PICOIDES

Bulletin of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists **Picoides, June 2008**
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American Redstart. Photo by Frode Jacobsen.

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What non-Canadian bird is this? Photo by Larry Halverson.

Editor's Message

Happy Spring and welcome to the second issue of *Picoides* of 2008! I hope everyone had a good spring and is looking forward to summer!

Please find inside the mini biographies and research project descriptions of the 2008 SCO-SOC student awards. Congratulations to all award winners. I wish to express my condolences to the family and friends of the late Gareth Akerman. Also inside this issue are two thesis abstracts, several poems and many other ornithological articles and notices in this issue.

I hope all SCO-SOC members had the opportunity to take a day in May to go birding for fun and raise money for ornithological research and your local bird observatory through the Baillie Birdathon. I was fortunate to participate in the Bailie Birdathon at Last Mountain Lake Observatory on May 24. I got 72 bird species. We raised $1200 and our tour leader, Jared Clarke, got 103 bird species. Notable species were American Redstart, Warbling Vireo, Cape May Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Tennessee Warbler and lots of cowbirds and grackles. Saskatoon's Baillie Birdathon Dream Team got a whopping 159 bird species in 24 hours! During the Nature Saskatchewan meet field trips in Weyburn area and to Roche Percee in southeast Saskatchewan, I got 69 bird species, 30 of them new from the weekend before. At Roche Percee, I saw a Turkey Vulture, Yellow-breasted Chat and my first Black and White Warbler as well as lots of American Redstarts, Least Flycatchers and Eastern and Western Kingbirds.

Please take note of photo submission guidelines on page 11. On a final note, I need all members to continue to submit material and I welcome your feedback to improve *Picoides*. After all, it is your publication. I look forward to hearing from you. Have a safe, wonderful and fun summer!

Cheers,

Rob Warnock
Picoides
Editor

Yellow Warbler. Photo by Jean-Sébastien Guénette.

PLEASE NOTE THE *PICOIDES* DEADLINES! Deadlines are now February 15, May 15 and October 15.

2008 SCO/SOC Student Award Winners

The 2008 SCO/SOC Student Award Winners have been confirmed and have accepted their awards. The winners and their profiles are as follows:

Celia K. W. Chui (University of Windsor), M.Sc.

Carotenoids, diet, and geography: a multi-scale analysis of crown coloration in golden-crowned kinglets

Percy A. Taverner Award ($1000)

Celia Chui holding a Yellow-rumped Warbler at Hillman Marsh Conservation Area, near Point Pelee National Park. Photo supplied by Celia Chui.

Biography

I completed my B.Sc. in Animal Biology at the University of British Columbia in 2005. After working in an HIV lab for a couple of years, I returned to my love of birds and the outdoors and volunteered as a field assistant for Dr. Stéphanie Doucet in Santa Rosa National Park, Costa Rica during the summer of 2007. I then became a M.Sc. student in Dr. Doucet's lab at the University of Windsor in September 2007. This year, I have been volunteering at the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory during spring migration and hope to become an experienced bird bander.

Summary of Research

My M.Sc. thesis project focuses on the individual and geographic variation in crown colouration of golden-crowned kinglets (*Regulus satrapa*). There are currently five recognized subspecies, which vary in geographic location, morphology, and plumage – including crown colour. Females have a uniformly yellow crown, whereas males have both yellow feathers and an orange crown-patch in the middle. I am interested in investigating the interactions between carotenoids, diet, and geography on plumage colouration across this species' range. Carotenoids (the pigments that produce red, orange, and yellow colours) often occur in bright, sexually selected ornaments; and their expression is an honest indicator of quality because of their role in immune function and dependence on diet and parasite load. I am currently working on characterizing the geographic variation in sexual dichromatism and dimorphism in kinglets across North America, and the remainder of my M.Sc. research will involve investigating the possible mechanisms for this geographic variation.

Lori Parker (Queen's University), M.Sc.

The evolution of female ornamentation and maternal investment in the American robin

Percy A. Taverner Award ($1000)

Biography
My interest in biology was sparked early in life while exploring the Qu'appelle Valley, Saskatchewan with two naturalist aunts. I completed my BSc (Honours) in biology at the University of Saskatchewan where I studied egg investment in northern flickers for my undergraduate thesis. Before beginning my M.Sc. research at Queen's, I worked on a wide variety of avian conservation and behaviour projects. My research interests lie in the evolution of mutual mate choice behaviour in birds, in particular the role of female signaling. Presently I am investigating the relationship between female colour and reproductive investment, using the American robin as a model.

Lori Parker holding a robin egg. Photo supplied by Lori Parker.

Summary of Research
The function of ornamental traits in males has been subject to intensive research, but the expression of such traits in females has received much less study. My research uses the American robin to answer whether colour variation in female songbirds reflects the amount of energy and resources they are able to devote to reproduction. Female robins show a subdued expression of plumage and bill colouration compared to males; however, there is much variation among females. Using a combination of field spectrometry, yolk biopsies, whole egg analysis, predator defense experiments and feeding rates of fostered nestlings, I will assess whether female ornamentation is acting as a signal of individual quality, and whether colour variation is correlated with reproductive investment. Investment will be measured by egg size, clutch size, egg energetic investment, yolk androgen and carotenoid deposition, and parental effort. I will also investigate differential maternal investment with respect to mate quality.

Robert DeCaire (University of Western Ontario), M.Sc.

Do brood parasites alter host offspring sex ratios due to their larger size?

James L. Baillie Award ($1000)

Robert DeCaire measuring a nestling song sparrow. Photo supplied by Robert DeCaire.

Biography
I earned my B.A. in Philosophy at the University of Toronto, and following that received my B.Sc. in Biology at Concordia University, Montreal. Currently, I have returned to my hometown to pursue a master's degree at the University of Western Ontario in London. I am interested in the ecology of predator-prey relationships, and how predators influence the behaviour of their prey species. I am especially interested in predators that interact with their prey in unique and interesting ways, such as parasitoid wasps and brood parasitic birds.

Summary of Research
Brown-headed cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) are obligate brood parasites that reproduce in the nests of song sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*). Cowbird nestlings compete with sparrow nestlings for resources, and this causes a sex ratio skew in parasitized nests, because female sparrows experience increased mortality compared to males as a result of the cowbird. It is not clear by what mechanism this sex ratio skew is effected. However, since cowbird nestlings grow quickly, they may be putting pressure on the sparrow nestlings by virtue of a height advantage. Females, being slightly smaller than males, are therefore competing against two types of larger competitors, and fail to thrive. We are testing the hypothesis that the size of the cowbird causes the sex ratio skew by placing sparrow nestlings in nests with younger birds, so that a large competitor will be present in the nest. We will determine if this generates a sex ratio skew.

Roslyn Dakin (Queen's University), M.Sc.

The signal content of the peacock's train: testing the role of nanostructure

Fred Cooke Award ($1000)

Roslyn Dakin setting up a model peahen near a displaying male, as part of a study of the way males exploit the directionality of their iridescent train feathers during their courtship dances. Photo supplied by Roslyn Dakin.

Biography
Roslyn Dakin is an MSc student at Queen's University working with Dr. Bob Montgomerie. She has been fascinated with evolution since learning about it in her youth, and became interested in behavioural ecology while working on an undergraduate research project involving tree swallows. Although she lacks extensive birding experience (and a "list"), she gained an appreciation for the diversity of avifauna and the enthusiasm of bird-lovers after working in the forests of Costa Rica as a field assistant to Professor Stéphanie Doucet. She has since purchased her own binoculars and is looking forward to continuing to use them for fun as well as field work.

Summary of Research
Roslyn is studying the function of iridescent plumage in peacocks, using free-ranging peafowl populations in Canada and the US. Previous research indicates that peahens prefer to mate with males that have a greater number of eyespot feathers, but little is known about the complex structural colouration of the eyespots. Roslyn hopes to address the importance of colour for avian courtship in a number of ways. First, she is performing an experimental test of the idea that peahens assess plumage colour when choosing a mate. She is also investigating the possibility that eyespot colour is an honest signal of male condition and genetic quality, and she plans to examine the nanostructural basis of individual variation in iridescent colour. If colour is related to male quality, what mechanism maintains signal reliability in these birds? The answer may lie in the development of the colour-producing nanostructures.

Andrea Norris (University of British Columbia), Ph.D.

The long-term perspectives on resource pulses: how are cavity nester populations regulated following a mountain pine beetle outbreak?

Junco Technologies Award ($1000)

Andrea Norris checking the contents of a cavity near Riske Creek, BC. Photo supplied by Andrea Norris.

Biography

I am a PhD student with Dr. Kathy Martin, in the Centre for Applied Conservation Research, at the University of British Columbia. I received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Victoria in 2003, and a Master of Science degree from the University of British Columbia in 2007. For my MSc, I examined how populations of small-bodied cavity nesting birds were influenced by habitat conditions and community dynamics. I found that a mountain pine beetle outbreak correlated with changes in populations of nuthatches and chickadees, however, the mechanism by which these changes occurred were unknown. Outside of work, I enjoy bird watching, rock-climbing, hiking, and learning other languages including French, Spanish, and German.

