PICOIDES

Bulletin of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists **Picoides, November 2009**
Bulletin de la Société des Ornithologistes du Canada **Volume 22, Number 3**

Great Egret. Photo by Sarah Jamieson.

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Editor's Message

Welcome to the third and final issue of *Picoides* of 2009! I hope everyone is having a good fall.

I congratulate members Spencer Sealy and Clive Goodwin on their well-deserved awards and to all graduate students who successfully defended their theses this year. We have news from the Prairie Conservation lab at the Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba and the Ryan Norris lab, more information on Mute Swans, Short-eared Owls and reports from the 2009 SCO-SOC meeting in Edmonton. Also inside this issue are several other ornithological notices and features. Don't forget to mark your calendar for the 2010 AOU-COS –SCO joint meeting in San Diego on February 7-11, 2010.

In the last few months, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) has recommended that two more bird species be added to Canada's list of species at risk: Horned Grebe and Whip-poor-will. Last assessed by COSEWIC 10 years ago, Roseate Tern and Least Bittern were also reconfirmed as Endangered and Threatened, respectively. In addition, BirdLife International's latest evaluation of the world's birds has revealed that more species than ever are threatened with extinction. The annual Red List update, on behalf of the IUCN, now lists 192 species of bird as Critically Endangered, the highest threat category, a total of two more than in the 2008 update. These reports strongly suggest that things are getting worse for many bird species. SCO-SOC and its partner ornithological organizations need to continue to advocate strongly for sound science and adequate protection for all birds and their habitats in Canada and around the world. SCO should be, in my opinion, remain independent but allied with the proposed new American ornithological society arising from the merger of the existing ornithological societies in the US. We still need an uniquely Canadian voice such as SCO looking after ornithological issues in Canada and assisting with international bird conservation issues.

Before I close, I would like to remind everyone that i) *Picoides* is not a peer-reviewed journal, (ii) publication of an article in *Picoides* does not imply endorsement by the Society of Canadian Ornithologists and iii) the editor relies on authors to submit accurate, honest and error-free (as much as possible) submissions.

Please take note of photo submission guidelines and the disclaimer on page 4. 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 summer!

Cheers,

Rob Warnock
Picoides
Editor

Common Nighthawk.
Photo by Barbara Bleho.

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.

Your submissions are greatly appreciated and always welcome.

Rob Warnock, Editor of Picoides

Male (l) and Female (r) Eastern Bluebirds. Photo by Brigitte Noel.

Disclaimer

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Rob Warnock, Picoides Editor

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

Erratum

The Willets photo on page 3 in the July 2009 issue (Volume 22, Issue 2) of *Picoides* should be credited to Sarah Jamieson not Brigitte Noel.

The editor apologizes for this unintentional error.

The Society of Canadian Ornithologists/La Societé des ornithologists du Canada
Annual Meeting, Edmonton, 2009
President's Report

David M. Bird

Overall, it is safe to say that the Society of Canadian Ornithologists (SCO) is in relatively great shape in every aspect, e.g. publications, web site, awards, finances, and membership. And I give no small credit to my predecessors for that. Beginning with the most important component of the SCO, our membership at the end of 2008 still stands fairly strong at 357, albeit down from 410 a year before that. The decline is mostly due to loss of memberships from retiring Canadian Wildlife Service personnel and from universities, particularly students. To increase retention, it would be helpful to encourage our current members to renew their memberships for multiple years. I am very grateful to Thérèse Beaudet, our membership secretary, who has not only provided us with useful statistics as well as thoughtful insights in her 2008 report, but keeps in constant electronic touch with no less than 97% of our membership!

Our journal, Avian Conservation and Ecology, remains in the very capable hands of our two editors, Tom Nudds and Marc-Andre Villard. Two issues plus a special theme issue were published in 2008 with a new special theme issue on grassland birds just being launched. Our rejection rate stands respectably at just under 50% and we boast one of the fastest turnaround times of all similar journals.

Similarly, thanks to a highly enthusiastic editor, Rob Warnock, our newsletter, Picoides, has always come out in timely fashion. It is filled with interesting, if not occasionally controversial, material to keep our membership informed on the most recent ornithological issues. I am personally grateful to Rob for not making one particular issue his "swan song".

Because both of our main publications are electronic, we extend much gratitude to Joe Nocera for taking on the job as Webmaster. He did a tremendous job in cleaning up the SCO web site and making it much more user-friendly and attractive. Visitations are relatively high and a new page for students (thanks to Russ Dawson for the idea) has proven successful.

The Conservation Committee was composed of Joe Nocera as chair, Erica Nol, and Tony Gaston were not overly burdened in 2008, but did spend a fair bit of time dealing effectively with fall-out from the mute swan article published in Picoides. I thank them and many others for their wise advice on how to handle this issue.

At the Annual General Meeting, the membership will vote on some badly needed changes to our By-Laws. We are all grateful to Past President, Sue Hannon, for taking the lead on this.

The SCO prides itself on offering several awards each year. This year was no exception and our three awards' committees worked hard to come up with some outstanding selections for the Dorothy Huestis Speirs Award, the Jamie Smith Mentoring Award, and the five student awards, namely the Taverner, Baillie, Cooke and Junco Awards. Our appreciation is extended to three chairpersons of these committees, i.e. Marty Leonard, Ken Otter and Russ Dawson, respectively, and their hard-working committee members. I would be remiss not to thank generous donors such as past-president Fred Cooke for helping to make these awards worthy of giving.

