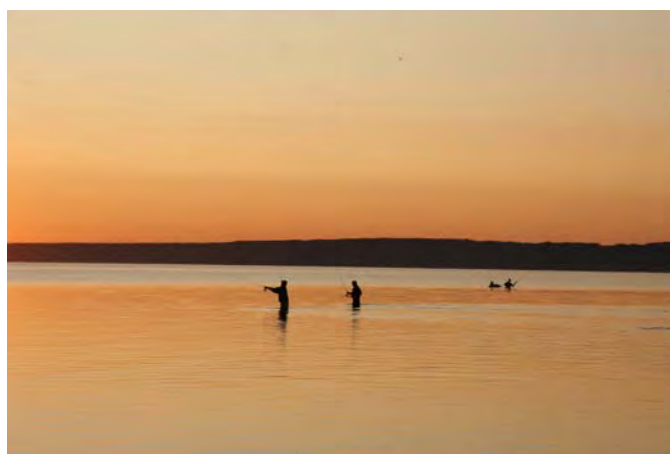
There have been many highlights for us over the six weeks. They have included:

- Accompanying Cori Klassen, Boreal Educator, on our first trip to the banding lab. What a wonderful opportunity to see Banders Richard Krikun and Nicole Linfoot in action. They are so knowledgeable and good at explaining the banding process. I was thrilled to see tiny songbirds up close.
- Wayne's first kayaking experience with Tim Landon, Seasonal Interpreter, fly fishing for walleye. Wayne caught one big enough to keep and we enjoyed a delicious dinner the next evening.
- Walking along the Trans Canada Trail and along the shore of this amazing lake.
- Sharing our experiences with our friends from Calgary and Victoria...all who came to visit and see the centre.
- Getting to know the other people who work out of the Lesser Slave Provincial Park and the Boreal Centre. The maintenance staff, the Conservation Officers...all so friendly and ready to answer questions and share experiences.

- Interacting with the many interesting people from near and far visiting the centre. And for me, mastering the cash register!



But by far, the biggest highlight for us has been the opportunity to work with and get to know the most welcoming, collaborative, knowledgeable, hard working and fun filled staff ever. We were always made to feel like we were part of the team. So much so, that we hope to come back next May and June so we can see birds in breeding plumage and help prepare for the annual LSLBO Annual Songbird Festival and helping with school programs offered at the centre. Thanks everyone for a great volunteer experience.



Top— Wayne helping young visitors with their bird mask craft; Bottom—fishing at sunset. Photo by Wayne

2009 Banding at the LSLBO

By Nicole Linfoot
Assistant Bander

I first heard about the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory when my NAIT class came up to the area in mid-September for a field course. During this course, we learned all sorts of fun and useful field techniques but the highlight for me was, by far, the opportunity to visit the bird observatory. Even though bird activity was low, Richard actually caught a bird, and not just any bird, it was, we were assured, a 'good bird'. In the lab we watched, riveted with anticipation, to see this 'good bird' and out of the bag Richard pulls a beautiful Magnolia warbler. Then, to add to the excitement we went out for northern saw-whet owls that night and caught a few of them too. In any case I was HOOKED! I couldn't believe that there were people so lucky as to have a job like that. I am embarrassed to admit that my excitement was probably bordering on lunacy.

So with a career path in mind I watched the LSLBO website for a hint of a job posting. Sure enough, the position for field assistant was advertised and I jumped on it! Unfortunately I lacked the qualifications at the time, but Patti was gracious enough to offer me the position as the Information Officer which I eagerly accepted. This position was

great because not only did I get to work at the Boreal Centre but I was able to vol-



*Top: Fun in the snow;
Bottom: male blackpoll warbler dressed in his finest*



unteer out at the lab on my days off. Then this year it all came together and I got the position as the Assistant Bander out at the observatory and it is everything I dreamed it would be!

Anyways enough of my babble, let's get on to what you all actually want to read about: the 2009 banding season.

