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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region III (Western Ridge)- Fall 2006 Long Point Bird Observatory

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Weatherwise, the beginning part of the season was very hot and humid and dry. September had showery weather with some windy days. In October it stopped showering and just rained, sometimes for days at a time. On the 13th we had enough snow to cover the ground and points east experienced more severe snow. The wet weather made for some really flooded and wet trails. The addition of boardwalks this past summer made possible by a grant from T.D. Friends of the Environment Foundation and my son Alex's hard work in building them made for easier walking.

Some compromises were made to my overall protocol because of health concerns. I had a kidney transplant in January, so my strength was just building through the fall season. Some days were missed because of appointments that were unavoidable. In addition, we started later in the season and did not do consistent banding through the summer. My chief assistant Roswitha also had an accident in early September and was unable to help the rest of the season.

We remain a purely volunteer organization made possible only by the dedication of those individuals who are willing to commit at least one day a week to come out and give assistance. Being the only licensed bander remains a difficulty which does not allow for continuation of the program when I am not available. This is a limiting factor which I do not think will be solved without volunteers willing to take on the responsibility required.

We experienced record numbers of Slate-colored Juncos (182) and Swamp Sparrows (89) this year. More noteworthy were the species we did not catch this year—Sharp-shinned Hawk, Eastern Phoebe, Purple Finch, Eastern Towhee, Canada Warbler, and Wood Thrush. American Goldfinches for some reason have shown a steady reduction from 833 in 2000 to 136 this year. Some common species, such as Red-winged Blackbird, European Starling, and Brown-headed Cowbird, were in the area but did not come down.

Only two bands were recovered this season. An American Robin, banded on 25 Oct 2004, was recovered near Beamsville, ON, on 4 Apr 2006. A Chipping Sparrow, banded on 21 Apr 2004, was recovered at Oak Lake, ON, 30 Apr 2005.

We had two school classes visit on separate days. One nature club visited and, in addition, we had 43 casual visitors.

Again, I give sincere thanks to the regular volunteers who give one or more days a week to assist. Without permission from Ontario Parks and Mark Custers to conduct scientific studies within the park we would not have such a good location.

Financially, we are supported through grants or donations by Haldimand Bird Observatory, James L. Baillie Memorial Fund of Bird Studies Canada, T.D. Friends of the Environment Foundation, Ontario Power Generator and individual contributors.

Selkirk Provincial Park

424-0795

Haldimand-Norfolk Counties, ON

Bander: John Miles

Chief Assistants: Stacey Logan, Al Thrower, Linda Thrower, John Dickie

John Miles' Selkirk Station had its best fall banding season ever. Before he was hospitalized, John sent out his fall 2006 totals and a brief summary of the season. My thanks go to Linda Thrower for supplying additional information about the season for the tables.

There were 15 species where totals tied or surpassed the all-time seasonal high for Selkirk, including Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, American Goldfinch, Cedar Waxwing, Red-eyed Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Lawrence's Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Gray Catbird, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet and American Robin.

Long Point Bird Observatory

423-0800

Port Rowan, Norfolk County, ON

423-0801

Bander: Stuart A. Mackenzie

423-0802

lpbo@bsc~eoc.org

Chief Assistants: Mike D. Boyd, Yousif Attia, John Brett, Audrey Heagy, Hugh McArthur, Fergus Nicoll

LPBO's 47th fall season officially began on 15 Aug at all three field stations. The first official bird was a moulting adult Swainson's Thrush banded at Old

Cut. Some preliminary banding began mid-July with North American Banding Council certification sessions and the Young Ornithologist Workshop. The bulk of this early banding was comprised of post-breeding dispersed Yellow Warblers, Gray Catbirds, and Song Sparrows.

Shorebird diversity was notable this fall starting with a Red Knot, and an American Golden-Plover at the Tip on 18 Aug. Four Long-billed Dowitchers happened upon the Tip on the 23rd, and a moulting adult Willet flew over Old Cut on the 24th. Two Buff-breasted Sandpipers were observed at the Tip on the 29th, along with the season's first White-rumped Sandpiper and an immature Long-tailed Jaeger! A Marbled Godwit flew over Old Cut that same day and was later found on the beach in the Provincial Park. Another Buff-breasted Sandpiper was found and banded at the Tip on 19 Sep, second only to one banded in 1966.

Movements of aerial foragers at Long Point this fall were quite impressive. On 12 Aug, a group of 1100 Purple Martins were observed roosting in the Long Point Company marshes, followed by 950 the next evening. On the 17th, 2500 martins were observed riding a light west wind as they streamed off the Tip. A conservative estimate of 100,000 swallows, mostly Bank, was also observed roosting in the vast Long Point Company marshes that day. At Breakwater the following day, the seasons only Tufted Titmouse was banded and a Grasshopper Sparrow was observed in the dunes. Eighty Common Nighthawks were observed heading east over Old Cut that evening. A strong east wind on 29 Aug encouraged Eastern Kingbirds and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds to move. Old Cut counted 175 kingbirds and 84 hummingbirds heading toward the Tip, which only counted 37 kingbirds, but over 400 hummingbirds! Twenty-eight warbler species were recorded by the end of August, including the season's first Pine and only Prairie at Breakwater on the 24th. The only two Prothonotary Warblers, both males, were found on the morning census at Old Cut on the 20th, and at the Tip on the 30th.

