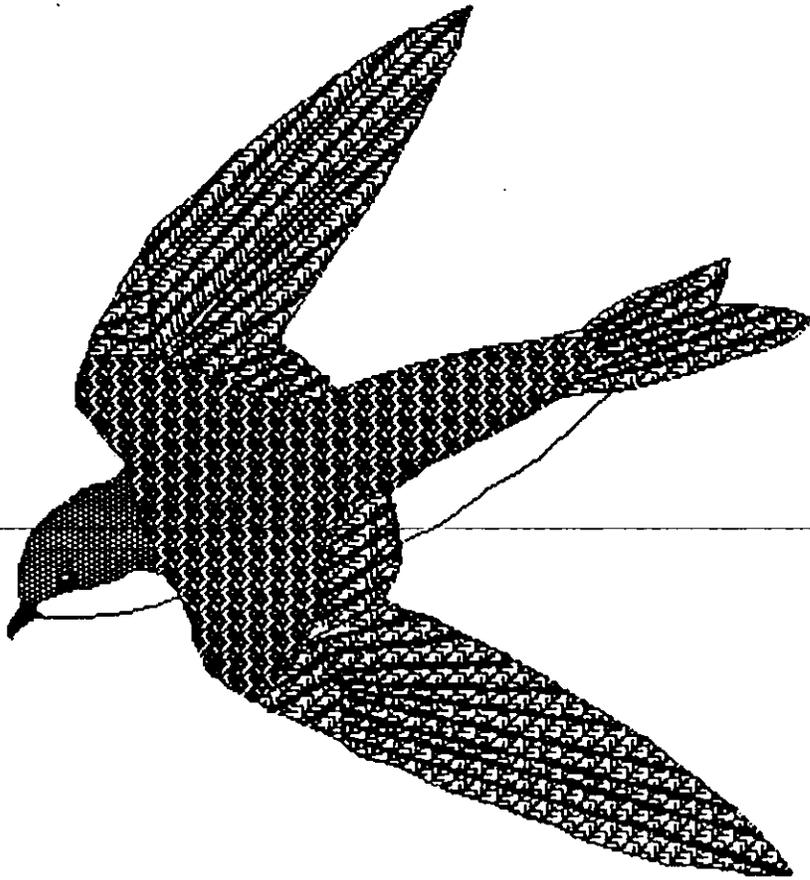


BEAVERHILL LAKE BIRD BANDING STATION 1983 REPORT

by G.R.A. Ebel

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ARTICLES

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1. Introduction

1.1 History of the Station

Beaverhill Lake, located approximately 70 km southeast of Edmonton, Alberta, is perhaps the area in Alberta most frequented by birders from Edmonton, from the province, and from abroad.

The Beaverhill Lake Bird Banding Station was established in the spring of 1983 by a small group of bird banding enthusiasts from the Edmonton Bird Club as part of an effort to compile bird sighting and banding records from this important water body. The station is located on the southeast shore of the lake, just west of Robert Lister Lake ("A" Lake), and is temporary in nature (no fixed structures have been built) with banding activity taking place along a willow-grassland community known as Rainer's Ridge.

This area was selected over all other potential sites around the lake because (1) the land is owned by the Crown, (2) this area is the one visited most frequently by birders and other lake users, (3) habitat has already been developed for waterfowl in nearby Robert Lister Lake, and (4) grazing cattle have only limited access to this habitat.

1.2 Objectives and Functions

The general aim of the banding station is two-fold: first, to provide instruction in field ornithology to those interested in environmental

operations for the year.

2.2 Capture Devices

Mist nets were in position from dawn to dusk and furled for the night. The number used varied from one to twenty, depending on the number of operators (some participants own their nets) and assistants. Nets of standard height (2.1 m), of varying mesh size (31, 38 and 60 mm) and of varying length (3, 5.5, 9.1, 12.2 and 18.3 m) were used to capture birds. These nets were placed either along the shoreline (at Hohn's Head) to capture shorebirds, or in the grassland or grassland-willow communities to catch passerines and other small birds.

