

BPBO Beakon

Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory
PO Box 189 Tobermory, ON, NOH 2T0



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Open House at BPBO.....

And You're Invited!!!

The BPBO is hosting its first **Member's Day and Open House** at the Cabot Head Research Station on August 23rd, 2003, and you are invited! The event will run from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

This casual day will provide members with an opportunity to meet and mingle with observatory staff and board members. Visitors are welcome to tour the station and see the facility upgrades that have been made possible through your generous support. Most importantly, this is also a great opportunity to see migration monitoring in action!

For directions to the site, or general inquiries, please contact Ron Baker at ronbakerbpbo@sympatico.ca or (519) 795-7652.

"Is That What I Think It Is"?! Details Inside...



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Photo Credit: Dave Brewer **he Chair**

by Ted Cheskey

Visitors to the Research Station this spring may have noticed a little *je ne sais quoi* that was different this season. Stephane Menu, our 2003 FOBIC has not only brought solid skills to the position but also infused some French culture into the banding station, enriching the experience of our volunteers and visitors alike.

Stephane will be back this fall, as we hope our volunteers will be also. While the numbers of birds seemed a bit low this spring (see Stephane's migration report), the weather was the likely culprit, rendering net operations impossible on several days. We struggled to get adequate long-term volunteer support this spring, an issue that we hope can be remedied soon. Stephane's own efforts landed an excellent recruit, Michel Bélanger, who was hired on an HRDC grant for one month in the spring, and some of August.

The station is never without challenges, access being a central theme over the last several years. Access to the research station is controlled for several reasons, some related to land ownership. However, on several occasions this spring, it was not BPBO or Ontario Parks determining access, but rather a very industrious beaver. Thanks to our furry neighbour, I was kept out of the station on the day of my birdathon (Friday May 23), because of an extremely deep puddle. That same day, road construction commenced to fix the problem by dumping several loads of aggregate in the low spots. Initially, this did not work as hoped, as the deep rock-filled holes became unstable slurry pits, trapping unsuspecting vehicles. A FON conference trip bus-load of 25 people caught word of the trap, and averted a visit to the station on May 25th. Fortunately, Stephane and his crew were able to meet us near the lighthouse. With time, and the addition of finer aggregate, the road stabilized, and for now the problem seems to have disappeared.

A key concern to BPBO is ensuring that the station is adequately staffed. We had trouble finding adequate numbers of long-term volunteers over the spring season, and have large gaps in coverage this fall. The station needs experienced observers to either be able to conduct census alone, or extract birds without supervision while the staff person conducts census. If you meet these criteria, or know of someone who does, and who is available, please let us know, we would very much appreciate, and very much need your contribution.

The Board is launching its raffle of three magnificent framed photographs, donated by Willie Waterton, Ethan Meleg and Doug Van Hemmesen. The prize draw will be held on November 1. The Board will also be launching a corporate fund raising campaign this fall.

We were delighted to receive funding from the Protection and Enhancement fund of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. BPBO received \$13,000 towards site improvements including road work, continued restoration of the glass house cottage, and support towards continued fall banding of Saw-whet Owls at the Institute for Outdoor Education and Environmental Studies.

We are grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Parks, the Canadian Nature Federation, and several private donors for supporting our efforts so generously this past year.

2003 Spring Migration Monitoring Summary

by Stephane Menu

This spring, a total of 1479 birds comprising 69 species were banded and 97 birds of 27 species were recaptured at the Cabot Head Research Station. Spring migration monitoring began on April 16th and ended on June 15th. Stéphane Menu was contracted as the Field Ornithologist/Bander-in-Charge (FO/BIC). With the assistance of two long-term and several short-term volunteers, the banding and migration monitoring was conducted for a total of 61 consecutive days. Fourteen to 16 mist-nets were operated each day, depending on the weather. Though not as high as for spring, 2002, the results confirmed the importance of Cabot Head for monitoring bird migration (see Table below for banding totals).

The season was exceptional for an extremely unusual bird: A Hermit Warbler was captured and banded on May 13th (see photo on front page, and page 6). Great care and lots of pictures were taken to identify this stray bird from the West Coast. Other noteworthy sightings include a White-eyed Vireo seen on May 11th and a Hooded Warbler the 12th. A Northern Mockingbird was first seen on May 15th and was observed regularly afterwards (up to June 25th). A few Golden Eagles (mostly first-year) were observed migrating through the area. Finally, a superb male Red-headed Woodpecker, a species clearly in serious decline throughout much of its range, was spotted briefly on a cedar at the tip on May 29th.