Of equal importance to all of the above are our annual meetings. We are deeply indebted to Erin Bayne for taking onto his shoulders the responsibility of organizing our 2009 meeting and equally so to Sue Hannon, the scientific program chairperson who had not only retired from the position of the SCO's president last year but also is trying to retire from the University of Alberta. Running these meetings costs money and a $10K contribution from the Canadian Wildlife Service, thanks to the actions of past-president, Charles Francis, is most gratefully acknowledged. Our 2010 meeting will be held in San Diego in February 7-11 in conjunction with the annual meetings of the American Ornithologists' Union and the Cooper Ornithological Society. This will be followed by our participation

in the 5th North American Ornithological Conference to be held in August 14-18 at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia. Kathy Martin, an SCO past-president, is the head of the organizing committee for that meeting.

Speaking of the cost of running meetings, Pierre Lamothe, our Treasurer, has once again done a sterling job throughout the year keeping track of our assets and expenditures right down to the penny. An eyeball view of his latest excellent, detailed financial report shows us slightly ahead of the game in terms of funds from last year. We cannot thank him enough for his efforts — good treasurers are worth their weight in gold to my mind.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to Erica Nol, our Vice-President and President-Elect, and Andrea Pomeroy, our recording secretary, our representatives to other organizations such as the Ornithological Council (Liana Zanette and Leslie-Evans Ogden) and Bird Studies Canada (Jean-Pierre Savard), and last but certainly not least, all of the Councillors for all of their wise counsel and enthusiasm throughout the past year.

A Report on the 28th SCO_SOC Annual Meeting from the President

David M. Bird, President, SCO-SOC

The 28th annual meeting of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists/Sociéte des ornithologistes du Canada was hosted by the University of Alberta at the Telus Centre on its beautiful North Campus in sunny Edmonton. As always, the meeting provided an excellent venue for ornithologists across Canada and even those beyond our borders to discover the very latest findings in bird research, to create new collaborations and networks, to discuss ways to make our society even more beneficial to all of us, and to socialize over a cold drink in the evenings. Attendees were treated to two thought-provoking plenary lectures, one by Dr. Spencer Sealy from the University of Manitoba on his 30 years of research on cowbirds and their hosts and another by Dr. Grant Gilchrist from the National Wildlife Research Centre in Ottawa on the conservation biology of northern eiders in Arctic Canada and west Greenland. Around fifty oral and poster papers were also presented, along with a special session on managing Canadian birds in the face of large-scale change. Most important, we honoured two of very best Canadian ornithologists, one a professional and the other an amateur. Dr. Spencer Sealy of the University of Manitoba received the 2009 Jamie Smith Mentoring Award for his years of educating undergraduate and graduate students on a number of ornithological subjects, including his plenary topic on cowbirds and their hosts. The SCO was also delighted to give the 2009 Doris Huestis Speirs Award to Mr. Clive Goodwin for his decades of contributions to the bird life in Ontario. Regrettably, Clive was unable to travel to Edmonton, but he was most touched by the award. On the Friday of the conference, TV personality and naturalist, Mr. John Acorn, on why it is not easy to be a birder, treated us to a very humourous lecture. The next evening, we had a great horse-drawn tour of Fort Edmonton Park followed by a terrific BBQ meal and the announcement of the student awards.

As your president, I always look forward to meeting each and every one of you and moreover, I always keep an open mind as to ways in which we can make our society even better! It is indeed my great pleasure to thank in particular three people — Erin Bayne of the University of Alberta and head of the local organizing committee consisting of Cindy Paszkowski and Susan Hannon of the University of Alberta (she also organized the scientific program), as well as all of the volunteers who pitched in to ensure a fun-filled and productive conference for us.

2009 Doris Huestis Speirs Award for Outstanding Contributions to Canadian Ornithology: Mr. Clive E. Goodwin

Clive Goodwin. Photo by Bob Edmunds.

The Doris Huestis Speirs Award is the most prestigious award of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists and is presented annually to an individual who has made outstanding lifetime contributions to Canadian ornithology. It is with great pleasure that the Society of Canadian Ornithologists presents the 2009 Doris Huestis Speirs Award to Mr. Clive Goodwin.

Clive immigrated to Canada from his native England in 1949 at the age of 20. He gained an encyclopaedic knowledge of Canadian birds, and went on to apply that knowledge to make many wonderful contributions to conservation, science and public education, especially in his home province of Ontario.

In the area of conservation, Clive served as the Executive Director of the Conservation Council of Ontario, a Board Member for the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and Toronto Ornithological Club, President of the Toronto Field Naturalists and a Trustee of the James L. Ballie Memorial Fund. He was instrumental in the development of many major conservation initiatives, including Birdlife International's Presqu'ile Important Bird Areas project, the Presqu'ile Provincial Park Management Plan and the Lone Pine Marsh Management Plan.

Clive is widely known for his significant accomplishments in enhancing the public's knowledge and awareness of birds. He published five guides to Bird-Finding in Ontario, served as an editor of four natural history periodicals ("The Ontario Field Biologist" The Young Naturalist", "The Federation of Ontario Naturalist Bulletin" and "The Ontario Naturalist"), wrote the Ontario Regional Reports in "American Birds" for many years, and wrote numerous articles on birds. With his wife, Joyce, he taught bird identification courses at Seneca and Humber Community Colleges, the Civic Garden Centre in Toronto, and several public libraries.

Clive has made invaluable contributions to ornithology through collecting and managing key data on bird occurrences and numbers. He was the organizer and first Chair of the Ontario Ornithological Records Committee, and started the innovative and extremely useful electronic database, "Birds of Northumberland County", which now contains nearly 300,000 records. He was on the Management Committee for the first Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas and a Regional Coordinator for the second. He has also been a long-time participant in Breeding Bird Surveys, Midwinter Waterfowl Inventories and Christmas Bird Counts.

The Society of Canadian Ornithologists is pleased to honour Mr. Clive Goodwin for his outstanding contributions to Canadian ornithology.

The D.H. Speirs Award Selection Committee for 2009 includes Mark Brigham, Bob Clark, Greg Robertson and Marty Leonard (chair).

