PICOIDES

Bulletin of The Society of Canadian Ornithologists
Bulletin de la Société des Ornithologistes du Canada

Picoides, June 2005
Volume 18, Number 2

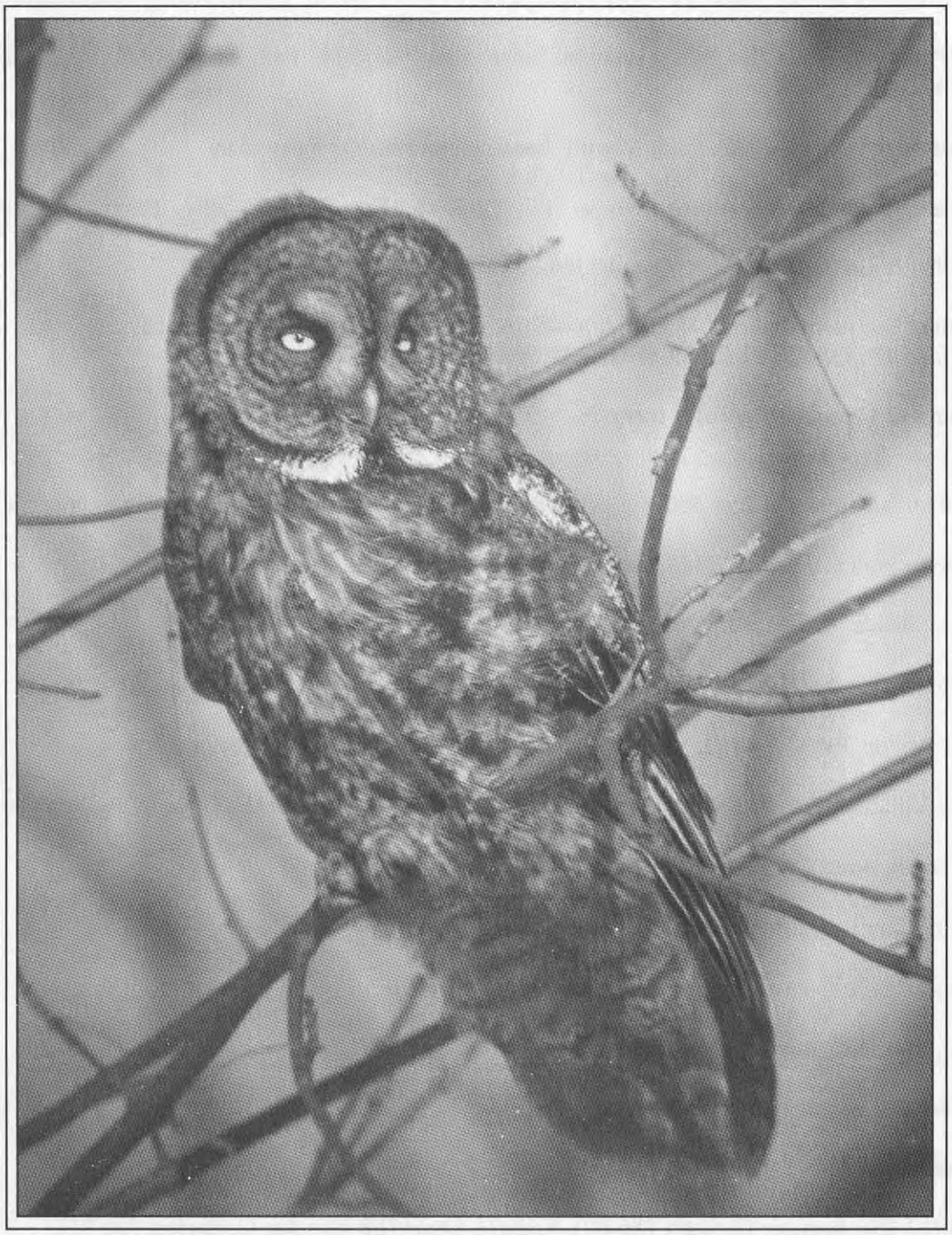


PHOTO: PIERRE LAMOTHE

Great Gray Owl

Society of Canadian Ornithologists/Société des Ornithologistes du Canada

WEBSITE: www.sco-soc.ca/index.htm

Officers for 2004/2005:

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

Vice-President/President-elect: Dr. Susan Hannon, Voice: 780-492-7544; Fax: 780-492-9234; Email: shannon@ualberta.ca

Membership Secretary: Thérèse Beaudet, Email: beaudet.lamothe@sympatico.ca

Recording Secretary: Dr. Greg Robertson, Voice: 709-772-2778; Fax: 709-772-5097; Email: greg.robertson@ec.gc.ca

Treasurer: Dr. Pierre Lamothe, Email: beaudet.lamothe@sympatico.ca

Editor of Picoides: Dorothy Diamond, Voice: 506-454-6178; Email: doroth@nbnet.nb.ca
TO ADVERTISE IN PICOIDES PLEASE SEND OR WRITE TO EDITOR.

(Voting) Members of Council: *second term

*Dr. Gilles Gauthier, Voice: 418-656-5507; Fax: 418-656-2043; Email: gilles.gauthier@bio.ulaval.ca

*Dr. Liana Zanette, Voice: 519-850-2549; Fax: 519-661-3935; Email: lzanette@uwo.ca

*Dr. Allan Baker, Voice: 416-586-5520; Fax: 416-586-5553; Email: allanb@rom.on.ca

*Dr. Robert Butler, Voice: 604-940-4672; Fax: 640-946-7022; Email: rob.butler@ec.gc.ca

*Dr. Bob Clark, Voice: 306-975-4110; Fax: 306- 975-4089; Email: bob.clark@ec.gc.ca

*Dr. Marc-André Villard, Tél: 506-858-4334 (direct: 4292); Fax: 506-858-4541; Courriel: villarm@umoncton.ca

Dr. Ken Otter, Email: otterk@ub.ca

Dr. Ian Warkentin, Email: iwarkentin@beothuk.swgc.mun.ca

Dr. Jean-François Giroux, Courriel: giroux.jean-françois@ugam.ca

Dr. Marc Belisle, Courriel: marc.belisle@usherbrooke,ca

Dr. Jean-Pierre Savard, Past President (02-03).

(Non-voting) Past Presidents:

M. Ross Lein (1982-85), Spencer G. Sealy (86-87), Erica H. Dunn (88-89), Jon C. Barlow (90-91), J. Bruce Falls (92-93), Henri R. Ouellet (94-95), David N. Nettleship (96-97), Antony W. Diamond (98-99), Kathy Martin (00-01).

NEWS ITEMS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

2005 SCO/SOC Annual General Meeting
Halifax, NS, Oct. 20-22, 2005
Register and Reserve, see page 4.

Call for submissions to ACE/ECO in French or English, see page 8.

ACE/ECO web-site is http://www.ace-eco.org

Call for new Editor for Picoides, see below.

Future Direction for Picoides, see page 16.

PHOTO: CHARLES FRANCIS

BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Readers,

The time has come for me to step down as the Editor of Picoides. Although others have donated more years of time to this worthy effort, I think 5 years is about enough for me. With the possibility of Picoides going out of hard copy and into an on-line format, I feel it is time to allow someone with more skills in that area to take over. Perhaps this will give me the time to contribute more in terms of articles, book reviews, or photos.

As Editor I have learned a variety of skills, but the best part of this job is the freedom to be creative and to work, albeit through email, with other ornithologists and members of SCO/SOC. We are all tremendously busy, and the busiest people seem to contribute the most. I continue to be impressed with how those in top positions in government, university, and organizations, with heavy responsibilities and many details to fill up their working lives, still find the time to answer my requests for contributions. Your executive and members of committees are like that - doing the maximum at work, and then more as volunteers for the SCO/SOC.

My sincere thanks go to the presidents I have worked with - Kathy, Jean-Pierre, and Charles - and to membership secretaries Therese Beaudet and Nancy Flood, with whom I collaborated in getting the mailings out and membership lists updated.

I want especially to thank my son, Matthew McFarlane, who gave as much time as I did to Picoides. It was a pleasure to work with him as an equal, and to see how well our skills complemented each other's. That is a collaboration I will miss.

