

BPBO Beakon

Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory
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www.bpbo.ca

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A Message from the President

It is an honour for me to serve as president of BPBO again. I had the good fortune of meeting many BPBO supporters and friends at our annual open house at the Cabot Head Research Station on September 9th. The day was beautiful, and many familiar, and some less than familiar faces enjoyed the ambiance, the food and company. There were very few birds – really the story of much of the early fall season – but that mattered little to the sixty guests. The moment that stole the show for myself and several others was hearing our newsletter editor Peter mutter “I think I see Venus.” I checked my watch . . . high noon, sun blazing in the sky. I thought to myself “sure Peter, now let’s look for some birds.” Someone else said “airplane” but Peter was steadfast. Then someone else said, “left of the moon, at 7 o’clock.” It took some of us a bit of time to find the sliver of a moon, then ... people were gasping, “oh my God, he’s right!” It was as if a storm-petrel flew over. (Ok, maybe not quite like that, but it was very exciting!) Several of us saw Venus, the closest planet, named after the goddess of love, at midday, for the first time (during daylight). Rod, our ex-president, and amateur astronomer par excellence, explained why it was possible to see Venus at noon, and thus this event came to be the rare sighting of the day. This observation (sorry for every doubting you Peter) was, in my eyes, a match for the Louisiana Waterthrush that a small group of dedicated BPBO members delighted to at Inglis Falls Conservation Area just before our annual meeting. So, good people, the message is not to ever miss a BPBO event - there is always something amazing to observe.

BPBO has had a successful year. Our workshop series has been well attended and a great success due to the *(continued on p. 6)*

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The Fourth Annual BPBO Fund-raising Evening, featuring Stewart Nutt: The Return of the Piping Plover



*Saturday, November 24, 5:30 p.m.
St. Mary’s church hall,
6th Avenue East and 15th Street,
Owen Sound.*

Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory is very pleased to have Stewart Nutt, coordinator of the Sauble Beach Piping Plover Recovery Team as our guest speaker. A pair of these very endangered shorebirds bred successfully at Sauble Beach this past summer, for the first time in recent memory. Stewart led the drive to guard the hatchlings until they could safely fledge. I’m sure he will have plenty of entertaining stories to tell.

The evening will also feature our ever-popular silent auction, raffles, a cash bar, and (of course), a delicious dinner. Tickets are \$40, and a \$25 charitable receipt will be issued at the event. Please contact Lorraine Brown (372-0322; lorraine@apropos.ca) for tickets, or any member of the BPBO board.

2007 Spring Migration Monitoring Results from Cabot Head

This spring, 1,891 birds of 67 species were banded and 69 birds of 18 species were recaptured at the Cabot Head Research Station. Spring migration monitoring ran from April 16 to June 10. Stéphane Menu was contracted, for a fifth year, as the Station Scientist. With the assistance of our volunteers, banding and visual observations were conducted for a total of 55 days. Fifteen mist-nets were operated every possible day, depending on the weather. Banding totals (see table, facing page) for many species, especially warblers, were around average compared to previous springs (when 2002 is excluded). However, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper and Slate-colored Junco were banded in record numbers this spring. The banding total is the second highest after 2002. A total of 157 species of birds were detected in the standard count area over the course of the field season. The highest one-day species total was 74 recorded on May 11.

The defining characteristic of spring 2007 was fair weather interspersed with days of very strong south wind. As a consequence of this mixed weather, there were 10 days without any banding (mainly due to windstorm) but 37 with very good coverage (more than 84 mist net-hours out of a possible 90).

Two new species were added for the area this year. Wild Turkeys (a tom and 3 hens) were seen at the tip on April 22. (Finally, this reintroduced species on the northern peninsula has reached Cabot Head!) More exciting was the American Magpie seen by a large group of observers on May 14, in a flock of Blue Jays!

Otherwise, the season was not exceptional for unusual sightings this year. A Pied-billed Grebe, a rather uncommon bird around the station, was heard a few times from Compass Lake at the base of West Bluff. Only one Eastern Towhee was detected on May 6. An adult Golden Eagle was seen with the immature on April 15, before the official start of the season. In total, observations of an immature Golden Eagle were made on 7 occasions this spring, between April 16 and May 7, raising the possibility of being the same individual: the first 4 observations were made on April 15, 16, 17 and 19. On the last occasion, with a relative strong south wind, the Golden Eagle was seen coming from the bay, heading south! A Golden-winged Warbler was observed on May 8. A Solitary Sandpiper was observed

on May 11. A Red-headed Woodpecker was seen on June 2.

