

BPBO Beakon

Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory
RR#1, Miller Lake, ON, N0H 1Z0



Bruce Peninsula
Bird Observatory

Volume 07, Number 02

July, 2007

Latest News from BPBO

Summer is traditionally a bit of a dull time for migration-monitoring enthusiasts; the rush and excitement of the spring is long over, and although the fall migration has (egad!) already started (the first south-bound migrants in southern Ontario - a few Lesser Yellowlegs - were reported in June), the sense of urgency that comes with full-blown migration will not be with us for a while yet.

However, even though things are slow on the migration monitoring side, the staff and board at BPBO have by no means been idle; there has been a lot of event planning and preparation going on in the background. In August, we're hosting the **Environmental Film Festival** in co-operation with the Bruce Peninsula Environment Group. Proceeds of this event will be used to support our monitoring work at Cabot Head, so please come out if you can, and tell all your friends to come, too. Of course, the big event that I always look forward to is the **BPBO Open House**, coming up September 8 (see box). We'll also be hosting another one of those very popular Grebe Lodge workshops this fall, this one on the subject of Nature Journaling; see p. 4 for details.

Other news: back on April 22, we held our **Annual General Meeting** at the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority Headquarters in Owen Sound, right there on the banks of the Sydenham River. The day got off to an auspicious start with our morning bird walk; it was a perfectly calm sunny day, such as we had no right to expect in Ontario in April. The group turned up some excellent birds, the undoubted highlight of which was the Louisiana Waterthrush! This was a lifer for half the group or more, and if you check the account in your field guide, you can see why; quite hard to find anywhere in Ontario, it is almost unknown at these latitudes. It was not your typical rare warbler sighting; for one thing, it appeared below eye-level, so we didn't have to destroy our necks looking at it, and for another,

BPBO Open House

Saturday, September 8,
Cabot Head Research Station

It is once again time to fling open the gates at our research facility at Cabot Head and invite you, our loyal friends and supporters, to join us for a morning of all kinds of birdy stuff. There will be banding demonstrations, site tours, and a guided bird hike or two. This will all be followed by a barbecue lunch hosted by your humble and devoted servants, the BPBO board. It's just generally a good way to get to know what goes on at BPBO first-hand.

The open house will be held on Saturday, September 8, and run from 9 o'clock in the morning until approximately 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Lunch will be served around noon.

As usual, parking will be located outside the gate, on Dyer's Bay road. We'll have a regular "shuttle bus" service to get people to and from the station.

We hope to see you all there, in September!

it was extremely cooperative, letting everyone take long looks as walked along sticks in the water, energetically bobbing its tail. Thanks to Ted for knowing the song of this seldom-seen species.

Returning to the business part of the AGM, this year was marked by a relatively small amount of change in BPBO's board of directors; most of our current directorship is staying on in their respective portfolios (portfolia?). However, a very important exception to this is the departure of Rod Steinacher, one of the founding members of BPBO, who has is taking a well-deserved

(Continued on Page 2)

break from board work. Rod has served us as President for the last two years, and has, in addition, done more committee work over his tenure on the board than I could possibly enumerate. Thanks to Rod from all of us for all he has done in that time, and especially for the continuity he has provided through a period marked by so many changes. Rod will continue to serve in an advisory capacity as Past President.

Rod's departure left us with one space to fill on the board, and we were all very pleased to have Ted Chesky stand for election. Ted is another founding member, and his return to the board is most welcome. He will be taking over as President and BOD chair.

Other tidbits from the AGM: Once again, we had a **photo quiz**, a highly enjoyable event that is getting to be something of a tradition for us. Thanks to Ethan Meleg for putting this together out of his extensive archive of bird images. Ethan also provided the feature presentation for the afternoon, with a very entertaining and informative feature on photographic techniques entitled "**The Story Behind the Picture**". (Who would have thought that duct tape and broken-off tree branches would be vital tools for bird photography?)

-Peter Coo



Bruce Peninsula Environmental Film Festival

Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory and Bruce Peninsula Environment Group are hosting a festival of environmental films from the 11th to the 18th of August.

