

Weekly Report: May 22 - 31, 2004

The time has come for another weekly report. Activity at the BBO has slowed considerably since our last update; however, we've seen, heard, and had some very interesting birds in hand on a daily basis. Of the 121 birds we handled over the past ten days we banded 97 individuals. As you can see, we haven't had to deal with another crazy 83-bird day, though it would have been nice. On May 22nd, the first of three Rose-breasted Grosbeaks was banded. The other two were banded on the 23rd and the 25th and although all three individual birds are spectacular in their own way, I hold a special place in my heart for the Rose-breasted Grosbeak banded on the 25th of May.

We woke up to a balmy 4.8 °C that morning, which meant we were able to set nets up right on schedule. Although the morning was quite calm, we did not seem to be capturing as many birds as we had thought. As Crystal, Lisa and I were enjoying the morning sun between one of the routine net checks, we heard some noise in the distance. At first I thought it was a large flock of geese flying overhead, but as I strained to identify the looming racket, I remembered that it was Tuesday. This was the day the Grade Seven classes from Tofield School were coming to visit. Because the morning had been slow, all three of us wondered if we would have any birds to show the students. However, there was really no need for us to worry as every group, a total of three, that visited the BBO that day was able to see us process and handle at least one bird. The last group saw me extract a beautiful young male Rose-breasted Grosbeak from one of the nets behind the lab. We also expanded our vocabulary of foreign words that day, as Irene, a Tofield resident and frequent visitor of the BBO, informed the students and us that 'grosbeak' means big beak in German. I can definitely attest to that! These birds have very strong beaks that love to nibble the fleshiest part of your fingers, but in the end it was worth the small amount of discomfort as I saw the faces of the students light up with awe and excitement. A big thanks goes to the Tofield staff and students that visited the BBO. We appreciate your enthusiasm, eagerness and excellent behaviour!

Some other highlights of the week include the banding of a Western Wood-pewee, the cat-like meow of the Gray Catbird, and the *teacher-teacher-teacher* call of the Ovenbird. Three Blackpoll Warblers were banded on May 23rd and three Tennessee Warblers followed on the 27th. As well, we have been fortunate to witness the majestic sight of a Northern Oriole. We can only hope there is a pair that will nest nearby. Speaking of nests, the residents in the Tree Swallow grid are busy collecting nest material, and out of eleven boxes that were checked on the very rainy 29th day of May, six were on eggs. Spring has sprung!

With the gorgeous weather at the beginning of the week, more and more butterflies flit through the spring air. Canadian Tiger Swallowtails are seen almost daily as well as the Mourning Cloaks, Milbert's Tortoiseshell and numerous whites, whose names escape me. Also, with each passing day the Beaverhill Natural Area becomes greener. New plants are identified every few days as the first leaves of spring decorate the once naked twigs and stems. I was delighted to find some Saskatoon

plants on one of our daily census walks and will be even more delighted if the plants produce some delicious fruits. Many White-tailed Deer have been spotted in the natural area over the past few days, and the snowshoe hare population seems to be growing each day. What a wonderful place to spend a sunny afternoon!

Unfortunately, the lovely weather did not stay, and has forced us to keep the nets closed for a few days. But the rain did not dampen our spirits, so Crystal and I took this opportunity to participate in the 2004 Baillie Birdathon. We started the afternoon of the 29th and continued listening and looking for all the bird species possible over the next 24 hours. In total we counted 67 species with the major highlights being the oh-so-cute Sora in Amisk Creek, and the close up view of a Common Snipe at Kallal field. If you are interested in pledging us crazy birders (you can pledge per species or a flat rate) give us a call at 780 991 6864 and leave your name and number and we'll give you a call back. The majority of the money we raise goes directly to the BBO!

We hope to see you soon at the BBO, and you are always more than welcome to come out and see us band the birds; we love the company!

Cheers,
Jill and Crystal

Species	# New birds	# Recaptured	# Recovered	Total
Black-capped chickadee	0	1	0	1
Blackpoll warbler	3	0	0	3
Clay-colored sparrow	22	2	2	26
Hermit thrush	1	1	0	2
House wren	1	2	0	3
Least flycatcher	14	6	0	20
Lincoln's sparrow	1	0	0	1
Myrtle warbler	12	0	0	12
Orange-crowned warbler	1	0	0	1
Rose-breasted grosbeak	3	0	0	3
Savannah sparrow	1	0	0	1
Song sparrow	1	0	0	1
Swainson's thrush	19	1	0	20
Tennessee warbler	3	0	0	3
Tree swallow	0	1	0	1
Trail's flycatcher	2	0	0	2
Western wood-pewee	1	0	0	1
White-throated sparrow	5	0	0	5
Yellow-bellied sapsucker	2	0	0	2
Yellow warbler	5	7	1	13
Total	97	21	3	121