So this (volunteer) job is up for grabs, to anyone who enjoys writing, editing, graphics, photography, communication, collaboration with others about bird-related topics, and advancement of the science of ornithology. Keep in mind that this science done in isolation without communication does not progress. Picoides is about sharing information and about learning. May its new form be as effective as the last.

Dorothy Diamond
doroth@nbnet.nb.ca

CIRCULAR OF INFORMATION

Annual Meeting of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists/Société des Ornithologistes du Canada
20 - 22 October 2005
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Location

The Society of Canadian Ornithologists/Société des Ornithologistes du Canada will hold its annual meeting at the Delta Halifax Hotel, 1990 Barrington Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia from Thursday, 20 October through Saturday, 22 October 2005.

Registration

We are encouraging members to register on-line by following the meeting link on the SCO/SOC website at www.sco-soc.ca. Those preferring to register by mail can download a form from the meeting website or request a form fromAndrew Boyne (45 Alderney Drive, 16th floor, Dartmouth, N.S., B2Y 2N6; 902-426-1900). Cheques should be made out to "Society of Canadian Ornithologists". Confirmation of registration and receipts will be sent by e-mail or mail as appropriate.

Fees and Deadlines

On or before 1 September: Students - $35.00
Non-students - $60.00

2 September to 14 October*: Students - $40.00
Non-students - $65.00

*After 14 October, only on-site registration will be possible

On-site registration: Students - $60.00
Non-students - $85.00

Non-members - Students and non-students will be charged $10 and $25, respectively, in addition to the above registration fees. These added fees can be used to purchase a new membership or to re-new a lapsed membership. You can buy a membership by ticking the appropriate box on the registration form.

Scientific Sessions

Scientific sessions will be held in the **Bluenose Ballroom** of the Delta Halifax.

Symposia - Friday and Saturday morning sessions will include a symposium. The Friday morning symposium will be on "Radar Technology and Ornithology" and the Saturday morning symposium will be on " The Contribution of Citizen Science to Canadian Ornithology".

Oral papers - Friday and Saturday afternoon sessions will include oral presentations. There will be a limited number of openings and preference will be given to paper submissions that arrive before the 1 September deadline.

Posters - Posters will be displayed throughout the conference in the Bluenose Ballroom. There will also be a reception and poster session with authors between 7:30 and 10:00 pm on Friday, 21 October in the ballroom.

Call for Papers

We invite conference participants to submit an abstract (see below for instructions) for an oral or poster presentation on any topic related to the scientific study of birds. The deadline for receipt of abstracts is 1 September 2005. Oral presentations will be 15 minutes long including questions, and posters must be no more than 122 cm X 122 cm.

Instructions for preparation of abstracts

Please provide the following information, in the order listed, when preparing abstracts.

1. Title of presentation.
2. Name(s) and affiliation(s) of all authors.
3. The body of the abstract, no more than 300 words.
4. Full name, address and contact information (tel, fax, e-mail) of corresponding author
5. Type of presentation, ORAL, POSTER or part of a SYMPOSIUM. Indicate ORAL/POSTER if both are acceptable options.
6. Format for oral presentations; POWERPOINT, SLIDES, OVERHEAD.
7. Whether a STUDENT presentation and if you wish to be considered for a student presentation award.
8. Any special instructions

Example: Pelagic distribution of rare seabirds in Atlantic Canada

Gregory J. Robertson, Canadian Wildlife Service, 6 Bruce Street, Mount Pearl, NL, A1N 4T3, Canada; Andrew W. Boyne, Canadian Wildlife Service, 45 Alderney Drive, Dartmouth, NS, B2Y 2N6, Canada; Marty L. Leonard, Department of Biology, Dalhousie University, etc....

Several species of rare seabirds are regularly sighted in the waters of the Grand Banks and the Scotian Shelf...

Gregory J. Robertson
6 Bruce Street
Mount Pearl NL A1N 4T3
Canada
Tel: 709-772-2778
Fax: 709-772-5097
e-mail: greg.robertson@ec.gc.ca
POSTER
Place next to other Robertson poster (Winter seabird distributions in eastern Newfoundland)

Submission of abstracts

Abstracts should be submitted as e-mail attachments to greg.robertson@ec.gc.ca
For those wishing to mail abstracts, please send them to Greg Robertson, Canadian Wildlife Service, 6 Bruce Street, Mount Pearl, NL, A1N 4T3. Make sure that they are posted in advance of the deadline, as **abstracts received after 1 September 2005 will not be considered.**

Social Events

Thursday, 20 October
7:30 - 10:00 pm — Opening reception at the Harbourview Suite at the Delta Halifax

Friday, 21 October
7:30 - 10:00 pm — Reception and poster session in the Bluenose Ballroom at the Delta Halifax

Saturday, 22 October
6:30 - 11:00 pm — Buffet dinner with traditional music and dancing in the North Front Casement Rooms of the Halifax Citadel National Historic Site

Tickets for the dinner will be $25 and should be purchased when registering for the conference.

Travel

For those traveling by air, WestJet is providing a 10% discount on their best available regular fares at the time of booking (excluding seat sales). There are three options for booking discount flights. Reservations can be made by 1) calling 1-888-493-7853 (indicate that you will be attending the SCO/SOC conference and give the booking account QC# 3112) or by downloading forms from the SCO/SOC website (go to meeting link) that can be either 2) faxed or 3) e-mailed to WestJet. Note that the 10% discount is not available if flights are booked through the WestJet website. Discounted rates are also available only for travel between 17 and 26 October 2005 inclusively, and flights must arrive and depart from Halifax. For flight information, visit the WestJet website at www.westjet.com.

A shuttle bus leaves the Halifax Airport every 45-60 min and stops at various hotels, including the Delta Halifax. Costs are $12/person (one-way) or $20/person (round trip); only cash payments are accepted.

Accommodations

Delta Halifax
We have reserved a block of rooms at the meeting site at the Delta Halifax for a reduced rate of $145 + tax/night. You can book a room by calling the following toll free number 1-877-814-7706 or by reserving online at http://www4.deltahotels.com/reservations/. Please indicate that you are with the conference when booking your room.

A special note to students: **Halifax Heritage House Hostel** (1253 Barrington St., Halifax) is a youth hostel about a 10 to 15 minute walk from the conference site. Rooms are $24/person for a 6-8 bed room and $25/person for a 4 bed room. You can book space in the hostel by calling 902-422-3863 or by going to http://www.hihostels.ca/hostels/Nova Scotia and following the links to Halifax. Beware that online reservations must be made a week in advance.

Field Trips

As part of their 50th anniversary celebration, the Nova Scotia Bird Society will host the following two field trips from 07:30 to 12:00 on Sunday, 23 October:

1. Eastern Shore hotspots
This trip will follow one of the best birding routes in the province, with stops at freshwater lakes, dunes, estuaries, and mixed woods. The route always yields a broad range of species, including late shorebirds (e.g. Black-bellied Plover and Dunlin), gulls (e.g. Black-headed), bay and sea ducks (e.g. Lesser Scaup), and assorted landbirds (e.g. Ipswich Sparrow). Vagrants such as southern herons, European shorebirds, and southwestern passerines are also possible at this time of year

2. Pennant Point and coastal barrens
This trip will appeal to both birders and those interested in a scenic hike along coastal barrens and rocky shores. The route should yield Nova Scotia specialties of both the coast (e.g. Northern Gannet and Black Guillemot) and woods (e.g. Boreal Chickadee and Fox Sparrow). Raptors, such as Peregrine Falcon and Rough-legged Hawk, and early wintering birds, such as Northern Shrike, American Pipit, Snow Bunting, and Lapland Longspur are also possible.

Registration - Participants must register for the trips and pay the $25 transportation fee when registering for the conference. The fee is non-refundable. Space is limited and offered on a first come, first served basis, so please indicate both your first and second choice of trip.

Members of the local committee will also offer informal birding walks before morning sessions on Friday and Saturday. Sign-up sheets will be available at the conference.

Doris Huestis Speirs Award for Outstanding Contributions to Canadian Ornithology 2005 Call for Nominations

Prix Doris Huestis Speirs pour les contributions exceptionnelles à l'ornithologie canadienne Mises en candidature 2005

The Doris Huestis Speirs Award is the most prestigious award given by the Society of Canadian Ornithologists. The award is presented annually to an individual who has made outstanding lifetime contributions to Canadian ornithology. Past awardees include professional ornithologists who work at museums, government agencies, private companies and universities, as well as amateur ornithologists and people who have contributed to ornithological infrastructure of Canada.