With the number of banded birds building up, there were interesting recaptures from the previous years (28 birds). They involved mostly local breeding birds, such as American Redstarts (one from 2000, 5 from 2001, and 6 from 2002), Red-eyed Vireos (3 from 2000), and even the only banded Northern-Rough-winged Swallow (in 2000) was recaptured. Two recaptures of "foreign" origin were also recaptured: a Common Yellowthroat, of still unknown origin; and an American Redstart the day after it was banded at Cape Hurd (at the western

tip of the Peninsula) by Ted Cheskey and Rod Steinecher!

SPRING BANDING TOTALS (2000-2003)

Species	03	02	01	00	Species	03	02	01	00
Sharp shinned Hawk	20	29	35	28	Yellow Warbler	16	22	48	16
Merlin			1		Chestnut-sided Warbler	20	26	30	23
Spotted Sandpiper			1		Magnolia Warbler	146	184	119	64
Mourning Dove			2		Cape May Warbler	1	9	2	2
Black-billed Cuckoo		1			Black thr. Blue Warbler	64	36	38	35
Eastern Screech Owl			1		Yellow-rumped Warbler	68	244	10	23
Northern Saw Whet Owl			1	49	Black-thr. Green Warbler	27	38	38	18
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1			1	Hermit Warbler	1			
Downy Woodpecker			1		Blackburnian Warbler	4	13	9	2
Northern Flicker	1	1	3	2	Pine Warbler	1	4		
Pileated Woodpecker	1		1		Prairie Warbler			1	1
Eastern Wood-Pewee	8		2		Western Palm Warbler	61	216	50	18
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	22	15	26	11	Bay-breasted Warbler	1	11	2	2
Trail's Flycatcher	13	14	36	17	Blackpoll Warbler	4	4	4	
Least Flycatcher	17	9	18	17	Black and white Warbler	72	78	58	24
Eastern Phoebe	2	5	3	1	American Redstart	171	204	306	148
Eastern Kingbird			1		Ovenbird	27	37	37	31
Blue-headed Vireo		6			Northern Waterthrush	3	2	4	3
Warbling Vireo		3	2		Mourning Warbler	12	14	10	5
Philadelphia Vireo	2	2		1	Common Yellowthroat	60	56	41	20
Red-eyed Vireo	13	10	43	13	Hooded Warbler		1		1
Blue Jay	21	13	550	115	Wilson's Warbler	25	32	9	12
Northern Rough-winged				1	Canada Warbler	24	19	24	12
Barn Swallow		1	3		Scarlet Tanager			1	
Black-capped Chickadee	6	342	9	49	American Tree Sparrow	3	5	1	56
White-breasted Nuthatch				1	Chipping Sparrow	14	47	91	45
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	17	1	15	Clay coloured Sparrow		2	1	
Brown Creeper	30	6	2	14	Field Sparrow		1	4	2
House Wren		2	1	2	Savannah Sparrow	3	1	16	1
Winter Wren	2	2			Fox Sparrow	2	2		1
Golden crowned Kinglet	77	6	2	33	Song Sparrow	19	12	21	63
Ruby crowned Kinglet	145	79	24	15	Lincoln's Sparrow	10	17	13	6
Blue Gray Gnatcatcher		1			Swamp Sparrow	4	3	4	3
Eastern Bluebird			1		White-throated Sparrow	25	71	48	44
Veery	4	1	14	8	White-crowned Sparrow	19	17	118	84
Gray cheeked Thrush	3	1	2	1	Dark-eyed Junco	25	69	1	160

Swainson's Thrush	12	13	24	14	Northern Cardinal	1	1	2	
Hermit Thrush	14	8	3	4	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	4	1	6	
Wood Thrush	1	1	2	5	Indigo Bunting	1	3	4	1
American Robin	15	8	5	5	Red-winged Blackbird			4	3
Gray Catbird	16	11	18	16	Eastern Meadowlark			1	
Northern Mockingbird				1	Common Grackle			7	3
Brown Thrasher	7	3	10	3	Brown-headed Cowbird			3	6
Cedar Waxwing	4		22	2	Baltimore Oriole	2	8	1	
Tennessee Warbler	1	6		2	Pine Siskin		1	8	
Blue-winged Warbler		1			Purple Finch	3			2
Golden-winged Warbler		3	1		American Goldfinch	4	41	36	7
Orange-crowned Warbler	5	29	9	4					
						147			
Nashville Warbler	60	227	20	16	TOTAL:	9	2431	2133	1414
Northern Parula	8	3	2	1	Species Total:	69	74	81	70