Mild, calm weather kept most of September pretty dull, but it brought with it a few flurries of excitement. Temperate migrants did not seem to mind, as Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper,

Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Blue-headed Vireo all arrived in the first week alone. On 3 Sep, the only Yellow-breasted Chat of the fall was at Old Cut. The following day a young Least Bittern was captured rather unorthodoxly at the Tip, and banded as LPBO's 12th. An Acadian Flycatcher, a rare fall migrant at Long Point, was banded at Old Cut on the 10th. Strong northerly winds on the 15th and 16th brought 910 and 650 Sharp-shinned Hawks to the Tip, respectively. Northern Flickers followed suit shortly thereafter. Numbers started to build mid-September with 161 on the 20th and an astounding 719 were counted flying west over Old Cut on 25 Sep! The bulk of the warblers and thrushes did not push through till the end of September. On the 29th for instance, Ruby-crowned Kinglets dominated the 661 birds banded of 52 species.

Northern Parulas were particularly abundant this fall, increasing the 2006 banding total to 17, which made them one of seven species with the highest banding totals since 1960. The other six species were Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Blue-headed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, and Fox Sparrow. Most of these species are late temperate migrants, which suggests that these high banding totals could simply be an artefact of a concentrated late fall push which Long Point received in the last week of October. The vireos are interesting in that each of the above species is showing significant increases based on long-term population trend analyses for LPBO which can be viewed online at <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/national/migmain.jsp>.

Northern Saw-whet Owl monitoring started on 25 Sep at Old Cut and the Tip, ending on 3 and 15 Nov, respectively. Conditions were poor for owl monitoring throughout most of the fall with high winds and lots of rain. There were fewer nights of coverage at Old Cut and at the Tip. As a result, a far below-average number of 191 saw-whets was banded. The mild fall and healthy small mammal populations throughout Ontario probably contributed to this as well. Four Eastern Screech-Owls were also banded this fall, the highest total since 1992. The season's only Short-eared Owl was observed at the Tip on 29 Oct, and a number of Long-eared Owls regularly used the Scots Pine woods at Old Cut and the Provincial Park in late fall. Other raptor

banding this fall was productive, considering only a passive effort. Seventy-three Sharp-shinned Hawks were banded, the highest total since 77 were banded in 1994. Other raptors banded include three Cooper's Hawks, five American Kestrels, three Merlins, one Red-tailed Hawk, and a spectacular hatch-year Broad-winged Hawk was banded at the Tip on 19 Sep, LPBO's 7th.

October started out with some exciting visitors. On 2 Oct, a group of 10 Glossy and one White-faced ibis were found just north of Long Point. This was the first Long Point record for White-faced Ibis. Three more *Plegadis* Ibis flew over Old Cut on the 6th and three were at the Tip on 9th. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo also surprised everyone when one was banded at the Tip that day. Two of four more cuckoos were banded at the Tip on the 13th. Blue Jays also took advantage of light north-west winds on the 9th, when over 1000 were counted at Old Cut and the Tip. The only Sedge Wren of the fall was observed at the Tip on the 10th, and the only Lapland Longspur of the season was banded there on the 12th.

Brown Creepers and both kinglet species moved en masse in two waves this fall, coinciding with the majority of temperate warblers and thrushes. The first wave was in the 2nd week of October, followed by the second in the last week of October. During this second wave, the White-crowned Sparrows began to outnumber the white-throats, and Dark-eyed Juncos inundated the area. A Le Conte's Sparrow pleased those at the Tip on the 20th, and a Grasshopper Sparrow was banded on the 25th. Hermit Thrushes started to appear in greater numbers mid-October, while the odd Swainson's and Gray-cheeked were still lingering. There were 182 and 152 Hermit Thrushes at the Tip on 23 and 25 Oct respectively, following moderated northwesterly winds. Presumably these winds also brought two notable western species into Old Cut. On 26 Oct, a second-year male Varied Thrush was banded. This was the third record for Long Point and the first ever banded! It was last seen briefly on the morning census on the 27th. The second species was a Bohemian Waxwing, which flew over the parking lot on the 26th.

Passerine movement slows at times toward the end of the season, especially at the Tip. Luckily

enough, there is often more to look at. Five thousand Bonaparte's Gulls, accompanied by six Little Gulls, passed the Tip on 23 Oct. Common Loon movement was spectacular on the 28th, when 395 were counted at the Tip, and close to 200 individuals each on the 31st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th of Nov.

The 'river of blackbirds' did not occur till the first week of November—the mixed blackbird/grackle flock numbered near one million birds. A record late Wood Thrush was found at Old Cut on 1 Nov and a late Cape May Warbler was feeding in the Old Cut garden on the 2nd, along with a Clay-colored Sparrow, which was later banded on the 6th.

North winds on the 2nd got the Red-shouldered Hawks moving, and the Tip crew was astounded when 135 streamed into the Tip from out over the depths of Lake Erie. Seventy-one more individuals followed suit on the 3rd. The next day, a flock of 200 Red-winged, 30 Rusty, and three Yellow-headed blackbirds stopped briefly at the Tip.

Very few winter finches were recorded this fall. Low numbers of Purple Finch were sporadically observed, very few Pine Siskins, four Common Redpolls were at the Tip on 2 Nov, and American Goldfinches even appeared scarce. A highlight on the finch front was a pair of Red Crossbills at Old Cut on the 6th.

Mt Nebo Banding Station

392-0792

Oakland, Garrett County, MD

Banders: Connie Skipper and Fran Pope

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This was the sixth season of banding at the Mt. Nebo Wildlife Management Area, located three miles north of Oakland, MD. Seventeen nets were strung throughout hedgerows of autumn and Russian olive and honeysuckle bushes interspersed with orchard trees, mostly apple and wild cherry. We attempt to maintain net lanes in the same location from year to year, but the management clearing sometimes precludes that option.

The station was open 27 days between 9 Sep and 30 Oct. In total, 753 birds were banded of 65 species, with a station effort of 1,978 net hours. The capture rate was 38 b/100nh. Two new species were added to the list—American