Summary of Research

For my PhD, I will investigate how cavity-nester populations recover following an outbreak of mountain pine beetles (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*) in mixed forests of British Columbia. In ecosystems with naturally occurring major disturbance events, birds must be able to adapt to changes in resource availability and community dynamics. Bark beetle outbreaks can result in increases in densities of cavity excavating bark insectivorous birds, facilitating increases in populations of secondary cavity-nesters. However, when the food supply is depleted, increases in competition and predation may negatively influence populations within the cavity-nesting community. Few studies have monitored population densities, reproductive success, and habitat conditions of cavity-nesting communities before, during and following such a major disturbance event. My study objective is to examine how unstable resource constraints (nest sites, food and predation) imposed by the large-scale mountain pine beetle outbreak affects population densities, breeding success and survival of red-breasted nuthatches (*Sitta canadensis*) and mountain chickadees (*Poecile gambeli*) in interior British Columbia.

Annual Meeting sponsored by the American Ornithologists' Union, the Cooper Ornithological Society and the Society of Canadian Ornithologists/Société des ornithologistes du Canada.

Key Dates
Registration
Early: until 15 April 2008
Regular: until 15 June2008
Late: after 15 June 2008

Abstract Submission
15 April 2008

Call for Symposia and Workshops
Deadline for submission: 1 December 2007

Silent Auction
AUCTION ITEMS NEEDED!! We need donated items for a silent auction. Proceeds will fund student travel to future meetings.

125th Anniversary of AOU
Founded in 1883, the American Ornithologists' Union is the oldest and largest organization in the New World devoted to the scientific study of birds. The 2008 meeting in Portland will mark the 125th anniversary of the AOU's founding.

How Green is Our Meeting
The conference organizers have carefully considered the effects of meeting on our environment and selected the Hilton Portland and Executive Tower because it is a certified green property as well as selecting guidelines to minimize the environmental footprint of our meeting For more information, please see the "How Green is Our Meeting" section in the news and notes area of the web site.

For More Information
For more information, please contact the conference management office by e-mail at pdxbirds08@sgmeet.com or by phone at 1-254-776-3550 or check out the website at: http://www.pdxbirds08.org/.

Attention Photographers- Submission Guidelines!

To assist the *Picoides* editor with managing photo submissions, please do following

- Use tiff or jpeg file format
- Minimize file size while maintaining photo quality. This helps keep overall file size down and speed up downloads
- Use descriptive file names. Generic file names from photo software are not very helpful.
- Supply captions for all photos. Good captions include common names of species, names of people, locations, activities, behaviours and dates and very importantly photo credit.

Rhino Auklet. Photo by Alan Burger

Your submissions are greatly appreciated and always welcome.

Rob Warnock
Editor of *Picoides*

Photos Still Needed for *Being a bird in North America*
From Robert Alvo, preparing the book *Being a bird in North America:*

Thank you to those who have already contacted me regarding supplying photos for this book. For those people, and anyone else interested in contributing, please note my new coordinates: robalvo1@gmail.com, tel. 613-236-0660, 219-140 Mann Ave. Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 1E5.

I will pay Can$15 for any photos used. Photo credit (your name) will be given next to the photo in the book, and you can include a 100-200 word biography for publication in the book. The highest priority species for which we need photos are:

Hooded Merganser	Black Storm-Petrel	White-tailed Hawk
Masked Duck	Brandt's Cormorant	Black Rail
Gunnison Sage-Grouse	Hook-billed Kite	King Rail
Pacific Loon	Snail Kite	Common Ringed Plover
Horned Grebe	Mississippi Kite	Eurasian Dotterel
Manx Shearwater	White-tailed Eagle	Northern Jacana
Leach's Storm-Petrel	Broad-winged Hawk	Hudsonian Godwit
Ashy Storm-Petrel	Short-tailed Hawk	Red-necked Stint

There are many other species for which we want photos. I will send you a complete list (Excel spreadsheet) if you ask.

Thank you,
Robert Alvo

In Memoriam: Gareth Akerman

On March 13, 2008, a plane crash just outside of West Palm Beach, Florida killed four people including Gareth Akerman, a member of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists, as well as two graduate students with whom he was working. Gareth, 36, was on a six-month contract with Florida Atlantic University, studying wading birds on Lake Okeechobee as part of the South Florida Wading Bird Study

Gareth Akerman. Photo by Gareth Akerman, Photo supplied by Andrew Boyne.

(http://www.wec.ufl.edu/research/wadingbird/). The crash occurred while conducting what was to be their last aerial survey of the season.

Gareth joined the SCO-COS in 2005 at the Halifax meeting where he volunteered with the organizing committee. Gareth was a late comer to ornithogical research. He had traveled extensively and had worked in the business world and in the film industry, before returning to school in his late twenties. However, in the relatively short period in which he was involved in the ornithological community in eastern Canada he was able to work with and interact with an incredible number of individuals and organizations. He graduated from Saint Mary's University with honours in 2005, where he did his thesis work with Dr. Colleen Barber on social attraction and Common Tern nest site selection, and from Dalhousie University with a Master of Science in 2007, where he did his graduate work with Dr. Cindy Staicer on the role of riparian forest and riparian buffer strips in avian conservation in the Acadian forest. His undergraduate thesis was done in conjunction with the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Bluenose Coastal Action Foundation, a local non-government organization, and his graduate work was done in conjunction with Parks Canada. After finishing his graduate studies he worked with Bird Studies Canada where he worked for the Maritime Breeding Bird Atlas, surveying for breeding birds in some of the more remote regions of northern New Brunswick, before accepting the contract at Florida Atlantic University.

Gareth was bright, receiving NSERC scholarships for both his undergraduate and graduate work, and had clearly found his passion. He had articulated that environmental science, and ornithology in particular, had saved him. His mother explained that in his younger days he was like a wild bronco; you wanted to control him without breaking his spirit. It seems that ornithology was able to do that. Outside of ornithology Gareth was a writer, musician, traveller, artist and avid Habs fan. My lasting image of Garth is of him on the top of Quaker Island, NS - where he was studying terns - in a rainstorm huddled beneath a tarp watching the 2005 Stanley Cup playoffs on a battery powered, black and white, 4 inch, VHF television; dedicated and passionate.

To have lost him so early in a career for which he showed such zeal and promise makes the tragedy of his death even more poignant. A memorial scholarship has been set up at Saint Mary's University. To contribute to the Gareth Akerman Memorial Fund please contact the Development Office, Saint Mary's University, Halifax NS, B3H 3C3, T 902-420-5496, F 902-420-5140 E development.office@smu.ca.

- Andrew Boyne

North American Banding Council at Partners in Flight Conference.

http://www.nabanding.net/
http://www.partnersinflight.org/events/mcallen/

The Partners in Flight Conference (PIF) was held in McAllen, Texas from February 14 to 16, 2008. Four North American Banding Council members participated in the Western Hemisphere Bird Banding Network workshop and gave a presentation entitled "International commitment, bander certification, training and data standards a potential tool applied to the Western Hemisphere Bird Banding Network." (John Alexander, Lesley-Anne Howes, Norm North and C.J. Ralph. NABC). The workshop was held to discuss collaboration, communication and issues related to bird marking in the western hemisphere such as training, data standards and ethics. Approximately, 40 participants from 16 countries throughout North, Central and South American, as well as Italy and Britain attended.

A poster entitled *The North American Banding Council: Supporting bird research, conservation and management* was exhibited during the poster sessions to promote NABCs mandate of sound and ethical banding principles and techniques.

A NABC booth was set up in the exhibition hall to further promote the North American Banding Council to the participants and hand out materials. Materials available for distribution included bird banding training manual CD's, key chains with related web sites, flyers and various publications. The booth was well received.

Book Review Opportunities Available

I have a couple of book titles that could be reviewed in *Picoides*:

A Life of Ospreys* by Roy Dennis

Flight of the Wild Geese* by Graham Uney

It is a good opportunity for a graduate student.

If interested, please contact Rob Warnock, *Picoides* Editor, at warnockr@accesscomm.ca and I will ask the publisher to send the reviewer's copy directly to the reviewer.

Canadian Thesis Abstracts in Ornithology

Bond, Alexander L. 2008. Patterns of Mercury Burden in the Seabird Community of Machias Seal Island, NB. M.Sc. thesis, ACWERN & Department of Biology, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB.

The goal of this thesis was to examine the relationship between total mercury concentrations and stable isotopic ratios of carbon and nitrogen in a variety of tissues from seven breeding seabirds on Machias Seal Island (MSI), New Brunswick in 2005 and 2006.

Trophic level, as indicated by $\delta^{15}N$, was weakly correlated with total mercury concentration in most tissue-species combinations, suggesting other physiological or ecological factors influence mercury burden. MSI seabirds also had higher mercury levels than other studies of conspecifics. Northern Krill have higher mercury concentrations, and MSI seabirds have higher proportions of krill in their diet as compared to other sites.

Of the six species examined, all were classified as 'income' breeders, using exogenous nutrients from the breeding grounds for egg production. Thus, mercury contamination from eggs collected on MSI represents local mercury acquisition rather than long distance transport.

In a comparison of visual feeding observations to isotope mixing models, the visual study was more useful in estimating seabird diet because of uncertainty in the physiological factors affecting isotopic ratios.