2.3 Recording Information

For each bird caught, operators at the station recorded age and sex (where possible) and species identity, to comply with the official bird banding requirements and regulations as laid out by the Canadian Wildlife Service and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The information collected was forwarded to the Bird Banding Office in Ottawa. In addition, wing chord, culmen, and tarsus measurements were collected from several selected species such as Savannah Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, and the flycatchers. Color comparison charts for field-separating birds of known age and sex were also tested in the field. Data cards were selected and tried for recording moult patterns.

Field sightings of birds were recorded and compiled (Bird Sightings, this report), either from members at the banding station or from other observers. These people are listed in section 4.1.

The following people were involved in banding activities: 1) Robert Brown, 2) Mike Casselman, 3) Lewis Cocks, 4) Rainer Ebel (permit 10467), 5) Rosemary Harris, 6) Janos Kovacs (10467C), 7) Jim Lange (10467B),

American Redstart	10	Le Conte's Sparrow	6
Northern Waterthrush	3	Song Sparrow	7
Common Yellowthroat	1	Lincoln's Sparrow	4
Wilson's Warbler	9	White-throated Sparrow	3
Western Tanager	1	White-crowned Sparrow	4
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	4	Dark-eyed Junco	3
American Tree Sparrow	5	Red-winged Blackbird	30
Chipping Sparrow	20	Yellow-headed Blackbird	7
Clay-colored Sparrow	130	Brown-headed Cowbird	14
Vesper Sparrow	15	Northern Oriole	11
Savannah Sparrow	217	American Goldfinch	11
		TOTAL SPECIES	62
		TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	1417

3.1 Recaptures

Five birds which were banded at Beaverhill Lake in previous years were recaptured at our station in 1983. Listed below are these birds, their banders, and when they were banded. These are not considered significant, but because they were recaptured at their banding origin, are interesting. Those banded and recaptured in the same year are not included.

Species	Band Number	Date Recaptured	Bander	Date Banded
Savannah Sparrow	910-15160	3 June	Edgar Jones	19 May 1981
Savannah Sparrow	1211-1785	2 June	Edgar Jones	21 May 1980
Cliff Swallow	910-22042	22 May	Rainer Ebel	7 June 1981
Tree Swallow	890-53971	23 May	?	?
Swainson's Thrush	1251-66648	26 June	Rainer Ebel	25 June 1982

