

Introduction

The Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory (LSLBO) has been in operation, carrying out spring and fall migration monitoring as well as avian productivity and survivorship monitoring (MAPS), at its current location since the spring of 1994. Some of this work, however, began in the spring of 1993 to determine the feasibility of carrying out bird studies at this site.

As part of the spring migration monitoring program this year, LSLBO field staff carried out, as usual, a standardized census, standardized visual migration surveys, and six hours of standardized netting (weather permitting) every morning. Additionally, field staff contributed bird sightings made on a casual basis from the LSLBO study area.

This report briefly summarizes the results of the spring 1997 migration monitoring program. Also included are brief descriptions of the people and events that helped to make this spring a memorable one.

Field Staff

The LSLBO employed two fulltime field staff this spring, a chief bander and an assistant bander.

The chief bander this spring was Dennis Verbeek. Dennis arrived on 28 April 1997 to prepare forms and bands and began the spring migration monitoring program himself on 30 April 1997. Dennis brought with him about five years of birding experience in addition to banding experience obtained at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory where he worked, fulltime, during the 1996 season. Dennis also assisted with fall 1996 migration monitoring at the LSLBO and banded birds in Portugal for six weeks the following winter.

The assistant bander this spring was Jason Rogers. Jason began work at LSLBO on 11 May 1997. Jason holds a diploma in Environmental Sciences - Parks & Recreation and has been birding for about seven years. He has also carried out bird research and monitoring, in a volunteer capacity, for Alberta Parks, Alberta Fish & Wildlife, and Parks Canada.

Special Events

The biggest event staged at the LSLBO this spring was the fourth annual Songbird Festival which was held on May 17 and 18. About 60 people attended over the two days, despite cold, wet weather. Visitors to the LSLBO were kept busy with interpretive walks, a bird-feeding workshop, banding demonstrations, and bird-watching. Some of the more interesting bird sightings made during the festival include Oldsquaws, Surf Scoters, and two Peregrine Falcons. Also, a Say's Phoebe and a Le Conte's Sparrow posed for many, both birds seemingly aware of the public relations opportunity. Giving interpretive walks and talks were Richard Thomas, Yannis Kovacs, Dan McIssac, Jason Duxbury, Steve Lane, Frank Fraser, Robyn Irvine, and Cindy Verbeek.

Throughout the spring migration period, the LSLBO received drop-in visitors from as far away as France and Holland as well as seniors, church groups, school groups, Junior Forest Wardens, Cub Scouts, and Fish and Wildlife Officers on organized tours.

The Daily Census and VIS-MIGS

The daily census would begin once the nets were up, lasting from 30 to 50 minutes. Three five to seven minute stops, beginning at the road entrance of the LSLBO and following the lakeshore north, would be made (Figure 1). Stops two and three were made at the picnic table in front of the lab and the picnic table next to the MAPS FAWA station respectively. This walk covers the general area of the LSLBO and enables field staff to make sightings along the lake as well as see or hear most upland birds.

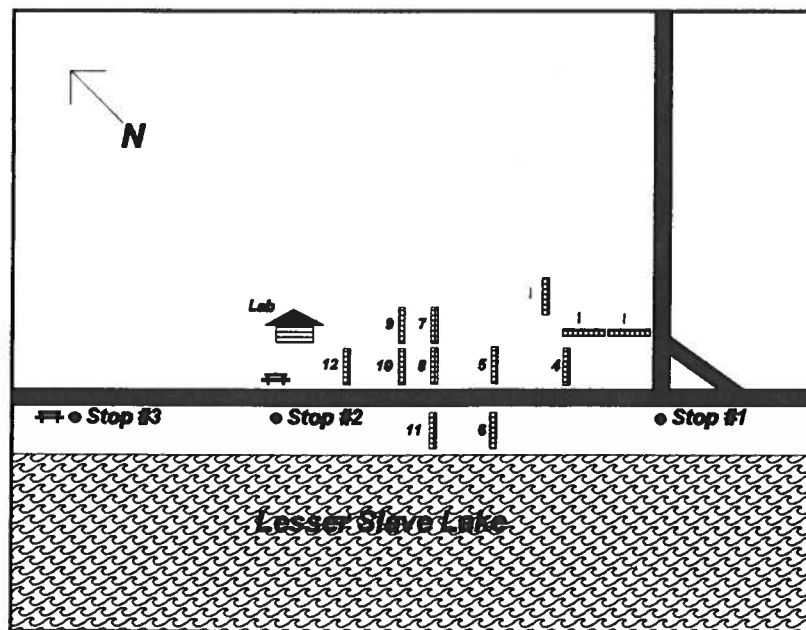


Figure 1: Map layout of census route and area (not to scale)