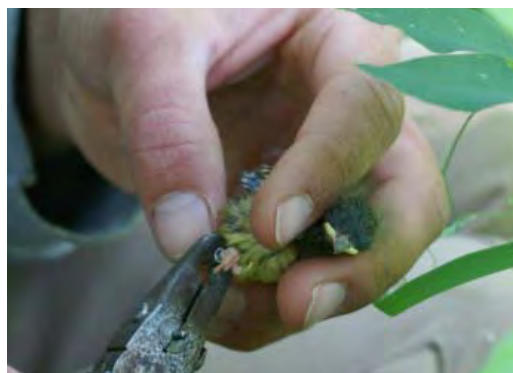
Spring started off with a bang as 226 birds (mostly juncos) were banded in the first two days of banding. From there, things slowed down considerably over the next two weeks. Then we were hit by bad weather as lots of snow and cold rolled through the lab. Strangely enough this weather worked in our favour and we had a few days of solid banding that steadied off and remained decent through the rest of spring. Although the snow helped our banding totals, it did cause quite a few late arrivals from some of our most common species. Overall we banded 45 different species for a total of 1117 birds which is a pretty good spring by any standard. Our top banded species were Dark-Eyed juncos (no surprise at 237), Swainson's thrush (168), White-throated sparrows (78), Least flycatchers (49) and Chipping sparrows (46). A major highlight was being able to add two new species to the list of birds seen at the lab, the Wandering tattler and the Ivory

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gull. As usual, we ran the MAPS program (a program designed to monitor birds on their breeding grounds) and continued work on the Canada warbler project during the summer. The Canada warbler work was especially exciting for me since I had never done any before this year. Essentially one of our main goals is to find the warbler's nests and monitor it until the young fledge. This is really difficult because they nest on the ground in really heavy underbrush (what is up with that?). Despite the difficulties though, it is extremely rewarding. Nothing quite matches the feeling of spotting Mama Canada Warbler discreetly dropping down onto her nest after hours of stalking her guided only by the sound of her soft chips. And nothing especially matched the feeling of being the one to find the first nest of the year.

Currently we are half-way through fall migration and although things were shaping up nicely in the early weeks, we have run into a very slow spell. Some of our early big-hitters like the Tennessee warbler and the American redstart have all but fallen off the map. We still don't know if things will pick up again, maybe the birds are late because of the late spring? Or perhaps they migrated by like ships in the night and we missed them? Hopefully the former, but only the birds really know. Despite the slowness, this fall has had its moments; it was full of firsts for me as well as a few exciting catches like a female ruby-throated hummingbird (we can't actually band them so she was promptly released), a common grackle (only the fourth banded at the LSLBO) and an olive-sided flycatcher (only the second banded at the LSLBO). And on top of all the bird highlights, perhaps the biggest highlight of all was obtaining my banding permit!! That about sums up our adventures out at the lab this 2009 season, I hope you enjoyed reading about them as much as I enjoyed having them! Maybe we will meet out at the lab this fall or even next year!



Top: Banding a baby Canada warbler

Middle: Nicole banding her first Downy woodpecker.

Do you enjoy receiving updates and newsletters from the LSLBO? If the answer is yes then consider taking the next step. If you are not already a member, please join us!

Become a part of our research and education programs as a member or volunteer at our banding station this spring.

To our current members and volunteers, we greatly appreciate your continued support. Thank you!

Project Little Brown

By Cory Olson, University of Calgary

Ever wonder where bats spend the day when there are no buildings or caves for them to roost in? Well it turns out that in the boreal forest, most bats spend their day roosting in trees. Of the six species of bats that occupy the beautiful old-growth forest around Lesser Slave Lake, the little brown bat is by far the most abundant. While this species has gladly made use of homes, amphitheatres, banding labs, boreal hostels and other buildings, the majority can be found roosting in the cracks and crevices of dead or decaying trees – and not alone. Female little brown bats typically raise their single pup in maternity colonies during the summer so that they can take advantage of higher roost temperatures needed to promote development of their young. These maternity colonies are not just random groups of individual bats, but are cohesive social groups where several beneficial social interactions may occur – including mutual grooming and exchange of information about food resources and roost sites.

It is these maternity colonies that are the focus of my Master's research at the University of Calgary. Along with my research assistant and fellow University of Calgary student, Kirk Graff, I spent the summer living a nocturnal life so that I could capture, track, and document bats that make Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park their home. For reasons that are poorly understood, tree roosting bats regularly switch roost trees during the summer. Little brown bats around Lesser Slave Lake move trees every few days – mother's simply fly between roosts with their pup latched on to their breast. Even though this behaviour is well known, its implications for bat social behaviour has only begun to be examined. When little brown bats move roost trees, they do not necessarily move together.