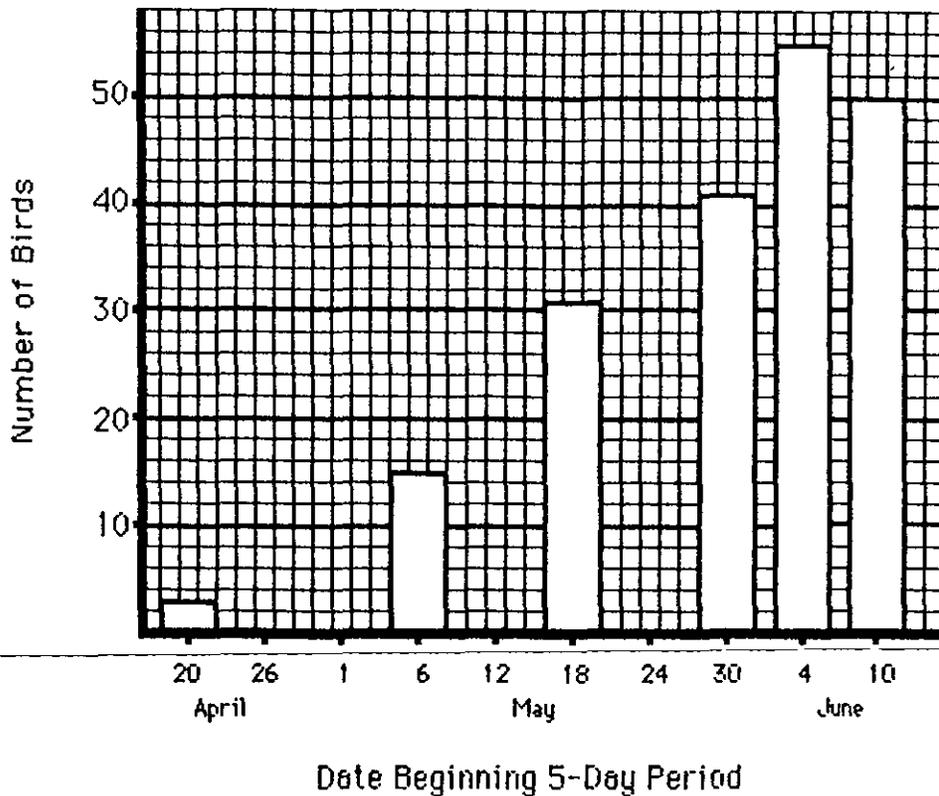


Figure 1. Number of Savannah Sparrows observed each 5-day period at the southeast shore of Beaverhill Lake in 1983.

Habitat

Prime habitat for nesting Savannah Sparrows contained moderately dense grasses or grass-like plants (*Juncus* and *Eleocharis* spp.) that became at least knee-high by mid summer. These areas were ungrazed by cattle. Heavily grazed grass areas were possibly used for feeding but (so far) not for nesting. In nesting areas, grass clumps or small willow clumps were selected for nesting and singing perches. Savannahs appear to favor areas near the lake shore previously trodden by cattle. It is suspected that these

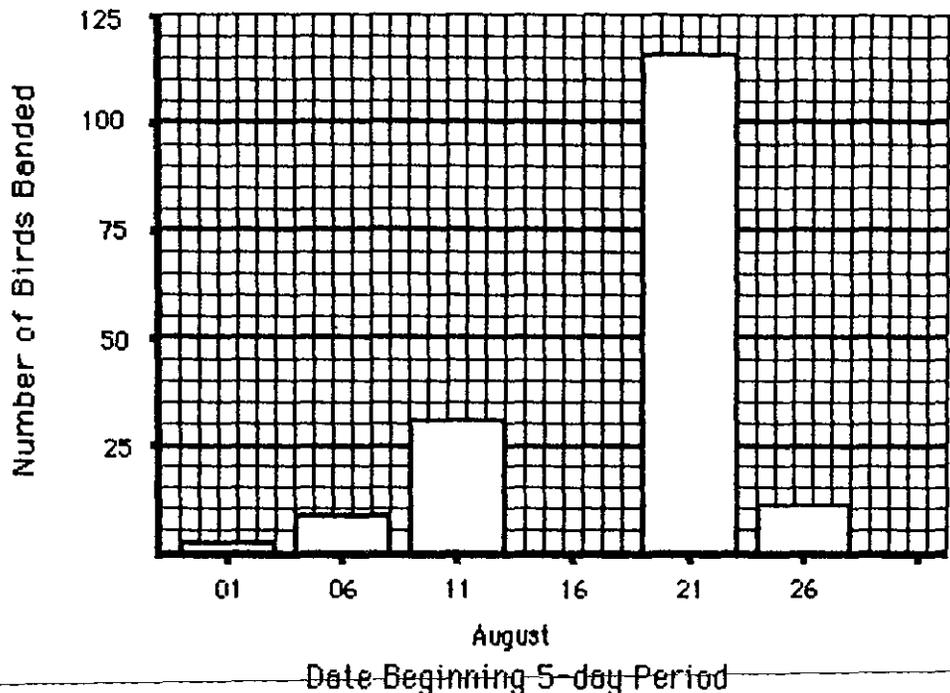


Figure 2. Number of Least Flycatchers banded each 5-day period in 1981 to 1983.

Habitat

Least Flycatchers occupy open aspen forests that have a well developed leaf canopy. They appear particularly fond of the lower half where visibility is unrestricted by shrub growth, and dead branches on aspen are in ample supply for singing perches. They also occur in the willows at the station. It appears that this is only a temporary arrangement upon arrival at the lake. It is not known whether these birds move on after a brief stay or rest and feed before moving into the aspen woods nearby. Some do appear to inhabit the willows, but only in areas that have greater than 3 m high aspen or balsam poplar. More detailed information is required to confirm these observations.