Poulin, Jean-François. 2008. Mechanisms Underlying Brown Creeper (*Certhia Americana*) Sensitivity to Forest Structure in a Managed Landscape. M.Sc Thesis. Université de Moncton, Moncton, New Brunswick

Brown Creeper. Photo by Frode Jacobsen

Many songbird and woodpecker species are sensitive to forest harvesting, even at moderate intensities. The Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*) and the Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) are considered to be the two bird species most sensitive to partial harvesting in North America, making them good focal species. For example, according to a study conducted in northwestern New Brunswick, the probability of presence of the Brown Creeper decreased significantly under a threshold of 66 stems/ha (≥ 30 cm dbh). However, the life history of the Brown Creeper is still poorly known, as well as the mechanisms underlying its sensitivity to forest harvesting. At the stand level, the limiting factors could be the availability of nesting (mainly snags) or foraging (large-diameter trees with textured bark) substrates. Partial harvesting provides the opportunity to manipulate post-harvest value in terms of habitat quality for creepers and ecologically similar species. In our study area, deciduous stands are mainly managed under uneven-aged systems through the single-tree selection harvesting. *A priori*, stand structure after a first entry seems to allow the presence of creepers.

The broader objectives of this study were to compare occurrence thresholds to eventual thresholds associated with nesting habitat requirements, to identify key variables in nesting site selection, and to determine the immediate demographic response of the

creeper to experimental selection harvesting. During the summers of 2005 and 2006, we searched for nests in Black Brook and West Tobique Districts and compared vegetation characteristics between nests and sites unused by the creeper. A discriminant function analysis was used to pinpoint the key variables in selection of habitat for nesting and thresholds in habitat structure were found with the use of logistic regression and receiver-operating characteristic analysis (hereafter ROC). For example, the probability of presence of a nest decreased significantly below 127 stems/ha (≥ 30 cm dbh). This value represents nearly twice the occurrence threshold found for the same region. In the summer of 2007, I studied the short-term demographic response of individuals to experimental single-tree selection harvesting in 10 plots of 25 ha each (5 controls, 5 treated). Nest density and number of territories were lower in treated sites. Furthermore, fledging success of the first nesting attempt was lower in harvested sites. However, when considering the total reproductive success at the end of the breeding season, no statistical difference was detected. Our results suggest that stand structure (large trees and snags) and the presence of mature or old forest patches in a 250-m radius have a significant influence on the probability of presence of a Brown Creeper nest. The thresholds found suggest that occurrence thresholds may underestimate the requirements of sensitive species. The current definition of old hardwood habitat by the New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources calls for the maintenance of a minimum of 60 stems/ha (≥ 30 cm dbh). Thresholds in the probability of presence of a nest suggest that these strategies should include the retention of undisturbed mature forest patches. Creepers respond negatively to selection harvesting one year after harvest and this may be due to a decrease in food abundance (fewer large trees).

Birds of Saskatchewan Project – Photos still needed

Stuart Houston and Alan Smith are hard at work on the text for *Birds of Saskatchewan,* but to complete the project, we need your help. We're looking for black and white sketches and colour photographs to illustrate this two-volume, definitive record of Saskatchewan's birds.

We expect to publish the first volume in the spring of 2010, but to do that, we have to start our search now. We're looking for clear, sharp colour photographs, either slides or digital that show any bird found in this province. Photo credits will be given.

We will also welcome photos of habitat and birders in the field. If you are an artist, we'd welcome black and white sketches as well.

The book will be comprehensive, with historical background, information on bird banding, distribution and accounts of each species found in the province. The project began many years ago when Manley Callin left much of his estate to Nature Saskatchewan for the eventual publication of *Birds of Saskatchewan*. Allan Smith produced the *Atlas of Saskatchewan Birds* in 1996 and has been keeping the information current. Stuart Houston has written or been involved with many of our regional bird books, and has compiled many historical and banding records. Both of them are now devoting much of their free time to this project.

Gary Seib is co-coordinating the collection of illustrative material. You can reach him by e-mail at gseib@sasktel.net or by regular mail at 2924 McCallum Avenue, Regina, Sask. S4S 0R2. Please let him know if you wish to be involved in this project, and what type of material you could supply. He will be circulating lists of the species we're looking for to all who express interest in being part of this project.

The Costa Rican Bird Route: Conservation in Practice

By Susan Hannon

Why should Canadian ornithologists care about habitat protection in the tropics? A quick visit to the Partners in Flight website will tell you why. http://www.partnersinflight.org/pubs/ts/04-Connections/default.HTM. Click on your home province and you will see where the bulk of your Neotropical migrants spend the winter. Provinces from Manitoba east have strong migratory connections with Costa Rica. This country is known worldwide for its natural beauty, high biodiversity (over 850 bird species) and protected areas. However, only one park is larger than 100,000 ha and much of the landscape has been converted to agricultural crops (bananas, pineapple, coffee).

Keel-billed Toucan at feeding station. Photo by Holly Roberson.

In February, I joined 14 professionals from bird conservation and eco-tourism organizations on an expedition to "test drive" the new Costa Rican Bird Route. The founders of the route wanted to improve birding tourism in the region in the hopes that economic opportunities for local landowners and local communities will provide them with an economic incentive for habitat conservation. The project area is part of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, one of the world's longest biological corridors, stretching from southern Mexico to Panama. This Central American region covers 0.5 percent of the world's land surface, contains about 7% of the planet's biological diversity but only 11% of the land area is protected. In the face of burgeoning population growth, increasing deforestation and resource development and extreme poverty in the region, conservation plans must integrate sustainable development and economic incentives for local people to protect nature.

Emblematic of these conservation issues is the Great Green Macaw (*Ara ambigua)*, an internationally endangered species. Fewer than 200 birds and less than 30 breeding pairs remain in Costa Rica, with the population living on less than 10% of its original habitat. The Rainforest Biodiversity Group (www.greatgreenmacaw.org/happenings.htm) is working to protect biological diversity in Costa Rica, using the Great Green Macaw as an umbrella species. Within the San Juan – La Selva Biological Corridor of Costa Rica, they have developed a number of conservation initiatives, including developing nature tourism. One of these initiatives is the Costa Rican Bird Route (http://www.greatgreenmacaw.org/birdrouteinfo.htm).

The Route consists of 13 bird watching locations in areas with the best bird watching opportunities in the Sarapiquí region. The route has portal sites, that provide accommodation and meals, and other more remote sites that are within striking distance of the portal sites. The area supports the last remaining habitat of the Great Green Macaw and offers excellent opportunities to see this rare species. We had several sightings of pairs and visited a nest site. The birding was wonderful (trip list was 884 (7 endemics, 18 globally threatened) species over 4 days) and there were many opportunities to meet local people interested in bird conservation. Check it out if you want a great birding trip that will help to support local conservation work.

Information needed on Birds of Guyana

My name is Christy Garland and I'm a documentary filmmaker living in Toronto. At present I'm developing a documentary about the tradition of birdsong competitions, with a specific focus on Guyana, where seed finches are trapped in the savannahs and rainforests and sold to 'birders' in Georgetown, who compete them every Sunday, betting huge sums of money to determine which bird sings the clearest note structure.

Predictably, the sport has had an impact on the bird populations there, as well as the vast number of caged birds, but it is also a very interesting look at how we relate to birds and their songs. I'm looking for any Canadian ornithologists who may have done research in this area.

I'm also trying to find the contact information of one ornithologist, Balram Singh, who I know is based in Toronto and who has written a book "Birds of Guyana." Would you by any chance happen to know the contact information for Mr. Singh?

Thanks so much if you are able to help.

Regards,

Christy Garland
murmur film
57 Melbourne Avenue, Toronto, ON, M6K 1k6
416-535-9303
christygarland@rogers.com

Poetry

Full Crown

It was the unexpected
appearance of the bright colour
that drew our attention
a flash of scarlet
and a flutter of wings
in the leafless shrubbery
beside the birdbath
what bird is that?!
a fully-erect pompadour
of ruby red
lit by morning sun
until it slicked down
beneath green plumes
our kinglet revealed

Robert Nero

Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Photo by Marie-Anne Hudson, McGill Bird Observatory.

Poetry

It Beckons Me…

From the plaintive yodeling cries of a Common Loon on a northern shield lake,
to the melancholy 2-note *Kloo woo* of a distant Tundra Swan in a small wet depression on the northern coastal plain of Alaska…

From the deep *Hronk-honk-honking* of a Canada Goose pair startled from the water and a nearby Muskrat house perch,
to the guttural, resonating *rattling-croak* emitted from a flock of Sandhill Cranes flying low over the wheatfields of the Canadian prairie…

From the reverberating gobble of an eastern Wild Turkey perched in a large Burr Oak on a hillside in the Loess Hills of western Iowa,
to the distinctive, but seldom heard 4-note call of the Mexican Spotted Owl somewhere in a deep, cool, Douglas Fir-Ponderosa Pine canyon in northern Arizona…

It matters and it beckons, but why?