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The Jamie Smith Memorial
2009 Award for Mentoring in Ornithology

It is with great pleasure that the Society of Canadian Ornithologists presented the award to:

Dr. Spencer G. Sealy
Professor
University of Manitoba

There is no doubt that Spencer Sealy is an outstanding biologist and has had a significant contribution on ornithology in Canada. The 24 letters of nomination/support that Spencer received for the Jamie Smith Mentoring Award, however, also attest to his obvious impact on those with whom he works. Many wrote of Spencer's long hours in the office (on weekends and holidays too), intentionally set so as to ensure adequate contact time with students while also fulfilling his administrative duties. The letters of support also referred to the Spencer "chats" which appear to be informal hallway conversations that students truly appreciated. Former students also recalled memories of the pages full of red ink after a "Spencer edit", attesting to a care about his students and the progress that they were making - it takes a long time to edit a students' work and Spencer clearly gave them this time. This benefited the students in improving their written work and also helped the students learn the process of both designing experiments and expressing their ideas. Many spoke of how Spencer encouraged and directed his former students, giving them the right combination of hands-on and hands-off support, providing them the confidence and ability to pursue graduate degrees and continue work in ornithology. Spencer's contributions did not end in the office but extended to the field where he devoted much time in the day-to-day basics of research—helping students slog through marshes or climb trees to find nests. Simply being with them in the field to assist doing whatever was needed (often difficult to schedule for faculty with high administrative duties) and is a contribution that his students acknowledged over and over again. There is an overall sense that Spencer really likes his students and that the "training of highly qualified personnel" is a task that he took on with great delight. This is evident in the letters, many of which stated that Spencer set up an environment in his lab that fostered mutual respect and collaborations not just between himself and his students, but also amongst the students themselves.

On behalf of the award committee, I would like to congratulate Spencer on his achievements and encourage others to consider making nominations of supervisors and peers for next year's awards.

Ken Otter, Chair, Jamie Smith Memorial Mentoring Award Committee

COS/AOU/SCO JOINT MEETING IN 2010

Registration is now open for the joint meeting of the Cooper Ornithological Society, American Ornithologists' Union, and Society of Canadian Ornithologists, to be held 7-11 February 2010 at the Town and Country Resort and Convention Center in San Diego, CA. Information on the call for papers, registration, meeting venue, hotel, and activities is available at: http://www.birdmeetings.org/cosaousco2010/default.htm.

Key Dates:
6 November : Early registration closes; abstracts due; applications for student travel and presentation awards due
7 November - 6 December: Regular registration
7 December - 11 February: Late registration

For information on the newly remodeled Town & Country Hotel and to make your hotel reservations, go to: https://resweb.passkey.com/Resweb.do?mode=welcome_gi_new&groupID=995827

As you make your plans, please consider that by staying at the conference hotel, you help keep conference costs low by helping us meet our room block obligation with the hotel. These savings allow us to support student travel and activities at annual meetings. Assistance in finding roommates is available via a check-off box on the registration form.

We have an exciting program of workshops, plenaries, exhibits, field trips, student activities, and social events planned, and look forward to seeing you in sunny San Diego in February!

Best wishes,

Barbara E. Kus and Kevin J. Burns,
Co-chairs, Local Committee for the 2010 COS/AOU/SCO Joint Meeting

2010 SCO-SOC Student Research Awards Competition

The SCO-SOC administers four different student research awards - the Taverner Awards, James L. Baillie Award, Fred Cooke Award, and the Junco Technologies Award. Applicants must be members of the SCO-SOC to be eligible.

A single application can be made to apply for all three types of Student Research Awards. The deadline for application is 15 February 2010. Applications are available online at: http://www.sco-soc.ca/studentawards.html

Successful applicants are strongly urged to submit brief project reports (3-4 pages) within 1 year of receipt of award to *Picoides* so the membership can lean about your award winning research.

Applications should be emailed to:
Ian Warkentin, Chair SCO-SOC Student Awards Committee
Environmental Science Unit, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, Memorial University, Corner Brook NL, A2H 6P9 ; e-mail: iwarkent@swgc.mun.ca; tel: (709) 637-6200 ext 6246

Taverner Awards

Taverner Awards are offered by The Society of Canadian Ornithologists to honor Percy A. Taverner and to further his accomplishments in increasing the knowledge of Canadian birds through research, conservation and public education. The awards are aimed at people with limited or no access to major funding, regardless of professional status, who are undertaking ornithological work in Canada. Two awards of up to $1500 each are made annually.

James L. Baillie Student Research Award

The James L. Baillie Student Research Award is open to any student conducting ornithological research at a Canadian university. It honours the memory of James L. Baillie and shall be for research that is consistent with the objectives of the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund. These are to support: studies of Canadian birds in their natural environment; projects which contribute to preservation of birds; and projects, which disseminate knowledge of birds. Long Point Bird Observatory funds the James L. Baillie Student Research Award / Bird Studies Canada from proceeds of the Baillie Birdathon, and is administered by The Society of Canadian Ornithologists. A single award of up to $1000 is made annually.

Fred Cooke Student Research Award

The Fred Cooke Student Award is offered jointly by the SCO and Bird Studies Canada to honour the contributions of Professor Fred Cooke to Canadian ornithology by supporting ornithological conference travel or research activities by a student at a Canadian university. The Award shall be open to any student conducting ornithological research at a Canadian university, except that previous recipients of the Award shall not be eligible. The Award shall be for travel to ornithological conferences at which the student will make a verbal or poster presentation, or research in any aspect of ornithology anywhere in the world. A single award of up to $1000 is made annually.