Visual Migration Surveys (VIS-MIGS) went on from 30 April through 17 June, when possible, and were felt to be an effective method of migration monitoring. Ten minutes were allotted to each survey with as many as six surveys completed per day. With only two field staff present at any one time, however, it was difficult to do these counts when birds were numerous in the nets, therefore some VIS-MIGS were missed. The most productive days occurred during the period of 4 May to 23 May. On 4 May, 104 birds were counted despite only two VIS-MIGS having been completed. The highest number of birds counted in one full day of VIS-MIGS totaled 593 birds. That's an average of 98.8 birds every ten minutes.

The following are some of the more interesting species recorded on a daily census or VIS-MIG this spring:

Oldsquaw
Surf Scoter
White-winged Scoter
Cooper's Hawk
Peregrine Falcon
Sora
Yellowlegs sp.
Dowitcher sp.
Mourning Dove

Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Black-backed Woodpecker
Say's Phoebe
Eastern Kingbird
Solitary Vireo
Harris' Sparrow
Baltimore Oriole
White-winged Crossbill

Banding Update

The spring migration for 1997 went well in the bird banding department. In total, 716 birds from 51 species were caught from 1 May through 17 June. Of these, 676 were newly banded (Figure 3), 26 were return and recoveries, and 14 were others (birds caught and released without bands because of stress or injury to the bird, its size, or its status as a permanent resident). It should be noted that mortalities are also included in the "others" category. We were fortunate this spring in having lost only three birds: two Yellow-rumped Warblers to Sharp-shinned Hawks and one White-throated Sparrow to suspected mischief. The following is a list of "others" captured, including number of captures, during this years spring migration monitoring program:

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Rufous Hummingbird (1) | American Redstart (1) |
| Alder Flycatcher (2) | Common Yellowthroat (1) |
| Gray Jay (3) | American Tree Sparrow (1) |
| Yellow Warbler (1) | White-throated Sparrow (1) |
| Yellow-rumped Warbler (4) | White-crowned Sparrow (1) |
| Black-and -white Warbler (1) | |

Nets were open 33 out of 34 possible days. They were not necessarily open for six hours each day, however. Lost net hours this spring were the result of high winds, rain, and damage to nets by animals. To our frustration, White-tailed Deer damaged net 3 three times in three consecutive days! The total net hours figure for this years spring migration monitoring program was 2007.5 out of a possible 2448.

| SPECIES | # BANDED | % OF TOTAL BANDED |
|-------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Yellow-rumped Warbler | 132 | 19.5 |
| White-throated Sparrow | 71 | 10.5 |
| American Redstart | 58 | 8.6 |
| Least Flycatcher | 47 | 7.0 |
| Alder Flycatcher | 39 | 5.8 |
| Swainson's Thrush | 34 | 5.0 |
| Canada Warbler | 30 | 4.4 |
| Yellow Warbler | 25 | 3.7 |
| Black-and-white Warbler | 19 | 2.8 |
| Common Yellowthroat | 17 | 2.5 |

Figure 2: Top ten species banded at the LSLBO during the spring of 1997

Species (Number Banded)

