

PINERY BIRD BANDING STATION

SPRING 2006



Chestnut-sided Warbler. Photo: Peter Fearon

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PINERY BIRD BANDING STATION

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The Old Ausable River Channel at 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.

Banding sessions in past years at Pinery Provincial Park suggested of the importance of the Huron coastline as a migratory corridor. With little or no work previously undertaken on this route and a culmination of planning by Terri Groh, Martin Wernaart and David Brewer, the Pinery Bird Banding Station (PBBS) was formed. The initial aim of the station was to assess the viability of a more permanent station at Pinery. Over the course of the migration period, PBBS has proven its viability through a successful spring migration banding season.

In our maiden season as a banding station, PBBS had three core aims:

- 1) To study the avian diversity of Pinery Provincial Park.
- 2) To study the importance of the Lake Huron coastline as a migratory corridor.
- 3) To provide educational programs on bird banding for the users of Pinery.



Three of PBBS's long-term volunteers (from left): Ray Marsh, Kevin Grundy and Peter Fearon.

SPRING MIGRATION SUMMARY

Banding commenced at Riverside Trail on April 21st to initiate the first spring migration monitoring of the area. With seventeen 12m mist nets arranged into nine net lines the main monitoring area was comprehensively covered. The first week of banding turned up a few surprises. April 23rd brought us an Oregon Junco as well as our first Myrtle Warblers and Northern Waterthrush and our only Golden-Crowned Kinglet. The remainder of April brought a consistent flow of Juncos and Sparrows (Swamp, White-throated, American Tree, Fox, and Song) as well as the only Pileated Woodpecker of the season.

As we entered May we started to see the arrival of the wood warblers, with Wilsons and Nashvilles starting to appear, along with the first Least and Traills Flycatchers. May 6th saw a big day for female Ruby-crowned Kinglets, with over 35 banded. By May 8th we had caught our first Yellow Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Baltimore Orioles. Into the second week of May we saw the start of the Ovenbirds and Thrushes, Swainson's, Hermit and Veery banded. We also had our first Magnolias and a consistent stream of White-throated Sparrows. There was excitement on May 11th when we had our busiest day, with 133 birds banded including Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers, Canada Warblers and a Cape May Warbler. May 14th turned up the best bird so far, a male Hooded Warbler. By the end of the second week of May all of the banders were anxious for the anticipated fall of wood warblers, however it was long in coming.

The third week of May produced a good range of birds despite the rain - a Blue-winged Warbler, Northern Parula and second-year male Canada Warbler banded in the USA. Mourning Warblers started to move through as the Nashvilles began to tail-off, the ever reliable Gray Catbirds continued to move through. The final week of May started off promisingly, contrasting with the previous weeks miserable weather. We caught our first Prothonotary Warbler for the station, a Nelsons Sharp-tailed Sparrow and a Clay-coloured Sparrow. With most of the other sparrows

gone, it was good to get better acquainted. The Eastern Wood Pewees and Gray-cheeked Thrushes started to move through and two Woodcocks were accidentally flushed into the nets, whilst five Cedar Waxwings were also banded at Riverside.



PBBS's first foreign control, a second-year male Canada Warbler. Photo: Peter Fearon

TABLE 1: Summary of the ten most banded species divided by age ratios.

Species	Number Banded	% After Hatch Year	% Second Year	% After Second Year
White-throated Sparrow	511	11.5	65.2	23.3
Chipping Sparrow	218	7.8	61.0	30.7
American Goldfinch	154	2.6	66.9	30.5
Swamp Sparrow	151	8.6	79.5	11.9
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	146	9.6	58.9	31.5
Magnolia Warbler	111	0.9	55.9	43.2
Myrtle Warbler	96	7.3	64.6	28.1
Gray Catbird	93	5.4	59.1	35.5
Blue Jay	91	1.1	64.8	34.1
Common Yellowthroat	81	6.2	65.4	28.4

In total, over 2800 birds were banded at Pinery this spring of 94 species highlighting its importance as a corridor for migrating birds. Despite the weather and observed poor migration, this can be viewed as a very successful opening campaign. Two species-at-risk were banded providing

valuable information for future recovery as well as confirming the first record of Prothonotary Warbler at Pinery since 1995. The banding of a Nelsons Sharp-tailed Sparrow also provided confirmation of its presence as a vagrant at Pinery this year.

Volunteer Contributions:

Long-term Volunteers (> 1 month):

Ray Marsh, Kevin Grundy, Peter Fearon Jr., David Brewer, Sarah Tremain, Melody Cairns.

Short-term Volunteers (< 1 month):

Peter Holmes, Anthony Roberts, Gerry Thomas, Tony Galsworthy, Pete Fearon Sr.