Junco Technologies Award

The Junco Technologies Award is open to any student who is enrolled in a Canadian university and is conducting a field research project in Canada on at least one species of cavity-nesting bird. The Award must be used to purchase field equipment necessary for the research project (e.g., audio recording, optics, video camera or radio transmitters). The Award cannot be used for to pay a stipend for the recipient. One Award of up to $1,000 is available each year. The Junco Technologies Award is sponsored by Junco Technologies Inc., in cooperation with Bird Studies Canada / Études d'Oiseaux Canada (BSC/ÉOC). Junco Technologies Inc., a company specializing in the production of birdhouses, is interested in advancing field research on cavity-nesting birds in Canada. Bird Studies Canada / Études d'Oiseaux Canada (BSC/ÉOC), a national non-governmental conservation organization, is dedicated to advancing the understanding, appreciation, and conservation of wild birds in Canada.

Recently completed theses from the Prairie Conservation lab at the Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba
Nicola Koper

The Prairie Conservation lab was established at the Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba, in 2005. Our program primarily explores effects of habitat management and habitat fragmentation on prairie communities, particularly prairie birds. Our research also touches on related conservation issues, such as conservation of prairie plant communities, and avian conservation in habitats adjacent to prairies, such as wetlands and forests. Ongoing projects include several that explore the effects of grazing intensity and grazing systems on prairie birds and their habitats; behavioural ecology and its role in mediating effects of habitat fragmentation on prairie birds; and conservation of wetland species, such as yellow rails and western grebes. So far this year, five students from our lab have graduated from the Masters of Natural Resources Management program. All theses are available on-line through the University of Manitoba MSpace website.

The effects of grazing on songbird nesting success in Grasslands National Park of Canada
Jennifer Lusk

Vesper Sparrow. Photo by Barbara Bleho.

Jennifer evaluated the role of vegetation and cattle grazing on songbird nesting success in grazed and ungrazed native mixed-grass prairie in Saskatchewan. Prairie songbirds have been experiencing long-term population declines but little is known about factors influencing nesting success. Jennifer found that Sprague's pipit daily nest survival declined with increased vegetation density and litter depth at the nest site. Environmental conditions during the study may have resulted in an increased risk of predation for Sprague's pipit nests located in greater cover. Vegetative cover did not influence vesper sparrow, lark bunting or chestnut-collared longspur daily nest survival. Jennifer found no effects of low-moderate intensity grazing on Sprague's pipit, Baird's sparrow, vesper sparrow, lark bunting, and chestnut-collared longspur nesting success. This indicates that low-moderate intensity grazing may be compatible with management for these species.

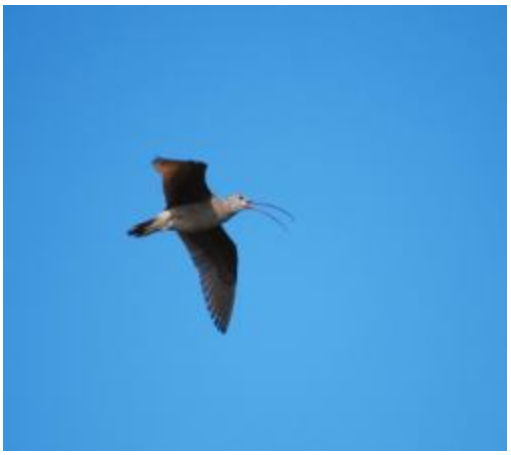
An assessment of the relative importance of Wildlife Management Areas to the conservation of grassland songbirds in south-western Manitoba
Sandra M. Duran

Sandra evaluated the role of Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) for the conservation of grassland songbirds. She determined the habitat requirements of grassland birds at both local and landscape scale. WMAs supported the lowest richness of obligate grassland songbirds. This pattern was strongly influenced by the habitat management (e.g. grazing) and vegetation structure (e.g. vertical density) on each prairie site. At the landscape scale, these species were strongly affected by the proximity and presence of edges on the landscape, as well as the surrounding habitat of grassland patches. Bird species responded to habitat structure at spatial scales greater than 1800 ha. This study provided insights about habitat requirements of grassland birds at local and landscape scales, so that effective management can be prescribed on public and private lands at both the regional scale, and at individual sites such as WMAs.

Songbird diversity and habitat use in response to burning on grazed and ungrazed mixed-grass prairie
Krystle White

Krystle's study evaluated how fire influences the songbird community and habitat use in northern mixed-grass prairie. In the summer of 2006, several wildfires occurred within and around Grasslands National Park and the neighbouring Mankota community grazing pastures in southern Saskatchewan, which provided a valuable opportunity to assess how burning influences the songbird community on both ungrazed and grazed prairie. Krystle surveyed songbirds using five-minute, 100-m radius point-count plots in four different treatment groups: burned-ungrazed, burned-grazed, unburned-grazed, and unburned-ungrazed prairie. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to do so in Canadian mixed-grass prairies. Burning on ungrazed prairie provided the highest songbird diversity. Burned-grazed and unburned-grazed prairie had comparably high diversity, while unburned-ungrazed prairie had the lowest. The structural components of vegetation generally decreased as a result of burning and grazing, yet the two disturbances generated different levels of litter and exposed bare ground. A positive relationship of species diversity with burned and grazed vegetation suggests that high species diversity targets can be achieved with vegetation of low- to mid-densities and ground cover. While burning increased the species diversity of the songbird community, it had a detrimental effect on the abundances of Sprague's pipits (*Anthus spragueii*) and Baird's sparrows (*Ammodramus bairdii*), indicating the need to maintain habitats in a variety of successional stages.

Passerine Relationships with Habitat Heterogeneity and Grazing at Multiple Scales in Northern Mixed-Grass Prairie
Barbara Bleho



Long-billed Curlew. Photo by Barbara Bleho.