Nominations of candidates for the 2005 award will be accepted until September 15th, and the award will be presented at the Society's Meeting in Halifax in October.

Please submit nominations, preferably with supporting data, to:

Dr. Gilles Seutin
Chair, D.H. Speirs Award Committee
Parks Canada, National Parks Directorate
25 Eddy Street, 25-4-S
Gatineau, Quebec, K1A 0M5
Phone 819-994-3953; fax 819-997-3380
e-mail : gilles.seutin@pc.gc.ca

Le Prix Doris Huestis Speirs est le prix le plus prestigieux décerné par la Société des ornithologistes du Canada. Ce prix est remis annuellement à une personne en reconnaissance de sa contribution au développement de l'ornithologie au Canada. Les récipiendaires des années passées incluent des professionnels ayant travaillé dans les musées, l'administration publique, des compagnies privées et le milieu universitaire, et d'autres qui ont contribué au développement des infrastructures liées à ornithologie au Canada.

Les mises en candidature pour le prix de 2005 seront acceptées jusqu'au 15 septembre. Le prix sera remis lors de la réunion de la Société à Halifax en octobre.
Veuillez soumettre vos suggestions de candidats, et de préférence inclure un document à l'appui, à :

Gilles Seutin
Président, Comité du Prix D.H. Speirs
Parcs Canada, Direction générale des Parcs Nationaux
25, rue Eddy, 25-4-S
Gatineau (Québec), K1A 0M5
Tél. 819-994-3953; Télécopie 819-997-3380
Courriel : gilles.seutin@pc.gc.ca

AVIAN CONSERVATION AND ECOLOGY - ÉCOLOGIE ET CONSERVATION DES OISEAUX

Editors-in-Chief:

Thomas D. Nudds, University of Guelph, Canada
Marc-André Villard, Université de Moncton, Canada

Publisher:The Resilience Alliance on behalf of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists and Bird Studies Canada

Journal URL: http://www.ace-eco.org

Call for Papers

Editors-in-Chief Thomas Nudds and Marc-André Villard are pleased to invite authors to submit articles to Avian Conservation and Ecology - Écologie et Conservation des Oiseaux (ACE-ÉCO). ACE-ÉCO is an open-access, fully electronic scientific journal, sponsored by the Society of Canadian Ornithologists and Bird Studies Canada.

The journal publishes peer-reviewed, scientific papers pertaining to the conservation, ecology, and status of birds. In focusing on research that is simultaneously pure and applied avian ecology, the journal will complement other publications, such as traditional ornithological journals, conservation publications, general ecology journals and those focused on specific groups of birds. Although ACE-ÉCO is intended in part to enhance the international profile of Canadian ornithology and applied avian science, contributions will be welcomed from all over the world.

Submitting an Article

Authors are invited to submit their original work under any of the following manuscript categories:

1) Research Papers

Standard papers reporting research results using the classical format (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, Literature Cited). Length restricted to 6000 words exclusive of tables, figures and literature cited. Publication fees are $750 CDN.

2) Letters

Relatively short papers designed to attract attention to innovative concepts or techniques which have the potential to strongly influence the research area. Letters will be of interest to a broader audience than topics addressed in standard research papers. For example, a letter describing a major advance in the estimation of juvenile survival using an innovative method to track bird movements over long time intervals and/or distances is likely to be of interest to avian ecologists generally. Statistical analyses supporting the concept or technique may be preliminary, but nevertheless robust with respect to the inferences drawn. Letters describing innovative concepts or techniques accompanied by too few data, or inappropriately analyzed, will not be accepted. Length is restricted to 3000 words, exclusive of tables, figures and literature cited. Publication fees are $750 CDN.

3) Forum

Short papers (1000 word limit) designed to respond/follow up on papers published in recent issues, or to reply to such commentaries. Short commentaries can also raise attention on issues that were not specifically addressed in the journal. Publication fees are to be determined.

Manuscripts are submitted electronically using a user-friendly online submission upload interface. Authors are asked first to register as an author (http://www.ace-eco.org/login.php) to obtain the pass codes that are needed to access the online submission upload interface. Submission details and manuscript formatting guidelines are available online at http://www.ace-eco.org/submissions.php.

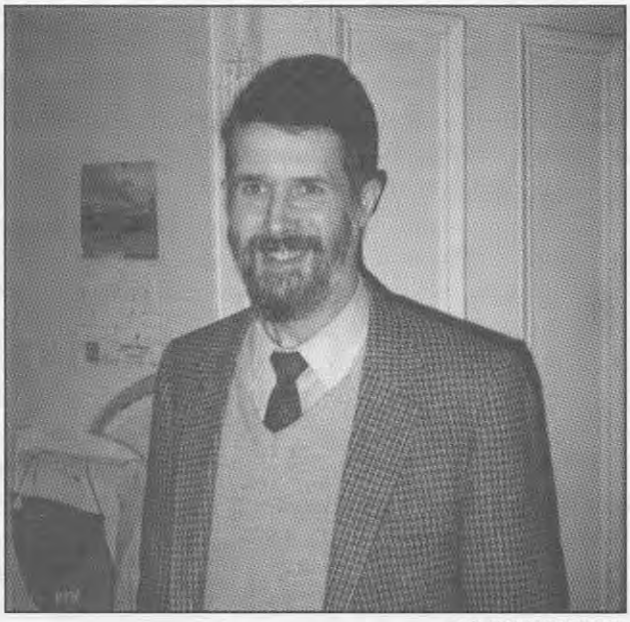
For more information, please contact the Managing Editor: managing_editor@ace-eco.org

THE BREEDING BIRD SURVEY CELEBRATES 40 YEARS!

C. M. Downes
Canadian Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Research Centre

As June rolls around, bleary-eyed birders all across North America will stumble out of bed long before sunrise, binoculars, keys and coffee cup in hand, and make their way to the start points of their Breeding Bird Survey routes. As certain as the return of the birds every spring, so begins the 40th anniversary year of the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS).

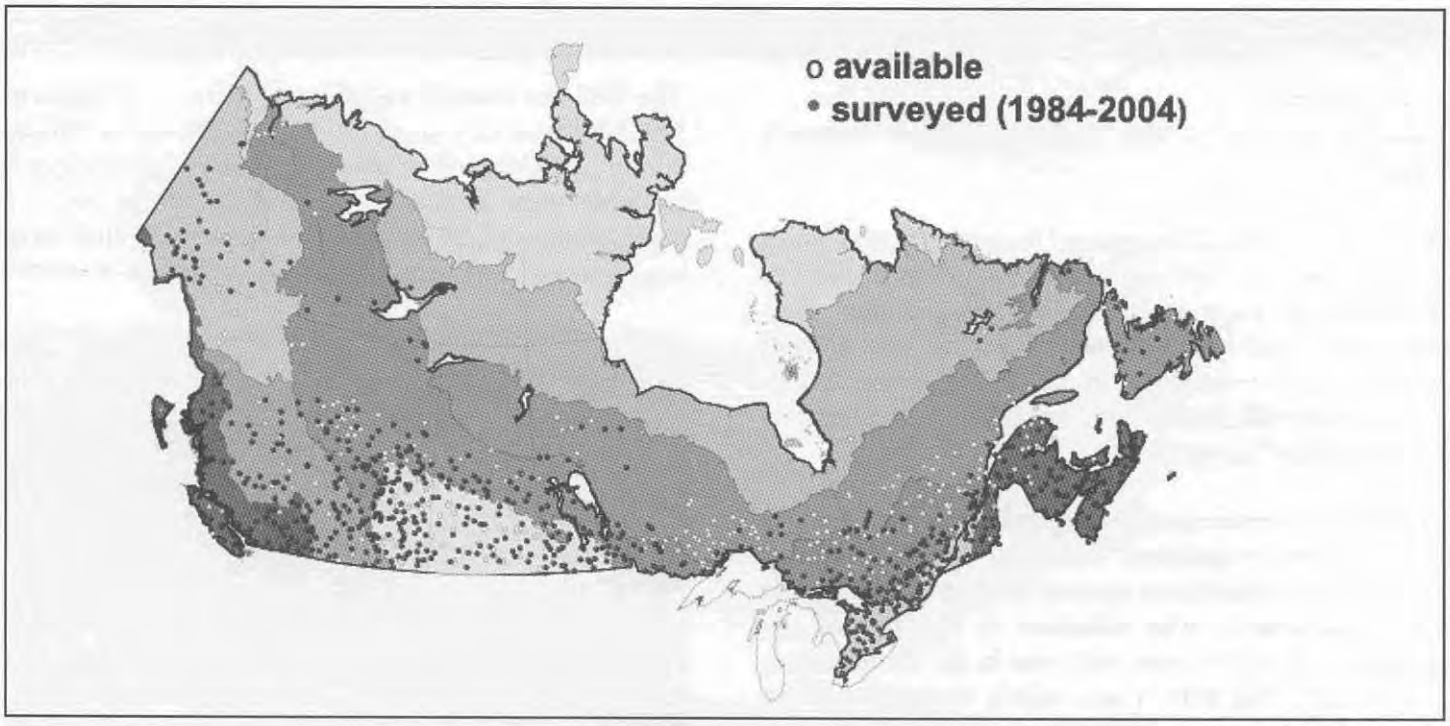
The BBS is a continent-wide program designed to monitor the long-term population trends of North American landbirds. It is based on a network of observers, skilled in bird identification, who volunteer to run one of the thousands of BBS routes each year in the United States and Canada. The BBS is now widely recognized as the most valuable source of long-term, large-scale data on landbird populations in North America. However, in order to ensure its continuation in the future and to increase its validity and effectiveness, there is a need to augment participation especially in the Canadian north, in certain habitats, in areas away from large urban centre and to increase sample sizes so as to enhance the reliability of the results. This article is both a retrospective look at the BBS's 40-year history in Canada, and a plea for participation and support of BBS within the birding community of government, academia and the public.



