



Ausable Bird Observatory

FALL 2006 OPERATIONAL REPORT



Black-throated Green Warbler. Photo: Peter Fearon

NOVEMBER 2006

BY PETER FEARON

AUSABLE BIRD OBSERVATORY
BOX 1035 GRAND BEND
ONTARIO
N0M 1T0

www.ausablebirdobservatory.org
info@ausablebirdobservatory.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Migration Monitoring Summary	4
Volunteer Contributions	7
<i>An Avian Adventure</i> – Educational Programs	7
Summary	8
Appendix 1 – Table 4: Species Totals Fall 2006	11



First Snow of the fall, Riverside Trail. Photo: Peter Fearon

INTRODUCTION

Pinery is a 6000 acre natural environment class Provincial Park located on the shoreline of Lake Huron. The park is comprised of three types of ecosystem: Oak Savanna, Coastal Freshwater Dunes and Wetlands (spring-fed river channel). Due to the uniqueness of these three ecosystems Pinery is home to over 800 species of plants, over 30 species of fish and has documented over 350 bird species within the park boundaries.

Following the success of Spring 2006 migration monitoring efforts, during which over 2800 birds of 94 species were banded, the first ever fall operation was put into place operating on Riverside Trail. Due to volunteer constraints, the station could only be operated at weekends until 16th September, when long-term volunteer, Peter Fearon, was able to man the station on a day-to-day basis.

Formerly Pinery Bird Banding Station (PBBS), the Ausable Bird Observatory has now established with a board of directors and a charitable status application pending. As the Ausable Bird Observatory, we have been accepted into the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network as a provisional member, with full member status anticipated by 2008. As a result of our reviewed status, our long-term goals have been adapted:

1. To study the avian diversity of the Port Franks Important Bird Area (PF IBA) and its importance as a corridor for migrating birds.
2. To establish a long-term migration monitoring station, in accordance to CMMN protocol, on Riverside Trail in Pinery Provincial Park.
3. To provide outreach educational programs to school, youth and naturalist groups on the importance and implication of bird banding as a research technique.
4. To achieve full member status in the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network by 2008.

FALL MIGRATION SUMMARY

The fall campaign began on 12th August, with weekend banding being operated by Kevin Grundy and Melody Cairns until September 16th. Nets were set up, in accordance to the protocol of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network, in the same locations as spring 2006.

The first weekend of the fall banding turned up some interesting birds down on Riverside including a pair of Solitary Sandpipers being the first recorded for ABO. The third Hooded Warbler of 2006 turned up on 12th August, an adult male, providing evidence of local breeding.

The next weekend showed an increase in warbler species, with ABO's first Bay-breasted and Blackburnian Warblers on the 19th, an Eastern Kingbird was also caught. Red-eyed and Philadelphia Vireos made up the majority of the numbers, along with Tennessee, Nashville and Magnolia Warblers.

The beginning of September brought a bigger movement of Philadelphia and Red-eyed Vireos, highs of 51 and 25 respectively being recorded on the 1st. The first Blackpoll Warbler was banded on the 1st, a Black-billed Cuckoo on the 2nd and a Belted Kingfisher on the 3rd – all new species for ABO.

The second weekend of September saw the early White-throated Sparrows starting to move through, the first Ruby-crowned Kinglets of the fall were also banded. A quiet weekend, the main species banded were Magnolia, Nashville and Chestnut-sided Warblers, good numbers of Swainson's Thrushes were also present.

TABLE 1: Top ten species banded divided by age ratios.

Species	Total	% Hatch Year	% After Hatch Year
White-throated Sparrow	772	54.5	45.5
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	404	78.0	22.0
Slate-colored Junco	312	48.1	51.9
Golden-crowned Kinglet	174	82.2	17.8
Red-eyed Vireo	145	79.3	20.7
Magnolia Warbler	139	58.3	41.7
Swamp Sparrow	107	71.0	29.0
American Goldfinch	95	70.5	29.5
Nashville Warbler	89	49.4	50.6
Hermit Thrush	86	84.9	15.1

After the third weekend of September, full time banding was able to start, with the arrival of Peter Fearon from Portugal and after a quiet few initial days that included one of three Northern Parulas, a Cape May Warbler and a Fox Sparrow on the 19th. The peak of the White-throated Sparrows hit on the 21st and large numbers were banded daily until the 3rd of October. The first Hermit Thrushes started to be caught on the 21st along with the first Orange-crowned Warblers. A Bay-breasted, three Western Palm and a Blackpoll Warbler were banded through late September and early October, caught amongst Magnolia, Myrtle and Nashville Warblers.

