

BPBO Beakon

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



Volume 04, Number 02

August, 2004

Member Appreciation Day To Be Held At Bird Observatory

There are few things more special for a birder than seeing a favourite bird in the hand. Members and local cottagers will get this chance on Tuesday, August 31 when BPBO hosts its second annual Members Appreciation Day. Members and cottagers are invited to join BPBO Board Members for a day of socializing, birding, and perhaps even a peek at the banding activities (for those who arrive early enough in the day). Refreshments will be served over the “bar-b”. The open house will begin at 10am and end at 2pm. We hope to see all of you there!

Name Our Newsletter!

The time has come folks! We are looking for a name for our newsletter, and we need your help! We are hoping for a name for our newsletter that is catchy, relevant to birds, of course, and suits the purpose of the newsletter – keeping you, our valued members, informed. In order to find such a name, we are launching a contest. Entries should be submitted to Deb Diebel, at deborah_diebel@bwdsb.on.ca by September 30, 2004. The winning entry will earn an overnight stay for two at the Cabot Head Research Station’s Grebe Lodge during an agreed upon time.

It’s for the Birds! - Membership Renewal Reminder

To our valued members – Please remember to renew your memberships as soon as possible! BPBO is striving to seek new opportunities for funding, but we continue to rely upon and appreciate your support. Your support will allow us to continue migration monitoring projects, and other valuable bird research projects. Contact us or refer to our website for more information. Thank-you!

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Monitoring Summary

By Stéphane Menu

This spring, 1,431 birds of 65 species were banded, and 110 birds of 30 species were recaptured at the Cabot Head Research Station. Spring migration monitoring began on April 19th and ended on June 12th. Stéphane Menu was contracted, for a second year, as the Field Ornithologist/Bander-in-Charge (FO/BIC). With the assistance of several volunteers, the banding and migration monitoring was conducted for a total of 55 consecutive days. Fifteen mist-nets, one baited ground trap and one hawk-net were operated each day, depending on the weather. Though below average (based on years 2002, '03 and '04, when a similar protocol was followed), the results confirmed the importance of Cabot Head for monitoring bird migration (see Table below for banding totals).

The season was exceptional for the many unusual birds detected. Two new species were added for the area: a Worm-eating Warbler was seen on the 30th of April. Another spring overshoot and new species was the Yellow-throated Warbler seen on the 7th of May. Just like the Worm-eating, it was observed on the following a strong south windstorm. The 12th of May, in warm and humid weather, 84 species were detected at Cabot head, including a Hooded Warbler, a Golden-winged Warbler and the first ever banded Worm-eating Warbler. Other noteworthy sightings include a White-eyed Vireo banded on May 17th and seen the following day, when 2 Yellow-throated Vireos were observed as well. A Red-headed Woodpecker was seen on May 16th and was caught the same day in the ground trap! Also interesting were the Western Meadowlark singing in the half-dead birch in front of the station and the 2 pure albino Double-crested Cormorants flying in stark contrast to their black counterparts.

With the number of banded birds building up, there were interesting recaptures from previous years (28 birds from 7 species). They involved mostly local breeding birds, such as American Redstarts (3 from spring 2001, 3 from spring 2003, and 12 from fall 2003), Red-eyed Vireos (1 from spring 2000 and one from fall 2003), and even a Swainson's Thrush banded in fall 2003 was recaptured. Two recaptures of "foreign" origin were also recaptured: an American Redstart and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. Imagine our surprise to discover that the first "sharpie" caught this spring was already banded. We will post the information on these birds as soon as possible.

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Second Annual BPBO Raffle This Fall

After the success of last year's raffle, BPBO will be launching another draw n this fall. This year's prizes include a weekend get-away at the Cabot Head Research Station with dinner for two at the Rocky Raccoon Restaurant in Dyer's Bay, a weekend of yurt camping at MacGregor Provincial Park, and a set of 10 CDs of stories told by BPBO's own Ron Baker! Prizes will be drawn at a gathering for members and supporters on November 20th (details to follow). The price for tickets will be \$2 each or 3 for \$5. Please let one of our Board Members know if you would like to purchase tickets, or if you would be willing to sell tickets. Last year's draw raised over \$1000, and we're looking forward to continued success with this fundraiser.