Bold - Record high spring totals, 2000-2003

Italic - indicated first spring banding record for CHRS

Non-standard banding in 2003: one Barn Swallow and one Red-eyed Vireo (not included in the table)

Data: for 2000-2001 Heagy, 2002; for 2002: Derbyshire, 2002

Banding recoveries (not including 2003 banding season)

All recoveries banded at Cabot Head Research Station, 45°1' lat, 81°1' long.

Species	Date banded	Date recovered	Location	Reason
Sharp-shinned Hawk	May 8, 2000	March 26, 2003	Macomb twp, Michigan 42°4' lat 82°5' long	Found dead
Saw-whet Owl	October 18, 1999	February 25, 2003	Port Hope, Ont. 43°5' lat 78°1' long	Found dead
Saw-whet Owl	October 7, 2001	October 6, 2002	Port Hope, Ont. 43°5' lat 78°1' long	retrapped
Saw-whet Owl	October 15, 2002	October 21, 2001	Stevens Point, Wisconsin 44°2' lat 89°3' long	retrapped

Recognition of Volunteers

BPBO and the FO/BIC would like to express our gratitude to the following members of the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory and volunteers for the help at the field station during the banding season, especially the 2 long-term volunteers, Michel Bélanger and Colin Zantinge. And also David Brewer, Lorraine Brown, Mary-Anne Cain, Ted Cheskey, Kevin Dance, Deb Diebel, Corinne Down, Janet MacDonald, Marion Mosolf, Rod Steinacher, Al Woodhouse.

Ron Baker, as the BPBO's administrator, was of invaluable help during the

— The BPBO newsletter has been distributed via email in order to save BPBO on printing and mailing costs. Please inform Ron Baker at ronbakerbpbo@sympatico.ca if you would prefer a hard-copy.

spring! BPBO and the FO/BIC would like to extend well-deserved thanks for his work.

Final Thoughts

Spring 2003 was a success as coverage was complete and the data collected was of high quality. This season marked the second year of migration monitoring following a well-established protocol. Already, interesting comparisons can be made between these 2 years. As shown by the capture of the Hermit Warbler, the unexpected is always to be expected at a migration station! Migration monitoring at Cabot Head will be ongoing for a period of at least 5 years, and will participate in the efforts of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network. It will certainly provide other surprises and ultimately will contribute to the understanding and monitoring of bird populations.



Stephane Menu carefully handles the Hermit Thrush banded at the Cabot Head Research Station.

Photo Credit: Dave Brewer

Red-necked Grebe Surveys

by Ethan Meleg

This was the fourth year of volunteer Red-necked Grebe (RNGR) surveys conducted along the shore of Georgian Bay from the Dyers Bay dock to Cabot Head. Although the Red-necked Grebe may be the characteristic bird of this area, this spring was anything but characteristic for the grebes. The lingering cold of winter left the entire study area frozen solid until around April 20, resulting

in the cancellation of many surveys. Rod Steinacher was able to do a partial survey on April 20 in which he tallied 4 RNGR, 197 Long-tailed Ducks and 57 White-winged Scoters. The bay opened up after that, and volunteers Joe Johnson, Rod Steinacher, Ted Cheskey, Shawn Gilck, Ethan Meleg, Don Wilkes and Margie Wikes were able to complete the remainder of the surveys through early May.

Surveys from the past three years have confirmed the peak of RNGR migration in Dyers Bay to fall between April 20 and 30, with some days recording upwards of hundreds of grebes. High counts of RNGR this year were much lower than usual, with 31 on April 26, 51 on May 3 and 37 on May 7. The unusually cold weather and frozen bay conditions were no doubt the cause of the atypically low grebe tallies this year.

Despite the low numbers of Red-necked Grebes, there were other interesting records made this year. Rod Steinacher had a high count of 69 Horned Grebes on May 3. There were also larger than usual numbers of Long-tailed Ducks and White-winged Scoters present during the survey season.

The Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory wishes to thank the volunteers who helped to make this another successful year of surveys, and to Shawn Gilck for the excellent feature story in the Owen Sound Sun Times. These efforts are paying off with a clearer understanding of the significance of Dyers Bay to Red-necked Grebes and other waterfowl.