Grazing exclusion in the park has resulted in an increasingly homogenized landscape, which may result in the exclusion of some species due to the loss of appropriate habitat. Few studies have explored how grazing and habitat heterogeneity together influence grassland bird communities. Barbara used mixed models to analyze how these factors influence passerine richness, diversity, and abundance at Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan, Canada. In 2008, Barbara conducted comparative avian and habitat surveys between ungrazed pastures within the park and seasonally grazed community pastures neighbouring the park. Grazing did not influence species richness or diversity, but both positively and negatively influenced individual species. Chestnut-collared Longspurs, McCown's Longspurs, and Horned Larks were more abundant in grazed pastures. In contrast, Baird's Sparrows and Red-winged Blackbirds were more abundant in ungrazed pastures. Grazing likely influenced the passerine community indirectly through changes in habitat; both habitat structure and heterogeneity were strongly influenced by grazing, though relationships with grazing varied among habitat variables. Passerine richness and diversity were greater at higher levels of habitat heterogeneity, but species relationships with habitat heterogeneity varied. Simultaneous positive and negative relationships with habitat heterogeneity for some species suggests that individual species require both patchy and uniform structural components in their breeding habitat, depending on the specific structural measure, and the configuration of these components depends on each species' unique habitat needs. Overall, light-moderate grazing did not have a negative effect on passerine diversity. An appropriate grazing regime may benefit some species and increase community diversity within the park.

Northern saw-whet owls: migration and population trends in Manitoba
Chris C. De Ruyck

Northern Saw-whet Owl. Photo by Chris De Ruyck.

Chris studied the diminutive but numerous northern saw-whet owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) in Manitoba. Despite their abundance, very little is known about saw-whet owl distribution or population trends in the prairie provinces, as saw-whet owls primarily breed in the boreal forest, north of most bird survey routes and settled areas. Chris analyzed long term saw-whet owl migration monitoring data gathered by the Delta Marsh Bird Observatory, Manitoba (2000-2008) to examine their migratory behaviour, breeding ecology and recent population trends. Chris evaluated the reliability of trends detected through the long-term data set by comparing trends observed with those detected through the Manitoba Nocturnal Owl Survey, and evaluated mechanisms that affect these trends by comparing population fluctuations with small mammal abundance surveyed over time at two sites in southeastern Manitoba. Chris also used stable isotope analysis techniques to learn the geographic origins of saw-whets that migrate through Delta Marsh each fall. Chris concluded that there was no evidence of a downward trend in population abundance, but that power was low to detect such trends. Population fluctuations and reproductive success may be driven by small mammal abundance.

News From the Ryan Norris Lab

Undergraduate Sarah Gutowsky - attended the Rising Stars of Research National undergraduate poster competition, which brings together Canada's top 100 undergraduate researchers in science and engineering to showcase their research accomplishments. Sarah was awarded "most outstanding poster" in the Life Sciences and Psychology division for her undergraduate thesis work titled "Concurrent declines in nestling diet quality and reproductive success in a threatened seabird over 150 years", which has also recently been published in Endangered Species Research.

Alex Mills Now at York University

Following post-doctoral work at Bird Studies Canada and Acadia University (with Phil Taylor), I have now accepted a position at York University in the Division of Natural Science.

Board Game "Conspiracy of Ravens" Now available

The board game "Conspiracy of Ravens" is available through EnviroQuest at: www.enviroquestltd.com. You can see all the information on the EnviroQuest website about the game.

Canadian Theses in Ornithology

American Redstarts. Photos by Ryan Germain.

Germain, Ryan. 2009. Delayed maturation of secondary sexual signals in first-year male American redstarts. M.Sc. Thesis. Queen's University, Kingston, ON.
email: ryan.germain@queensu.ca

Male birds of many species use conspicuous song and plumage displays in both courtship and territorial interactions. In some species, one or both of these signalling traits may not reach full adult maturity until a male's second year of life. While the prevalence of delayed plumage maturation is well documented, delayed song maturation may be more difficult to detect. As a result, there are few studies, which report age-based song differences between first-year and adult males. Additionally, despite the potentially large degree of variation of each trait within yearling males, little work has examined the benefits for young males who appear or sound more adult-like. In my M.Sc. thesis, I investigate variation in both song and plumage displays of yearling male American redstarts (*Setophaga ruticilla*) as they relate to success during the breeding and non-breeding seasons.

I first demonstrate a relationship between the degree of adult-like black plumage and both non-breeding season habitat quality in Jamaica and breeding season arrival date in Ontario. Previous studies have linked breeding season arrival date with winter habitat quality in adult males using stable-carbon isotope analysis. Together, these results suggest that variation in yearling male appearance may signal an individual's competitive ability for high-quality resources. Next, I quantified the mate-attraction songs of both adult and yearling males and demonstrate a delayed maturation in this song type. I also present evidence of the potential benefits of expressing a more adult-like song by linking song structure with reproductive success in adult males. Finally, I demonstrate a potential relationship between the degree of adult-like song and plumage expression in yearling males, but not adult males. This work demonstrates that the delayed maturation of sexual signals may play an important role in the life-history of yearling male American redstarts, and highlights the need for in-depth analyses of individual variation of multiple sexual signals in this poorly-studied age class of birds.

Jamieson, Sarah, E. 2009. Cross-seasonal factors affecting breeding investment by female Pacific Dunlins. PhD. Thesis, Centre for Wildlife Ecology, Simon Fraser University

Myers proposed the Migration Distance Hypothesis (that the costs of long-distance migration force a compensating reduction in breeding investment) to explain parental care differences between species and sexes in shorebirds. This thesis proposes that seasonally increasing predation danger during migration is the main cost of extending breeding investment, and examines whether danger and other cross-seasonal factors predict reproductive patterns of Pacific Dunlins (*Calidris alpina pacifica*) and other shorebird species breeding in Alaska. The Predation Danger Hypothesis assumes that moult and migration schedules of shorebirds evolved to minimize exposure to raptors, especially migratory Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*). The hypothesis predicts that these scheduling considerations affect parental care because they either require shorebirds to depart breeding areas early and in advance of falcon migration and moult on non-breeding areas prior to the migratory arrival of falcons; or to remain on or near northern breeding areas to moult, and migrate after falcon passage.