October brought some very wet and windy weather and subsequently there was a total of sixteen days where it was impossible to operate Riverside. The decision not to open the nets on these days was based on the risk to the safety of the birds. On some days it was necessary to close the nets early, or open the nets later, depending on precipitation events.

The last Red-eyed Vireo was recorded on the 6th and the last Philadelphia on the 8th, two late Swainson's Thrushes we also banded on the 9th. A peak of 12 Hermit Thrushes on the 8th was part of a steady passage that lasted through October. In between the showers, there was a peak of seven Orange-crowned Warblers on the 10th, with the last being banded at Riverside on the 26th.



After Hatch-year Blue-headed Vireo. Photo: Peter Fearon

October was dominated by Kinglets and Sparrows, with a consistent movement of Swamp, White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets. Nashville Warblers also turned up frequently throughout October but in small numbers, the last caught on 31st October. Another species that was banded frequently although never in high numbers was the Brown Creeper, with a total for the fall of 39, with a peak of 7 on 1st October. On the 15th October, a surprise was had when a House Sparrow was caught and banded at a banding demonstration. A relatively quiet day on the 18th turned up a surprise in net line 5, with a juvenile female Sharp-shinned Hawk being banded. The last of the Blue-headed Vireos were banded on the 20th of October, bringing the fall total to fourteen. Four American Tree Sparrows were banded on the 26th amongst a flock of Swamp Sparrows and were observed daily after that. Golden-crowned Kinglets were still moving through in low but consistent numbers when banding terminated on Riverside on November 2nd. There were seven recoveries of previously banded birds during the fall 2006 campaign, to date, information is only available for four of these recoveries and we are awaiting confirmation on the remaining three.

TABLE 2: Time between initial capture and recapture.

Species	Band N ^o	Date Banded	Location Banded	Date Recovered	Location Recovered	N ^o Days
Song Sparrow	2251 - 49022	04/22/06	Riverside	10/18/06	Riverside	179
Red-eyed Vireo	1661 - 05760	06/04/06	Staff House	09/01/06	Riverside	88
Downy Woodpecker	1881 - 77179	05/23/04	Visitor Centre	10/12/2006	Visitor Centre	892
Blue Jay	1162 - 64625	05/14/06	Riverside	09/18/06	Riverside	127

TABLE 3. Recoveries awaiting initial capture data.

Species	Band N ^o	Date Recovered	Location
Black-capped Chickadee	2250 – 14900	10/20/06	Visitor Centre
Black-capped Chickadee	2250 – 14903	10/20/06	Visitor Centre
White-breasted Nuthatch	1881 – 77600	10/27/06	Visitor Centre

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS:

Long-term Volunteers (> 1 month):

Peter Fearon, Melody Cairns, Kevin Grundy.

Short-term Volunteers (< 1 month):

Rob Cairns, Sarah Tremain, David Brewer, Alan Laishman, Audrey Laishman, Emily Apse.

Field Assistants:

Brian Lassaline, Marjorie Lassaline, Malcolm Boyd, Judy Cairns, Lianne Rood.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING - AN AVIAN ADVENTURE

A significant part of Peter's work at the observatory this fall has been to offer the educational program '*An Avian Adventure*' both to park users, including a banding demonstration, and local naturalist groups, such as Lambton Wildlife. The program offers an insight into the life of a bird bander, the techniques used, the banding process, species profiles and the applications of banding data. With lots of pictures, a full banding demonstration and amusing tales of banding adventures, the program was a big success with adults and children alike.

ABO estimates that Peter demonstrated to around 6000 visitors during the course of the summer, with word of the program quickly spreading. ABO understands that the youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow and realizes the importance of engaging youth to spread a better understanding of bird banding and its uses. In 2007, ABO looks to take *An Avian Adventure* on the road, visiting local schools and scout groups.



Peter leads the banding demonstration. Photo: Melody Cairns

SUMMARY

The number of birds we banded this fall is encouraging despite the lack of staffing; a final total of 3338 was recorded. We believe that we missed large numbers of Red-eyed Vireos and many Warbler species that moved through Riverside during the second half of August and first half of September. It was not an ideal situation to be in, and we have ensured that in future years, the observatory will be fully staffed.

As a bird observatory, we are in our maiden year and so we have found it hard to recruit experienced volunteers and banders. In future years, we hope that the promising numbers that we have encountered this year will help raise our profile and attract banders from Ontario and further afield.

The fall migration showed a significant movement of White-throated Sparrows, Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets and Hermit Thrushes. Where this is not

always shown by banding data, large numbers of these species were observed moving through the site and surrounding areas.



