

# BPBO Beakon

Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory  
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Bruce Peninsula  
Bird Observatory

## Message from the President

Another year, my second as President of BPBO, has flown by and Spring is almost here again. As I write this, Songs Sparrows and a brilliant red Cardinal are at my feeder, jostling for space with the regular busy Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches. A Raven has just passed the window with an unfortunate Grackle dangling in his feet, possibly a casualty of the cold night. As I put seed in the feeder first thing, a querulous *fee-BEE fee-BEE* told me that the first of the Flycatchers was making an early appearance. A time of huge change in the progression of the seasons is upon us.

The next month also marks a big change for me and my involvement in BPBO. As a founding Board member, Recording Secretary for three years, Vice-President for one, and now President for two years, it is my time to leave the Board. I do so with some reservations, as I would still like to be part of BPBO's exciting continued growth.

BPBO has developed strong working relationships with both Ontario Parks and Parks Canada and with local organizations such as the Huron Fringe and Owen Sound Field Naturalists groups. We have provided valuable educational workshops, both "weekenders" at the Cabot Head Research Station, and in the community. BPBO has also contributed strongly to the scientific and university communities, which is our primary goal as an organization, as part of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network and with the publication of our Five Year Report on Migration Monitoring at Cabot Head. The wonderful just published Checklist of the Birds of the Cabot Head Area should be invaluable for birders on the upper Bruce Peninsula. The site at the CHRS has greatly improved since the days of being able to

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-----Calling all Members!-----

## BPBO Annual General Meeting

*Sunday, April 22nd,  
Grey Sauble Conservation Authority,  
237897 Inglis Falls Road,  
Owen Sound.*

It's time for the members, board, and staff of BPBO to get together again and 'catch up'. Find out what the Bird Observatory has been up to over the past year, and see what we have planned for the future. The day begins with a bird walk on the lovely GSCA grounds, starting at 9:30. After the walk there will be a light lunch served, followed by a short business meeting at 12:00. We will also have the return of Ethan Meleg's famous "Bird photo Quiz". Then, at 1:30, the day will be capped off by another of Ethan's excellent photographic presentations, entitled "The Story Behind the Picture".

Please join us for an enjoyable day of 'birdy' events and activities in Owen Sound!



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## Fall 2006 Migration Monitoring Results from Cabot Head

### August:

Fieldwork for fall migration monitoring began at Cabot Head Research Station on August 16 with fifteen mist nets in operation. August is normally a quiet month of migration in southern Ontario. Banding was possible every day in this period, with only a few net-hours lost to bad weather (87% of the potential mist net hours were realized). A total of 260 birds for 39 species were banded in August. The American Redstart was the most common species caught, with 22% of the banding total, followed by the Red-eyed Vireo (9%).

### September:

The defining characteristic of September was frequently windy weather throughout the month: 33% of the possible mist net hours were lost! In part due to the adverse conditions, only 512 birds were banded during the month for 44 species. September was the most diverse month: 44 species were caught compared to 39 for August and 37 for October. It was only slightly busier than August: an average of 19 birds a day were banded.

### October:

October is usually the busiest banding period of the fall migration season at Cabot Head Research Station. This was still the case in 2006, as 719 birds were banded, which was 217 birds more than in September. However, only slightly more than half the potential mist net hours were realized (56%) because of 14 days of strong wind and/or rain. The most common species caught were Golden-crowned Kinglets, with 313 individuals banded (43.5% of monthly total), followed by Slate-coloured Junco (14%) and Ruby-crowned Kinglets (8%).

### Unusual Records:

This fall, two species were banded for the first time at Cabot Head for this season (since the implementation of the CMMN protocols in 2002). A few unusual sightings were also made. Four Blue-grey Gnatcatchers were seen on August 19 and one individual on various occasions (September 15 and 29, and October 1). One Wood Thrush was banded on August 29. One Scarlet Tanager was seen on September 25. One

hatch-year female Black-backed Woodpecker was banded on October 7, a first since 2000. The closest breeding population lives on Manitoulin Island, just a short distance north. However, Thunder Cape Bird Observatory, though farther to the west, reported an unusual high number of this species. Thus, this rare capture could be an indication of a larger movement. Only one Northern Shrike was observed this fall on October 24, although after the count period. On the last possible day of banding, October 30, a Snow Bunting was caught in the net the closest to the bay shore (net C13).

### Banding Data Analysis :

Banding totals for fall 2006 represent a below-average year as 17 species have their lowest (or near-lowest) banding totals (especially for Black-capped Chickadee, Black-throated Green and Black-and-white Warblers, White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows). This fall, banding was severely restricted by weather especially in early to mid-September and after mid-October, when 37 to 73% of mist net hours were lost on a weekly average.