Following breeding, Pacific Dunlins linger in Alaska until October, arriving on wintering areas after

Dunlin. Photo by Frode Jacobsen.

peak falcon passage. I found that breeding Pacific Dunlins renested and double-brooded extensively. Female Pacific Dunlins invested more time to reproduction and remained longer on the breeding grounds than female Western Sandpipers (*Calidris mauri*), their sympatrically-breeding, ecologically-similar, and early-migrating congener. The breeding seasons of both species were initiated on almost the same day, but the breeding investment of female Pacific Dunlins exceeded that of female Western Sandpipers by 7.2 days, and the seasonal decline in parental care duration of Western Sandpipers was steeper than in Pacific Dunlins. As predicted, Western Sandpipers but not Pacific Dunlins departed sooner in years with early falcon southward migration (related to snowmelt timing), and they gave up more breeding opportunity to do so. Stable isotope analyses showed that Dunlins and other sandpipers are primarily income rather than capital breeders and I found little support for the Differential Parental Capacity Hypothesis (that female shorebirds truncate care due to higher investment in egg production). These findings support the Predation Danger Hypothesis and highlight how predation danger can have far-reaching impacts on the life histories of potential prey species.

Dead Goose

Late last fall
After the geese had all departed
It drifted about on the small pond
In the little park by the ballfield
Until blown by the wind against the reeds
One dead lone goose from whatever cause
And there it lay untouched
Until the pond froze over
Then all winter long, dogs excitedly
Chewed on the rotting carcass
And in spring dragged it ashore
Where it lay stark, dry and still
An emblem of flight marked
on this May morning
by one elegant upright wing

Bob Nero

Canada Goose. Photo by Jean Sébastien Guénette.

Re-identification of the Fort Albany Mute Swan bone

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The incredible claims of Alison and Burton (2008) have largely been corrected by subsequent authors here in *Picoides*. The focus in particular was on their factual errors (Warnock, 2009), their misinterpretation of the swan fossil record (Elphick, 2009), the notorious unreliability of many early illustrations (Askins, 2009), the well-documented evidence for the first records and subsequent spread of Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* in the late 1800's and early 1900's (Askins, 2009) and the lack of records for any naturally vagrant Mute Swans (Elphick, 2009). One substantive claim is still outstanding; the accurate identification of an archaeological Mute Swan bone from Fort Albany, Ontario. In this note, we will establish that this bone was misidentified and subsequently, misrepresented. The bone in question is actually from a Canada Goose, thereby removing Mute Swan from the archaeological record of Ontario.

The site

The Fort Albany archaeological site is an early historic site, occupied by English and French traders from approximately 1679 to 1721 AD, and frequented year round by native peoples with firearms. Mammal and bird remains collected from this midden have been studied (Churcher 1965, Baldwin 1967). Overall, thirty-one species of birds were identified, including Snow Goose *Chen caerulescens*, Ross's Goose *Chen rossii,* two races of Canada Geese *Branta canadensis*, Mute Swan, Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus* and at least 10 species of ducks (Sadler and Savage 2003).

In 1775 John Foster described five bird species new to science: Eskimo Curlew *Numenius borealis*, Great Gray Owl *Strix nebulosa*, Boreal Chickadee *Poecile hudsonicus*, Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* and White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*. All five had been collected in northern Ontario by Andrew Graham. The Eskimo Curlew is said to have been collected in the Fort Albany area (Baldwin, 1967). The Fort Albany site was therefore well-known to European ornithologists at the time.

There certainly were European influences evident in the archaeological material at Fort Albany because rat, dog, pig, cow and sheep bones were identified amongst the mammal material (Churcher, 1965) and Domestic Chicken (*Gallus gallus*) amongst the avian material. Shot holes are not uncommon in these archaeological specimens (Sadler and Savage, 2003), therefore these remains, in most cases, represent bones left after the birds were shot and consumed.

It would not have been impossible that a Mute Swan could have been brought from Europe to live at this site. Nor would it have been impossible that swan meat may have been salted and sent over as additional meat resources. Nevertheless, contrary to Burton's claims (Burton, 2009) this site is not "dated to a period in which there was no European colonization of the area". And, as we will show, there are no Mute Swan bones from this site anyway.

To provide a clear understanding of the process that Baldwin went through to identify the bone it is best to track the material from the Fort Albany site. Photos and description of the archaeological excavation can be found in Kenyon (1986). During excavation of the stockade in 1963 numerous bird bones were found amongst the litter and garbage of the compound floor (Baldwin 1967). The bones were not numbered nor catalogued as to location specificity during the excavation. All avian skeletal material was collected at the site and brought in five bushel baskets to the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM).

Upon arrival of the material at the ROM, Don Baldwin, a technician in the Ornithology Department was asked to identify the skeletal material (Fig. 1, next page). Baldwin was considered a natural choice for the job because for the previous three years he had been given the responsibility of expanding the museum's bird skeleton collection which, at the time, was still in its infancy. Today the number of skeletons in the Ornithology collection is just over 45,000. The number of skeleton

Figure 1. Don Baldwin in the early stages of processing and identifying the Fort Albany archaeological bird remains. 1963. Photo by Leighton Warren. ROM.

specimens dated earlier than 1964 is 2,776, of which only two are Mute Swan and seventeen are Canada Goose.

The Fort Albany bones are presently housed in two locations. The non-accessioned skeletal material remains in New World Archaeology. The artifacts have been placed in large cardboard boxes and wrapped in plastic. The material has been roughly separated by species, presumably by Baldwin, but it has not been uniquely identified or accessioned into any collection. Most of this skeletal material has been identified as Canada Goose, Blue Goose *Chen caerulescens*, grouse or shorebird. The Canada Goose box is the largest and contains numerous sterna amongst many other elements. There is little doubt that this material was identified and kept for comparative purposes but we did not find any evidence to suggest the possibility of a mix up occurring during processing and identification.