May, 3. **Black-crowned Night-Heron** 9 May, 1 adult; 13 August, 5 adults. **Tundra Swan** 1 April, 12; 24 April, 120 to hundreds; 12 August, 5; 2 October, 75. **Greater White-fronted Goose** early sighting of 2 on 4 April, apparently peaked on 23 April; 24-30 April, spectacular movement; 9 May, several flocks of 50-100, numbers low; 13 August, 25. **Snow Goose** on 9 April present on the lake, by the end of April they reached 1000; 24 April, 50/50 ratio of blues and whites. **Ross' Goose** 15 May, 12; 2 October, 20+ feeding in the field near Francis' Farm. **Canada Goose** early migrant to Edmonton area (15 March); 2000-3000 reported on the lake 1 April; 24 April, sitting on bales on Lister Lake; resident number 25 adults seen in July.

4.3 Waterfowl (14 species)

The following were noted without any exceptional details: **Green-winged Teal**, **Mallard** arrived by 27 March. **Northern Pintail** 500+ by 1 April. **Blue-winged Teal**, **Cinnamon Teal** 14 May, 1. **Northern Shoveler**, **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon**, **Canvasback**, **Redhead**, **Lesser Scaup**, **White-winged Scoter**, **Ruddy Duck**, **Common Goldeneye** present at various times. More information is needed on nest sites for ducks, particularly in ungrazed and grazed areas of the lake.

4.4 Osprey to Phalaropes (45 species)

Osprey 9 May, 1 overhead. **Bald Eagle** 2 adults on 1 April; 13 April, 8; 2 November, 1. **Northern Harrier** 24 April, male and female; seen through to 2 October. **Sharp-shinned Hawk** 7 June, 1. **Cooper's Hawk** 24-30 April, 1; 22-23 May, 1. **Northern Goshawk** 24 April, 1 flying north; 30 April, 1. **Red-tailed Hawk** 24 April, 2 flying north; everywhere by 9 May; last report 13 August, 2 adults. **Ferruginous Hawk** 6 May, 1, very rare for area. **Rough-legged Hawks** low numbers this spring. **Golden Eagle** 30 March, 2 adults; 24 September, 6. **American Kestrel** 14 August, 2. **Merlin** 9 May, 1 on east side near Monty's Meadows. **Peregrine Falcon** 26 April, 1; 9 May,

4.5 Jaegers to Woodpeckers (16 species)

Parasitic Jaeger 10 and 24 September, 1 and 4 respectively; 15 October, 1. **Franklin's Gull** 9 May, 2. **Bonaparte's Gull** 2 October, 5. **Ring-billed Gull** 26 March, 30; 9 May, 4; last record 2 October. **California Gull** 9 May, 2. **Common Tern** 30 April, 10; 7 June, 5. **Forster's Tern** 1 each for 9 and 21 May. **Black Tern** 9 May, 2; 22-23 May, 12; 26 July, adults and immature. **Ancient Murrelet** 1 October, reported by D. Dekker, seen at the weir; third record for the province. **Great Horned Owl** hooting owls heard on 22-23 May; 13 August, 3; 4 November, 1. **Short-eared Owl** 24 April, 1 pair; 9 May found 1 carcass; singles seen on 22-23 May and 13 August. **Snowy Owl** 13 May, 1 late record. **Burrowing Owl** 7 May, 1. **Common Nighthawk** singles recorded for 31 May and 3 June. **Downy Woodpecker** 2 banded on 13 August and 1 seen on 28 August. **Common Flicker** singles on 24 April and 22 May.