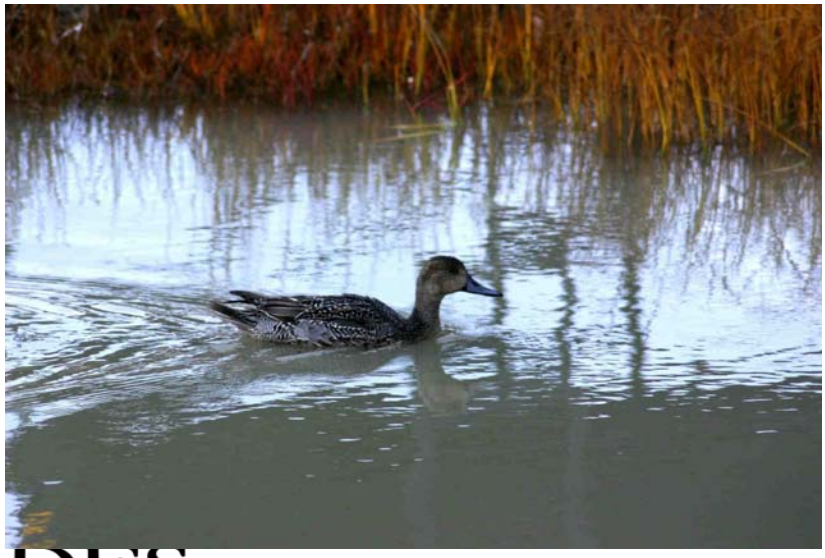
Signals and signs…maybe. An indicator of presence/absence and possibly abundance, a changing of the seasons, or an indicator of change; but much more. Calls, sounds; indicators of something that is wild and everything that is wild, almost primeval. I know not exactly why, but the effect is dramatic and real…

For those that do not recognize, they do not understand…a real shame indeed. For without recognition, there is a lack of understanding, comprehension, and willingness to compromise; a missed opportunity and a lost connection.

Sparking feelings and emotions of excitement and anticipation, from previous encounters and experiences, memories from the past? Hopes of future opportunities, a chance to finally visualize, to study? A chance to finally feel the weight in hand and admire at a distance not typically observed, the beauty and the ability to fly…evolution? A stirring not oft felt, but self-evident in the presence of those from above.

That may partially explain it, but it falls well short of adequately capturing all that it means…to me.

Jeff S. Gleason



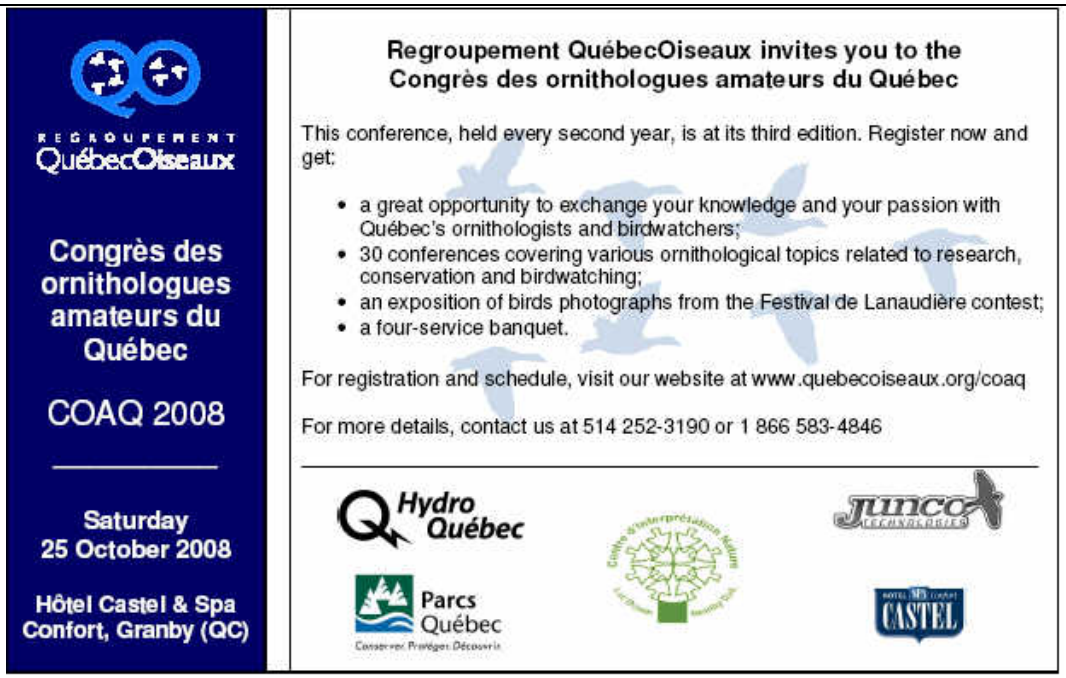
Northern Pintail. Photo by Jeff Gleason.

Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies – What's New

By R. Wayne Campbell, Director, Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies

Since the last issue of *Picoides* the Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies, a non-profit Society in British Columbia, has made some significant changes to their web page that may be on interest to ornithologists. The following articles (PDF) and information are available on-line at www.wildlifebc.org:

- All *Feature Articles* and *Notes* (115) for the first eight issues of the bi-annual journal *Wildlife Afield*;
- Fully updated species accounts for *The Birds of British Columbia* published as *Feature Species* in *Wildlife Afield* (*e.g.*, Turkey Vulture-20 pp., Semipalmated Plover-7 pp., Hermann's Gull-53 pp., Common Nighthawk-53 pp., and Canada Warbler-66 pp,) can be ordered;
- The long-awaited BCFWS article *Making a Wildlife Data Centre Work - History, Objectives, and Solutions for Sharing Data*;
- An updated British Columbia Nest Record Scheme manual with samples of a single visit and colony card;
- A copy of the Wildlife Data Centre brochure;
- The *Table of Contents* for the recent issue of *Wildlife Afield* (Vol 4, No. 2); and
- A power point presentation summarizing use of BCFWS databases in a paper *Avian response to climate change in British Columbia, Canada – towards a general model* presented at the recent conference *Climate Change and Biodiversity in the Americas* in Panama. There is strong scientific evidence for some species (*e.g.*, Trumpeter Swan, Common Loon, Sandhill Crane, Heermann's Gull, Common Nighthawk, Lewis's Woodpecker, Barn Swallow, Swainson's Thrush, and Yellow Warbler) to show significant changes in arrival, departure, and over-wintering dates and northward shifts in breeding populations in British Columbia.
- The British Columbia Nest Record Scheme – 53rd Annual Report – 2007 Nesting Season can be ordered.



Owl Survey at Prescribed Burn in Kootenay National Park

By Larry Halverson

Noelle Summers looks on as Ralph Stewart checks to see the beak really helps his hearing. Photo by Larry Halverson

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Owls are notoriously difficult to count because they are secretive, primarily nocturnal and roost in concealed locations during the day. However, at night owls vocalize to communicate with their mates and delineate territory. A simple survey technique is to imitate or broadcast tape recordings of owl vocalizations to invoke owls to call back.

On April 17, 2008 between 9 and 11 pm Darren Quinn, Fire/Vegetation Specialist, Noelle Summers, Environmental Assessment Office, Ralph Steward, Contractor and Larry Halverson, Naturalist conducted an owl survey at Mitchell Ridge Fire Guard in Kootenay National Park

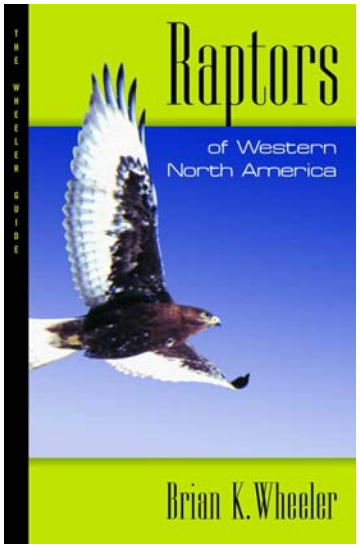
We had excellent weather conditions with no wind, clear sky and bright moonlight. At four different locations within the fire guard a cassette tape of pre-recorded owl calls was played alternating with listening periods. A Northern Saw-wet Owl responded at the first stop and an unidentified bird (possible owl) few past the owler's heads at stop 3.

The information gathered will help Noelle's summer environmental assessment for the Mitchell Ridge prescribed burn in Kootenay National Park and is part of national efforts to monitor nocturnal owls.

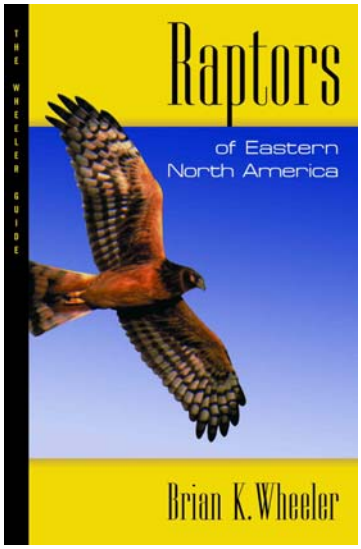
Book Review

Wheeler, Brian K. 2007. Raptors of Western North America. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. 15 cm by 23 cm. Soft Cover. 560 pages. 622 colour plates. 56 maps. $29.95 US. ISBN: 978-0-691-13477-2.

Wheeler, Brian K. 2007. Raptors of Eastern North America. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. 15 cm by 23 cm. Soft Cover. 456 pages. 559 colour plates. 37 maps. $29.95 US. ISBN: 978-0-691-13477-2.



These books by Brian Wheeler are the definitive photographic guides to the 33 diurnal raptor species: vultures, hawks, eagles and falcons of North America. Owl species are excluded, however. The boundary of coverage between the eastern and western editions is the Mississippi River in the continental US and the Ontario-Manitoba border in Canada. The western edition profiles 33 raptor species and the eastern edition profiles 26 raptor species. Seventeen of the 33 profiled western raptor species occur in western Canada and 21 of the 26 profiled eastern raptor species can occur in eastern Canada. In total, 23 diurnal raptor species occur or can occur in Canada and they are Turkey Vulture, Black Vulture, Swallow-tailed Kite, White-tailed Kite, Mississippi Kite, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Merlin, Gyrfalcon, Peregrine Falcon and Prairie Falcon. The other featured raptor species do not occur in Canada.