Sharp-shinned Hawk (9) ✓

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (3) ✓

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (1) ✓

Alder Flycatcher (39) ✓

Least Flycatcher (47) ✓

Eastern Phoebe (3) ✓

Black-capped Chickadee (2) ✓

House Wren (1) ✓

Ruby-crowned Kinglet (2) ✓

Swainson's Thrush (34) ✓

Hermit Thrush (2) ✓

American Robin (4) ✓

Warbling Vireo (1) ✓

Philadelphia Vireo (2) ✓

Red-eyed Vireo (12) ✓

Tennessee Warbler (13) ✓

Orange-crowned Warbler (14) ✓

Yellow Warbler (25) ✓

Chestnut-sided Warbler (1) ✓

Magnolia Warbler (5) ✓

Yellow-rumped Warbler (132) ✓

Palm Warbler (6) ✓

Blackpoll Warbler (5) ✓

Black-and-white Warbler (19) ✓

American Redstart (38) ✓

Ovenbird (7) ✓

Northern Waterthrush (12) ✓

Mourning Warbler (12) ✓

Common Yellowthroat (17) ✓

Wilson's Warbler (6) ✓

Canada Warbler (30) ✓

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (2) ✓

American Tree Sparrow (7) ✓

Chipping Sparrow (10) ✓

Clay-colored Sparrow (16) ✓

Vesper Sparrow (1) ✓

Savannah Sparrow (5) ✓

Le Conte's Sparrow (1) ✓

Fox Sparrow (1) ✓

Song Sparrow (4) ✓

Lincoln's Sparrow (13) ✓

Swamp Sparrow (4) ✓

White-throated Sparrow (71) ✓

White-crowned Sparrow (6) ✓

Harris' Sparrow (1) ✓

Dark-eyed Junco (1) ✓

Red-winged Blackbird (1) ✓

Pine Siskin (8) ✓

Figure 3: Spring 1997 totals for species banded at the LSLBO

Recapture Report

A total of 91 recaptures involving 52 individuals from 19 species of birds was made at the LSLBO between 1 May and 17 June 1997.

Of the individuals recaptured, 25 were banded at the LSLBO during the spring of 1997. The remaining 27 individuals were banded during another season or at another banding station. For an overview of the number of species and individuals recaptured as well as the time and location of banding, see Figure 4.

| SPECIES | TOTAL INDIV. RECAP. | LSLBO SPRING 1997 | LSLBO FALL 1996 | LSLBO MAPS 1996 | LSLBO SPRING 1996 | LSLBO FALL 1995 | LSLBO MAPS 1995 | LSLBO SPRING 1995 | ? |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|---|
| Y.-bel. Sapsucker | 2 | 1 | | | | | | | 1 |
| Northern Flicker | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | |
| Alder Flycatcher | 6 | 2 | 2 | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| B.-cap. Chickadee | 3 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Swainson's Thrush | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| American Robin | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Tennessee Warbler | 2 | 2 | | | | | | | |
| Yellow Warbler | 3 | 3 | | | | | | | |
| Magnolia Warbler | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Y.-rumped Warbler | 2 | | | | | | | | 2 |
| American Redstart | 9 | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | 4 | | 2 |
| N. Waterthrush | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| C. Yellowthroat | 2 | 1 | | | | | | | 1 |
| Canada Warbler | 5 | 2 | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Chipping Sparrow | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Song Sparrow | 3 | 2 | | | | | | 1 | |
| Lincoln's Sparrow | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| W.-thr. Sparrow | 5 | 2 | | | 1 | | | | 2 |
| Pine Siskin | 3 | 3 | | | | | | | |

Figure 4: Recaptured birds and their origins, LSLBO, spring 1997

Bird Banding at Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory Year End Statistics

It was not the highest year ever at the LSLBO for numbers of birds banded, but every year seems to yield interesting results. The following chart represents a compilation of the Spring and Fall banding sessions. "Spring" ran from May 1 until June 17, 1997, followed by the fall session from August 6 until October 2, representing a total of 68 banding days. MAPS (Monitoring of Avian Productivity and Survivorship) took place in the interim period of July and August and these results have not yet been tabulated.

This year's seasonal banders included Dennis Verbeek, a bander from the University of Alberta of five year's experience both here and at Beaverhill Bird Observatory plus Jason Rogers, a graduate student of Environmental Sciences - Parks and Recreation from Lakeland College. Steve Lane took over the fall banding as of August 26.

Species of note have been marked in bold.

| <i>Species</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>Comments</i> |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| American Redstart | 260 | Highest # for year |
| Canada Warbler | 114 | |
| Magnolia Warbler | 25 | |
| Tennessee Warbler | 35 | |
| Wilson's Warbler | 29 | |
| Cape May Warbler | 6 | New fall high |
| Common Yellowthroat | 35 | |
| Black and White Warbler | 46 | |
| Western Palm Warbler | 12 | |
| Yellow Warbler | 65 | |
| Orange Crowned Warbler | 27 | |
| Ovenbird | 24 | |
| Mourning Warbler | 56 | |
| Myrtle Warbler | 144 | |
| Northern Waterthrush | 28 | |
| Blackpoll Warbler | 6 | |
| Connecticut Warbler | 2 | |
| Macgillivarys Warbler | 2 | New fall high |
| Red Eyed Vireo | 35 | |
| Warbling vireo | 1 | |
| Philadelphia Vireo | 3 | New year high |
| Least Flycatcher | 83 | |
| Alder Flycatcher | 86 | |
| Traill's Flycatcher | 1 | |
| Yellow Bellied Flycatcher | 2 | |
| Eastern Phoebe | 4 | |
| Ruby Crowned Kinglet | 6 | |
| Black Capped Chickadee | 16 | |