Spring Banding Totals of birds captured in mist-nets: 2002-2004

Species	04	03	02	Av.	Species	04	03	02	Av.
Sharp shinned Hawk	10	20	29	19.7	Black thr. Blue Warbler	21	64	36	40.3
Black billed Cuckoo			1	1.0	Yellow rumped Warbler	49	68	244	120
Yellow bellied Sapsucker		1		1.0	Black thr. Green Warbler	25	27	38	30.0
Northern Flicker		1	1	1.0	Hermit Warbler		1		1.0
Pileated Woodpecker		1		1.0	Blackburnian Warbler	2	4	13	6.3
Eastern Wood-Pewee	1	8		4.5	Pine Warbler	2	1	4	2.3
Yellow bellied Flycatcher	17	22	15	18.0	Western Palm Warbler	55	61	216	110
Traill's Flycatcher	11	13	14	12.7	Bay breasted Warbler	1	1	11	4.3
Least Flycatcher	22	17	9	16.0	Blackpoll Warbler	1	4	4	3.0
Eastern Phoebe	3	2	5	3.3	<i>Worm-eating Warbler</i>	1			1.0
Blue headed Vireo			6	6.0	Black and white Warbler	45	72	78	65.0
Warbling Vireo			3	3.0	American Redstart	223	171	204	199
Philadelphia Vireo		2	2	2.0	Ovenbird	26	27	37	30.0
Red eyed Vireo	14	13	10	12.3	Northern Waterthrush	2	3	2	2.3
<i>White eyed Vireo</i>	1			1.0	Mourning Warbler	11	12	14	12.3
Blue Jay	88	21	13	40.7	Common Yellowthroat	45	60	56	53.7
Barn Swallow			1	1.0	Hooded Warbler			1	1.0
Black capped Chickadee	14	6	342	120	Wilson's Warbler	20	25	32	25.7
Red breasted Nuthatch	2	1	17	6.7	Canada Warbler	22	24	19	21.7
Brown Creeper	9	30	6	15.0	American Tree Sparrow	2	3	5	3.3
House Wren			2	2.0	Chipping Sparrow	17	14	47	26.0
Winter Wren	3	2	2	2.3	Clay coloured Sparrow			2	2.0
Golden crowned Kinglet	36	77	6	39.7	Field Sparrow			1	1.0
Ruby crowned Kinglet	74	145	79	99.3	Savannah Sparrow	1	3	1	1.7
Blue Gray Gnatcatcher			1	1.0	Fox Sparrow		2	2	2.0
Veery	21	4	1	8.7	Song Sparrow	9	19	12	13.3
Gray checked Thrush	5	3	1	3.0	Lincoln's Sparrow	11	10	17	12.7
Swainson's Thrush	21	12	13	15.3	Swamp Sparrow	6	4	3	4.3
Hermit Thrush	6	14	8	9.3	White throated Sparrow	26	25	71	40.7
Wood Thrush	1	1	1	1.0	E. White-cr. Sparrow	14	19	17	16.7
American Robin	5	15	8	9.3	<i>G. White-cr. Sparrow</i>	1			1.0
Gray Catbird	11	16	11	12.7	Dark eyed Junco	20	25	69	38.0
Brown Thrasher	6	7	3	5.3	<i>Eastern Towhee</i>	2			2.0
Cedar Wax wing		4		4.0	Northern Cardinal		1	1	1.0
Tennessee Warbler		1	6	3.5	Rose Breasted Grosbeak	3	4	1	2.7
Blue winged Warbler			1	1.0	Indigo Bunting	5	1	3	3.0
Golden winged Warbler	1		3	2.0	Common Grackle	1			1.0

Orange crowned Warbler	8	5	29	14.0	Baltimore Oriole		2	8	5.0
Nashville Warbler	18	61	227	102	Pine Siskin			1	1.0
Northern Parula		9	3	6.0	Purple Finch		3		3.0
Yellow Warbler	8	16	22	15.3	American Goldfinch	1	4	41	15.3
Chestnut sided Warbler	14	20	26	20.0					
Magnolia Warbler	109	144	184	145	Total	1210	1479	2431	1707
Cape May Warbler		1	9	5.0	Species Total	62	69	74	85