One of three Northern Parulas banded during the fall. Photo: Peter Fearon

During large migration events, we were not able to operate at full potential due to a lack of volunteers, with some nets having to be closed early in order to keep up with the catch rate. It is estimated during these big pushes, we could have had two to three times as many birds as we banded. This gives us hope that 2007, when better staffed, ABO will continue to catch significant numbers of migratory songbirds.

This fall, we encountered some species that we had not banded before at the observatory, these were: Blackburnian Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, House Sparrow, Eastern Kingbird, Solitary Sandpiper, Belted Kingfisher, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Black-billed Cuckoo, Blue-headed Vireo and Warbling Vireo.

With only two seasons of migration monitoring behind us, it is too early to make any significant analysis of the data collected. However, we managed to band 33

Orange-crowned Warblers this fall and we believe this to be significant. In comparison with other bird observatories in Ontario, we seem to have a significantly higher catch rate. With one Orange-crowned Warbler banded during spring 2006, it will be interesting to see if we maintain such significant numbers through 2007.

The capture and banding of an after hatch-year male Hooded Warbler, adding to the banding of two after second-year male Hooded Warblers in May and June of 2006, provides evidence of their presence as a breeding bird in Pinery Provincial Park. This is particularly significant as the Hooded Warbler is designated as 'Nationally Threatened' on the Species-at-Risk list by COSEWIC.

Recovery data is a very important aspect of bird banding and after just two full seasons, ABO is starting to recapture some of our own birds between different locations in the park. The capture of a Red-eyed Vireo that was banded 4km away from Riverside as a breeding bird, and then recaptured, post breeding, identifies Riverside as an important site within the park for migrating birds. We were also able to control bird banded by other banders, such as the Downy Woodpecker (Table 2) and the birds shown in Table 3. It is likely these birds were banded at previous Victoria Day banding demonstrations at the Visitor Centre. This kind of recovery will provide an idea of the longevity of these species, for example, it is known that the Downy Woodpecker (Table 2) hatched in 2003 or earlier.

In 2007, Ausable Bird Observatory is looking to broaden its horizons and operate a second site for migration monitoring within the Port Franks Important Bird Area. ABO has made research applications to the various authorities and upon approval; we will look to recruit volunteers to operate these sites.

TABLE 4: Banding totals for banding station at Riverside Trail fall campaign (August 11 – November 2 2006)

Species	Total	Species	Total
American Goldfinch	95	House Sparrow	1
American Redstart	24	House Wren	4
American Robin	13	Least Flycatcher	8
American Tree Sparrow	5	Lincoln's Sparrow	21
Baltimore Oriole	9	Magnolia Warbler	139
Bay-breasted Warbler	6	Mourning Dove	1
Belted Kingfisher	1	Mourning Warbler	13
Black-and-White Warbler	10	Myrtle Warbler	51
Black-billed Cuckoo	1	Nashville Warbler	89
Blackburnian Warbler	4	Northern Cardinal	6
Black-capped Chickadee	44	Northern Parula	3
Blackpoll Warbler	3	Northern Waterthrush	2
Black-throated Blue Warbler	59	Orange-crowned Warbler	33
Black-throated Green Warbler	11	Ovenbird	16
Blue Jay	18	Philadelphia Vireo	68
Blue-headed Vireo	14	Red-bellied Woodpecker	4
Blue-winged Warbler	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1
Brown Creeper	39	Red-eyed Vireo	145
Brown Thrasher	5	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	6
Canada Warbler	13	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	404
Cape May Warbler	2	Scarlet Tanager	2
Cedar Waxwing	3	Sharp-shinned Hawk	1
Chestnut-sided Warbler	49	Slate-colored Junco	312
Chipping Sparrow	6	Solitary Sandpiper	2
Clay-colored Sparrow	1	Song Sparrow	24
Common Yellowthroat	53	Swainson's Thrush	64
Downy Woodpecker	14	Swamp Sparrow	107
Eastern Kingbird	1	Tennessee Warbler	11
Eastern Phoebe	10	Traill's Flycatcher	6
Eastern Towhee	2	Veery	11
Eastern Tufted Titmouse	20	Warbling Vireo	3
Eastern White-crowned Sparrow	75	Western Palm Warbler	5
Eastern Wood-Pewee	3	White-breasted Nuthatch	17
Field Sparrow	1	White-crowned Sparrow	1
Fox Sparrow	12	White-throated Sparrow	772
Golden-crowned Kinglet	174	Wilson's Warbler	22
Gray Catbird	11	Winter Wren	26
Gray-cheeked Thrush	15	Wood Thrush	1
Hairy Woodpecker	3	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	2
Hermit Thrush	86	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2
Hooded Warbler	1	Yellow-shafted Flicker	11
House Finch	3		