The rate of recapture at Cabot Head was low in spring 2007. A total of 107 recaptures for 69 individuals of 18 species were recaptured from April 18 to June 8. Most of the recaptured birds (51 out of 69 individuals) were recaptured only once. It demonstrates that birds are not heavily using this site as a stopover location for rest and refueling, at least in the spring. Only five American Redstarts (locally breeding species) were recaptured four times or more. Furthermore, a Red-eyed Vireo banded in spring 2005 was recaptured four times, and more often than not, with another vireo in the same net. It appears that this vireo established a territory at Cabot Head and was chasing off potential rivals!

Recognition of volunteers

BPBO and the Station Scientist would like to express their gratitude to the many volunteers for the help at the field station during the banding season, especially the long-term volunteers: Jackie Lamport (from Wiarnton), John McEachen & David Ross (from Britain) and, Emilie Champagne (from Québec). We are also fortunate to have a growing base of local volunteers who are willing to give a hand on a short notice when needs arise: Anita & Bob Cunningham, Scott Currie, Ursula Dexter, Karen Gavin & Jeff Truscott, Jenna McGuire, Lindsay Miller, Josh Shea, and Al Woodhouse. Special thanks are also due to John Haselmayer for taking over operations at the station for 4 days.

-Stéphane Menu



Station Scientist Stéphane Menu placing a band on a bird at the CHRS banding lab.

Photo: Ted Chesky

Banding totals of birds captured at Cabot Head Research Station for the last five spring seasons.

Species	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	Species	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
Sharp shinned Hawk	16	14	10	10	20	Magnolia Warbler	121	81	116	109	144
Black-billed Cuckoo	2					Cape May Warbler	6	8	2		1
Hairy Woodpecker			1			Black-thr. Blue Warbler	23	29	19	21	64
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2		2		1	Yellow-rumped Warbler	111	34	28	49	68
Pileated Woodpecker			1		1	Black-thr. Green Warbler	27	25	15	25	27
Yellow-shafted Flicker	12	4	8		1	Blackburnian Warbler	3	3	5	2	4
Flicker Intergrade		1				Pine Warbler	3	1	1	2	1
Whip-poor-will			1			Western Palm Warbler	145	42	38	55	61
Eastern Wood-Pewee		1	2	1	8	Bay-breasted Warbler	8	3	3	1	1
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	10	7	22	17	22	Blackpoll Warbler	3	3	1	1	4
Traill's Flycatcher	6	13	18	11	13	Black-and-White Warbler	49	43	42	45	72
Least Flycatcher	14	6	20	22	17	American Redstart	147	197	152	223	171
Eastern Phoebe	3	4	4	3	2	Ovenbird	29	31	40	26	27
Blue-headed Vireo	4	3	1			Northern Waterthrush	6	5	7	2	3
Warbling Vireo	1					Connecticut Warbler		1			
Philadelphia Vireo			1		2	Mourning Warbler	6	11	9	11	12
Red-eyed Vireo	13	15	10	14	13	Common Yellowthroat	23	27	49	45	60
Blue Jay	28	14	16	88	21	Wilson's Warbler	17	11	16	20	25
Barn Swallow			2			Canada Warbler	16	19	13	22	24
Black-capped Chickadee	10	22	6	14	6	American Tree Sparrow	17	6	2	2	3
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	17	2	2	1	Chipping Sparrow	10	12	20	17	14
Brown Creeper	65	45	20	9	30	Clay-colored Sparrow			1		
House Wren	2	1	2			Field Sparrow	2	3	1		
Winter Wren	1	2	1	3	2	Savannah Sparrow	4	4	1	1	3
Golden-crowned Kinglet	241	186	33	36	77	Fox Sparrow	3	1	1		2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	222	228	81	74	145	Song Sparrow	15	15	8	9	19
Veery	12	21	6	21	4	Lincoln's Sparrow	21	13	25	11	10
Gray-cheeked Thrush	3	1	4	5	3	Swamp Sparrow	3	3	6	6	4
Swainson's Thrush	18	42	27	21	12	White-throated Sparrow	57	47	91	26	25
Hermit Thrush	21	12	16	6	14	E. White-cr. Sparrow	38	37	69	14	19
Wood Thrush	3	4	2	1	1	Dark-eyed Junco	150	46	19	20	25
American Robin	12	10	6	5	15	Eastern Towhee		1	1	2	
Gray Catbird	9	18	17	11	16	Northern Cardinal	1		1		1
Brown Thrasher	2	6	8	6	7	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1	6	2	3	4
Cedar Waxwing		7	3		4	Indigo Bunting	3		4	5	1
Tennessee Warbler		1			1	Baltimore Oriole		1			
Orange-crowned Warbler	23	6	8	8	5	Purple Finch	3				
Nashville Warbler	37	34	49	18	61	Pine Siskin	1				
Northern Parula			1		9	American Goldfinch	5	2	1	1	4
Yellow Warbler	7	11	4	8	16	Total:	1891	1544	1236	1210	1479
Chestnut-sided Warbler	12	12	12	14	20	Species Total:	67	66	72	62	69