Readers should carefully review the introduction of these books. This chapter clearly describes the structure and organization of the species accounts in both volumes, which make up 86 to 87% of the books. Each species account begins with the following sections: ages (age cohorts), subspecies, colour morphs, size, species traits, subspecies traits, adult traits, subadult and juvenile traits and abnormal plumages. These sections are further subdivided by body region: head, body, wings and tail. Key external features are bolded in the text. These descriptions are very detailed and would presume the reader's previous knowledge of the species' basic identifying features. The latter half of the species accounts have sections related to habits (behaviour), habitat, feeding and prey, flight, voice, status and distribution, nesting and courtship, conservation (including threats), similar species, abbreviated references and range map(s). Each species account ends with a series of superb colour plates and captions. Information in the colour plate captions is bulleted and highlights the key identifying features in the colour plate.

Unfortunately the colour plates do not directly correspond with descriptions of ages, subspecies and colour morphs in the species accounts. One can easily get lost in the many details in the differences and variation between specific ages, subspecies and colour morphs. What I found useful is to look at the colour plates and read the photo captions and then relate the photos and captions to the text descriptions in the species accounts. The descriptions of behaviour, biology, conservation and threats are excellent with current information and are very readable. The conservation sections were particularly useful in discussing habitat loss, pesticides and efforts to conserve raptor species. Canadian works were frequently cited in the species accounts for both volumes.

The range maps were based on the most up date information available and were based on the detailed research/regional approach used in the *A Field Guide to the Warblers of North America* (Dunn and Garrett 1997). Largely, the range maps are accurate, clear and sharp in both books. I noticed one large omission in the western Merlin range map. The western Merlin range map does not show that Merlins breed and winter in the rural and urban areas in southern Prairies where suitable trees and prey occur.

Before the species accounts in both guides, there is a series of very useful glossaries: general terms; anatomy and feathers; plumage, moult and age; perching flying displays; and perching and flying attitudes. Subdividing the glossary terms into logical sections made it much easier to find the needed definition. For the perching and flying attitudes glossary, there are colour plates directly linked with the term definitions. Definitions are clear and concise and all key ornithological terms are included and I did learn some new avian terms. These glossaries can become your avian 'dictionary'. Following the glossaries, there is a brief section on the photography methods and equipment used to create the colour plates and followed by the same nice poem about raptors. These items are the same in both guides.

Reference sections of these books are an excellent gateway to the raptor literature in North America. There are over 300 publications cited in the western volume and about 240 publications were cited in the eastern volume. These are peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, books, chapters, monographs and government reports. A species account can have anywhere from 10 to over 80 references depending on the species and which volume is used.

In spite of the few drawbacks, I highly recommend these guides to anyone seriously interested in the identification of diurnal raptors of North America.

Literature cited

Dunn, J.L. and K.L. Garrett. 1997. *A Field Guide to the Warblers of North America*. Houghton Mifflin Company. Boston, MA.

Reviewed by Rob Warnock, 3603 White Bay, Regina, SK S4S 7C9, Email: warnockr@accesscomm.ca

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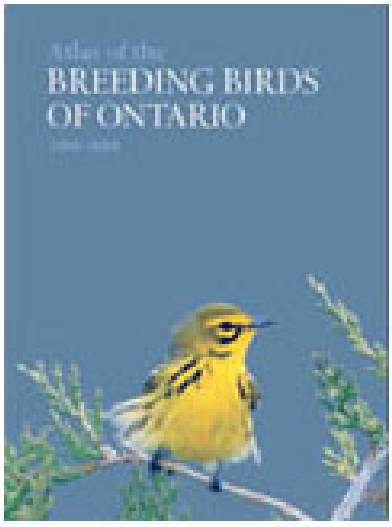
Swainson's Hawk. Photo by Jean-Sébastien Guénette

Book Review

Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario 2001-2005. Michael D. Cadman, Donald A. Sutherland, Gregor G. Beck, Denis Lepage, and Andrew R. Couturier. 2007. Bird Studies Canada, Environment Canada, Ontario Field Ornithologists, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and Ontario Nature. Toronto, ON. Hardcover. 22.5 cm by 30 cm. xxii + 706 pp. $92.50 CAN. ISBN 978-1-896059-15-0.



The publication of a breeding bird atlas is a major event because it contains massive data to be used for years to come. I have developed an interest in the comparison of the breeding bird atlases of different provinces because they seem to reflect the values and particularities of these different regions of the country.

In 1987, the province of Ontario published the first breeding bird atlas in Canada. Not surprisingly, it is also the first province to publish a "second generation" atlas, allowing an assessment of changes in the avifauna over a 20-year period. The large-scale survey effort that led to the publication of this second atlas seems to have sparked interest across the country, atlassers currently being hard at work in British Columbia and the Maritime provinces. Alberta just completed their second bird atlas (see the review in this issue). Although "bird atlassing" has essentially remained the same, the Ontario Atlas team has taken full advantage of technological advances, allowing participants to enter their data online and to visualize preliminary maps of bird distributions. Arguably, this has led to greater efficiency in atlassing through an easier access to knowledge gaps early in the atlassing period.

Although it contains detailed accounts for 286 species and 2 hybrids, the new atlas was published in a relatively compact format. Species accounts are restricted to two pages. Atlassing and data compilation methods are described in the first sections, whereas 20-year changes in species occurrences are extensively documented. The latter section is especially interesting: the reader can quickly determine which species have shown an apparent expansion or contraction in their distribution, with success stories (Eastern Bluebird or Bald Eagle) and dramatic declines in aerial insectivores (half of the 12 species showing the greatest reduction in number of squares occupied). An obvious question, though, is whether these trends are biased by differences in survey effort between atlas periods. Another potential source of bias could be changes in observer skills: at least one account (Brown Creeper) attributes the apparent expansion of a species to this factor.

Though observer skills are hard to measure and impossible to control statistically, the authors have been careful to reduce the potential effects of variations in survey effort. Between 1981-1985 and 2001-2005, the number of atlassers increased from over 1300 to more than 3400 and the number of squares covered went from 3649 to 4964. To account for this, only squares with at least 10 hours of atlassing in each period were included in comparisons, and the authors used a "matched-effort data set" to ensure that species detectability would be factored in before making comparisons.

The two-page species accounts emphasize the presentation of data, with two or three maps per species, and a histogram showing shifts in probability of observation for each of the five regions and Ontario as a whole. Maps illustrate the detailed distribution across 10 x 10 km squares in northern Ontario where coverage was deemed adequate (at least 20 hours of effort) and in southern Ontario. A smaller inset map shows species status for 100 x 100 km covering the entire province. Dots of different colours efficiently highlight squares whose status has changed between the first and second atlas. Finally, for 130 species that can be surveyed using point counts, relative abundance maps were produced (mainly for southern Ontario) using an interpolation method (ordinary kriging).

Volunteers were invited to conduct 5-min point counts at 25 pre-determined locations across each square. 9 appendices providing details on data analyses, a glossary, detailed statistics, etc. complete the atlas.

The new breeding bird atlas of Ontario represents a monumental contribution to our knowledge of the status of Ontario birds and it provides data to investigate critical research questions, such as the extent to which avifaunal changes reflect known changes in climate, environmental pollution, or land use changes. The introductory chapters include maps or charts providing basic information on climate, forest cover, land use, and human population density. Researchers will have to obtain data on changes in these various aspects to explore factors underlying the avifaunal changes documented in the atlas. For example, I was surprised to find out that maps of land use change are not currently available over the 1980-2005 period, even for southern Ontario (OMNR, personal communication).

Because they are written by a large number of different contributors, species accounts vary in their quality and originality. However, those I read were very informative and showed some nuance when interpreting 20-year changes in distribution, to account for sampling variability between atlases. Instead of presenting a review of published literature, the section on breeding biology mainly summarizes information collected by participants. However, the improvement in knowledge on breeding biology generally seemed modest, perhaps because anecdotal information from participants is challenging to compile. Accounts of rare or uncommon species, however, usually provide detailed information on timing of nesting, microhabitat used, best dates for confirmation of breeding, etc. The publication of pictures of nests, presumably submitted by atlas participants, partly fulfills the goal of better documenting breeding biology.

In a nutshell, the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario is a must-read for all ornithologists, amateur and professional alike, who have an interest in the avifauna of eastern North America. It sets a high standard for its followers. It is not yet available in French, but possibilities for translation are being discussed. Hopefully, the Ministry of Canadian Heritage will help cover translation costs so that this information is accessible to as many Canadians as possible.

Reviewed by Marc-André Villard, titulaire
Chaire de recherche du Canada en conservation des paysages
Département de biologie, Université de Moncton, Moncton, NB E1A 3E9, Canada

White-throated Sparrow. Photo by David Bradley

Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario 2001-2005. Michael D. Cadman, Donald A. Sutherland, Gregor G. Beck, Denis Lepage et Andrew R. Couturier. 2007. Études d'oiseaux Canada, Environnement Canada, Ontario Field Ornithologists, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources et Ontario Nature. Toronto, xxii + 706 pp. 92,50$ ISBN 978-1-896059-15-0.