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| Yellow Bellied Sapsucker | 4 |
| Harris Sparrow | 1 |
| Lincoln's Sparrow | 38 |
| Clay coloured Sparrow | 18 |
| White Crowned Sparrow | 21 |
| White Throated Sparrow | 100 |
| Chipping Sparrow | 14 |
| Song Sparrow | 9 |
| American Tree Sparrow | 25 |
| Savannah Sparrow | 7 |
| Unidentified Dark Eyed Junco | 22 |
| Oregon Junco | 2 |
| Red winged Blackbird | 1 |
| Pine Siskin | 9 |
| Rose Breasted Grosbeak | 5 |
| American Robin | 5 |
| Swainsons Thrush | 79 |
| Hermit Thrush | 3 |
| Varied Thrush | 1 |
| Purple Finch | 3 |
| Cedar Waxwing | 1 |
| Western Tanager | 2 |
| House Wren | 2 |
| Lapland Longspur | 1 |
| Sharp Shinned Hawk | 18 |
| Recaptures | 117 |
| Total Species Banded | 53 |
| Total Birds Banded | 1549 |

New banded species

New banded species

New year high

76 individuals, 23 species

Birds banded and captured at LSLBO during MAPS, 1997

| Species | 1997 banded | 1997 retr. enc. | 1997 other enc. | 1997 total |
|---------------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| ✓ N. Saw-whet Owl | 1 | | | 1 |
| - Swainson's Thrush | 8 | 4 | | 12 |
| ✓ Tennessee Warbler | 3 | 3 | | 6 |
| ✓ Yellow Warbler | 1 | | | 1 |
| ✓ Magnolia Warbler | 6 | 7 | 1 | 14 |
| ✓ Myrtle Warbler | 8 | 2 | 1 | 11 |
| ✓ Black-and-White Warbler | 3 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| ✓ American Redstart | 30 | 17 | 3 | 50 |
| ✓ Ovenbird | 17 | 3 | 1 | 21 |
| ✓ Northern Waterthrush | 1 | | | 1 |
| ✓ Mourning Warbler | 6 | 7 | 3 | 16 |
| ✓ Canada Warbler | 22 | 16 | 2 | 40 |
| ✓ Song Sparrow | 1 | | | 1 |
| ✓ White-throated Sparrow | 18 | 12 | 8 | 38 |
| ✓ Pine Siskin | 1 | | | 1 |
| TOTAL INDIVIDUALS | 126 | 72 | 20 | 218 |
| TOTAL SPECIES | 15 | | | |

Field activity - 15 days (June 24 to August 4)

Total net-hours - 899.5

Capture rate - 24.2 captures per 100 net-hours

The Avifauna of Dog Island

by Jason Rogers

On 27 June 1997, I visited Dog Island in Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park to conduct a survey of its avifauna. The visit occurred between the hours of 10:30 and 14:15 approximately.

Skies were rather gray with intermittent showers and strong winds calming by the afternoon.

The route I followed was meandering but began on the northeast corner and was completed near the point on the west side. I also circled the southern half of the island by boat.

Red-necked Grebes were encountered in the sheltered bays on the west and south sides of the island and were probably nesting. Goldeneye hens were commonly seen, one of which was tending to a brood. Other water birds observed include a Common Loon, a Western Grebe, two White-winged Scoters, a Bufflehead, a large raft of *Bucephala* ducks, a small flock of Franklin's Gulls, several *Sterna* terns, and a Black Tern.

A Bald Eagle nest containing at least one juvenile was found near the center of the island. Both adults were seen and **clearly agitated by my presence**. The only other non-passerine observed was a male Downy Woodpecker.

Tennessee Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow and White-throated Sparrow were common on the island with at least two males from each species heard singing. Additional breeding evidence includes alarm calls from two pairs of Chipping Sparrows, one pair of Song Sparrows, and one pair of White-throated Sparrows as well as a White-throated Sparrow carrying food. Other passerine species encountered include two unidentified swallows, a Black-billed Magpie, a House Wren, and a Red-eyed Vireo, the latter two birds heard singing.