Av.: Average

Bold: Record high established in spring 2004 (period 2000-2004)

Bold and italic: Above average (period 2002-2004)

Italic: Indicated first spring banding record for CHRS

Data: for 2002: Derebyshire, 2002; for 2003: Menu, 2003

E. White-cr. Sparrow: Eastern White-crowned Sparrow

G. White-cr. Sparrow: Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow

RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTEERS

BPBO and the FO/BIC would like to express their gratitude to the following members of the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory and volunteers for the help at the field station during the banding season: Mary-Anne Cain, Ted Cheskey, Alain Deschamps, Raymond Fahey, Réjean Gaudreault, Douglas Lonsdale, Bill MacMartin, Marie-Josée Marcotte, Marion Mosolf, Larry Roszell, Josh Shea, Rod Steinacher, Claude & Margo St-Louis, and Al Woodhouse.

Ron Baker, as the BPBO's administrator, was of invaluable help during the spring! BPBO and the FO/BIC would like to extend well-deserved thanks for his work.

CONCLUDING REMARKS FROM STÉPHANE MENU, BPBO'S FO/BIC

Spring 2004 was a success as coverage was greatly enhanced by the presence of numerous dedicated and skilled volunteers. It clearly indicates that the Cabot Head Research Station is starting to be known and recognized in the birding community. This season marked the third year of a migration monitoring following a well-established protocol. Already, interesting comparisons can be made between these 3 years. As shown by the number of rare birds seen and the capture of the Worm-eating 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 contribute to the efforts of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network. It will certainly provide other surprises and ultimately will contribute to a better understanding and monitoring of bird populations.

Red-necked Grebe Surveys Summary – 2004

By Rod Steinacher

This is the fifth year that BPBO volunteers have completed the Red-necked Grebe (RNGR) surveys following a standard lake watch protocol. Timed stops are made at each of five

stations along a 10 km stretch of Georgian Bay shoreline from the hamlet of Dyer's Bay to the Cabot Head light house at the northeastern tip of the Bruce Peninsula. Red-necked Grebes congregate along this shore line from late April until early May each year to rest and feed. All waterfowl observed at each station are recorded on standardized data sheets and twice weekly the data is then compiled. The combined data, collected over the last five years, will soon be analyzed for any discernable trends.

Between March 31 and May 8 this year, 12 surveys were completed. Poor weather with fog or high winds hampered observing efforts, but only March 31 was completely weathered-out. This year Ethan Meleg and Rod Steinacher each did a training session for a total of four new observers interested in becoming grebe surveyors. It is always exciting to have new people helping out by getting involved in BPBO activities! Thanks to those who completed surveys; Ted Cheskey, Bill Hansen with Raymond Fahey and Ed Wilson, John and Diane Haselmayer, Joe Johnson, Ethan Meleg, Rod Steinacher, and Don and Margie Wilkes.

This year 17 species, for 3923 individuals, were observed. Red-necked Grebe numbers were at only about 30% of previous levels. 270 RNGRs were observed, representing just 30% of the 2003 total (of 905). This huge drop is likely due, in part, to the very poor weather experienced by both grebes and observers this spring, and time will tell if numbers are down in the long term. On the up side, 3005 Long-tailed Ducks (LTDU) were observed, which is almost nine times last year's number (of 338)! With the LTDUs subtracted out of the totals, 840 species of other waterfowl were observed, again down from 2003's 1475 non-LTDU individuals. Further study will be needed to see if this is a long term trend, or just a "statistical blip".

A new species for survey, a single Eared Grebe (EAGR), more common in the lakes and potholes out west, was clearly observed and documented at Station 1 by Ted Cheskey on May 1. A number of other observers reported "grebe species" during their surveys (meaning "It looks like a grebe, but I can't tell which species it is for sure."), a testament to how difficult it can be to clearly identify waterfowl at long distances in challenging light and wave conditions.

The Red-necked Grebe is BPBO's "signature" bird, and the reason things got rolling for the observatory in the first place. Due to the significant numbers of RNGRs congregating off the shore of Dyer's Bay to rest and feed, the area was designated a globally significant Important Bird Area. The BPBO was formed by a handful of interested and committed birders who had been part of the IBA process.