The capture of a Pileated Woodpecker in fall 2006 was a rare treat for the banding crew of CHRS. Although resident throughout forested areas of southern Ontario, this species is not one that often flies into our mist nets - but when they do, they make a very big impression!

*Photo: Stéphane Menu*

## Recaptures

The rate of recapture at Cabot Head was relatively low in fall 2006. A total of 161 recaptures for 125 individuals of 29 species were recaptured from August 17<sup>th</sup> to October 30. The vast majority of recaptures (114 i.e. 91%) came from birds banded this fall, representing only 7.7% of birds banded during the season. However, there was one foreign recapture of a Brown Creeper banded on April 3, 2006 southwest of Selkirk, near Lake Erie. There were also a few recaptures from the previous banding done at Cabot Head (only 10 individuals, of local breeding species – Gray Catbird, Magnolia Warbler and American Redstart - Table 3). Interestingly, all these birds were banded in previous springs and none during a previous fall.

**Table 1. Monthly capture rates, Fall 2006.**

Month	Birds Banded	Net Hours	Captures/net hour
August	260	1250	0.21
September	512	1800	0.28
October	702	1564	0.45

## Owl banding

Owl banding started on October 1 and ended on October 31. A sound system broadcasting non-stop Saw-whet Owl calls was placed in the middle of a perimeter delimited by 3 hawk nets (nets with a bigger mesh size than mist nets). Captures occurred only in 6 nights (October 5, 6, 7, 10, 15 and 26). No owl was captured when wind strength was above 3 on the Beaufort scale. Noise produced by strong winds may have reduced the lure effect, thus reducing the capture probabilities.

## Conclusion

Fall 2006 was a success as coverage was complete and the data collected was of high quality. Cabot Head is an excellent location for this program as bird concentrations are significant, the facilities are ideal and there is a skilled and enthusiastic base of volunteer support. Migration monitoring at Cabot Head Research Station is an ongoing project and contributes to the efforts of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network and ultimately to the understanding and monitoring of bird populations.

**-Stéphane Menu**

**Table 2. Banding Totals , Cabot Head Research Station, Fall 2006**

<b>Sharp shinned Hawk</b>	3	Yellow Warbler	4
Northern Saw-whet Owl	15	Chestnut-sided Warbler	3
Belted Kingfisher	1	<i>Magnolia Warbler</i>	20
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	Black-throated Blue Warbler	14
Downy Woodpecker	6	Myrtle Warbler	70
Hairy Woodpecker	4	<i>Black-throated Green Warbler</i>	29
Black-backed Woodpecker	1	<b>“Western” Palm Warbler</b>	18
<b>“Yellow-shafted” Flicker</b>	6	<i>Bay-breasted Warbler</i>	2
Pileated Woodpecker	1	<i>Blackpoll Warbler</i>	5
<b>“Trail’s” Flycatcher</b>	6	<i>Black-and-White Warbler</i>	12
<i>Least Flycatcher</i>	2	<i>American Redstart</i>	66
Eastern Phoebe	3	Ovenbird	17
Blue-headed Vireo	8	Northern Waterthrush	7
Red-eyed Vireo	52	Mourning Warbler	3
<i>Black-capped Chickadee</i>	12	Common Yellowthroat	26
Red-breasted Nuthatch	17	Wilson’s Warbler	4
Brown Creeper	46	<i>Canada Warbler</i>	1
Winter Wren	4	American Tree Sparrow	18
Golden-crowned Kinglet	407	<i>Chipping Sparrow</i>	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	106	Savannah Sparrow	2
Veery	3	Fox Sparrow	2
<i>Gray-cheeked Thrush</i>	9	Song Sparrow	15
<i>Swainson’s Thrush</i>	10	Lincoln’s Sparrow	8
<b>Hermit Thrush</b>	57	Swamp Sparrow	4
Wood Thrush	1	<i>White-throated Sparrow</i>	43
<b>American Robin</b>	36	<i>White-crowned Sparrow</i>	19
<i>Gray Catbird</i>	7	<b>“Slate-colored” Junco</b>	103
Cedar Waxwing	80	Snow Bunting	1
Tennessee Warbler	5	Indigo Bunting	1
<b>Orange-crowned Warbler</b>	23	Purple Finch	2
Nashville Warbler	32	American Goldfinch	6
		Totals (without Chickadees)	1479
		Totals (with Chickadees)	1491

Record **high** (in **bold**) and *low* (in *italic*) established in fall 2006 (period 2002-2006)

*(This report is a summary of the full CHRS fall 2006 Report [S. Menu 2006]. Condensed by R. Steinacher and P. Coe, to whom any errors can safely be attributed. -ed)*

## Upcoming Weekend Workshops at Grebe Lodge

The following is a condensed description of the workshops being offered at BPBO's Grebe Lodge, at Cabot Head. For a more complete description of the workshops, and to download a registration form, please go to <http://www.bpbo.ca/workshops.html>.