DR. TONY ERSKINE

The BBS was started by Chandler Robbins, U.S. Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, in 1966. In the era of "Silent Spring", when concerns about the effects of pesticide use on birds were increasing, he recognized the lack of information available on changes in bird populations over large geographical areas. Within a few years Robbins' efforts had resulted in the establishment of BBS routes throughout the U.S. and Canada. As the recognition of the importance of the data generated by the BBS has grown he has received many accolades for his inspiration to begin this program. The BBS began in Canada in 1966 when Robbins contacted Dr. Tony Erskine, Canadian Wildlife Service, who agreed to design some trial routes and find volunteers in the Atlantic provinces and Ontario. That year, with his wide range of contacts, Erskine managed to recruit 32 observers. Just two years later, BBS routes were being run in all provinces. By the mid-1970s, Yukon joined with a handful of routes. Jill Pangman ran the Inuvik route in 1987, the first route north of the Arctic circle circle and the first for the Northwest Territories. A small handful of those original observers from the 1960s are still participating today - Jack Park, Ian Halladay, Wayne Neily, Sylvia Fullerton, Ron Lepage and Jim Wilson from New Brunswick to name a few.

BBS routes are run mainly by volunteer observers. Each participant conducts his/her survey route on a single day during the peak of the breeding season, usually in June. BBS routes are 39.4 km long located on secondary roads, along which birds are counted at each of 50 stops spaced 0.8 km apart. At each stop, all birds seen or heard within 400 m of the stop are recorded during a 3-minute interval. While participants may take an additional person along as driver or record keeper, the count must be made only by the official observer. BBS routes are located randomly within one-degree block squares. This stratification is intended to help ensure that BBS routes are spread across the landscape as evenly as possible and sample the landscape in an unbiased way. Canadian participants send data to survey coordinators at the Canadian Wildlife Service National Wildlife Research Centre. In the United States, data are sent to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. The USGS office compiles all data for North America.

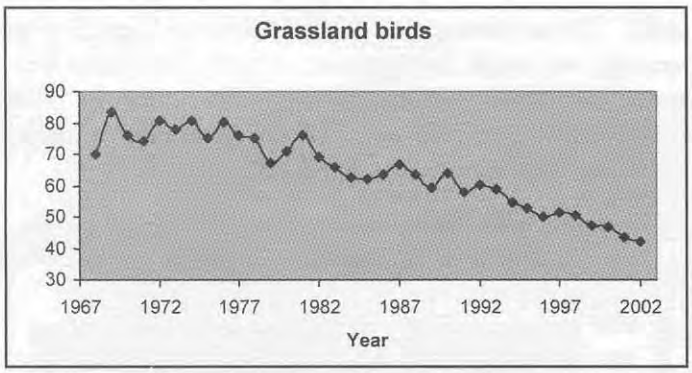


Now, with 40 years of data, including over 4 million species records, the BBS has proven itself a highly successful monitoring program. In 1999, a scientific peer review of BBS, led by the USGS (USGS, 2000), concluded that some of the strengths of BBS are the standardized methodology, including the stratified random sampling scheme for the design and placement of routes and data-collection protocols, and the extensive geographic and species coverage. A major strength of the program is that both the raw data and analysed trends are released annually and are publicly available on the US and Canadian websites (see below for web addresses). This availability has facilitated their widespread use in scientific research, conservation and management. BBS data are now used as the starting point for establishing conservation priorities and determining appropriate conservation action in virtually all major landbird management projects.

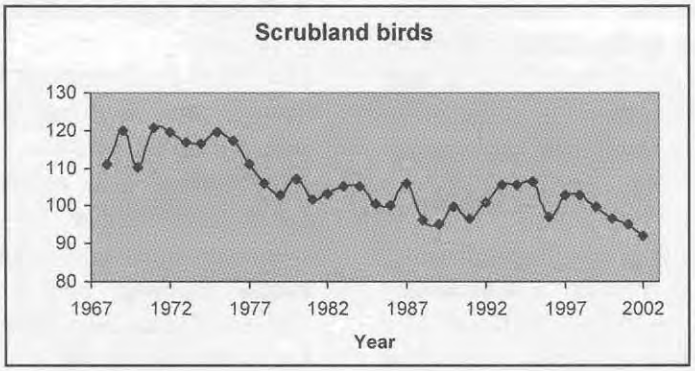
Use of BBS in conservation

One of the goals of BBS is to act as an early-warning signal of population change in landbirds and thus to encourage directed research into causes of change and conservation actions to ameliorate them. It has been remarkably successful in doing so. In the 1980s, BBS data were used to demonstrate that many Neotropical migrants were declining (Robbins et al. 1989). Publication of these results and the media attention that they drew were the spark for the formation of Partners in Flight (PIF), an international organization focused on the conservation of migratory landbirds. PIF has evolved to become part of the recently developed North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) whose goal is to develop continental conservation plans for all bird groups. The North American Landbird Conservation Plan (Rich *et al.* 2004), published by PIF provides continental priorities for landbird conservation in North America and helps guide conservation actions ensuring they are as efficient and effective as possible. The Plan contains a Watch List of those species that scored highest in the species assessment process. BBS data were used to calculate the population trend scores on which the assessments are based. For example, BBS data detected the decline in populations of Wood Thrush, Sprague's Pipit and Olive-sided Flycatcher among others, which are among the 100 species on the PIF Watch List.

BBS data have a high profile in the scientific world and are used in hundreds of research articles. For example, in the 1990s, BBS data demonstrated that grassland and scrubland birds were showing large population declines. These results helped raise the issue in management and scientific circles and resulted in a flurry of research and conservation projects for grassland birds. By providing scientific evidence for changes in their populations, the BBS confirmed the growing suspicion that grassland birds were in trouble and strengthened the argument that conservation action was needed.



BBS is the single most important Canada-wide survey for landbirds, contributing population trends for 73% of the landbird species that regularly breed in the country. The BBS methodology does not, of course, monitor all these species with equal reliability, but for many it provides the sole source of information available on their populations. The continental coverage by BBS has allowed the data to be used in "state of the environment" reports that demonstrate landscape level changes in bird populations that may be caused by large scale factors such as climate change and major forestry initiatives. Another example of use is the Canadian Wildlife Service's upcoming report assessing the status of all species in Canada. Under the Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk, the Canadian Wildlife Service has the responsibility to produce this report every 5 years. BBS data will contribute greatly to this daunting task for the landbirds (see Wild Species 2000 report website).