Rather, they could opt to roost – and socialize – with other members from a larger social unit (aka 'the colony'). This social unit could possibly be much larger than could fit in a single tree. If they exhibit this behaviour, it would be the larger social unit, rather than a group of bats temporarily occupying a tree, that would be the more informative unit for study. From a conservation viewpoint, providing habitat for an entire colony may be critical since bats likely benefit from living in large groups. Unfortunately, we do not yet know how to define a colony of little brown bats, nor do we understand the habitat requirements of this species. This information is important to better understand the affect of habitat loss or fragmentation on forest bat populations. It is this topic that is the focus of my research in Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park.



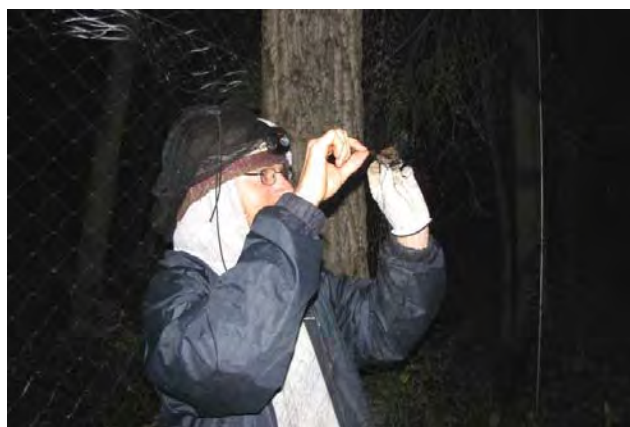
A little brown bat taking a break from chewing net strings in a bid for freedom

Starting near the middle of May, Kirk and I began capturing bats in preparation for the first field season of my research. To do this, we used 'mist nets' that we set across trails and cutlines. The setup is very similar to that used for songbird banding, except that all trapping occurred at night and our capture

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success tended to be low – a result of the highly tuned senses of bats and their incredible maneuverability. May and June were unexpectedly slow. Although bats had arrived by May, the cold night temperatures of spring compel many bats to stay in their roosts rather than wasting energy looking for non-existent insects. Of course, that means they are not out flying into nets. However, after a slow start, we managed to capture several of the local species, including a big brown bat, northern long-eared bats, a couple of silver-haired bats, and, of course, several little brown bats.



Kirk gently untangling a captured little brown bat from a mist net

Three important objectives of my study were to 1) determine the area of forest in which a colony roosts (the 'roosting home-range'), 2) examine movement patterns of individual bats from a colony, and 3) determine the types of trees that bats like to use for roosting. For each of these objectives, we needed a way of tracking bats to their roost trees. Fortunately, I had access to a critical piece of technology – 0.5 g radio transmitters that we glued to the bat's back. Once these transmitters are attached, we were then able to follow them during the day to their roost trees using a directional antenna. Unfortunately, transmitters rarely lasted more than about ten days before falling off, which required us to continually

attach transmitters to new bats. Thirty bats were the lucky recipients of transmitters during the three months of the project. Although not an easy task, we managed to locate 88 roost trees used by two colonies over the summer, many of which were reused on multiple days. To get an idea of how many bats occupy these trees, we spent many nights counting bats as they emerged from their roost trees.

Analysis of the data collected over the summer has only begun, but some results are already apparent. The preference for large diameter decaying aspen or balsam poplar trees is not surprising – most bats were in trees with a trunk diameter of more than 40cm. However, the observation of a tree containing at least 400 bats was very surprising! Bats also have many friends! Their frequent movements between roost trees mean these females can potentially roost with many hundreds or thousands of bats during the summer months. Although some bats only move few meters when changing roost trees, some bats moved over a kilometre – with their young – to roost with a different group of bats.

Overall, the summer was excellent. The park has an impressive bat population and we enjoyed amazing accommodations and facilities at the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation. Everyone in the park was very supportive and despite our nocturnal lifestyle, we met many wonderful people during our stay at 'The Nest'. Thank you for the hospitality! – Cory & Kirk.



