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Atlantic Flyway Review: Region III (Western Ridge)- Fall 2007 Long Point Bird Observatory

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example of how a simple conservation measure has resulted in a direct benefit in conserving a species at some risk.

There was a significant movement of "northern" birds into southern Ontario this fall. Evidently there was a poor food crop in the north this past summer. We took advantage of this movement by banding two new species for the station: Evening Grosbeak and Common Redpoll.

The season ended on a positive note: the last bird banded (by Loretta Mousseau) was a Northern Shrike, giving us a total of three for the season.

Many thanks to banders Loretta Mousseau and Brian Pomfret and the many volunteers who assisted in numerous ways. Also thanks to the Lower Grand River Land Trust for its support.

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There was very good coverage this fall season, although still not doing Sunday banding and some days missed for reasons other than weather. This was only my sixth best season of eight in relation to banded birds. We were on summer schedule through July and August, which means closing by 10 am because of the sun on the nets. September and October were back to our normal times. Both months were ideal weather-wise.

Deer were a problem this season, taking the bottom panel out of six of my nets and finally completely destroying one. I resorted to putting up scarecrows on the deer trails leading to my nets. We started out with 16 nets and finished with 15. Habitat was maintained by cutting back some of the bushes near the nets to bring them down to former heights.

Highlights take the form of any bird that you are not normally banding a lot of: a White-eyed Vireo was only the second banded in the fall, Northern Shrike only the third ever banded, and two Great Crested Flycatchers were both HY birds. Anything northern like Purple Finch or siskin is a treat,

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although their numbers were well below those experienced in 2001. House Finch numbers were really low with only six banded. Other species that were low were Yellow Warbler, Western Palm Warbler, and both kinglets. We had a record high number of Black-throated Blue Warblers, with 46 banded.

Returns showed 24 banded previous to 2005 and the majority, of course, from 2007. The earlier birds were mostly Black-capped Chickadees. I have one record in for a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, which does not have information at this point. I have had no foreign recoveries reported to me during this season.

We continue to collect tail feathers for species specified by Bird Studies Canada to determine breeding areas based on stable isotopes. Trend analysis has been done for Rock Point and other Migration Monitoring Stations and is available on the Bird Studies Canada web page:

www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/cmmn/index.jsp?targetpg=trends&lang=EN

Daily updates of banding with many bird pictures can be found at:

www.geocities.com/rockpointbanding/

The Harrier is a bi-annual publication that gives information on all Haldimand stations.

Volunteer effort has to be acknowledged as well as permission from Ontario Parks to conduct scientific research within Rock Point Provincial Park. Individual donations and grants from such sources as T.D. Friends of the Environment enable us to do the extra needed to maintain the station; and Bird Studies Canada for the scientific expertise and ability to analyse trends and other data.

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The return of thousands of breeding birds and their progeny was eagerly anticipated as we entered our 48th fall season. Migrating Yellow Warblers and dispersing Gray Catbirds dominated the first few

weeks of August, along with a small mix of flycatchers, warblers and thrushes. A number of Swainson's Thrushes were present in late July and early August. To everyone's surprise, an adult Hermit Thrush was banded on 4 Aug.

Breakwater was opened on a blustery 17 Aug. Swallow movements were nothing short of magnificent, with upwards of 100,000 swallows, mostly Bank, roosting in the Long Point Company marsh. Twenty-six warbler species made up the bulk of other migrant activity through August. A young male Golden-winged Warbler was banded at Old Cut on the 22nd, followed by a late female Prothonotary Warbler and the first Pine Warbler of the season, which were found at Old Cut on the 26th. The season's first Olive-sided Flycatcher was among 201 birds (166 of which were warblers) banded at Breakwater on the 27th. The next day, Breakwater banded an adult male Golden-winged Warbler, a Yellow-throated Vireo, and another Olive-sided Flycatcher!

Summer maintained a firm grip on southern Ontario well into September. Despite this, migrants continued to trickle through and accumulate on the Point. The first Palm Warbler and Lincoln's Sparrow were observed at Breakwater on the 2nd, and the first Ruby-crowned Kinglet was observed at the Tip on the 6th. A small cold front passed through the area on 8 Sep, stimulating yet another heavy warbler flight comprised mostly of Blackpoll and Western Palm warblers; 122 of 204 birds banded at Old Cut that day were Blackpolls. Also, a season high of four Connecticut Warblers, including two adult females, were banded at Old Cut. Warblers continued to move en masse at the Tip on the 10th, when approximately 200 Blackpolls, 250 Palms, three more Connecticuts and the season's first Northern Parula were observed.

Strong northwest winds on the 15th triggered the first significant raptor movement of the fall along the north shore of Lake Erie. Hundreds of Sharp-shinned Hawks and American Kestrels were pushed out to the Point, and the third-ever Swainson's Hawk for the Long Point birding area was banded 10 km west of Old Cut! Eastern Kingbirds also took a cue from this breeze heading west, high above Old Cut. Among them was an unidentified *Tyrannus* kingbird, likely a Western.