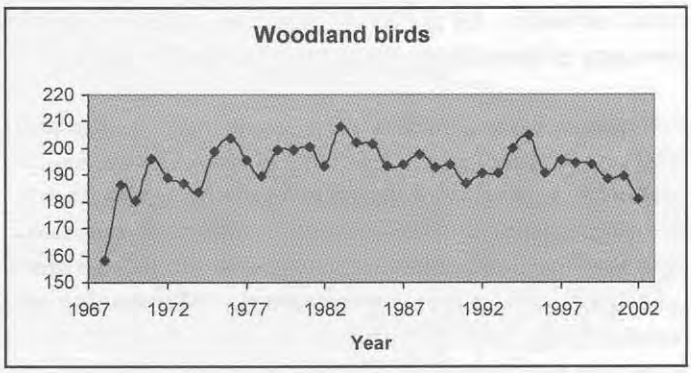


As a tool for public education and raising awareness of conservation issues the BBS has also proven itself. For example, data from the BBS in the 1990s were used as the basis for estimating the actual number of birds breeding in Canada (Blancher, 2003). Blancher determined that over half of Canada's' landbirds breed in boreal and taiga forests. Although these estimates are not very precise they demonstrated how valuable Canada is as a breeding ground for migratory birds and have been widely quoted in efforts to encourage the conservation of the boreal forest. Not least, the publication of results and the use of volunteers in running the Survey has helped develop an informed public that is aware and concerned about bird declines – an important step in achieving bird conservation

The BBS Volunteer

The BBS has earned many accolades over its 40-year history. One aspect that has been highlighted is its demonstration of the role that amateur bird watchers can play in contributing to bird conservation. In the words of its founder, "The North American Breeding Bird Survey stands as a tribute to the dedication of tens of thousands of experienced amateur birders throughout the United States and Canada." (Robbins, 2000). While the survey is coordinated and managed by U.S. and Canadian government agencies and the data are analyzed by biostatisticians, it would simply not exist without these volunteers.

Over the years some 2000 people throughout North America have participated as observers, and another 1000 or so have acted as their assistants. In Canada, over 10,000 routes have been run. These participants are a dedicated and loyal group. Most have run their routes for 7 to 8 years while a small group of about 50 Canadian observers have participated for more than 20 years. A questionnaire survey of participants in 2004 revealed that 87% are volunteers (the remaining 13% run routes as part of their job). When asked about their motivation for doing a BBS route, 80% cited personal enjoyment while 70% cited their desire to contribute to a conservation project. We received many eloquent statements about the joys of running a BBS route and vows to continue to do so as long as health and hearing held out. It is this workforce, motivated by their love of birding and birds, that is the foundation of the BBS.



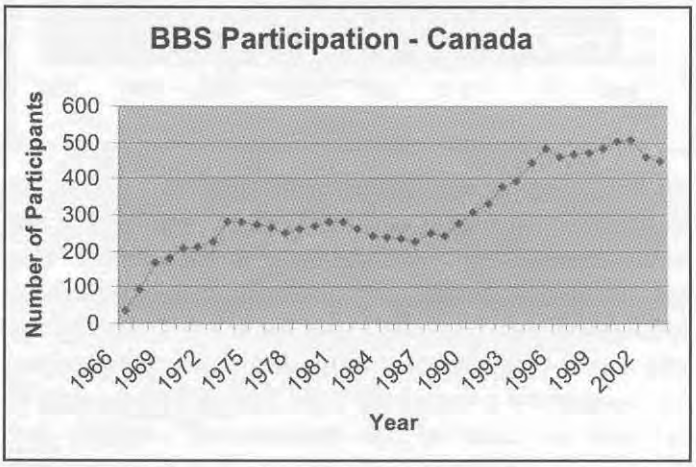
BBS Coverage and Recruitment Needs

Over 430 routes are now run in Canada each year and another 2,500 or so in the U.S. Per capita, the Canadian BBS compares favourably with the U.S. but the geographic coverage is not as evenly distributed (see map). As impressive as the coverage is, over 50% of the available routes in Canada are not run.

There are obvious gaps in coverage of the northern parts of the provinces and, while there are pockets of coverage in Yukon, much of the much of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut remain uncovered. The Canadian BBS is restricted in the north by the lack of roads and the small population of humans makes it is difficult to find volunteers with the necessary skills. BBS territorial coordinators have put a lot of effort into recruiting skilled volunteers and thus increasing coverage in the north where possible but realize that large areas will never be covered by BBS. In these areas other methods to monitor landbirds must be developed. Current recruitment efforts in the north focus on those areas in the northern parts of provinces and southern edge of the boreal where a road network exists and where the observer recruitment is possible either among skilled amateurs or among professional field biologists.

In the southern part of Canada, efforts have been made to improve coverage in certain habitat types. For example, in order to get better coverage of grassland birds, some of which are showing the greatest rates of decline among the landbirds, a concerted effort has been made by CWS biologists in the last few years to run routes in the remaining areas of grassland in the southern prairie provinces (for more information see Dale et al, in press). However, volunteer observers are now needed to take over these "grassland" routes in the future. Even in areas that are considered well covered by BBS, increases in sample size are needed to improve the reliability of the trend estimates for particular species, and to improve coverage in areas away from urban centres.

Participation rates in BBS rose dramatically in the mid-1980s, a reflection of both the growing awareness of problems in landbird populations and the recognition of the important role BBS played in their conservation. However, participation has plateaued in the last 10 years (see chart on Canadian participation). Maintaining and increasing the pool of skilled volunteers is essential to the existence and growth of BBS. Currently, 76% of the Canadian volunteers are over 45 while 16% are 65 or older. These observers will retire because of age, loss of hearing, and other commitments. There is an immediate need to educate young people not only in bird identification, but in a conservation ethic that instils the desire to "give something back to the birds".



A Plea for Participation and Support

During a discussion on the future of BBS in Alberta, George Newton (Can. Parks and Wilderness Society) summed up the situation by stating that the growth of the BBS cannot rely on the government agencies that coordinate it nor on the current dedicated workforce of volunteer observers. It must be the responsibility of the entire birding community including government scientists, academics, bird conservation organizations and local field naturalists to use whatever skills and contacts they have to actively participate in or support the BBS. Naturalist clubs and teachers in ornithology can educate young people in survey techniques, bird conservation issues and can nurture a conservation ethic of participation in surveys or other conservation activities. Birders who have the skills in identification can consider taking one or two days each year to run the nearest vacant BBS route. Managers of wildlife biologists can encourage participation by granting their employees leave to participate in the BBS. That one day per year running a BBS route will contribute in perpetuity to the conservation of landbirds. Today, it will determine current population status. Future generations will use today's data to gain a retrospective on whether the conservation actions we implement today were successful.

What will the BBS look like in the year 2044, its 80th anniversary? We hope by then to see even coverage throughout the provinces including a well-developed BBS

network along the southern fringe of the boreal forest where roads exist. By then perhaps monitoring will be done by microphone and satellite technology in the rest of the boreal forest, taiga and tundra! In that year, the sounds and songs of the birds returning in the spring will once again mark the beginning of a new cycle of the seasons; when, as June rolls around, bleary-eyed birders will still rise before sunrise, to begin their BBS routes. As certain as the return of the birds every spring, so, we hope, will begin the 80th anniversary year of the North American Breeding Bird Survey in Canada (BBS).

References

Blancher, P. 2003. Importance of Canada's Boreal Forest to Landbirds. Canadian Boreal Initiative and Boreal Songbird Initiative, Ottawa ON and Seattle WA.

Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council (CESCC). 2001. Wild Species 2000: The General Status of Species in Canada. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada. http://www.wildspecies.ca/wildspecies2000/en/T04E.html. The new report, Wild Species 2005, will be posted on this same website in 2006.

Dale, B., M. Norton, C.M. Downes and B. Collins. In press. Monitoring as a means to focus research and conservation – the grassland bird monitoring example.

Bird Conservation Implementation and Integration in the Americas: Proceedings of the Third International Partners in Flight Conference. 2002 (C.J. Ralph and T.D. Rich, eds.). U.S.D.A. Forest service, GTR-PSE-191 Albany, CA.

