

BEAVERHILL BIRD OBSERVATORY UPDATE JUNE 12-19, 2007

THE BIRDS MUST BE BUSY NESTING, because they certainly haven't been busy flying into our mist-nets. Banding at PARK station (4 birds) and WIER station (3 birds) was especially slow, despite the numerous birds we heard during our point counts. During point counts, we spent 10 minutes at each of 9 "points"- locations that are the same from year to year at each station. During this time we record all the birds we hear or see from that spot. After five minutes, the majority of nearby birds have been recorded on our data sheets - though some extra time can be helpful for separating out the numerous and often overlapping "che-beck" calls of the Least Flycatchers! Sometimes the birds forget our presence after we've been standing quietly in the same spot for 10 minutes, and it's a peaceful way to observe nature with few distractions.



Flagging tape marks a point count location



A well-camouflaged Least Flycatcher in her nest

Point counts also provide a great opportunity to look around for nests, but this week a nesting Least Flycatcher nest most definitely found me. I could hear a gurgling, cheeping sound close by, but wasn't focused quite close enough to see the bird sitting on her nest less than 10 feet from my face- AND at eye level. We watched each other for a minute (she had probably been watching me for the past several minutes) before I headed to the next point.

Big, stocky birds dominated our captures (21 birds) at BLAB station. Brown-headed Cowbirds and blackbirds (both Red-winged and Yellow-headed) seem to be everywhere in the forest, chasing each other or carefully hopping from branch to branch in what looks like an impressively systematic search. The blackbirds are searching for food to feed their own young, while the female cowbirds are looking for a nest in which to lay an egg. Cowbirds are brood parasites and females lay one egg in a number of different nests, which are then raised and fed by the host bird. We banded all three species this week, but the Yellow-headed Blackbirds were the highlight as our two captures (male and female) were the first at the BBO in (at least) the past six years.



Male Yellow-headed Blackbird

Another highlight has been all the Veerys that have been singing their weird, electronic-sounding song throughout the Natural Area for a few weeks now. It was exciting to capture one this week that had been banded by Lisa Priestley in 2005.

Nests around the lab hold young at various stages of development (eggs, just-hatched young, fuzzy nestlings, young birds growing flight feathers). We're looking forward to banding these nestlings and watching the young birds grow up over the next month or so.

-Alicia and Anna



Visitors Natalka and Casey with a Hermit Thrush

Table 1. Results from MAPS mist-netting for Rotation 1: June 10-19, 2007.

Species	Banded	Repeat¹	Return²	Foreign³	Other⁴	Total
American Robin	1	0	0	0	0	1
Baltimore Oriole	1	0	0	0	0	1
Black-capped Chickadee	2	0	0	0	0	2
Brown-headed Cowbird	2	3	1	0	0	6
Clay-colored Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hermit Thrush	2	0	0	0	0	2
Least Flycatcher	6	0	2	0	0	8
Red-winged Blackbird	6	0	0	0	0	6
Veery	0	0	1	0	0	1
Yellow-headed Blackbird	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total	23	7	4	0	0	30

Net Hours: 162.0 NH

Capture Rate: 18.52 birds/ 100 NH

1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO.

2 Banded at the BBO > 90 days prior to recapture (e.g. in a previous year).

3 Banded at a location other than the BBO.

4 Caught in a mist-net but not banded (e.g. escaped net).



*House Wren eggs just hatching
in a nest box*



*American Robin nest hidden
in a willow tree*