### Landscape, Light and Composition – Photographing Nature.

**Friday May 4 (evening) to Sunday May 6, 2007**

The workshop is designed for beginner to intermediate photographers interested in elements of composition, exposure, developing a personal style with nature photography. Participants will practice landscape photo techniques during excursions in and around the spectacular Cabot Head area.

**Leader:** Rob Cotton. Rob is a fine art photographer living near Tobermory. He has been conducting seminars and workshops on photography since 1998.

**Limit:** Up to 10 adults.

### Hitting the Peak - Spring Bird Migration at Cabot Head

**Friday May 11 (evening) to Sunday May 13, 2007**

The trip will include an evening of owling, a tour of the local birding hotspots, and a chance to get a close-up look at migration monitoring activities at the Cabot Head Research Station.

**Leader:** Ted Cheskey is a professional educator and bird bander, who has a long-standing connection to the Bruce Peninsula and its environment.

**Limit:** Up to 12 adults.

### Feathers and Fauna – A Watercolour Weekend

**Friday, May 25 (evening) to Sunday May 27, 2007.**

A weekend to draw and paint birds and soak in other elements of the natural environment. This workshop will focus on watercolour techniques to depict feathers, textures and other surfaces, shapes and forms related to birds, wild flowers and scenery. Depending on weather, the group will sketch outdoors and then go indoors to finish watercolour sketches.

**Leader:** Lin Souliere. Lin is a member of the Bruce Peninsula Society of Artists who has taught workshops across Ontario and France.

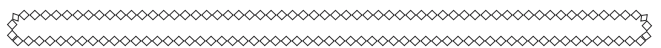
**Limit:** Up to 12 adults

## Nature Journaling Weekend with Marianne Karsh at the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory

**Friday, September 21 to Sunday, September 23, 2007**

Nature journals run the gamut from field notes, which limit themselves to objective descriptions of what the writer has observed, to fully developed poems, stories, or essays in which the landscape is a major character. Keeping a nature journal is a wonderful way for writers, novice or experienced, to become spiritually centered.

**Leader:** Marianne Karsh, B.Sc.F., M.Sc.F., is the Ecology Education Coordinator for the Ecology Project of the Ignatius Jesuit Centre of Guelph.



## BPBO and the Baillie Birdathon

### What it's all about

The Baillie Birdathon is an annual fund-raising event, with a history going back to 1976. It was in that year that a group of people from the Long Point Bird Observatory (the organization which would later give rise to Bird Studies Canada) founded the James L. Baillie fund as a means of granting money for ornithological research across Canada. Somehow they came up with the idea of having people going out bird-watching for money as a way of populating the fund, and thus was born the Baillie Birdathon.

In the subsequent 30 years the original goal has been admirably accomplished - Baillie grants have supported a wide array of research projects in Canada, from Triangle Is. B.C. to Cape Sable Is. NS, and all points in between.

Some of you may be wondering, just how exactly does this Birdathon thing work? The basic premise is that the participants gather sponsors, who pledge a certain amount per bird species seen during a single day (technically, any contiguous 24-hour period). The "Birdathoner" then goes out into the field on the chosen day (any time in May) and birds like mad. The participant then reports back to the sponsors the number of species, collects his or her pledges, and then forwards the proceeds to BSC. The Baillie Birdathon coordinator then takes care of the distribution of charitable receipts to the sponsors.

## Accomplishments of the Baillie Fund

In my opinion (highly biased, I have to admit), the most significant achievement of the fund has been the vital role it has played in the establishment of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN). This is the national organization of bird migration field stations, of which we are one of 18 full members. I have visited or volunteered at eight of the CMMN stations, and I suspect that almost none of them would have been able to get started without the Baillie fund - and without those stations, BPBO would lose a large part of its reason for being. This is because our migration data, while it tells us a lot about how many birds on the Bruce Peninsula, doesn't say much about the overall population trends of a species - at least, not taken in isolation. But when this same data is put into a larger context, by being combined with the numbers coming in from across the country, it becomes very much more meaningful; and this context is what the CMMN provides us.



*Photo: Ethan Meleg*

Birdathon money contributes to BPBO directly, too, through something called "Revenue Sharing". This is a system through which participants in the Baillie Birdathon can choose an approved organization (like BPBO, for example), and designate the organization to receive a portion of every dollar that the participant collects. When all the money has been collected for the year, the Baillie fund people calculate the proportion owed to each designated organization, and remit it to them. The real beauty of the system is that this proportion is "graduated" - the more money birdathoners who designate a particular organization make, the greater the proportion is that goes to that organization.