La publication d'un atlas des oiseaux nicheurs est un événement majeur parce que ce type d'ouvrage contient une quantité énorme de données qui sont utilisées pendant des années afin de mieux comprendre les facteurs influençant la répartition et l'abondance de l'avifaune. Pour ma part, j'ai développé un intérêt pour la comparaison des atlas des différentes provinces car ils semblent refléter les valeurs et les particularités de chacune des régions du Canada.

En 1987, l'Ontario publiait le premier atlas des oiseaux nicheurs au pays. Sans surprise, c'est aussi la première province à publier un atlas de "deuxième génération", permettant d'évaluer les changements dans l'avifaune survenus au cours des 20 dernières années. L'effort majeur d'échantillonnage qui a mené à la publication de ce second atlas semble avoir suscité un grand intérêt à travers le pays puisque les observateurs ont été mis à contribution en Colombie-Britannique et dans les provinces Maritimes afin de produire de nouveaux atlas. Bien que le protocole sur le terrain demeure essentiellement inchangé par rapport aux atlas de première génération, l'équipe de coordination du projet d'atlas de l'Ontario a profité des développements technologiques afin de permettre aux participants d'entrer leurs données en ligne et de visualiser des cartes préliminaires pour chacune des espèces. Présumément, ceci a permis de couvrir plus efficacement le territoire en pointant clairement les lacunes très tôt dans la période d'atlas.

Bien qu'il contienne des descriptions détaillées du statut de 286 espèces et de 2 hybrides, le nouvel atlas est publié dans un format relativement compact. Les descriptions d'espèces sont restreintes à deux pages. La méthodologie sur le terrain et la procédure de compilation des données sont décrites dans les premières sections, tandis que les changements survenus durant la période de 20 ans séparant les deux périodes d'atlas sont présentés en détail. Cette dernière section est particulièrement intéressante : le lecteur peut déterminer rapidement quelles sont les espèces qui ont montré une expansion rapide ou une contraction de leur répartition. Certaines espèces ont nettement amélioré leur sort (ex. : Merlebleu de l'Est, Pyguargue à tête blanche) tandis que les insectivores aériens ont chuté de façon spectaculaire: à eux seuls, ils comptent pour la moitié des 12 espèces montrant la plus grande réduction dans le nombre de carrés d'atlas occupés entre les deux périodes. Une question demeure: ces changements reflètent-ils en partie des biais reliés au plus grand effort d'échantillonnage durant la deuxième période d'atlas? Une autre source potentielle de biais pourrait provenir de l'amélioration générale des connaissances des observateurs: la description d'au moins une espèce (Grimpereau brun) soulève cette possibilité.

Bien que les talents des observateurs soient très difficiles à quantifier et impossibles à contrôler statistiquement, les auteurs ont pris soin de réduire les effets potentiels des variations dans l'effort d'échantillonnage. Entre 1981-1985 et 2001-2005, le nombre d'observateurs est passé de plus de 1300 à plus de 3400 et le nombre de carrés échantillonnés est passé de 3649 à 4964. Afin de tenir compte de ces changements, seuls les carrés échantillonnés pendant au moins 10 heures durant chaque période ont été inclus dans les comparaisons. De plus, les auteurs ont utilisé une autre procédure faisant en sorte que les données comparées reflétaient un effort d'échantillonnage similaire.

Les descriptions d'espèces mettent l'accent sur la présentation des données, avec deux ou trois cartes par espèce et un histogramme montrant les changements dans la probabilité d'observation dans chacune des cinq régions, ainsi que pour l'Ontario dans son ensemble. Les cartes illustrent la répartition détaillée des espèces dans les carrés de 10 x 10 km du nord de l'Ontario où la couverture était considérée adéquate (au moins 20 heures d'effort) ainsi que dans tout le sud de l'Ontario. Une carte plus petite illustre le statut des espèces dans des carrés de 100 x 100 km couvrant la province entière. Des points de différentes couleurs illustrent efficacement les carrés où le statut de l'espèce a changé entre le premier et le deuxième atlas. Enfin, pour les 130 espèces qui peuvent être

échantillonnées efficacement par stations d'écoute, des cartes d'abondance relative ont été produites (principalement pour le sud de l'Ontario) en utilisant une méthode d'interpolation (krigeage ordinaire). Les bénévoles ont été invités à effectuer un point d'écoute de 5 minutes à 25 sites pré-déterminés dans chaque carré. L'atlas est complété par 9 annexes présentant des détails sur l'analyse des données, un glossaire, des statistiques détaillées, etc.

Le nouvel atlas des oiseaux nicheurs de l'Ontario représente une contribution majeure à nos connaissances sur le statut des oiseaux de l'Ontario et il procure des données afin de répondre à d'importantes questions qui préoccupent les chercheurs, telles que le degré de correspondance entre les changements de l'avifaune et les modifications connues du climat, de la pollution environnementale ou de l'utilisation du sol. Les chapitres d'introduction incluent des cartes ou graphiques présentant des informations de base sur le climat, le couvert forestier, l'utilisation du sol et la densité de la population humaine. Les chercheurs devront obtenir des données sur les changements de ces divers paramètres du territoire afin d'explorer les facteurs sous-jacents aux changements de l'avifaune présentés dans l'atlas. Par exemple, j'ai été surpris de constater que des données sur les changements dans l'utilisation du paysage durant la période s'étendant de 1980 à 2005 ne sont pas disponibles actuellement, même pour le sud de l'Ontario (OMNR, communication personnelle).

Parce qu'ils ont été rédigés par un grand nombre de personnes différentes, les descriptions d'espèces varient dans leur qualité et leur originalité. Toutefois, celles que j'ai lues étaient très informatives et elles montraient des nuances dans l'interprétation des changements survenus durant la période de 20 ans afin de tenir compte de la variabilité de l'échantillonnage entre les deux atlas. Plutôt que de présenter une revue de la littérature, la section sur la biologie de la reproduction résume l'information récoltée par les participants. Cependant, l'amélioration de nos connaissances sur la biologie de la reproduction m'a semblé modeste, peut-être parce que l'information anecdotique provenant des participants est difficile à compiler. Toutefois, les descriptions d'espèces rares ou peu communes fournissent des informations détaillées sur la phénologie de la nidification, les microhabitats utilisés, les meilleures périodes pour la confirmation de la nidification, etc. La publication de photos de nids, probablement soumises par les participants de l'atlas, rencontre partiellement l'objectif de documentation de la biologie de la reproduction.

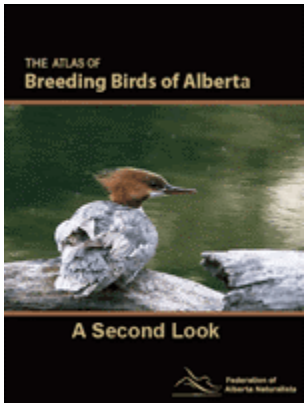
Bref, l'Atlas des oiseaux nicheurs de l'Ontario est une source d'information incontournable pour tous les ornithologues, amateurs ou professionnels, qui s'intéressent à l'avifaune de l'est de l'Amérique du Nord. Il établit un standard très élevé pour ses successeurs. L'Atlas n'est pas encore disponible en français, mais la possibilité de traduction est actuellement discutée. Espérons que le ministère du Patrimoine canadien contribuera à couvrir les frais de traduction afin que cette ressource unique soit accessible au plus grand nombre possible de lecteurs.

Bank Swallow.
Photo by Jean-Sébastien Guénette

Book Rreview

The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Alberta: A Second Look

Federation of Alberta Naturalists. 2007. Federation of Alberta Naturalists, Edmonton, AB. viii+626 pages. Hard cover. 22 cm by 28 cm. $65.00 CAN. ISBN: 978-0-9696134-9-7.



A breeding bird atlas is a huge project requiring hundreds of people. The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Alberta is no exception as shown by the huge acknowledgements section with hundreds of people and numerous organizations thanked for their contribution. The Atlas as the end product from this massive project is spectacular.

The book begins with a very useful chapter on the 6 natural regions of Alberta: Rocky Mountain, Canadian Shield, Foothills, Boreal Forest, Parkland and Grassland. These natural regions are based on climate and typical vegetation types.

The next chapter is a brief discussion of changing landscapes in Alberta. Particular strengths of this section are the information on the expansion of oil and gas and roads, wetland loss in the province and map showing habitat change in the Foothills Natural Region. More information about forest fragmentation, seismic line impacts, grassland loss and expansion of urban sprawl in Alberta would have been very useful and strengthened this chapter considerably.

There is a detailed and helpful methods section describing survey protocols and coverage, data sources and limitations, changes in survey protocols and coverage since the first Atlas of Breeding Birds of Alberta. Description of data limitations and biases is particularly useful. Use of reporting rates, reporting rate variances and an occurrence index are innovative and useful proxies for abundance. The statistical section of this chapter is well written but very technical and assumes that readers have prior knowledge about statistics. The layperson will have trouble fully understanding the statistical approach used to assess changes in abundance and distribution of birds. It does take a slow and careful read to fully understand the statistical approach presented here. However, the statistical approach employed is sound and valid given the data limitations.