Rich, T.D., C.J. Beardmore, H., Berlanga, P.J. Blancher, M.S.W. Bradstreet, G.S. Butcher, D.W. Demarest, E. H. Dunn, W.C. Hunter, E. E. Inigo-Elias, J.A. Kennedy, A.M. Martell, A. O. Panjabi, D.N. Pashley, K.V. Rosenberg, C.M. Rustay, J.S. Wendt, T.C. Will. 2004. Partners in Flight North American Landbird Conservation Plan. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY. (http://www.partnersinflight.org/cont_plan/default.htm).

Robbins, C. S. 2000. Thirty years of Breeding Bird Survey in North America. Soc. Con. Bio. Newsletter Vol 7(1).

Robbins, C. S., J. R. Sauer, R. S. Greenberg, and S. Droege. 1989. Population declines in North American birds that migrate to the Neotropics. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. USA 86:7658-7662.

Website references:
Partners in Flight (PIF): http://www.partnersinflight.org/
PIF- Canada: http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/birds/lb_ot_e.cfm

North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI): http://www.nabci.net/

U.S. Geological Survey. 2000. A programmatic review of the North American Breeding Bird Survey. http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/bbsnews/

PHOTO: CHARLES FRANCIS

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER

GREAT GRAY OWL INVASION IN QUÉBEC

by Thérèse Beaudet and Pierre Lamothe

Great Gray Owls (*Stryx nebulosa*) occur throughout the North American boreal forest and normally spend their entire life in remote areas away from people. Exceptionally, they may wander south during winters when their prey are scarce; their normal diet consists of Red Backed Vole, but they will also feed on mice, shrew, squirrels, hare and other small mammals when voles are in low density. It seems that the small mammal reproduction was so bad in summer of 2004 up north that during the 2005 winter thousands of Great Gray Owl invaded southern Québec, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Ontario, as well as Minnesota and Wisconsin, in search of microtines outside their normal range, to the joy of bird watchers and photographers.

A total of 512 birds were reported in southern Québec between October 2004 and February 2005, mainly on the north shore of the St. Lawrence. A few reached the Gaspé peninsula and New Brunswick, as if the St. Lawrence River acted as a barrier. In some locations amazing concentrations were observed: on Île-aux-Coudres, an island off the north shore of the St. Lawrence River near La Malbaie, 67 owls were counted on February 5th. Near Montréal, Île-Bizard housed up to 18 birds. A lot of sightings were also made in the Ottawa area. The previous invasion in Québec was in the 1983-1984 winter when around 350 birds were observed. The 2004-2005 invasion is believed to have been more important.

Thanks to the Internet, several amazing pictures of owls were made available, which eventually raised ethical questions about how the pictures were taken. The use of bait to attract owls for pictures and the annoyance to owls, were highly criticized. At one point, a website showing maps of recent observations was removed, because it was found to funnel observers to these sites creating increase disturbance to the birds. Another invasion also occurred in Île-Bizard, inducing flocks of observers from the North-Eastern States on weekends.

Throughout the winter, owls were observed hunting in fallow fields and perched only a few metres above the ground, trying to detect their prey by sound. Among the birds that travelled south some were probably in poor physical condition, and no doubt some of them died of starvation. In addition to those who did not survive the winter, several birds were hit by cars as reported in Minnesota, where the magnitude of this year's invasion was unprecedented (2000 owls were reported). Among the carcasses examined, adult females were in good condition.

The Great Gray Owl is between 60 and 84 cm high and its wingspan reaches 150 cm. It looks big, but weighs less that the Great Horned Owl. At least two Great Gray Owls were the prey of a Great Horned Owl at the Cap Tourmente National Wildlife Area. Healthy birds are normally nocturnal, but when stressed and starved, they are also active in daylight. The Great Gray Owl flies slowly, quietly, for short distances. Its absence of fear makes it accident-prone and easy to observe.

The Great Gray Owl was designated as nationally rare (vulnerable) by COSEWIC in 1979, and delisted in 1996. It is retained on Ontario's list of provincially vulnerable species pending further consideration by COSSARO. It is not listed in Manitoba and is no longer classified as a vulnerable species in Québec.

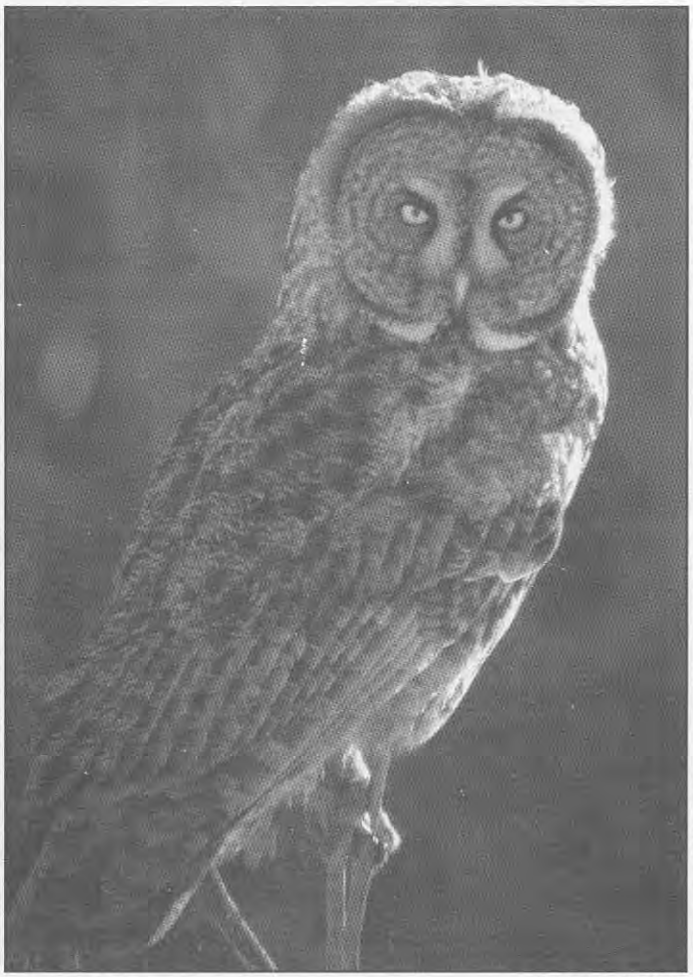


PHOTO: P. LAMOTHE

GREAT GREY OWL

INVASION DE CHOUETTES LAPONES AU QUÉBEC

par Thérèse Beaudet et Pierre Lamothe

La Chouette lapone (*Stryx nebulosa*) se retrouve dans la zone boréale de l'Amérique du Nord et passe normalement toute sa vie dans des zones isolées, loin des humains. À l'occasion, des Chouettes peuvent s'aventurer plus au sud pendant les hivers où leurs proies se font rares; leur diète normale consiste en campagnols à dos roux, mais elles se nourrissent aussi de souris, musaraignes, écureuils et autres petits mammifères quand la densité des populations de campagnols est faible.

Il semble que la reproduction chez les petits mammifères a été si mauvaise dans le nord à l'été 2004 qu'à l'hiver 2005 des milliers de Chouettes lapones ont envahi le sud du Québec, du Manitoba, du Nouveau- Brunswick et de l'Ontario de même que le Minnesota et le Wisconsin, pour la plus grande joie des observateurs d'oiseaux et des photographes.

Un total de 512 Chouettes a été rapporté pour le sud du Québec, surtout au Nord du fleuve Saint-Laurent, entre octobre 2004 et février 2005. Quelques-unes se sont rendu jusqu'à la Gaspésie et le Nouveau-brunswick, le Saint-Laurent agissant en quelques sorte comme barrière. À certains endroits, on a observé des concentrations étonnantes : sur l'Île-aux-Coudres, une île au large de la rive nord du Saint-Laurent près de La Malbaie, on a compté 67 chouettes le 5 février 2005. Près de Montréal, l'Île-Bizard a accueilli jusqu'à 18 oiseaux. Plusieurs observations ont aussi été enregistrées dans la région d'Ottawa. L'invasion précédente au Québec datait de l'hiver 1983-1984, alors qu'environ 350 Chouettes avaient été observées. On croit que l'invasion de 2004-2005 a été plus importante.