## Birdathon Goes Green

Lately, there has been a trend toward more environmentally-friendly birding, and this includes the

Baillie Birdathon. Instead of tearing all over Ontario in motor vehicles, many participants are choosing to restrict themselves to muscle power only to complete their counts - cycling, walking, paddling, (or using some combination thereof) around their route. I am keen to encourage more and more people to go this route. My team-mate Dawn and I will be doing a "green" Birdathon on Pelee Island this year, and I know of at least two other BPBO board members who will be doing the same up on the Bruce Peninsula. But however you choose to go about it, I hope you will consider participating in this worthwhile event - or, if not, perhaps being a sponsor. It's a great way to spend a day out of doors during migration, - it's fun, it's a great work-out for your birding skills, and it's good for bird research.

To register, or just learn more about the Baillie Birdathon, check out the Birdathon web page at [www.bsc-oec.org/organization/birdathon.html](http://www.bsc-oec.org/organization/birdathon.html).

-Peter Coo



## The Birdhouse Network:

### Citizen scientists keep tabs on the lives of nesting birds

For 10 years, a network of dedicated birders has made it their mission to help birds by providing nest boxes where birds can raise their families and by recording information for scientists. Together, they've kept a decade of meticulous records about when the birds build their nests, how many eggs they lay, and when the gawky fledglings take their first flights. Combined, they have sent nearly 70,000 nest records to The Birdhouse Network, a citizen-science project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. These efforts have helped expand scientific knowledge about bluebirds, Tree Swallows, House Wrens, and other cavity-nesting birds for whom the motto may be rephrased, "Hole Sweet Home."

Using records from participants, scientists have examined factors that affect the success of nesting birds across time and space. They have found, for example, that in northern latitudes, nest boxes facing east or northeast produce more fledglings. The hypothesis is that cavity entrances facing toward the sunrise remain warmer on cold spring mornings, increasing survival

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look up and see the sky from inside Grebe Lodge to the safe, sound, and comfortable buildings used by our Station Scientist, volunteers, and guests today.

BPBO has grown as an organization to the point where it is now seen as an important contributor to birding issues, receiving numerous contacts to be part of research projects, provide information to the local community, or even be part of developing an overall plan for birding tourism on the Bruce Peninsula. I could not foresee all of this happening a little over seven years ago as a group of us shivered one November day in the unheated light house keepers cabin at Cabot Head, discussing an IBA designation for the area because of all the Red-necked Grebes using the area. It had to start somewhere!

It has been a pleasure to work with all the motivated and dedicated people involved with BPBO over the years, and to have a chance to play my own part in all of this. I will, as I have urged BPBO members over the years to do, continue to be involved as a volunteer, whether as part of the workshop program or by organizing the grebe surveys each spring.

Oh, Oh! There's a Bald Eagle perched on the ice ridge out front eating something. Gotta go!!

**-Rod Steinacher**

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rates. In contrast, the orientation of the nest box has no effect in southern latitudes.

The Birdhouse Network also invites participants to help in a special study called Personality Profiles. Participants follow an experimental protocol and observe how birds react to harmless novel objects placed near nest boxes. Scientists use the information to learn more about birds, such as why some species fare better in cities or around people. They invite anyone interested in animal behaviour to help by joining the study.

People of all ages and skill levels can be part of The Birdhouse Network. "Without the data sent in by participants, we would not be able to track large-scale trends in the reproductive cycles of these birds," says project leader Tina Phillips. "Whether they monitor one box or 100, our participants are so dedicated to the birds, and the data they provide us year after year are incredibly powerful."

To sign up or find out more about The Birdhouse Network, visit [www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse), or call (800) 843-2473.

*-Submitted by Bob Gray*

**A BPBO Who's Who:**

**The Board of Directors**

- \* Rod Steinacher President & BoD Chair; Fund-raising Committee Chair
- \* John Haselmayer Vice President; Membership Committee
- \* Rob Kearns Treasurer; Membership Committee Chair
- \* Peter Coo Newsletter
- \* Bob Gray Secretary
- \* Anne Range Event Planning; Fund-raising Committee
- \* Steve Patterson Marketing, Publicity, Webmaster; Information Technology, Fund-raising & Membership Committees
- \* Gord Cottrill Director at Large

**Staff**

- \* Ron Baker Administrator
- \* Dr.. Stéphane Menu Cabot Head Research Station Scientist

**Non-Board Volunteers**

- \* Noreen Steinacher Workshop Coordinator; Fund-raising Committee
- \* Ted Cheskey Research Station Volunteer Program
- \* Dawn Miles Membership Secretary
- \* Deb Diebel Education Committee
- \* Norah Toth Ontario Parks Liaison