Field Assistants (< 1 month):

Vincent Leahy, Tim Snieder, Arnie Weisbrot, Ellie Weisbrot.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

To fulfil the criteria of our research permit we provided weekly banding demonstrations for the public at the park's Visitor Centre. Depending on weather conditions and volunteer scheduling, these were normally held on Saturday afternoons or Sunday mornings. These demonstrations were advertised in the Natural Heritage Education Program's monthly activity sheet, which was handed out to all park visitors and posted on the park website (www.pinerypark.on.ca).

The demonstrations proved a huge success with much public support gathered and a fair few 'regulars' coming down to Riverside Trail most mornings during their stay.

Our longest-term volunteer, Peter Fearon, was also persuaded to make a presentation summarising the seasons banding efforts in the Visitor Centre theatre followed by a banding demonstration. The presentation was a huge success, the turnout of over 120 filling the theatre twice-over. The demonstration at the Centre's feeders was also successful and provided a more 'up-close' aspect for visitors as they were shown the various stages of bird banding.



Peter answers questions during a banding demonstration. Photo: Peter Fearon

The public feedback following the demonstrations and presentations was very positive ensuring that public interaction is an aspect of PBBS's duties at Pinery in seasons to come. Over the course of the spring migration, it is estimated that PBBS demonstrated to around 2000 visitors of all ages.

PROPOSALS

Despite the regionally-observed poor migration, the numbers we banded are very encouraging. We can now understand the importance of Pinery Provincial Park as a corridor for migratory sparrows and warblers. The high numbers of White-throated, Swamp and Chipping Sparrows as well as fair numbers of Magnolia, Myrtle and Common Yellowthroats show that even on a poor migration year, Pinery is an important point in the migration.

The banding of species classified as 'at risk' by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), such as the single Prothonotary (the first confirmed record for the park since 1995) and Hooded Warblers, indicate the significance of Pinery for these species and the need for further banding.

The success of the spring campaign has led to the planning of a return trip for one of our volunteers (Peter Fearon), with full-time banding now scheduled from September 15th with weekend banding until then. 2006 will remain to be a largely experimental year for PBBS with site familiarity and logistical improvements being made, allowing a more successful 2007.

The fall 2006 Campaign will continue to survey the previously unknown importance of Pinery Provincial Park on the return migration to enhance planning for the 2007 effort. The success of the presentations and public demonstrations will be continued through further programmes lead by Peter Fearon.

TABLE 2. Banding totals for Pinery Provincial Park (April 21 - June 1) 2006

Species	Number Banded	Species	Number Banded
American Goldfinch	154	Mourning Dove	4
American Redstart	62	Mourning Warbler	25
American Robin	42	Myrtle Warbler	96
American Woodcock	1	Nashville Warbler	31
American Tree Sparrow	2	Northern Cardinal	11
Baltimore Oriole	29	Northern Parula	1
Barn Swallow	5	Northern Waterthrush	22
Black-and-White Warbler	11	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	1
Black-capped Chickadee	41	Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow	1
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	3	Orange-crowned Warbler	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	63	Oregon Junco	1
Blue Jay	91	Ovenbird	54
Brown Creeper	4	Philadelphia Vireo	1
Brown Thrasher	10	Pine Siskin	2
Black-throated Blue Warbler	18	Pileated Woodpecker	1
Black-throated Green Warbler	1	Prothonotary Warbler	1
Blue-winged Warbler	2	Purple Finch	5
Canada Warbler	32	Purple Martin	1
Clay-colored Sparrow	1	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	48
Cedar Waxwing	5	Red-breasted Nuthatch	18
Chipping Sparrow	218	Red-bellied Woodpecker	2
Cliff Swallow	4	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	146
Cape May Warbler	1	Red-eyed Vireo	15
Common Grackle	18	Rusty Blackbird	2
Common Yellowthroat	81	Red-winged Blackbird	4
Chestnut-sided Warbler	18	Slate-colored Junco	53
Downy Woodpecker	12	Scarlet Tanager	1
Eastern Phoebe	6	Song Sparrow	15
Eastern Towhee	8	Swamp Sparrow	151
Eastern Wood-Pewee	3	Swainson's Thrush	15
Eastern Tufted Titmouse	18	Tree Swallow	1
Eastern White-crowned Sparrow	59	Trail's Flycatcher	21
Field Sparrow	56	Veery	28
Fox Sparrow	3	White-breasted Nuthatch	7
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	White-crowned Sparrow	1
Gray-cheeked Thrush	2	Wilson's Warbler	19
Gray Catbird	93	Winter Wren	21
Hairy Woodpecker	6	Wood Thrush	14
Hermit Thrush	4	Western Palm Warbler	23
House Finch	3	Whip-poor-will	1
Hooded Warbler	1	White-throated Sparrow	511
House Wren	12	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	3
Indigo Bunting	8	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	3
Least Flycatcher	47	Yellow Palm Warbler	1
Lincoln's Sparrow	17	Yellow-shafted Flicker	7
Magnolia Warbler	111	Yellow Warbler	14