Cory searching for bats with the help of radio tracking equipment

Nurturing Stewards of the Boreal Forest

By Chris Dodds
Visitor Services Supervisor

Here at the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation our goal is to “*Nurture Stewards of the Boreal Forest*”. To me this means creating meaningful connections with nature for visitors of all ages. They can either be here for as long as two weeks, as many campers at Marten River campground are, or as short as an afternoon for some of our environmental education programs. Regardless, it is my hope that by the time they leave the boreal forest, they have a new appreciation for it. So my question is: “how do you instil a sense of awe for the boreal forest in visitors?”

When I look at the boreal forest, the first thing that strikes me is its size. It is the largest forest ecosystem in Canada, covering 53 percent of the country—the size of about 7.5 provinces of Alberta, and that’s just the Canadian part! Let’s not forget the fact that the boreal forest is circumpolar, which means that it can be seen as a green band around the top of the earth. The boreal forest’s immense size means it holds a number of world and Canadian records. It contains about 80% of the planet’s unfrozen fresh water, and the largest amount of Canada’s plant and animal species including the world’s smallest carnivore, the least weasel. These features and many more make the boreal forest unique.

Most people visiting Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park see the boreal forest as a sea of balsam poplar and trembling aspen trees. Other common sightings included deer, bear and of course birds. When you have such great leading actors it is not hard to create excitement for the forest in people. Especially

when working with kids, it is not hard to encourage them to interact with nature. All it usually takes is one close look at an insect or a rock on the beach and they are caught up in the joy of exploring nature. It can be a little tougher to get adults to interact with nature—many of us over the age of 20 like to sit back and let the Interpreter do the talking or to let the kids play with the magnify glasses and the bug nets.

This summer, one of the aims of the education program was to talk about biodiversity in the boreal forest. And there were two programs that I was involved in this summer where I saw adults getting their hands dirty and involved in nature. The first one was a guided hike I ran along the Marten River Campground Beach and the second was a Bat presentation done by Cory Olsen from the University of Calgary. In both presentations people of all ages were having fun and interacting with nature. So, back to my previous question, “how do you create meaningful connections with nature, and inspire a sense of awe in visitors for the boreal forest?” My answer is to create an opportunity for people to get involved in hands-on interactive experiences where they can smell, touch and feel this wonderful place with all of their senses.



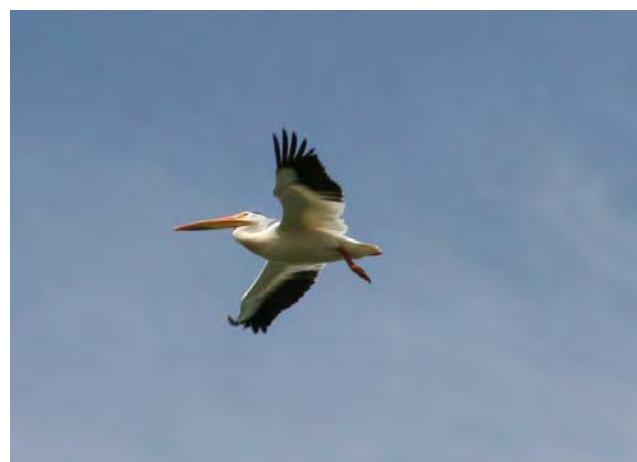
Birding at Winagami Lake Provincial Park

By Cori Klassen
Boreal Educator

Those of us who are fortunate enough to live in the Lesser Slave Lake region know that there are a number of fantastic birding spots in the area. Winagami Lake, located approximately 25 km northwest of the town of High Prairie, is one of them. This summer I was lucky and had the opportunity to lead a birding hike at Winagami Lake for children participating in the Lesser Slave Forest Education Society's *Boreal Forest Discovery Camp*.

The ages of the campers ranged from 5 to 12 and I really wasn't sure how interested they would be in bird watching for an hour and a half. But, to my amazement, they REALLY got into it. Before we went down to the lakeshore I explained the importance of being quiet and 'sneaking up' on the birds. We were quiet and sneaky for the first minute or so but as soon as the first bird was spotted there were shouts—"there's one-I see a bird!" accompanied by a lot of frantic binocular use, pointing and jumping. It was fantastic. Pelicans flew low over our heads, Yellow-headed and Red-winged Black birds loudly defended their territories, American Coots and their young hid amongst the cattails, Common Terns fished, Ruddy Ducks quacked their disapproval at us and Tree Swallows glided into and out of the large Purple Marten house.