Fully accessioned, representative materials from 29 of the 31 species presented in the Baldwin (1967) paper are housed in the Ornithology skeleton collection. These bones were selected by Baldwin for inclusion into the collection however; they represent only a small fraction of the 2,357 bones collected at the site. Prior to deposition into the collection the bones were cleaned, uniquely numbered and protected with a lacquer-like substance (polyvinyl acetate, or gelva). The representative bones for each species have been grouped together and placed in individual species boxes with the associated data placed on labels glued to the top of the box. All boxes from the Fort Albany site were pulled from the collection drawers during this investigation and checked to ensure accurate deposition. The only bone in the box originally labeled as *Cygnus olor* ROM 159698 is the bone in question: a partial sternum matching the description provided by Baldwin (1967). None of the other bones in the accessioned material matches the Baldwin description. This is contrary to the contention of Burton (2009), that “Mute Swan remains” were found, implying more than one specimen.

The bone

ROM 159698 is a partial sternum and keel (Figs. 2 and 3, next page). It is the anterior part of the keel with several mm of the sternum on each side. The width of the bone at its widest point is 29 mm. The length of the broken keel is 117 mm and the depth of the keel at its highest point is 33.7 mm.

To identify the bone to species we used 3 characters; overall size of keel, slope of keel and the dorsal median ridge running the length of the sternum. The slope of the keel was calculated for several specimens of Mute Swan and Canada Goose *interior* contained in the Ornithology collections and compared with the Fort Albany sternum (Fig. 4, next page). The dorsal median ridge on swans was found to protrude dorsally, while on Canada Goose the ridge is impressed ventrally. The bone was compared with several waterfowl species including; Trumpeter Swan, Tundra Swan, Mute Swan, Snow Goose *Chen caerulescens*, Canada Goose *B. c. interior*, Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* and Brant *Branta bernicla*. The larger keel size excluded White-fronted Goose, Brant and Snow Goose while the gentler slope of the keel (Fig. 2) and the morphology of the dorsal median ridge (Fig. 3) excluded the three swan species. All three of the qualitative characters are

Figure 2. Ventral view of sterna (from left to right) of Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*, Fort Albany sternum and Canada Goose *Branta canadensisr.* Photo by Brian Boyle, ROM.

Figure 3. Dorsal view of sterna showing the median ridge (from left to right) of Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*, Fort Albany sternum and Canada Goose *Branta canadensis.* Photo by Brian Boyle, ROM.

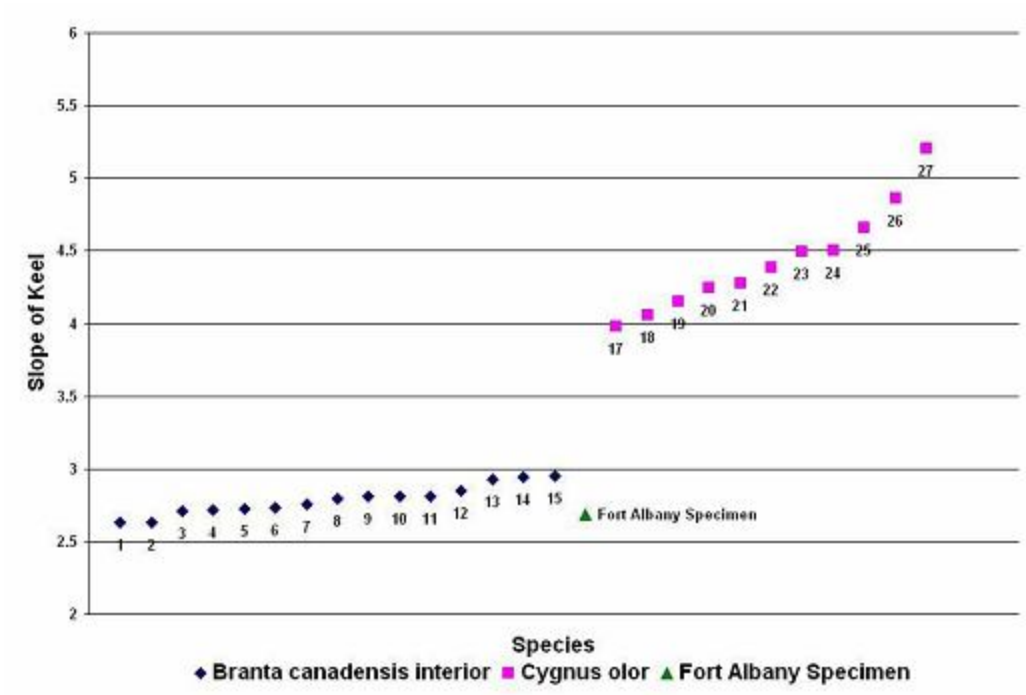

Figure 4. Slope of keel calculated for Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*, Fort Albany specimen and Canada Goose *Branta canadensis interior.* Measurements taken from specimens contained in ROM, Ornithology collections.

congruent with Canada Goose.

Since there is no doubt as to the identification of this bone fragment as that of a Canada Goose, one question remains: how could so many experts misidentify this bone fragment? After careful review of the history, it is clear they all did not. The original identification was made by Baldwin in 1967, at a

time when the ROM did not have a significant bird bone collection. Baldwin decided to travel to the American Museum of Natural History in New York and U.S. National Museum (Smithsonian) in Washington DC. (Baldwin, 1967) in order to complete the identification of these bones, and hence neither Savage nor Churcher could have had a hand in its identification at that time. Churcher's name appears in Sadler and Savage (2003) associated with this site because he was paleontologist in charge of the project, and he studied the mammal remains found therein, published in 1965. It is important to note that Churcher is not "an ornithologist and archaeologist" as Alison and Burton (2008) claim but a mammalogist and paleontologist. We regard him highly for his wide-ranging abilities, including having supervised the PhD thesis of one of the authors (KLS). However, we also have his verbal assurances that he did not have a hand in the bone's identification.