Local Birder and Educator Joins BPBO Board of Directors

This spring we welcomed a new bird enthusiast to our Board of Directors. We are very pleased to welcome Peter Middleton to the fray. Peter is a long-time naturalist and avid birder. Born in Scotland, Peter emigrated to Canada in 1952 and has lived in Owen Sound with his family for many years. After teaching for 35 years, Peter has made a second career for himself as a guide for Quest Tours to such destinations as South Africa, the high Arctic, Antarctica, Trinidad and Tobago, the Amazon, India, and Costa Rica. Peter is also heavily involved in community work with organizations such as the Georgian Bay Youth

Choir, Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery, Owen Sound Field Naturalists, Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy, and the Bruce Grey Public Education Foundation. He is quite knowledgeable about birds, and can imitate several bird calls quite fluently. Lore at the Institute for Outdoor Education and Environmental Studies depicts Peter plucking Saw-Whet owls right out of their perch! We look forward to Peter working his magic for BPBO!

Baker's Blurb – 2004 An Exciting Time for BPBO!

By Ron Baker, BPBO Administrator

Following our Memorandum of Understanding with Ontario Parks, we have begun to use the facilities at Cabot Head to create some revenue to support our Monitoring program. Two employees with the Shrike Recovery Program have been tenants of Grebe Lodge for the summer. Two successful Nature Retreat Weekends, a birding weekend led by Ted Cheskey and a photography workshop led by Ethan Meleg treated everyone involved to a great time and generated useful revenue. The birders identified 110 species over the course of the birding weekend, including a wild Loggerhead Shrike (not part of the shrike release program), wild cavorting Barred Owls and numerous strutting Sandhill Cranes! In addition, our first booking by a university group was described as 'A Wonderful Experience'.

We now have a colourful leaflet describing our group accommodation. This has been sent to Ontario Universities and will be sent to naturalist and art groups shortly. The cost for a group staying at Grebe Lodge is \$25.00 per person per night, with a minimum charge of \$250.00 and a minimum stay of 2 nights. If you know of any naturalist or art groups that would be interested please let me know and I will send them information.

Park Stewards who staff the cottage during our summer break from monitoring are another source of income. In exchange for a reasonable rent, some work and supervision of the site Park Stewards enjoy an idyllic vacation. Stewards this summer did a lot of necessary jobs around the site and buildings, and we thank them for their efforts.

Utilizing the facilities at Cabot Head within the parameters set down by Ontario Parks represents our best prospect for a stable and secure source of funding in the future, and 2004 has proven to be a good beginning. We were very fortunate with our volunteers this spring, some very experienced birders, mostly Francophones! This September we have a contingency from Germany! We are getting an international reputation thanks to our website and word of mouth. We still have spaces for volunteers in late August and for most of October. Applications are also invited for the spring of 2005.

Memberships are another important source of funding, apart from being a pool of volunteer support. Thank you to the large number of members who have sent in their renewal. If you have not gotten around to it you may expect a call from one of our Directory pleading for your support... so be prepared (better yet - be able to tell them that it is in the mail!)

Rita and I are taking a group to Iona and Glencoe in Scotland, and then we are going on a 70 mile 'Secret Kingdom Walk' in Northumberland. After that we are renting Smuggler Cottage in Saundersfoot, S. Wales until the end of March. The Board has granted me

leave of absence from October 1st until April 4th 2005. I am trying to get group bookings and Spring volunteers lined up before I go. While I am away Ted Cheskey will take over Volunteers, Deb Diebel will look after group bookings, and Lorraine Brown will deal with general correspondence and other administrivia.

Happy Birding!

Thanks For Corporate Sponsors

The board and members of the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory wish to thank and acknowledge the corporate support we have received to date in 2004 from the following businesses:

Shouldice Designer Stone – Shallow Lake
Cornerstone Golf Course – Tobermory
Circle Arts Gallery – Tobermory
Peninsula TimBr-Mart – Miller Lake
Stone Orchid Eatery and Shoppe – Tobermory
Escape Productions – Owen Sound

Supporting a relatively new non-profit community organization among the hundreds to choose from is like taking leap of faith; thank you for your confidence as we embark on our mission. Your contributions will help us to build a network of support among other businesses in Owen Sound and area and on the Bruce Peninsula.