Species names in **bold** represent a record high was set in 2007 (For spring captures, 2002-2007)

The Best Ways to Attract More Songbirds to Your Property

The following advice has been gleaned from the recently-released book The Audubon Society Guide to Attracting Birds (Stephan W. Kresse, Cornell University Press). While spring may still feel a long way off, winter is the time for planning what to put in a garden... -ed

With growing recognition that our climate is warming, native plants are the best choice for creating bird friendly habitats for the future. Native plants are adapted to temperature extremes of the past and they are the best bet for future changes because of their long history with local climates. If you are trying to bring more birds to your backyard, the single best thing to do is plant native shrubs, vines, and trees.

Provide a water source near protective shrubs during the summer months. On hot days, birds are especially eager to bathe and drink. Bird baths should be only an inch or two deep with a shallow slope; a dripping effect will lure more birds. Mount the bath on a pedestal if cats prowl your neighborhood. Clean it once a week with a stiff brush.

Create a songbird border along your property edge by planting trees and shrubs that meet the needs of birds throughout the year. Select native plants adapted to the weather extremes of your local climate. The border can take the form of a hedge or windbreak, depending on your property size. Plant several of each species adjacent to each other, selecting a mix of plants, with the tallest planted at the edges of the property, and shorter species tiered toward your home. Include at least one species of thorny tree, such as hawthorn or raspberry, for nesting. Also include evergreens, such as spruce, holly, or juniper, for cover. Plant berry-producing shrubs such as dogwood, serviceberry, and viburnum that will provide fruit throughout the seasons.

Create a brush pile in a corner of your property. Each time a storm drops limbs, heap them up. During spring clean-up, save those downed branches and tree trunks from the community wood chipper. Layer the larger logs as a foundation, then build up the pile in successive layers. In large fields that are growing into young forest, create living brush piles by cutting neighboring saplings most of the way through the trunks, then pulling them into a collective heap. Songbirds will find shelter from extreme weather in such cover throughout the year.

Rake leaves under shrubs to create mulch and natural feeding areas for ground-feeding birds such as sparrows, towhees, and thrashers. Earthworms, pill bugs, insects, and spiders will thrive in the decomposing leaf mulch, and will in turn be readily eaten by many songbirds. In general, overly tidy gardeners are poor bird gardeners!

Reduce your lawn by at least 25% to favor meadow plants and taller grasses. Tall grasses provide seeds and nesting places for birds. Cut this meadow just once each year, and let the remainder of the lawn grow 3 to 4 inches tall before cutting. Take the “healthy yard pledge” to avoid lawn pesticides and wasteful sprinklers www.audubonathome.org/pledge. Currently, 50 percent of U.S. households treat their lawns with chemicals that kill about 7 million birds each year. These chemicals also leach into our groundwater where they move to wells, streams, lakes, and oceans.

Clean out old bird and mouse nests from nest boxes in early spring. When setting out new nest boxes, consider the preferred habitat for different species, as well as the size of the entrance hole, and its distance above the ground. Face boxes to the east in northern latitudes to provide extra warmth. In forests, play “woodpecker” by using a power drill to create 1 1/4-inch holes into dead snags 4 to 5 feet off the ground. These holes will serve as nest cavity starts for chickadees and titmice.

Clean tube feeders with a bottle brush and a 10% solution of non-chlorine bleach solution. Rinse thoroughly and dry in the sun before refilling. Rake up soggy seed from under feeders that could grow deadly mold. Move feeders close to the house to avoid window strikes. Collisions with windows may kill as many as a billion birds in the United States each year. Birds at feeders that are spooked by a hawk or other predator will scatter in all directions. Move feeders within three feet of a window. At such close distances, birds are less likely to gather lethal momentum when startled. The birds will be safer, and you’ll get a better view!

Keep your cat indoors for the safety of both the birds and your cat. There are about 100 million pet and stray cats in the United States. They kill hundreds of millions of birds each year – especially in the spring when young songbirds are fledging, often on or near the ground. And cats themselves are safer from collisions with cars, predators, diseases, and parasites when kept indoors.