Grâce à Internet, plusieurs photos extraordinaires ont été diffusées, ce qui a fini par soulever des questions d'éthique quant aux circonstances dans lesquelles les photos de Chouettes avaient été prises. À un certain moment, une carte montrant les sites des observations les plus récentes a été retirée, parce qu'on s'est aperçu que cela attirait les observateurs vers ces sites ce qui dérangeait les oiseaux.

Une autre invasion s'est aussi produite sur l'Île-Bizard, quand des observateurs venant des états du Nord-Est américain y ont afflué en grand nombre pour observer les Chouettes.

Au cours de l'hiver les Chouettes lapones ont pu être observées dans des champs en friche et se perchaient à quelques mètres du sol alors qu'elles chassaient, tentant de détecter leurs proies au son. Certains des oiseaux qui ont migré vers le sud étaient en mauvaise condition physique, et sans doute certains sont-ils morts de faim. En plus de ceux qui n'ont pas survécu à l'hiver, plusieurs oiseaux ont été tués par des véhicules tel que rapporté au Minnesota, où l'amplitude de la migration a été sans précédent (on y a rapporté 2000 Chouettes lapones). Parmi les carcasses examinées, les femelles adultes semblaient cependant en bonne condition.

La Chouette lapone mesure de 60 à 84 cm de haut et son envergure d'ailes peut atteindre 150 cm. Elle paraît grosse mais pèse moins que le grand duc. Au moins deux Chouettes lapones ont été la proie d'un grand duc dans la Réserve nationale de faune du cap Tourmente. Les oiseaux en santé sont normalement nocturnes, mais quand ils sont stressés et affamés, ils peuvent être actifs le jour. La Chouette lapone a un vol lent, silencieux, sur de courtes distances. Elle n'est pas craintive ce qui la rend sujette à des accidents, mais aussi facile à observer.

En 1979, la Chouette lapone a été désignée rare (vulnérable) par le Comité sur la situation des espèces en péril au Canada (COSEPAC/ COSEWIC), mais supprimée de la liste en 1996. Elle est toujours considérée vulnérable en Ontario, en attendant un avis du COSSARO. Elle n'est pas sur la liste au Manitoba et n'est plus considérée vulnérable au Québec.

FUTURE DIRECTION OF PICOIDES

by Charles M. Francis and Ian Warkentin

In January 2005, the SCO circulated a poll to all of its members, through Picoides as well as through the web site, to learn about members' preferences for how the society should communicate information to members. Especially given the recent launch of our fully electronic journal, Avian Conservation and Ecology – Écologie et Conservation des Oiseaux (ACE-ÉCO), we were particularly interested in determining whether we could also be shifting more to electronic media for other communications, particularly Picoides.

Of the 83 members (of 325) who responded to the questionnaire, about 53% indicated they would prefer an electronic version of Picoides, and an additional 29% would accept one. This suggests fairly strong support to move towards an electronic newsletter, especially given that printing and mailing Picoides currently represents a major portion of the annual SCO budget. The remaining questions dealt with ways that we might implement this. A .pdf document either sent via E-mail, or posted on the web with an announcement sent via E-mail were both popular.

At least one person suggested a BSC-style electronic newsletter (which some of you may receive) while several people suggested components of the current Picoides information that could perhaps be posted directly on the society web pages instead (though perhaps with short announcements in the newsletter).

Over the next few months, Council will be working on ways to deliver an electronic version of Picoides, no doubt with discussions continuing at the upcoming annual general meeting in Halifax in October (which we hope you will all attend). We also need to consider how we can address the needs of those members who do not regularly use computers.

We are also looking for a new editor for the newsletter, as Dorothy, who has done a fabulous job of preparing Picoides over the past few years, is now ready to move on to other activities, and feels this would be a logical time to make a break. If anybody out there would be willing to take on the task of editing the newsletter (and preparing it in its new, electronic, format) please contact either Charles Francis or Dorothy for more information.

A complete breakdown of the answers to the quantitative questions follows (note that not all respondents answered every question, and in some cases, questions could have multiple answers).

1. Picoides delivery

Prefer to receive Picoides electronically (43);

Willing to receive Picoides electronically, but would prefer paper (24);

Strongly prefer a paper version of Picoides (10);

Rarely read Picoides, and feel the information could be better provided through other mechanisms such as a more frequently updated web page (5).

2. If Picoides is made available electronically, which formats would be preferred (more than one answer can be marked):

Receiving Picoides as a PDF document via email (34);

Having Picoides posted in a PDF format on the web (19);

Having Picoides posted on the web in .html format allowing for hyperlinks among pages (14)

Receiving an announcement of the newsletter via email when it is posted on the web (32)

Any of the above would be fine (15)

None of the above is useful to me (3)

3. If Picoides is posted on the web, do you feel that access should be:

Restricted to SCO members via a password (7);

Publicly available at all times (39);

Restricted initially, but publicly available after a delay (e.g. 3 or 6 months) (33);

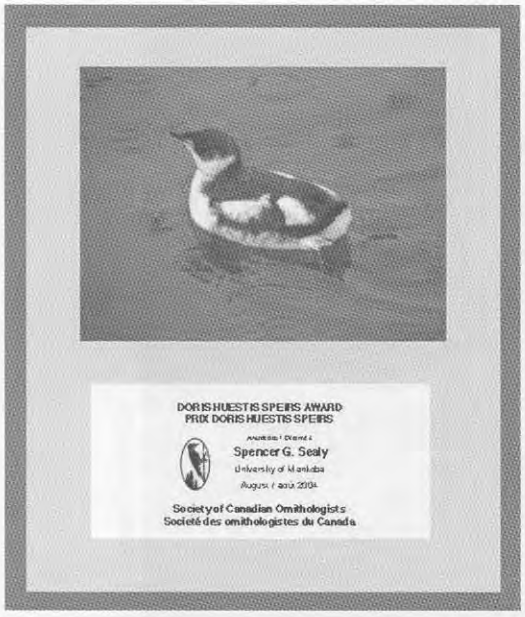
4. Picoides Content

	Not Worth Including	Sometimes Useful	Moderately Useful	Usually Useful
a) Original news items (e.g. info on upcoming meetings, awards, scholarships, etc.)	2	7	15	53
b) SCO student award reports	4	24	21	28
c) "Recent literature" sections	16	14	10	35
d) Book reviews	8	22	20	26
e) News reports on conservation issues/initiatives (e.g., trends in particular species or taxa, species-at-risk legislation, habitats/regions at risk)	2	9	13	52
f) Reports about activities of ornithological organizations (e.g. Ornithological Council)	7	25	17	25
g) Minutes of SCO Council meetings and AGM	21	23	14	19
h) Feature articles on various aspects of Canadian ornithology	4	7	24	41
i) Abstracts/summaries of Canadian bird-related theses (especially MSc theses that are not available through abstracting services)	4	13	20	39
j) Biographies of Canadian ornithologists	7	31	24	15

In addition to the predefined choices listed on the questionnaire, there were also a large number of helpful comments received from various members, regarding both Picoides content, and the web pages. Although I have not listed all of these comments here, these will all certainly be taken into account as we move forwards in developing the newsletter and the web pages.

2004 DORIS HUESTIS SPEIRS AWARD TO DR. SPENCER G. SEALY

for Outstanding Contributions to Canadian Ornithology
Dr. Spencer G. Sealy



The Doris Huestis Speirs Award is the most prestigious award of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists, recognizing outstanding contributions to Canadian ornithology. The SCO/SOC is pleased to present this award in 2004 to Dr. Spencer G. Sealy.

We honour Dr. Sealy for his contributions to ornithology in Canada over his 40+ year career, including research, teaching, supervising graduate students, and support of ornithological museums. His major research areas include behavioural and evolutionary ecology of avian brood parasites and their hosts, ecology of seabirds, songbird population trends, and sociality among tropical birds. Spencer began his ornithological career as a youngster in Battleford, Saskatchewan, and first published in 1960 when in grade 11. R.W. Nero, C.S. Houston, R. Webb, and K. Vermeer had a strong influence on his early career. During his M.Sc. (University of British Columbia 1968; advisor M.D.F. Udvardy) and Ph.D. studies (University of Michigan 1972; advisor R.W. Storer), he conducted the first major breeding and feeding ecology studies of little known Pacific alcids in remote locations in the Bering

Sea, Alaska (Least, Crested, and Parakeet Auklets), and at the Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia (Ancient and Marbled Murrelets).