For more information on BPBO's corporate sponsorship opportunities please see the BPBO website or e-mail ronbakerbpbo@sympatico.ca.

A Fall Weekend at Cabot Head With the Birds

Come and join BPBO president Ted Cheskey, master bird bander, bird advocate and outdoor educator to experience the fall migration at the stunning Cabot Head Research Station at the eastern tip of the Bruce Peninsula. During this weekend of learning and fun, participants will participate in migration monitoring including banding birds. Visit and bird some of the best local birding sites, and indulge in the incredible natural history of this unique site. If conditions are appropriate, some nets may be opened at night for Saw-whet Owl banding. This will be a very full weekend with some hiking over easy terrain.

The weekend will be conducted on October 16th and 17th. The cost includes two breakfasts, two lunches and Friday supper. We will dine on Saturday at the Rocky Raccoon Restaurant in Dyers Bay, but the cost of this is in addition to the registration price. The cost for the weekend is \$300, including a \$100 tax donation receipt. Accommodation is in dormitory-style bunks in the newly refurbished and quite cozy Grebe Lodge.

BPBO Public Banding Demonstrations

By Rod Steinacher

In an effort to inform the public about birds on the Bruce Peninsula and the monitoring of their migration, BPBO “took its show on the road” this spring. Two bird banding demonstrations were held in the Tobermory area.

The first, on Saturday, May 15 saw Rod and Noreen Steinacher set up two mist nets behind the main National Park office, across the road from St. Edmund’s Public School, in excellent wet scrub habitat. The big hit for the six participants was a Gray Catbird (GRCA) which put on its typical performance, with lots of noisy protest. As part of the “Nature Noons” program offered by the Stone Orchid Restaurant, the Steinachers did a second brief demonstration on June 13. With the migration essentially over, it was up to the resident Black-throated Green Warblers (BTGN) to assist with the education of the six observers.

BPBO will continue its educational outreach efforts on the Bruce Peninsula in the future, so watch for announcements about upcoming banding demonstrations.

Nicaragua Project

By Ted Cheskey, BPBO President

A few years back, I spent a week learning basic Spanish in a small city in central Nicaragua. While Nicaragua is the largest country in central America, it is also the poorest. The people have experienced a century or more of war and oppression, which has left an imprint on their faces and outlooks. There is little in the way of organized conservation or environmental protection, but with no resources, and little support, some Nicaraguans are struggling to protect some of the critical habitats in their beautiful country and the fauna that lives in them. Many birds that either migrate through the Bruce Peninsula, or breed here, spend their winters in Nicaragua, providing a strong link between our two countries.

This summer, I am returning to Nicaragua hoping to establish a working relationship with local bird conservationists that could eventually result in aid and skill transfers from Canada to Nicaragua. I have received some support from the Baillie Foundation for this trip, for which I am grateful, and at the time of writing this article, I am attempting to raise the additional funds to make it happen. One long-term goal of these efforts may be to bring Nicaraguan ornithologists and bird banders to Cabot Head for training and skill development. One of my main contacts in Nicaragua is Jose Zolotof-Pallais, editor of the Latin American ornithological bulletin La Tangara, and the recipient of an exchange a few years ago at Long Point Ontario similar to the one envisioned with BPBO. At this point this initiative is a personal one, but depending on the outcome of my visit, and fundraising efforts, I hope that within a few years some Nicaraguans will have experienced the splendor of Cabot Head and that we will be working arm in arm to protect critical wintering habitats for Bruce County birds as well as the great and diverse avifauna of Nicaragua.

Ekwan River Adventure and Atlassing Trip

By Ted Cheskey, BPBO President

Stephane Menu, our Station ornithologist, and Ted Cheskey, BPBO president, shared a tent, a canoe, and a 230 kilometer river adventure near the north end of James Bay in late June and early July. Ted and Stephane joined Steve Furino and Pat Hodgson as one of half a dozen Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas trips to the far north of Ontario. The team had to get to Timmins, to catch a plane to Attiwapiskat where the adventure started. After some tense last minutes arrangements were made to rent canoes from locals, the teams was flown to a predetermined location 230 kilometres upstream on the Ekwan River in a small Beaver floatplane. A Northern Shrike greeted the group as they unloaded the plane in a strong current, setting some high expectations!

