

BEAVERHILL BIRD OBSERVATORY UPDATE JULY 20- 31, 2007

SIGNS OF FALL are beginning to appear in the Natural Area, just in time for Fall Migration Monitoring at the BBO. Ducks are flying overhead again and stopping in Lister Lake, which looks much busier with the increase in ducks *and* the late-summer decrease in water level. Migrating songbirds are flitting through the trees, and leaves have begun to turn yellow and fall.



Black-capped Chickadee

A few weeks ago I mentioned that the nest boxes we monitor during the summer have been productive this year. MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship), the research program we participate in from June 11 until the end of July, has been a stark contrast to this. This year the capture rate for MAPS is 14.84 birds/100 net hours (average of all three stations). Capture rates for each station are the lowest they have been since at least 1998 (Figure 1). The five most common species captured this summer (MAPS mist-netting only) are (number of birds in parentheses) Least Flycatcher (62), Black-capped Chickadee (13), Brown-headed Cowbird (9), Downy Woodpecker (7) and Red-winged Blackbird (7).



Hatch-year Least Flycatcher

Despite the low numbers, there were a few notable captures this week. Three Downy Woodpeckers were caught together in a net in Park station, and a fourth Downy Woodpecker had missed the same net and foraged nearby while I extracted the three captured birds. A family of curious chickadees also hung around this net to watch the excitement, but managed to restrain themselves from also flying into the net (this happens). And two White-throated Sparrows (1 adult and 1 hatch-year bird) were banded at Weir station. This is notable because this sparrow is not a resident species, so these birds were using the Natural Area as a stopping point in their migration south.

The Least Flycatcher is the most common bird caught in our mist-nets, but we didn't catch juvenile Least Flycatchers until this week. We finally banded hatch-year Least Flycatchers and at both Park and B-lab stations. "Hatch-year" is the banding term for birds born in the current year (this spring). These young flycatchers are obvious with their new, pointy tail feathers and fresh buffy wing bars. And Cindy and Eric Kelly came out for banding around the Lab (B-Lab station) where we banded a gorgeous Northern Flicker. This woodpecker is one of the largest birds that will get caught in the nets and was much stronger than the songbirds we usually handle!



Yellow-shafted Flicker

We've also been busy mending nets, filling out miles of datasheets and getting nets set up for fall migration. Fall Migration Monitoring begins August 1, so we will be back to a regular schedule: daily mist-netting around the lab (weather permitting) for 6 hours beginning ½ prior to sunrise. We're looking forward to catching more hatch-year birds on their first migration and seeing the fall plumages of the brightly-coloured birds we caught in the spring. Visitors are always welcome to stop by or to spend a morning at the lab. We hope to see you out this fall!

- Allicia and Anna

Table 1. Results from MAPS mist-netting for Rotation 5: July 21-31, 2007.

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Foreign ³	Other ⁴	Total
Black-capped Chickadee	3	0	0	0	0	3
Chipping Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Downy Woodpecker	4	0	0	0	1	5
Least Flycatcher	12	3	1	0	1	17
White-throated Sparrow	2	0	0	0	0	2
Yellow-shafted Flicker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	23	3	1	0	0	29

Net Hours: 180.0 NH

Capture Rate: 16.11 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).

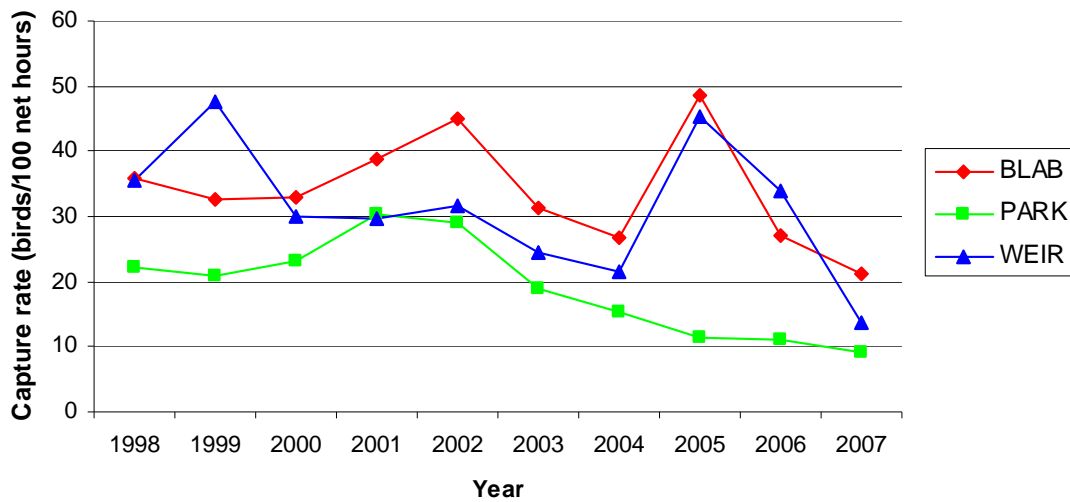


Figure 1. Comparison of MAPS capture rates at each station (B-Lab, Park, and Weir) from 1998 to 2007.



Banding in the lab (Cindy Kelly and staff Anna and Allicia)