Birds in the News

Announcing the 35th (!) Annual Tobermory Christmas Bird Count

It's almost that time of year again - Christmas Bird Count season! Please join us for the Bruce Peninsula National Park (Tobermory) count on Wednesday, December 19. Already, flocks of Bohemian Waxwings, Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, and Common Redpolls are being seen in the area, suggesting that this year's count may be rich in winter finches. To volunteer for this count, please contact John Haselmayer at 519-596-2444, Ext. 302 or by email at john.haselmayer@pc.gc.ca.



Determining the Origins of Migrant Songbirds through Isotope Analysis

A team of Canadian ornithologists is using feather samples collected at bird observatories across the country (including BPBO) to determine the place of origin of some widespread species of migrant birds.

Under the auspices of Bird Studies Canada, the researchers are analyzing feathers gathered at member stations of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN). Participating observatories are taking these samples from a number of species migratory songbirds, including various thrushes, warblers, and sparrows. The species chosen as subjects for this study breed mostly in the boreal forest, with the greater part of their range being far from towns and roads. This makes them difficult to monitor by conventional means, hence the motivation for this isotope study.

The research team will analyze these samples for the relative abundance of the naturally-occurring stable isotopes of hydrogen - regular hydrogen (H) and deuterium (D, aka "heavy hydrogen"). Previous work has shown that the ratio of these two kinds of hydrogen in the environment varies geographically and this difference in relative abundance shows up in the tissues (including the feathers) of birds that live in these areas. By determining the D-to-H ratio in the feathers of the birds, it will thence be possible, in a general way, to know where they are breeding. Furthermore, by collecting at a number of widely-spaced locations (literally coast to coast), this data will, it is hoped, give us a better understanding of these species' overall migration patterns.

The Parrot and the Palm

The following is a condensed version of a story which appeared on the Conservation International web site, April 1, 2007.

Once sold for use in church services, fronds from the threatened Quindío wax palms are now rare in Colombia's marketplaces thanks to a conservation effort that engages churches and churchgoers.

Formerly, members of the local Catholic Church used wax palms fronds to commemorate Palm Sunday - but the practice was destroying the habitat of the endangered Yellow-eared Parrot. This species "is extraordinarily dependent on the Quindío wax palm", according to researchers, for food and nesting sites, and the cutting of too many leaves was threatening its survival.



Six years ago, conservationists and religious leaders joined forces to solve the problem. They began spreading the word about what could be done ... today, vendors have replaced fronds with seedlings to promote replanting, and churchgoers are using alternative, non-threatened palms in their ceremonies. Another part of the strategy has been reforestation; 22,000 acres (8,870 hectares) of land has been set aside in private reserves, and 10,000 wax palm seedlings have been planted.

Government, police, military, and even rebel guerrilla forces now prohibit the sale or exploitation of both wax palms and yellow-eared parrots. And the extraordinary collaboration between conservationists, policy makers, the private sector, the church, and rural and urban communities has evolved into an unusual and powerful alliance.

Sources: <http://web.conservation.org/xp/frontlines/species/06030505.xml>

<http://web.conservation.org/xp/frontlines/people/04010701.xml>



The bird observatory temporarily becomes an astronomical observatory at the Open House, as guests (and staff!) strain to catch a glimpse of the planet Venus - photo: Ted Cheskey

of operating funds for us. BPBO rents out both the Wingfield Cottage and Grebe lodge to stewards over an approximate 7 week period each summer. These facilities are in an extraordinary location to spend a week vacation, with a few added responsibilities in one of the most amazing natural locations in Ontario. Please spread the word so that these facilities can achieve their potential value for BPBO.

-Ted Cheskey

Thank you!

As the end of another year approaches, the board would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you, our members, for your continuing support. We would not be able to maintain our programmes without it!

(Extra-special, deluxe, Kirtland's Warbler-grade thanks to the following individuals, who took out life memberships in 2007!)

<i>Ron Baker</i>	<i>Beth Anne Currie</i>
<i>Peter Coo</i>	<i>Jennifer Healey/Ben Warnica</i>
<i>Christine Cramer</i>	<i>Dawn Miles</i>

(continued from p. 1) hard work of Rod and Noreen Steinacher. A successful workshop series is on key part of a healthy financial picture along with our general ability to take full advantage of Grebe Lodge. This excellent facility often sits dormant, unoccupied during weekends and weekdays, yet groups could be renting it out for a full range of educational activities. Our plan for 2008 is to have Grebe Lodge used more effectively. Information about this facility and its use is available on our website. Our stewardship program is also an important source

A BPBO Who's Who:

The Board of Directors

- * Ted Chesky
- * John Haselmayer
- * Rob Kearns
- * Peter Coo
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- * Anne Range
- * Steve Patterson

- * Gord Cottrill
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- * Dr. Stéphane Menu

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- Fund-raising Dinner
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