The Atlas organizers set targets for effort for this and other trips. The Ekwan team was expected to spend about 50 hours in two different 100 by 100 kilometre blocks, and within those blocks (basic unit on topographical maps), spend 20 hours of atlassing in two predetermined 10 by 10 kilometre squares along their route). This included conducting 25 five minute timed point counts (generally between 300 and 400 metres apart) in each square. The weather was challenging, with temperatures early in the trip in the single digits and rain every day. The bird song level was reduced due to the cold and wet weather, however, the group had much distance to cover in little time, so after losing one entire day to weather (gale-like conditions, 4 degrees, horizontal rain, verging on snow), we pushed on along the river, our biggest day being 67 kilometres. The same storm forced the helicopter evacuation of two other groups off the Hudson's Bay Coast!

The habitat was quite boreal along the river, with tall spruce trees and Aspen coppices. Often the best campsites were in or near the Aspens, often near the junction of the Ekwan and one of its tributaries. Back from the river, the habitat was often muskeg, with small or stunted spruce, tamarack and various ericads, hummocks of sphagnum, and scary moss-covered bottomless muck pits. Often we had to wind our way though a labyrinth of tiny lakes along the vegetated hummocks. In these habitats, Palm Warblers, Hermit Thrushes and Fox Sparrows were among the most common species. Northern Waterthrush, Yellow Warbler and Swainson's Thrush were common near the river. Occasionally Arctic Terns would pass us along the river, along with Mergansers, Widgeon, Green-winged Teal and loons. While Bald Eagles were fairly regular along the lower stretches, a pair of Golden Eagles was a treat for us early in the trip (thanks largely to Stephane's keen eyes). The specialty species of the far north were few and far between though. One observation of Bohemian Waxwings, one observation of Pine Grosbeaks, two of Northern Shrike, a few Hudsonian Godwits and one Pacific Loon are some examples of the species we were expecting, or perhaps hoping to encounter more often.

We feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to experience the north this way. Yes, when it finally did get warm, the bugs were something to behold, especially the black-flies which got under my skin, both literally and figuratively, by the end. However, I would not pass off an opportunity to do it again!



“Focus” on the Black-throated Green Warbler (BTGN)

By Rod Steinacher

“Who loves Kelly-green?” This cheerful question can be heard almost any morning coming from the coniferous and mixed forests common on much of the Bruce Peninsula. From early May to mid-July, the male Black-throated Green Warbler loudly proclaims his territory and actively chases away almost all avian competitors. Listen for the five note pattern; it can take two forms. Commonly the male will give two rising notes, drop a little lower for the next two, and return to his starting point for the last note. Also heard is a similar, but faster version with four notes, one and one. If you hear these calls, watch for a few moments, as the Black-throated Green is very active and is likely to fly from one perch to another soon.

A male Black-throated Green Warbler in spring plumage is a dramatic sight you will not likely forget. His yellow face contrasts with a jet black throat and chest. From behind, the warbler is a rich olive green. The female is similarly plumed, but like most incubating birds that need to be inconspicuous, she is less boldly marked. Both parents become more visible in late June and early July when they have several voracious mouths to feed. Don't expect to locate the nest though, as it will generally be higher up in a conifer, safely out of sight.



- Ethan Meleg

With the arrival of Fall, the adult Black-throated Greens moult their feathers and appear much more drab, looking very similar to their young. Moving south from the coniferous forests of Canada and Appalachia, these tiny birds migrate all the way to Mexico and Central America. It is hard to believe that such a tiny bird, weighing the same, on average as a loonie and a penny (that's 9 g, or less than 1/3 oz for those more historically minded), can make the 4 000 km to 5 000 km round trip each year! They may actually make this arduous trip several times during their short but busy lives.

Last year, 143 Black-throated Greens were banded at the Cabot Head Research Station during the Spring and Fall migrations, making it the 7th most common bird banded there. Over the next year, try to “focus” your attention on the one of the more common and attractive breeding birds of the Bruce Peninsula.

Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory Board, 2004-2005

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