This hike was definitely one where I had as much fun as the participants. I am very fortunate to have a job where I have the opportunity to enhance children's curiosity and knowledge of the natural world while at the same time learning more about it myself. Plus, seeing the boreal forest and its inhabitants through a child's eyes is like seeing it again for the first time. And that NEVER gets old!



Top: Campers looking through binoculars
Middle: Pelican flying overhead,
Bottom: Ruddy duck and a Yellow-headed blackbird.

15th Annual Songbird Festival & 5th Annual Bird Run

The LSLBO celebrated Spring Migration with our 15th Annual Songbird Festival on June 6 & 7, 2009. The weekend kicked off in the early hours of Saturday morning with a pancake breakfast and special birding hikes. We were thrilled to greet visitors from across Alberta who arrived to share their love of birding with others. Throughout Saturday, over 200 people dropped in for face painting, crafts, games, bird house building, special workshops and of course tours of our banding operations. On Sunday, over 50 participants of all ages enjoy a stroll or even a run on the Trans Canada trail with our 5/10K Bird Run/Walk. Another successful festival and we would like to thank everyone who made it happen!



Clockwise from top left– Board member Terry Kristoff makes pancakes for breakfast; Volunteer Kevin Arnell helps out with bird house building; Grouard Historical Village workshop presentation; 5th Annual Bird Run gets underway. Thanks to Pat Potvin for taking such fantastic photos!



Rocking “Season Four” at LSLPP

By Tim Landon
Park Interpreter

Greetings Readers! It has been an exciting, busy and memorable summer of 2009 as Seasonal Park Interpreter here at Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park (LSLPP).

The Education Team at the BCBC started delivering environmental education programs early in May. Things quickly ramped up and soon we were delivering programs on a daily basis; sometimes two or even three per day! Plenty of students and their teachers enjoyed curriculum-based programs and also gained a greater understanding and appreciation of LSLPP and the wonderful and precious diversity of life here in the park. Occasionally we had to call in some reinforcements for particularly large school groups. Nicole Linfoot (Assistant Bander) and Charity Martin (Information Officer) were certainly up to the challenge and responded with verve and enthusiasm, while getting a first-hand glimpse of life in the Environmental Education fast lane. Thanks also to Richard Krikun (Bander-in-Charge) for allowing us to interrupt his research and helping to provide an engaging experience to visitors at the banding lab.

Switching gears in July, Chris, Kerry and I scrambled to get our summer interpretive programs up and running. I faced the exciting, yet daunting task of developing a solo evening amphitheatre show, along with other programs I'd be delivering, including a guided cycling excursion and point-duty program. The pressure was on as I hammered out and revised a script while conducting further research.

Once the script was finalized I was able to proceed with the myriad other tasks that go into an interpretive theatrical production. What visuals would accompany the show?

How about music – live or pre-recorded? I really wanted to involve the audience as much as possible in this program, so how to best go about that? As these decisions were reached, another piece of the puzzle would fall into place, allowing me to move on to the next task.



Wally the Walleye and some 'spottail shiners' audience volunteers

Thankfully, and fortunately we are blessed here at the BCBC with some of the greatest volunteers EVER! Bill, Sue, Michael and Rebecca Walsh returned, bringing their energy and creativity to our enormous benefit. While I was busy recording soundtracks and rehearsing, the Walsh's designed and fabricated some outstanding costumes. After seeing Wally the Walleye in his completed glory, I had to ask Bill, "Did you take a costume-making course over the winter?" The Walsh's also contributed by helping with the slide show (thanks Michael) and making some incredible "fish hats" to be worn by audience members with short speaking roles in the show. The costumes are great and truly exceeded my expectations!

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Other highlights of the season include the special events, especially Songbird Festival 2009. This was a particularly poignant and memorable time as my parents came to visit all the way from Richmond, ON. This was their first visit to the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation and also their first opportunity to see me in action at work, doing what I love to do; namely reconnecting people with Nature. We also had the pleasure of some visiting interpreters and information staff on hand from William A. Switzer Provincial Park which made the weekend even more memorable, especially the dinner and campfire at the Staff House!