Howard Savage (who was not a "staff paleontologist at the University of Toronto, Department of Ornithology" as Alison and Burton (2008) claim but a professor of faunal-zooarchaeology in the Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto) had a rigorous bone-identification ethic and we are confident that he could not have made such a flagrant identification error. Sadler and Savage (2003) was published some years after Savage's death in 1996, and given this book is a compilation of ALL archaeological bird bones found in Ontario (tens of thousand of specimens are represented), we are confident that Savage could not have personally checked the identification of every bone listed in this volume. As Sadler himself mentioned in the acknowledgements to the work (Sadler and Savage, 2003:331) they had to rely on the publications and reports of many individuals before them, such as Don Baldwin. Unfortunately, errors in identification do happen which may have been amplified in Baldwin's case, as he was a neophyte student and this was the first bone identification project that he had tackled (Baldwin, 1967). Therefore, we contend that the bone identification error was Baldwin's and Baldwin's alone.

Alison and Burton did not cite Lumsden (1984) or Abraham and Ross (2005) in their original discussion. Lumsden's (1984) work is relevant, as it discusses the pre-settlement breeding distribution of Trumpeter and Tundra Swans in Eastern Canada, and the archaeological and fur trader records of Trumpeter Swan. The problematic identity of the swans in early archaeological reports is specifically discussed, and Mute Swan is not mentioned. Abraham and Ross (2005) note the first 4 records of feral Mute Swan in Hudson Bay Lowlands of Northern Ontario and Manitoba (from 1996, 1997, 2001 and 2004). They documented no other records prior to these dates, which further demonstrate the lack of early evidence for Mute Swans in Eastern Canada.

In addition, we informed Burton in writing about the re-identification of the sternum ROM 159698 during August 2005. It was on her urging that we sent the bone to Dr. Richard Harington, retired Pleistocene paleontologist from the Canadian Museum of Nature, in Ottawa, Ontario. He also agreed with our re-identification of this bone as Canada Goose in January 2006, and this was communicated to Burton. However, Burton ignored this new information and instead re-published the former misidentification of the bone and in our view misrepresented the truth.

Discussion

From what we are able to ascertain Baldwin had a "few bones which defied identification" including the sternum in question. He eventually identified three bones as belonging to the "Common Domestic Chicken" *Gallus gallus* while the other "puzzler" was identified as the "breast bone of a Mute Swan" after additional comparisons with other "European avifauna".

From all accounts Don Baldwin was a careful observer and researcher. During his research Baldwin realized that the ROM's skeleton collection was not sufficient and so he traveled to the American Museum and the Smithsonian Museum to assist with his identifications. The box containing the sternum also contains a small label with "yellowlegs?" handwritten on one side and "Cygnus olor" on the other side. It also contains a small rectangular piece of paper with the words "O.K. New York., O.K. Wash". suggesting that he had confirmed his identification in all three museums. Shortly after the identification of the Fort Albany material Baldwin left the ROM to teach at Upper Canada College. Don Baldwin passed away in 2007 and we were unable to contact him prior to his death. As a result,

it remains unclear why Baldwin considered the bone to be problematic or how he concluded the bone belonged to a Mute Swan.

The list of species Baldwin identified is of further interest in two ways. The first is the number of unusual species present on the list. There are several species of waterfowl, grouse, owls and shorebirds as expected, but more notably, the list contains several unusual species: Ross's Goose (uncommon in east), Whooping Crane (endangered), Willet (extralimital), Eskimo Curlew (endangered/extinct), Common Murre (extralimital) and Passenger Pigeon (extinct). We consider all of these species unusual for the area by today's standards. The second point of interest is the species missing from the list. A few species of shorebirds, such as Marbled Godwit, and Lesser Yellowlegs are common in the area today but are not represented within this archeological material. Were they not there? Were they not hunted? Are there additional mistakes in identification? The resultant reanalysis of additional accessioned material is currently under review.

Summary
We have reexamined (ROM 159698) found at the historic Fort Albany archaeological site This alleged Mute Swan sternum does not represent a swan at all, but represents a Canada Goose. It falls within the range of keel size, keel slope and ridge position.for Canada Goose. Therefore, there is no archaeological record of Mute Swan in Ontario to date.

Acknowledgements
We would like to acknowledge Dick Harington, Joe Nocera, Brad Millen, April Hawkins and Amelia Whitear for their assistance in assembling this note.

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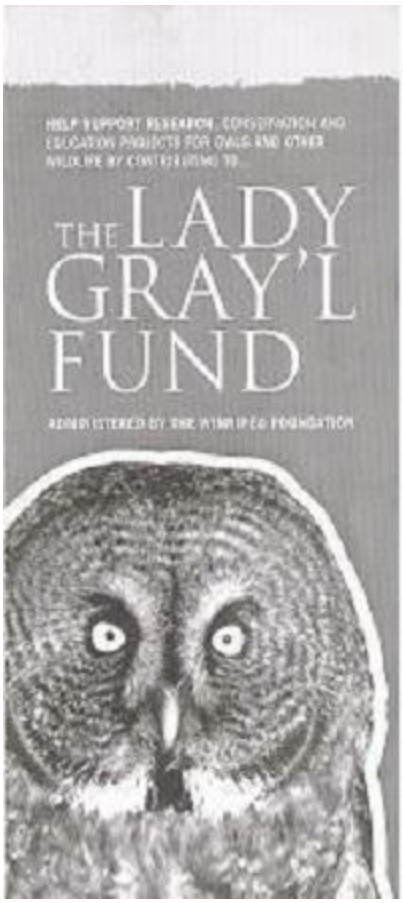

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