The Festival will be a mixture of classic films and documentaries, each with an environmental theme.

The Classic films will be introduced by Stephen Scharper, associate professor at the University of Toronto with 7 years of teaching in film studies. The films will be followed by an optional discussion led by Stephen Scharper. All films except *Winged Migration* will be shown in the Anglican Church Hall, Lion's Head at 7:00 p.m..

Programme:

Saturday, August 11: *The Grapes of Wrath*

This poignant adaptation of John Steinbeck's gritty Depression-era classic is on most top 50 film lists.

Sunday, August 12: *Babette's Feast*.

Based on a short story by Isak Dinesen, this is quite simply one of the most beautiful and lavish feast films ever produced.

Tuesday, August 14: *Refugees of the Blue Planet*.

This documentary shows that the environmental crisis is following the same fault line of social, economic, political and racial oppression.

Thursday, August 16: *Winged Migration*
(Special venue, for this film only: National Park Camp Amphitheatre, 7 p.m.)

Director: Jacques Perri, Jacques Cluzaud

Nominated for an academy award for best documentary, this extraordinary film gives a "bird's eye" glimpse of the perils and exhilaration of annual bird migration.

Friday, August 17: *Who Killed the Electric Car?*

This compelling documentary shows the complex interface between environmental policies, the corporate bottom line, consumer preference and ecological sustainability.

Saturday, August 18: *Modern Times*

The final appearance of Charlie Chaplin as "the tramp," this is Chaplin's most overtly political film and one of his most popular.

Admission: \$10 per film or \$25 for a passport to all films. For more information and tickets contact Ron Baker, 519-795-7652.

Sponsored by Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory and Bruce Peninsula Environment Group with assistance of the Bruce Peninsula National Park. Proceeds from the Festival will support the Migration Monitoring program of BPBO at Cabot Head.

Stephen Scharper Biographical Information:

Stephen Bede Scharper is Associate Professor at Centre for environment and the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto. He is the author of numerous scholarly and popular articles as well as *Redeeming the Time: A Political Theology of The Environment* and (with Hilary Cunningham) *The Green Bible*.

Birds in the News

It isn't often that we get good news stories about endangered birds these days, when all the talk seems to be about declining numbers and habitat destruction. While these issues certainly are a concern to us, every once and a while, the tenacity of birds continues to hearten us; reproduced below are two such stories.

The first concerns the return of a very scarce Piping Plover to the shores of Lake Huron the summer. A pair of these tiny relatives of the Killdeer nested at north Sauble Beach this summer, raising three fluffy chicks. To give you some idea of what a momentous event this is, the recently-completed Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas turned up only one confirmed breeding record for the entire province for the years 2001 -2005! Since Sauble is an area of extremely high human traffic, extraordinary measures had to be put in place to ensure the survival of the brood. A crew of volunteers was assembled to watch over the Piping Plover family day and night. One of them, Owen Sound naturalist Peter Middleton, sent this report on what it was like to work on the "Plover watch". -Ed.

"Hello folks,

"I thought that you might enjoy these new images of the Piping Plover. They were taken this past weekend, as I monitored the family. Sitting in one spot watching them on Monday morning, it was not long before the male approached me and settled on a spot, about five metres from me, in which to brood the three surviving young. One by one they arrived and pushed their way into the feathers of his breast. After about ten minutes, they then popped out one by one, preened and headed off for another round of feeding. Absolutely magical.



Adult Piping Plover guarding three (yes, three - count the feet!) chicks.
Photo courtesy of Peter Middleton.

"They all survived the weekend madness with hordes of people around and a very keenly interested fox between the hours of one and three am on Sunday night. I spent the two overnight shifts on Saturday and Sunday, arriving at 7:30 p.m. and leaving at about 8:30 the following morning as the first of the daytime shifts arrived for duty as monitors. The most interesting incident occurred at about 9:30 on Saturday evening, when the female decided to move the family north from the enclosure area to the dunes at the north end of the beach. There was a steady stream of people moving both on and off the beach at the time. I could see that she was going to have a problem getting them across the beach access. I quickly had the conservation officers, who were helping me, hold back the people headed to the beach while I held back those who were leaving.