I have also had a lot of fun meeting the many campers who come out and take part in our interpretive programs. Whether you are inspiring me through your enjoyment and active participation or stumping me with an incredible question, you are the reason why I am here doing what I do. It could be new people I'm meeting for the first time or familiar faces that return faithfully each year. In either case, I strive to do the best I can to relate, reveal, provoke and inspire wonder and appreciation for the natural world.

I feel blessed and very fortunate in being able to earn a living doing something I enjoy and believe in. Thanks for supporting our provincial parks and protected areas and have a wonderful summer's end!



Tim delivering the Amazing Amphibians point duty

Songs of Summer: The life of an interpreter

**By Kerry Girvan
Boreal Interpreter**

Since I first arrived here in late April I often heard the stentorian voice of the white-throated sparrow booming through the forest. This song has woken me up many a morning, and has lulled me to sleep on many summer nights. "White-Throaty's" keep singing throughout the summer, unlike most songbirds which are fairly silent after the spring-time breeding season is over. Now as I pack up to head back to school in Toronto, the white-throated sparrow sings me a plaintive lullaby to birdland.

The lure of seeing colourful songbirds is what drew me to the Boreal Centre here by Lesser Slave Lake. While I am an amateur and sporadic birder, I was enchanted enough with birds to take a job as a boreal nature interpreter. Although I grew up in Alberta, I had never been to the boreal region. The word 'boreal' made me think of Wolverine in the X-Men, in his northern Alberta lumberjack cage matches. Just before I left home I got some tourist information pamphlets on the Slave Lake area, which prominently featured sunny beaches and people fishing in the sun. I was surprised the Lake was still mostly frozen in early May, while large icebergs remained until almost until June; the water is just warming up now at the end of August. It is a Canadian myth that the cold weather makes a stronger, harder people, as compared to those in more southern climates. Maybe the myth is true, as the 2 resident bird banders I've had the pleasure of working with are hardy people indeed. They get up before the crack of dawn everyday for 4 months to sleepily traipse out to the bird research station; only rain or snow will cause them to begrudgingly close their bird nets.

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Kerri and Chris got to dress up AND hug during their amphitheatre show "Winged Wisdom"

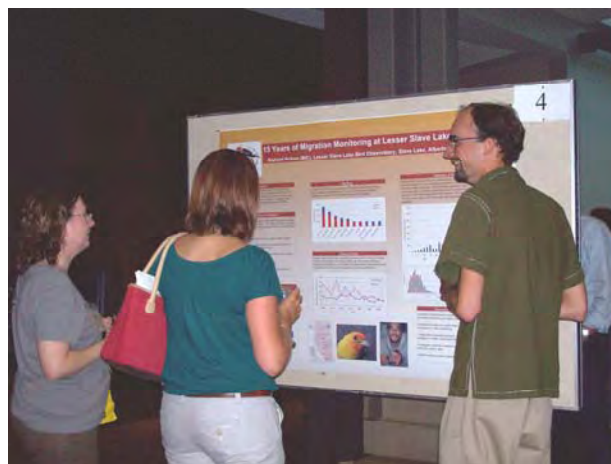
(Continued from page 13)

This summer has offered me many memorable experience centered around birds, and I have now seen over 150 of our bird species here in Alberta (about 247 species have been seen at the research centre). I also find it reassuring to sporadically tally all the birds I have seen. I find it comforting to know that my list is steadily growing, and that still I have seen only a small fraction of the 9000 extant bird species. This makes me feel powerful and insignificant all at once, like a genie stuck in a bottle. Another highlight of my summer was giving tours of the banding labs, especially to young school groups. It is inspiring and nerve-racking to see a group of grade ones literally screaming with excitement because they saw a rare and elusive... robin. Few people ever get to see a Swainson's Thrush or Ovenbird from 2 feet away; but many of our visitors were lucky to witness this at the bird banding lab. While the purpose of the lab is of course bird research; it is a happy coincidence that the bird banding process allows visitors unnaturally close views of even shy birds, like thrushes.

Despite a whole summer here, there are still many Alberta birds I have yet to view. And I haven't yet met my birding nemesis, the Magnolia Warbler, who the bird banders

seem to repeatedly catch minutes after I have gone home from the lab. And I still search for that holy grail of birders, the Blackburnian Warbler. But these are projects for another summer. After all, birdwatching is more about the journey than the destination. But if you are looking for a destination from which to start your journey, I highly recommend coming out to the Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation. I will greatly miss this bird watching mecca, and all the great people I have met here at the centre.