There is a useful short summary results chapter before the species accounts. In this chapter, there are statistics on atlas effort by year and by month, top 10 grid squares with highest overall bird and breeding bird diversity, top 10 reported species in terms of number grid squares reported and there is a species diversity map. There are tabular listing of species with expanding, contracting or unchanged distributions and increasing, decreasing, mixed or unchanged relative abundance. The chapter ends with the Alberta breeding bird list organized by natural bird groups with each species given qualifiers describing observed distribution and relative abundance change between the two atlases.

Before a reader goes through the species accounts for the first time, he or she should review the excellent how to use the book section, which explains clearly each textual and visual feature in each species account. There are 270 breeding bird species accounts, comprising 86% of the book. Each species account is spread over two adjoining pages. These species accounts are jam-packed with textual and visual information. On left side page of each species account, there is an outstanding photo of an adult of a species, a table about nesting (clutch size, number of incubation days, days until fledgling and nest height), brief description of habitat preferences and species status in Alberta and Canada, any change in relative abundance and distribution and their possible causes. There are also on the left side page, two graphs describing the reporting rates of the species by month and natural region and a map of Alberta describing the spatial reporting rate for the species. At the top of the right side page of each species account, there are pictorial symbols summarizing habitat, nest type, nest location and diet. Also on the right hand side page, an up to date breeding range map and

observed distribution maps from the first atlas and this atlas. On the observed distribution maps, grid squares are coded as unsurveyed, observed, possible breeding, probable breeding and confirmed breeding. Readers can easily see any changes in spatial distribution of each breeding bird species.

The references used in this volume are primarily selected *Birds of North America* species accounts and references for the methods section of book. It is a particularly good place to start looking for more information about bird survey methods, bird atlases and statistics.

There is a very useful provincial bird list with qualifiers related to residency and abundance with species organized by order/family. A web link to the most update Alberta species list is provided.

Unfortunately, the coloured edges at the top and bottom of the pages could not be used to find material quickly in this Atlas. However, information can be easily found through the detailed table of contents at the beginning of the book or the index in the back. Bird species are listed first by order then family in the table of contents. The index is alphabetical with both common and scientific names of breeding birds.

This book is well written as a whole and all figures, photos and maps are clear and sharp. I highly recommend this book to both professional ornithologists and amateur birders interested in the birds of Alberta. Federation of Alberta Naturalists staff and the hundreds of volunteers should be congratulated for creating a tremendous, stunningly beautiful and valuable resource for any ornithological library.

Reviewed by Rob Warnock, 3603 White Bay, Regina, SK S4S 7C9, Email: warnockr@accesscomm.ca

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Poetry

Fledgling Slapstick

Were it not for a hint of impossible blue
gleaming from wings, these fledglings
more owl than Eastern Bluebird chase
a hapless Starling, caterpillar in beak
at the roof ridge snack bar,
mistaken resting place
where hungry owlet mimes pursue

No party to servility, Starling tugs
his writhing meal from another mouth
leaves four brown-spotted, fluffy fledglings
perplexed bluebirds with white eye rings
to contemplate in stodgy countenance
the arrival and disappearance
of their fractious, surly butler.

S. A. McCormick

Published in The Saving Bannister (2003)

European Starling. Photo by Frode Jacobsen

Birds can tell us important things about our environment. Their presence and abundance provide an early warning of the state of ecosystems.

Over 300 species of birds breed each year in British Columbia - more than any other province in Canada. Sixty-five species breed nowhere else in Canada and for several other species, British Columbia holds the majority of the world population. For these reasons, British Columbia plays a pivotal role in Canada's bird conservation efforts.

The British Columbia Breeding Bird Atlas web site www.birdatlas.bc.ca was recently launched and birders are now able to register. Anyone can participate in the Atlas. All you need is a pair of binoculars and some bird watching experience or the desire to learn about birds. You need to be able to identify birds correctly but you do not need to be expert - all records are welcome. All data are entered on-line and the results will appear on the atlas web site.

The Atlas Coordination Office hopes that thousands of birders will join over the course of the seven-year project. Start to plan your summer in BC by joining in the fun!

Photo by Birgit Freybe Bateman

I have had a life long interest in birds. They have brought joy to an increasing number of people around the world but especially in Canada. In recent years I have noticed an alarming decline in many species I once considered a common part of my world. Bird populations are of course the proverbial canary in the coal mine. The health of their populations relates to the health of humans. The Breeding Bird Atlas puts scientific muscle behind vague impressions. It also stimulates public awareness and even that sense of joy I had in my youth. — ***Robert Bateman**, Patron of the Atlas*

25th International Ornithological Congress 2010
22-28 August 2010
Campos do Jordão, Brazil

Call for symposia proposals

The 25th International Ornithological Congress will be held in Campos do Jordão, Brazil, 22-28 August 2010. The Scientific Program Committee has been formed and a web page is in place (http://www.i-o-c.org or http://www.ib.usp.br/25ioc). We hope that you will circle these dates on your calendar and plan to attend!

The Scientific Program Committee (SPC) invites you to submit symposium proposals for the next IOC. Symposia are aimed at the general ornithologist and provide up-to-date coverage of current ornithological research. Similar to the last IOC meeting, each symposium will include two keynote addresses that should summarize the global progress of ornithological science in the field over the last four years and address priorities for future research. Other speakers will be chosen by the conveners, with guidance from the SPC, and will include persons who have submitted abstracts identifying the particular symposium they would like to join. This is intended to increase global participation and allow new researchers to contribute to symposia. The call for contributed papers (which will come in early 2009) will include a box that contributors can check if they wish to be considered for specific symposia.

Each symposium should have 2 co-organizers. Since this is an international congress, the SPC will give preference in choosing symposium topics to symposia with co-conveners from different continents, and, failing this, from different countries. If it is not possible to meet these criteria, a brief explanation should be given under 'Justification of symposium' on the application form. Conveners may choose themselves as keynote speakers. Conveners can organize only one symposium. Also note that symposium speakers cannot give another oral presentation during the congress, but can apply to organize a round table discussion or present a poster.

Proposals for symposia must be received on or before 1 June 2008. Please provide the information listed below and send it as an email attachment to the chair of the SPC, Carol M. Vleck, at ioc2010@iastate.edu.

If you cannot submit your proposal by email, please mail it directly to the program chair:
Carol M. Vleck, Department of Ecology, Evolution and Organismal Biology, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011, USA.

Please provide a title of the symposium, names, institution or affiliation, addresses, phone, fax, email addresses of both organizer, first and second keynote speakers, and describe (400 words maximum) goals, objectives, importance of the symposium and outline briefly what each keynote speaker will cover, giving a preliminary title if possible. Justify (250 words maximum) why this symposium is important and timely and why it will be of interest to IOC congress participants. If you cannot find a co-convener from another continent or country, explain why. The justification will not appear in the program or on the web site.

All proposals will be reviewed by the SPC in August 2008 and symposium organizers will be notified as to whether their proposal has been accepted shortly thereafter. The committee may recommend combining two symposia or substituting speakers.

The IOC is not able to provide any financial assistance to symposium organizers or participants. Organizers must make this clear to participants.

We ask that symposium organizers have a firm commitment from keynote speakers to attend the meeting before listing them in their proposal. Once a proposal has been accepted and the speakers finalized, we will request abstracts for each of the keynote talks. Summaries of accepted symposia will be posted on the IOC website. We also ask that symposium conveners inform speakers that the conference proceedings will be published, so that speakers must be willing to submit a paper on their presentation.

If you need more information, please consult the 25th IOC web site http://www.i-o-c.org or http://www.ib.usp.br/25ioc or contact the Secretary General for the Congress by e-mail at ioc2010@ib.usp.br or by mail at: Cristina Miyaki/IOC 2010, Departamento de Genética e Biologia Evolutiva, Instituto de Biociências, Universidade de São Paulo, Rua do Matão 277, São Paulo, SP, 05508-090, Brazil.

Carol Vleck
2010 IOC Scientific Program Committee Chair
http://www.ib.usp.br/25ioc
Dept of Ecology, Evolution & Organismal Biology
253 Bessey Hall
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011 USA

The 32nd ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WATERBIRD SOCIETY will be held 5-8 November 2008 on South Padre Island, Texas.

This is the first time that the meeting has been held in the continental U.S. or Canada in the last three years and we are expecting a large turnout of long-time members and students. Three full days of scientific sessions are planned. Three symposia have been confirmed: “Shorebirds” led by Erica Nol (enol@trentu.ca), “The Texas-Mexican Ornithological Connection” led by Clay Green (claygreen@txstate.edu) and “Ecology and Conservation of the Reddish Egret” led by Stefani Melvin (Stefani_Melvin@fws.gov). We are requesting additional suggestions (and leaders) for other Symposia at this time. Please send suggestions to the Chair of the Scientific Program (Chip.Weseloh@ec.gc.ca). We are also considering special sessions for both poster and oral presentations by students. Other suggestions for making our meeting especially attractive for students are welcome.

An array of exciting field trips is planned, as South Texas is a Mecca for bird watching. Padre Island National Seashore, an 80-mile barrier beach, and Laguna Madre, its protected hypersaline lagoon, are immediately available and abound with wintering shorebirds, waterfowl, gulls, terns, herons and southern residents, such as Reddish Egret and Black-bellied Whistling Duck. Also, immediately to the west is the Rio Grande River and Valley. The nearby Laguna Atascosa and Santa Ana Wildlife Refuges are the only subtropical refuges in the United States and have such specialties as Green Jay, Plain Chachalaca, Great Kiskadee and others. There will be both pre- and post- meeting field trip opportunities to these areas, so plan on a couple extra days in the area.

