

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update May 29-June 4, 2006

As we move into June the forest has filled out with new growth. The occasional rain interspersed with sun has really brought the leaves out in full, hiding the Yellow Warblers from sight, but we certainly hear them! We lost a few hours of banding this week due to rain and wind, but otherwise we had great coverage and really nice weather.

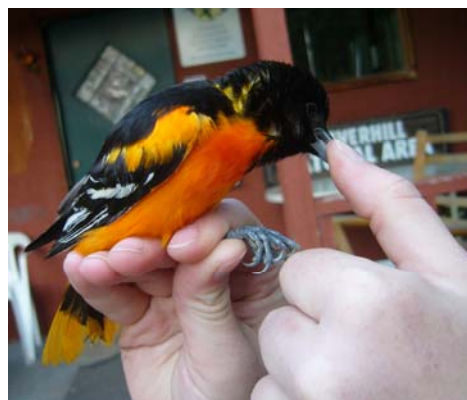
New species that we netted this week include American Goldfinches and a Magnolia Warbler. It took a bit of effort to figure out a couple of the Baltimore Orioles that we caught this week: was each a first-year male or an older female? The female is often shown in bird books with little to no black on the head. However- we had a female whose head was almost entirely black with a little orange mottling. Young males have brown tips on their head feathers instead of the orange mottling. Mature males have entirely black heads. See if you can determine the sex of Orioles in your area!



Magnolia Warbler



Female Baltimore Oriole with a very dark head and orange mottling.



Male Baltimore Oriole with an entirely black head, biting Katie!

More and more netted birds are showing a brood patch, meaning they have started laying or sitting on eggs. This week we banded our first nestling, a single American Robin chick, which will fledge quite soon. In contrast, two eggs in another robin's nest have only just hatched this week. A Least Flycatcher can be seen sitting in her nest out by the outhouse throughout the day, and the wrens nesting on the lab have been chattering to each other as they continue to build their nest.

On May 31, Allicia and I took on the Baillie Birdathon Challenge- to see the highest number of species in a single day! We started at the BBO with our regular morning banding, getting a respectable number of species around the lab and a few of the usual birds in the nets. Afterwards we hopped in the car and headed down to the grid roads south and east of Beaverhill Lake. Blackbirds and Eastern Kingbirds sat on several fence posts, and we also saw American White Pelicans and a Grey Partridge. We were thrilled to see our first Peregrine Falcon of the season as we walked out to the east side of the lake looking for shorebirds. Sadly, the endeavour yielded few other species and some very muddy clothes. After this we stopped in Tofield for some replenishing ice cream and to check off Purple Martins (where DID they live before humans built those apartment-style nest boxes for them?) On the drive to Elk Island National Park we added American Kestrels and once we hit the park we were finally able to add a Black-capped Chickadee! Our hopes of finding woodpeckers at the park were fulfilled as a Pileated Woodpecker laughed at us and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker squawked overhead. Over the entire day we saw a total of 83 species. It was a fun challenge, but in general we prefer a more relaxed bird watching style!



Arctic Skipper

We also managed to conduct our first full Pollard walk this week, which is a weekly standardized two-hour butterfly survey. New species for the year we came across were the Inornate (Common) Ringlet, Arctic Skipper and Common Alpine.



Saw-whet owlets

Visitors this past week included Liz and Chips Reed, Paul Burwell and the Edmonton Carving Club (15 people). The Carving Club came out to have a barbecue for their season wrap-up and all were a great help in the Tree Swallow banding-- the more hands we have to cover the nest box entrances the better! Thanks to Lisa Priestley for coming out every day and providing a constant supply of whatever we need for working around the lab. We also appreciate Chuck Priestley taking us out to band Saw-whet owlets this week.

-Katie Cameron and Allicia Kelly

Table 1. Results from Spring Migration Monitoring May 15-20, 2006.

Species	Banded	Recapture	Other	Total
American Goldfinch	4	1	0	5
American Redstart	2	0	0	2
Baltimore Oriole	2	1	0	3
Brown-headed Cowbird	1	1	0	2
Clay-coloured Sparrow	6	0	0	6
House Wren	5	2	0	7
Least Flycatcher	11	9	0	20
Magnolia Warbler	1	0	0	1
Savannah Sparrow	1	0	0	1
Song Sparrow	1	0	0	1
Swainson's Thrush	1	0	0	1
Trill's Flycatcher	1	0	0	1
Wilson's Warbler	1	0	0	1
Yellow Warbler	1	6	0	7
TOTAL	38	20	0	58