4.6 Flycatchers to Thrushes (20 species)

Olive-sided Flycatcher 9 June, 1. **Western Wood-pewee** 23 May, 2 banded and 3 heard. **Alder Flycatcher** 6 June, 2 in willows, on territory by June 15, but do not appear to summer in the area; 13 August, 1 heard; 14 August, 2 banded; 28 August, 2 banded; 4 September, 1. **Least Flycatcher** first recorded on 22-23 May when 7 were heard, 5 banded; 4 June, 5 banded; 6 June, 1 heard; 10 June, 2 heard; 13 August, 22 banded; 14 August, 9 banded; 28 August, 6 banded, 2 heard. **Eastern Kingbird** 13 August, 1; 28 August, 2. **Horned Lark** 27 March, 4; 24 April, 10 flying. **Tree Swallow** 9 May, 12 at Amisk Bridge; 23 May, 1 recapture, 12 seen; 26 July, present. **Bank Swallow** July 30, 5000 estimated at Amisk Creek. **Cliff Swallow** 9 May, 8 at Amisk Bridge; 22 May, at the same location, 1 recapture and 1 banded, 40+ seen. **Barn Swallow** 9 May, 7 at Amisk Bridge; 22 May, 2 banded and 30+ counted; 26 July, present; 13 August, 30. **Blue Jay** 22-23 May, 1. **American Crow** 9 May, 4; 22-23 May, 2. **Black-capped Chickadee** from 8 to 23 May only 1 seen; 13 August, 3 banded; 14 August,

September, 2 banded. **Vesper Sparrow** 30 April, 1; 9 May, 2; 22-23 May, 3; 7, 9, 10, 12 June, 1 singing and 1 banded, 1 banded, 2 banded, 1 banded, respectively. All birds were males. **Savannah Sparrow** 24 April, 3 in fields around Willow Edge Point; 9 May, 15; 22-23 May, 7 banded and 29 seen; 6 June, 10; 7 June, 15; 9 June, nests in various stages; 12 June, 4 eggs and 1 cowbird egg; 13 June, 19 banded; 15 June, 7 banded; estimated the ratio of Savannah to LeConte's to Sharp-Tailed Sparrow as 74:20:1; 26 July, present; 14 August, 2 banded (HY-U); last record 4 September, 1 banded (M-U). **LeConte's Sparrow** 24 April, 7; 30 April, 1 banded; 2 June, 1 banded; 9 May, 2 singing; 22 May, 1. **Lincoln's Sparrow** 22 May, 2 seen and 1 banded. **White-throated Sparrow** 23 May, 2 banded and 8 heard or seen. **White-crowned Sparrow** 4 September, 1 (HY-U). **Dark-eyed Junco** 2 October, 2. **Lopland Longspur** 2 April, seen; 24 April, 40 overhead; 30 April, overhead and feeding on the ice; 9 May, ~100; 4 September, 100; 2 October, 2. **Smith's Longspur** seen on May 15, no number listed. **Snow Bunting** 24 April, ~200 flying; 30 April, flocks over the ice; 9 May, 1.

4.9 Bobolink to Goldfinch (9 species)

Bobolink single birds seen on 20, 21 May; 23 May, 3. **Red-winged Blackbird** 30 April, small numbers of males present; 9 May, 400 M, 1 F; 22 May, 1 F banded, 2 M, 200+ seen; 4 June, 1 M and 1 F banded; 14 June, 1 F banded. **Western Meadowlark** 4 April, 1; 24 April, 2 singing at Francis' Farm; 9 May, 2; 23 May, 1; 6 June, 1 at Francis' Farm, 1 on Greenlee Meadows. **Yellow-headed Blackbird** 13 April, present; 9 May, 250; 23 May, 70. **Rusty Blackbird** 2 October, 3000 in large flocks. **Brewer's Blackbird** 2 October, 1000 in one large flock. **Brown-headed Cowbird** 9 May, 200 in several flocks; 22-23 May and 7 June, several banded; 2 October, 500+ birds. **Purple Finch** 9 May, 1 singing. **American Goldfinch** 3 June, 1 seen; 9 June, 1; 29 June, 5; 13 August, 14; 26 August, 1 banded.