LSLBO presents...



Richard Krikun presents a poster on 15 years of LSLBO migration monitoring at the Society of Canadian Ornithologists general meeting last month.

In August, 2009, the University of Alberta hosted the 27th General Meeting of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists. Academic researchers from all across Canada arrived to present and discuss the latest in avian research and issues. We are pleased to announce that Richard Krikun, LSLBO Bander in Charge had the opportunity to present some of his preliminary findings from our upcoming 15 year Technical Report during the evening poster presentation. If you are interested in seeing some of these results, just drop by the Boreal Centre to check out the poster.

Volunteers at the LSLBO and BCBC



If you are reading this newsletter and wondering how we manage to achieve all of this, it is the result of the incredible support and excitement that we have received from all the volunteers who helped us out at the BCBC and/or LSLBO banding lab this past year:

Angella Powell

Aaron Lehman

Wayne Bowles

Peter Moore

Ronda Groom

Bob Deacon

Terry and MJ Kristoff

Tyler Flockhart

Nelson Lutz

Neal and Chad Knoot

Cindy, Ivan and Louis Sneddon

Dianne, Kevin, Jennifer, and Shannon

Arnell

Sharon and Wayne Kimmel

Bill, Susan, Michael, and Rebecca

Walsh

Ted Campbell and Family

Edith Mackenzie

Pat Potvin

Cate Gongas

Steve Lane

Susan Moore

Kathleen and Dave Cullen

Kelly Harlton

George Snider and his wife

Kim Klassen

Stacy Boyenga

Judy Quach

Karen Nelson

Stefan, Debra and Alban Jungkind

Jul Wojnowski

Lester and Laurel Perrott

And to anyone else that we might have accidentally missed! Thank you!!



Thanks so much! We couldn't have done it without you.

2009 Banding Season Highlights... in Haiku

By Richard Krikun, Bander In Charge

After six years of banding at the LSLBO, everyday is still exciting. One thing that I find great about the job is every year has highlights. Sometimes it is encountering a new species, other times it is an exceptionally busy banding day, occasionally it is a cool event, and often it is just enjoying one of our banding projects. 2009 definitely had its share of highlights. I present my summer highlights, but with a poetic twist...

Getting Hit By Flocks of Juncos



A heap of Juncos
On the second day of spring
Removed winters rust

Banding My First Male Black-throated Green Warbler in Breeding Plumage



Males high in the trees
All dressed in their spring best
Look better banded

Banding My First Veery



I've heard them singing
But never seen one up close
It deserved a hug

Releasing a Red-necked Grebe



Releasing a grebe
Its displeasure was piercing
I can scream louder

Having Fun at Work



Banding with Nicole
Has made the summer a blast
The sharpie concurs

Banding My First Olive-sided Flycatcher



A huge flycatcher
I mean really really big
No insect is safe

Northern Saw-whet Owls...



September arrives
We band late into the night
Cause owls are that cool

The Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory is part of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network. Established in 1998, the network is supported by Bird Studies Canada, and involves the cooperation of over 20 bird monitoring stations across the country. All the bird observatories collect data in a standardized way which can be analyzed to calculate population trends for migratory birds in their area. The first technical report for the CMMN has just been completed entitled: ***The 10 Year Report on Monitoring Landbird Population Change***. If you are interested in finding out more about what is happening to bird populations across Canada, you can download the report at:

<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/downloadCMMNReport2008.pdf>

LSLBO members and friends are invited to our...

2nd Annual Saw-whet Social (and AGM)

7:00 p.m., Saturday, September 26, 2009 at the Boreal Centre

Come out and help us celebrate another great season for the LSLBO with a Potluck social and Owling!! Featuring a special owl presentation by Richard Krikun

For more information or to RSVP please call 780-849-8240.

Thanks to...



Government of Alberta



Community Development Trust



Student Temporary Employment Program
Canada Summer Jobs Program

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 : _____

Membership Categories (please circle one):

Individual	\$30	Benefactor	\$250
Family	\$60	Life	\$500
Platinum	\$1000		

**Thank you for
supporting the
Lesser Slave Lake
Bird
Observatory!**



Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory

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