If you'd like to volunteer your birding expertise next year (or join an experienced grebe counter), please contact Ethan Meleg at ethan.meleg@pc.gc.ca or (519) 596-2444 ext. 318.

Baker's Blurp

by Ron Baker

This spring was a trying time at Cabot Head. The cold weather restricted some banding and the beavers made entry into the station difficult at times, as noted in the report from the Chair. Road regrading has alleviated the problem for now, but the beavers are still busy!

The state of the road caused me to discourage all but the most hardy of volunteers, but many thanks to those who braved the way in. We were fortunate to receive a grant to hire Michel Belanger as an assistant ornithologist this year. Michel has been a great asset to the program.

We are making strides to return the lodge (glasshouse) to full use. Water has been reconnected and we expect to have plumbing in soon, together with completion of the rewiring. We hope to have the building habitable by the fall.

I am scheduling volunteers for the fall banding. August is already subscribed, but there are still vacancies for both experienced and apprentice birders in September and October. If you would like to spend some time at beautiful Cabot Head, please visit www.bpbo.ca and fill out our volunteer application form. Remember to indicate when you will be available. Push the submit button, and Ron will get back to you!

Research at Cabot Head

By Norah Toth, Ontario Parks

It is exciting to see the research facility at Cabot Head being used by both the birding community and researchers involved with the Ancient Tree Atlas Project.

Peter Kelly is continuing research begun in 1998 on cliff-face age structure, which is an important step towards making conservation-based decisions on land use along the Niagara Escarpment within our nature reserve parks on the Bruce Peninsula. During the first phase of this study, they set out to determine the location and age of the oldest trees on a network of cliff faces along the Niagara Escarpment between the Niagara River and Fathom Five National Marine Park. At that time, Pete also determined the habitat variables that might lead to the longevity of these trees. The final goal of this project was to increase the awareness of the general public about this unique forest. In 2003, Ontario Parks is supporting the continuation of this project within Lion's Head Promontory and Smokey Head - White Bluff nature reserves. We are also providing Pete and his crew accommodation at the research station. The information they are able to pass on will be very valuable during the management planning for these parks over the next two to three years.

Two other research projects are currently being carried out at Cabot Head. These researchers are not using the Research Station as their base of operations.

Five years ago a one-hectare forest biodiversity monitoring plot was established within Cabot Head Provincial Nature Reserve. This plot, which is being used as a “control” site, is being revisited again this year. Collection of forest biodiversity data (tree, shrub/sapling and ground cover) provides a documented inventory of tree growth, mortality, richness and abundance. Tree health data can be used to examine trends in the health of forests in undisturbed areas of the Escarpment. Long-term monitoring increases the understanding of forest dynamics and ecosystem processes that can be used to predict change, assess the impacts of disturbance and conserve/manage protected areas.

A second research project within the Cabot Head Provincial Nature Reserve has been approved by Ontario Parks. Leaf tissue samples are to be removed from Houghton’s goldenrod (*Solidago houghtonii*) to help researchers determine the origin, taxonomic relationships and population genetic structure of this species. Houghton’s goldenrod is tracked by the Natural Heritage Information Centre in Ontario but is not currently listed as a “species at risk”.

These exciting projects are helping to diversify the use of the Cabot Head Provincial Nature Reserve, and information gleaned from it. Ontario Parks continues to be excited about these new projects and partnerships.

Continued Support for BPBO Important

BPBO operates with membership fees, donations and grants from a variety of sources. Throughout the year, requests are sent out for funds to buy nets, tools and other supplies that cannot be donated and are needed to carry out our research projects. We are grateful for the support of organizations such as the Trillium Foundation of Ontario, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Ontario Bird Banding Association, Canada Trust Friends of the Environment, the Baillie Foundation and the Canadian Nature Federation. Many individuals have helped by donating specific items we need.

Much of the research done by BPBO is completed by volunteers, but we need a qualified master bander to oversee the migration monitoring research. While we have been fortunate to have received funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to ensure operations in 2002 and 2003, this grant will run its course this year. Next year, we may have to rely on the generosity of individuals and businesses to fund the balance of our operations. You can help by making a donation, or notifying a board member of potential funding sources.

Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory

Board and Colleagues 2002-2003

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The board thanks the following for their continued efforts on behalf of BPBO:

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