Please note that registration is now open for the Third North American Sea Duck Conference, to be held in Québec City, Canada, on 10-14 November 2008. Please consider that early registration and abstract submission end on 1 July 2008 (originally 13 June). All information on the conference, including registration and call for papers, is available on the web site: http://www.seaduckconference2008.org

The conference will be hosted by Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service and Science & Technology, Québec Region) and the non-profit organization Regroupement QuebecOiseaux, in partnership with several other agencies. Please circulate this information to anyone that may be interested in attending the conference.

Le congrès Third North American Sea Duck Conference se tiendra à Québec du 10 au 14 novembre 2008. Prière de noter que les participants ont jusqu'au 1er juillet (auparavant fixé au 13 juin) pour profiter d'un coût d'inscription réduit (early bird) ou pour soumettre un résumé pour une présentation orale ou une affiche. Les gens qui souhaitent participer au congrès peuvent maintenant s'inscrire par le biais du site Internet suivant: http://www.seaduckconference2008.org

Ce congrès est organisé par Environnement Canada (Service canadien de la faune et Sciences & Technologie) et le Regroupement QuébecOiseaux, en collaboration avec de nombreux autres partenaires. Prière de transmettre l'information aux personnes intéressées à participer.

For additional information, please use the following contacts: Pour plus d'informations:

Michel Robert (Chair of the Organizing committee)
michel.robert@ec.gc.ca Phone: 418-649-8071

Jean-Pierre L. Savard (Chair of the Scientific committee)
jean-pierre.savard@ec.gc.ca Phone: 418-648-3500

Conference Registration Jean-Sébastien Guénette Regroupement QuébecOiseaux 4545 avenue Pierre-De Coubertin P.O. Box 1000, succ. M Montréal, QC (Canada) H1V 3R2

Toll free/sans frais: 1-866-583-4846 Phone: (514) 252-3190 info@quebecoiseaux.org

Society of Canadian Ornithologists
Société des ornithologistes du Canada

RENEWAL / APPLICATION FORM

This form is provided for you to use when renewing, and to post or forward to others who might be interested in joining. Please feel free to renew or join for more than one year if desired: this will cut down on administration and the need to send you reminders every year. Donations are also gratefully accepted (the SCO is a registered non–profit society and issues tax receipts). For more on the SCO, please visit our website http://www.sco-soc.ca/.

Renewal? _____ New member? _____

Name _____

Address_____Postal code _____

Tel.:_____Fax:_____E-mail _____

Affiliation_____

Membership Category (in Canadian Dollars)

Student:	_____ years @ $10.00 per year	Total= _____
Regular:	_____ years @ $25.00 per year	Total= _____
Sustaining:	_____ years @ $50.00 per year	Total= _____
Outside Canada:	_____ years @ $35.00 per year	Total= _____
Life member:	once @ $500.00	Total= _____

Donation :	Jamie Smith Memorial Mentoring Award in Ornithology	_____
	Doris Huestis Speirs Award	_____
	Student Research Awards:	
	- Taverner Awards	_____
	- Fred Cooke Award	_____

All donors of $10.00 or more will receive a receipt for tax purposes; sustaining members will receive a $25.00 receipt for tax purposes for each year of sustaining membership, and life members will receive a $250.00 receipt. The SCO is a registered non–profit society and issues tax receipts.

Please make cheques payable to **The Society of Canadian Ornithologists.**

Mail to:

Thérèse Beaudet
SCO Membership Secretary
128, Chemin des Lièges
St-Jean de l'Île d'Orléans (QC)
Canada G0A 3W0

beaudet.lamothe@sympatico.ca

Society of Canadian Ornithologists
Société des ornithologistes du Canada

RENOUVELLEMENT / ADHÉSION

Ce formulaire peut être utilisé lors d'un renouvellement ou pour adhérer à la SOC. N'hésitez pas à le transmettre à d'autres ou à l'afficher pour assurer une plus grande diffusion et de nouvelles adhésions. Les renouvellements et les adhésions pour plus d'une année sont privilégiés; cela réduit les frais d'administration et l'envoi de rappels annuels. Les dons sont acceptés (la SOC a le statut d'organisation à but non lucratif et peut émettre des reçus pour fins d'impôt). Pour en savoir plus sur la SOC, vous pouvez visiter le site http://www.sco-soc.ca/.

Nom_____

Renouvellement? _____ Nouveau membre? _____

Adresse_____Code postal _____

Tel.:_____Fax:_____Courriel _____

Affiliation :_____

Catégorie de membres (en dollars canadiens)

Etudiant:	_____ ans @ $10.00 par an	Total= _____
Régulier:	_____ ans @ $25.00 par an	Total= _____
De soutien:	_____ ans @ $50.00 par an	Total= _____
À l'extérieur du Canada:	_____ ans @ $35.00 par an	Total= _____
Membre à vie:	un paiement de $500.00	Total= _____

Dons : Prix commémoratif Jamie Smith de tutorat en ornithologie _____
Prix Doris Huestis Speirs _____
Bourses pour étudiants :
- Bourses Taverner _____
- Bourse Fred Cooke _____

Toutes les personnes qui font un don de $10.00 et plus recevront un reçu pour fins d'impôt; les membres de soutien en recevront un de $25.00 par année de participation, et les membres à vie recevront un seul reçu de $250.00. La SOC a le statut d'organisation à but non lucratif et émet des reçus pour fins d'impôt.

S.V.P. Faire les chèques au nom de la ***Société des Ornithologistes du Canada****.*

Faire parvenir à :

Thérèse Beaudet
Secrétaire aux membres de la SOC
128, Chemin des Lièges
St-Jean de l'Île d'Orléans (QC)
Canada G0A 3W0

beaudet.lamothe@sympatico.ca

Society of Canadian Ornithologists/
Société des Ornithologistes du Canada

Officers for 2007/2008:

President: Dr. Susan Hannon, Voice: 780-492-7544; Fax: 780-492-9234; Email: sue.hannon@ualberta.ca

Vice-President/President-elect: Dr. David Bird, Voice: 514-398-7760; Fax: 514-398-7990; Email: david.bird@mcgill.ca

Membership Secretary: Thérèse Beaudet, Voice: 418-829-0379; Fax: 418-829-0584; Email: beaudet.lamothe@sympatico.ca

Recording Secretary: Dr. Andrea Pomeroy, Voice: 604-436 3014; Cell: 778-229 3643; Email: apomeroy@jacqueswhitford.com

Treasurer: Pierre Lamothe, Voice: 418-829-0379; Fax: 418-829-0584; Email: beaudet.lamothe@sympatico.ca

Editor of *Picoides*: Rob Warnock, Voice: 306-586-2492; Email: warnockr@accesscomm.ca TO ADVERTISE IN *PICOIDES* PLEASE SEND OR WRITE TO EDITOR.

(Voting) Members of Council: *second term

*Dr. Ken Otter, Email: otterk@unbc.ca

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*Dr. Lesley Evans Ogden, Email: lesleyje@interchange.ubc.ca

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Dr. Charles Francis, Past President (05-06), Voice: 613-998-0332; Fax: 613-998-0458; Email: charles.francis@ec.gc.ca

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Kathy Martin (2000-2002), Jean-Pierre Savard (2002-2004), Charles Francis (2004-2006)

Standing Committees and Work Groups

See Page 37 for contact information for those with # beside name.

Doris Huestis Speirs Award Committee (annual award for excellence in Canadian Ornithology): Marty Leonard, chair, E-mail: mleonard@dal.ca, Bob Clark, E-mail: bob.clark@ec.gc.ca, Mark Brigham E-mail: mark.brigham@uregina.ca, Greg Robertson, E-mail: greg.robertson@ec.gc.ca

Research Awards Committee (mandate: annual selection of research candidates, fall call for applications, selection and announcement by April of following year, members appointed and rotated) Five awards: James L. Baillie ($1,000), Taverner (2 awards $1,000 each) Fred Cooke Travel Award. Junco Technologies Award ($1,000), Russ Dawson (chair), E-mail: dawsonr@unbc.ca, Liana Zanette Email: lzanette@uwo.ca, Ian Warkentin, #, Joel Béty, E-mail: jbety@birdlover.com

Meetings Committee: Charles Francis #, Sue Hannon #

Picoides Committee: Rob Warnock (chair) #, Joe Nocera (Website) #, Jean-Pierre Savard, E-mail: pierre.savard@ec.gc.ca; Dorothy Diamond, 247 English Settlement Road, Stanley, NB E6B 2E9, Voice: 506-367-3181, E-mail: doroth@nbnet.nb.ca; Andrea Pomeroy, #

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Finance and Investment Committee: Pierre Lamothe #

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Ornithological Council Representatives Lesley Evans Ogden #, Liana Zanette Email: lzanette@uwo.ca

North American Banding Council Representative Wendy Easton, Voice: 604-940-4673; Fax: 604-946-7022; Email: wendy.easton@ec.gc.ca

Findings on the SCO/SOC website

WEBSITE: www.sco-soc.ca/index.html
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Notes about Annual Meetings
SCO/SOC Award information
Officers of SCO/SOC
Picoides Submission Guidelines
For Jobs and to post job openings see our link to the Ornithological Newsletter:
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