In the last week of September, a final push of warblers, large numbers of *Catharus* thrushes and the first few temperate migrants moved through the area. Seventeen warbler species were banded at the Tip on the 27th, including the season's first two Orange-crowns and a "Yellow" Palm Warbler. This movement was followed by a short lull until the second week of October when two substantial cold fronts swept across the region. A rush of temperate migrants followed suit. On the 10th, 789 birds of 44 species were banded. The following day, 445 birds of 37 species were banded, including 165 Yellow-rumped Warblers. It was a record fall for Yellow-rumps with 1917 banded, 93% of which were HY. Interestingly, we virtually missed them in the spring, with only 233 banded. A mix of other temperate migrants (Red-breasted Nuthatch, both kinglets, Hermit Thrush, and White-throated Sparrow) made up the rest of this push. The 11th also provided some last-chance looks at most swallows: one Barn, two Banks, and five Trees were observed on the Point, along with a lonely Purple Martin.

These weather fronts also provided our first substantial wave of Northern Saw-whet Owls. In early September, positive reports from saw-whet monitoring stations in northern Ontario had trickled down, affirming previous speculation of an irruption in 2007. Saw-whet irruptions tend to coincide with cyclic crashes of small mammal populations, which occur approximately every 10 years. The last major flight was in 1999. The season's first individual was banded at Old Cut on 24 Sep. Saw-whet migration was slow but steady until 12 Oct when 126 owls were banded at Old Cut. Though conditions were not conducive for many high volume nights, consistency throughout the season paid off, with a record 1088 saw-whets banded. Six Eastern Screech-Owls and four Long-eared Owls were also captured.

Other raptor banding was also productive with a little extra effort and some good luck. Sharp-shinned Hawks were the most numerous by far with 80 banded, followed by Cooper's Hawk (7), American Kestrel (5), Merlin (4), Red-tailed Hawk (3), and one Northern Goshawk.

Passerine movement throughout the remainder of October was fairly typical, with a flurry of temperate

migrants. During the week following 12 Oct, 2645 birds of 60 species were banded. Among these was a HY male Townsend's Solitaire, which magically appeared at the Tip cabin on the 18th. It was captured later that day and remained in the area until the 26th.

Migration ground to a halt when an intense low pressure system swept north from Texas on the 20th. This system carried with it two Cave Swallows, which were observed at the Tip that day. Another individual was observed struggling past the Tip on 1 Nov. Two more were observed at BSC headquarters on the 6th, and seven were seen at the Tip on the 7th.

American Robins, Eastern Bluebirds, and Cedar Waxwings were the most numerous diurnal migrants in late October. Flying over the Tip on the 20th were 130 Eastern Bluebirds, upwards of 500 waxwings were counted on the 22nd, and 660 American Robins migrated past Old Cut on the 25th. Many Hermit Thrushes and the usual mix of sparrows persisted through October. There was, however, a noticeable absence of Dark-eyed Juncos and American Tree Sparrows until the end of the season. Early on 2 Nov a young female Western Tanager, Long Point's second, was discovered in the Old Cut woodlot. This secretive bird fed on an abundant supply of grapes and skulked about the area until the 7th, but was never captured.

Moderate northwest winds blew on the night of 27 Oct and continued throughout the 28th. At dawn, a Barn Owl was flushed from its roost near the Tip. The bird flew along the south ridge, harassed by Sharp-shinned Hawks that were already active. Accipiter activity continued throughout the morning, and by 10 am, Turkey Vultures, Red-tailed Hawks, and eagles peppered the sky. Nineteen Bald and 16 Golden eagles circled high above the Tip and headed directly south across Lake Erie toward Pennsylvania. Early that afternoon, one hawk net entangled three red-tails and one Northern Goshawk at the same time, though the goshawk and one red-tail managed to escape.

As October wound down and November began, blackbirds flying over Old Cut numbered close to one million. Rusty Blackbirds were frequently found

among these massive flocks. A Brewer's Blackbird was observed at the Tip on 6 and 7 Nov. A Yellow-headed Blackbird appeared at the Old Cut feeders 17 to 29 Sep. A possibly different individual was observed there on 29 Oct.

Almost every irruptive species pushed south in Ontario this fall. It began in early August when Red-breasted Nuthatches, Purple Finches and American Goldfinches began appearing in high numbers. Record numbers of goldfinch and both nuthatch species were banded. The 109 Purple Finches banded was second only to the 262 banded during an irruption in 1985.

In October, we started to notice higher than average numbers of Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls. Seven White-winged Crossbills were observed at Old Cut on the 3rd, and 13 Evening Grosbeaks flew over on the 7th. The first Pine Grosbeak landed briefly at the Tip on the 8th, followed by another three at Old Cut on the 16th. Bohemian Waxwings started to appear about the same time, with the first bird at the Tip on the 13th and three at Old Cut on the 16th.

In fall 2007, 27 volunteer field biologists from seven countries logged over 6800 field hours, collecting migration data on 269 species and banding 15,516 birds of 134 species and forms. This compares to 13,103 birds banded of 126 species in fall 2006. There were 103 days of coverage yielding 12,557 net hours with a catch rate of 123.6 b/100nh (versus 123 in 2006). Twenty-one volunteer 'Friends of LPBO' greeted over 1500 visitors and students of all ages, who enjoyed banding demonstrations and the fall migration at the Old Cut field station. A sincere thank you goes out to all the volunteers and supporters who made this demanding fall season so successful.

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This fall represents a reopening of banding at Presque Isle following the retirement of Ron Leberman. Operating just three days a week, we netted in approximately the same net lanes used