"Two groups formed creating a corridor, which the female quickly accepted and led her brood safely across the access path with its galleries of onlookers. When all were successfully across a round of applause broke out before everyone went back to their business.

"I hope to get up one or more times before departing for the north. Perhaps we will see you there. If not enjoy a great summer."

-Peter Middleton

Another good news story concerns the critically-endangered eastern sub-species of the Loggerhead Shrike. This species used to breed in significant numbers in southern Ontario, but has declined precipitously in recent years, reasons unknown. The Bruce Peninsula is one area where captive-bred birds are being reintroduced. A recent news story came to us from CFOS radio, showing that these efforts are finally beginning to bear fruit. -Ed.

Bird breeding program successful

It is an environmental success story that is unfolding on the Bruce Peninsula near Dyers Bay.

A captive breeding program of an endangered Ontario songbird that hunts like a hawk, is showing positive results. Elaine Williams is the Executive Director of Wildlife Preservation Canada and says a captive raised Eastern Loggerhead Shrike has been spotted on the Peninsula. She says that for the past three years, these captive raised birds have been migrating south, then returning to Ontario to breed in the wild.

(Continued on Page 4)

When the program began back in 1997, only 18 pairs of Eastern Loggerhead Shrikes could be found in Ontario.

Last year 49 shrikes were released to the wild from the Bruce Peninsula site and another 62 from another site east of Orillia. So far this year, a total of 20 confirmed pairs have been spotted, including the one near Dyers Bay that so far has not found a mate.



Young Loggerhead Shrike, in its preferred habitat: thorns!
Photo: Brad Bergstrom

Williams says the goal of the program is to increase the Shrike population to 500 birds and then the species can be removed from the endangered list. She says the next step is to put tiny radio transmitters on the captive bred birds before releasing them. This will allow researchers to track the birds to see how they migrate and where they spend their winter.

Williams suspects changes to habitat in their overwinter location may be contributing to the decline in their numbers.

-Jim Birchard



Upcoming Workshops at Grebe Lodge

Nature Journaling - Putting Your Spirituality To Paper

Dates: Friday, September 21 (evening) to Sunday, September 23, 2007 Note: this is an event for women only.

Description of Workshop: A weekend to draw upon your spirit and soul. The Cabot Head environs and

atmosphere will inspire you to write and contemplate like never before. Keeping a nature journal is a wonderful way for writers, novice or experienced, to become spiritually centered. What you decide to put in your journal is a personal choice, and our Leader will teach you various techniques of journaling. 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. You may be called to draw or paint in your journal as well as write in it. Inspiration will come from nature walks on this unique and inspiring landscape, and from sharing each others' insights.

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. As Coordinator, she is developing and expanding new programs in Ecology and Spirituality on the property as well as supporting exciting ones. Marianne is also the Director of Arborvitae and member of the Russet House Farm community and has a deep passion for re-connecting people with the earth. Marianne, as the daughter of award winning landscape photographer, Malak Karsh, comes by her love for beauty naturally.

Marianne is a professional forester and active as a researcher for Environment Canada in areas of Biodiversity and Climate Change. She has been leading nature and spirituality field trips, courses and seminars year round for over 9 years. She is the coauthor of *Trees, Forestry and the Responsiveness of Creation* by Brian Walsh, Marianne Karsh and Nik Ansell, published in *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature and the Environment*, Roger, Gottlieb (ed.), (1996).

Participant Group: Up to 14 adult women

Cost:

\$250.00 inclusive of meals, accommodation & program

\$235.00 for BPBO members (you can join BPBO now and take advantage of the reduced fees for our Weekends at Cabot Head)

Day rates available for residents of the Northern Peninsula.

*NOTE - This weekends' meals will be vegetarian and cosmopolitan in nature.