Immediately after graduate school, he began teaching in the Department of Zoology at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg where he developed a large program of avian research at the Delta Marsh Field Station located at a forested-dune ridge on the shores of Lake Manitoba. That work has focused on breeding and feeding ecology of passerine communities (Yellow Warbler, Least Flycatcher, etc.) and brood parasitism (Brown-headed Cowbird). In addition, he developed the Department of Zoology Ornithology Museum (preparing most specimens himself), studied cloud-forest bird communities in Costa Rica, and continued studies of Pacific seabirds (especially at the Bamfield Marine Station on Vancouver Island, British Columbia) and Queen Charlotte Islands' avifauna.

Thus far, Spencer has supervised 9 Ph.D. and 42 M.Sc. students that have conducted studies on many avian groups and a vast array of topics. By 2003, he had published an amazing 230 papers, many with his students who also now contribute strongly to ornithological research in Canada and around the world. While he has published widely in international journals, he also has maintained an active interest in contributing to regional journals, especially Blue Jay, and maintains an avid interest in natural history. Spencer also has carried a heavy undergraduate teaching and committee load (introductory biology, chordate zoology, ornithology, mammalogy, and special courses at the Delta Marsh Field Station, Bamfield Marine Station, and Iceland). He has mined almost all ornithological collections in North America and many around the world for information on historical distribution, seabird vagrancy, plumage, cowbird hosts, and egg characteristics.

Spencer has also been an active member of the ornithological community as reviewer, referee, and board member. He was founding member of both the Pacific Seabird Group and SCO/SOC, and is an active member of several other ornithological societies. He has been closely associated with the publication of The Auk, Canadian Journal of Zoology, and Picoides, and is now editor of The Auk.

Spencer is one of few Canadian ornithologists to have studied and been interested in almost all aspects of the distribution, ecology, behaviour, and physiology of Canadian birds. Such a breadth of knowledge is rarely seen today with greater research specialization. Spencer's hard work, extreme dedication, and daily commitment over more than four decades is truly inspirational.

Congratulations, Spencer!

The D.H. Speirs Award Selection Committee for 2004 consisted of Gilles Seutin (chair), Erica Dunn and Mark Brigham.

PHOTO: CHARLES FRANCIS

BROWN THRASHER

COWBIRD VERSUS CUCKOO HOSTS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LEARNED NEST DEFENSE - 2004 COOKE AWARD WINNER

Daniela Campobello, Ph.D. Student
Department of Zoology, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg. MB R3T 2N2

danielacampobello@hotmail.com

One of the best examples of coevolutionary adaptations is that of the interactions between avian brood parasites and their hosts. Brood parasites lay their eggs in nests of other species and leave the job of caring for their young with the hosts. Hosts of brood parasites tend to suffer high reproductive costs as often they raise few or no young of their own, an effect of being parasitized. For this reason, many hosts have evolved strategies that reduce the cost of parasitism.

The Common Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*, hereafter cuckoo) and Brown-headed Cowbird *(Molothrus ater*, hereafter cowbird) are among the most studied species of brood parasites. They have adopted different parasitic habits and they are probably at different evolutionary stages in the arms races with their hosts. However, it has been suggested that one of the strategies that could prevent a parasitism event in the first place is a specialized nest defence performed by hosts. Among cowbird hosts, this specialized defence has been recorded in the Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*), which when confronted with a cowbird near the nest, utters a specific alarm call, the seet call, and rushes to its nest where it sits firmly on the eggs (nest-protection behaviour). However, whether such a specialized nest defence has evolved as anti-parasite strategy is still contradictory, particularly among cuckoo hosts. Accordingly, I tested whether a specialized nest defence is adopted by one of the most frequent cuckoo hosts, the Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*).

Learning, as all the phenotype traits, is subjected to natural selection, and selection pressures are supposed to shape individual responses according to different experiences and result in adaptive behaviours. Learning abilities have been detected as a principal cause of behavioural modifications in an array of behaviours, such as mate preferences, diet choices, anti-predator strategies, and so on. However, although parasitism by cuckoos and cowbirds has been studied extensively, the role that learning might play in the refinement of nest defence as an anti-parasitism strategy has not been addressed. Thus, I tested whether both hosts, Reed Warblers and Yellow Warblers, learn by direct experience or by observing conspecifics and thus change their behaviour in accordance with such experiences.

This part of the investigation, which is still in progress, is being conducted at Tomina Oasis, Modena, Italy, for the study of Reed Warbler nest defence, and at the University of Manitoba Field Station (Delta Marsh), Manitoba, where aspects of Yellow Warbler learning in nest defence were tested.

To test the above hypotheses, I presented stuffed specimens of different species placed in front of host nests. During these trials, host responses were recorded in audiocassettes and successively transcribed and quantified as variables used for the statistical analyses.

In the first two years of my study I focused on Yellow Warblers and tested 180 nests. The study on Reed Warblers began in 2004 and 72 nests were tested; this field work will be completed in the current field season. To test whether nesting Reed Warblers can recognize different enemies and respond to them differently, I exposed warblers to three species models, Rock Dove (*Columba livia*) as a non-threatening species, European Magpie (*Pica pica*) as a predator, and cuckoo model.

Results showed that Reed Warblers responded differently to the three species. Cuckoos elicited preferentially aggressive behaviours such as attacks on the models, mobbing, and a specific alarm call, the zirr call. Magpies should be perceived as a higher risk during the nestling stage when the brood value is higher than at the incubation stage. Indeed, Reed Warblers with nestlings at the nest increased significantly their response to magpies by more frequently uttering another alarm call, the churr call. Preliminary analyses of sonographs of both alarm calls revealed that they are structurally different.

To test whether both Reed Warblers and Yellow Warblers modified their defence after a direct experience, I provided them with an experimental parasitism event where the parasite model was placed on the host nest in a parasitism posture and a parasite egg model was placed in

the host clutch after this training. Reed Warblers slightly modified their nest defence after being experimentally parasitized and there is a trend indicated by an increase in aggressiveness. Such a trend is also apparent in the comparison with naturally parasitized warblers. In fact, Reed Warblers parasitized by cuckoos showed a high intensity of nest defence toward cuckoo models. This intensity was similar to that detected among Reed Warblers experimentally parasitized after, but not before, the training.

Finally, multivariate analyses showed that Yellow Warblers changed their nest defence, uttering more seet calls and performing more distraction displays. To test whether Reed Warblers and Yellow Warblers learn from conspecifics, at about 2-3 m from the warbler nests, I staged a pair of warbler conspecific models in a defensive posture, "defending" their nest from a parasite model. Simultaneously, I played the alarm call preferentially uttered to parasites. The hosts were able to observe this trial from their nest and sometimes participated in the staged defence. After this training, both Reed and Yellow warblers modified their defence by increasing those behavioural expressions typical of a specialized nest defence.

This study offers new perspectives in the interpretation of the long-discussed arms race between brood parasites and their hosts. Egg rejection behaviour and nest desertion have been the only strategies that have been considered as evolutionary options on the hosts' side. Results of this investigation showed also that among cuckoo hosts, enemy recognition abilities exist and hosts can adjust their defensive responses after an assessment of the risk they face. Moreover, this study showed that behavioural flexibility, due to learning processes, is another element that should be taken into account when estimating the coevolutionary adaptations associated with an avian brood parasitic system.

Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge the Society of Canadian Ornithologists/Société des Ornithologists du Canada for funding received from the 2004 Cooke Award. I thank my advisor, S.G. Sealy, for his continuous support. This research was also funded by a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada grant to S.G. Sealy. Logistical support was provided by the Delta Marsh Field Station (University of Manitoba) and La Tomina Banding Station. I also thank many individuals in the Department of Zoology, University of Manitoba, and in Italy, who provided helpful comments and assisted with data collection.

PHOTOS: CHARLES FRANCIS

FEMALE AND MALE GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLERS

NEW COMMON MURRE COLONY ON MACHIAS SEAL ISLAND

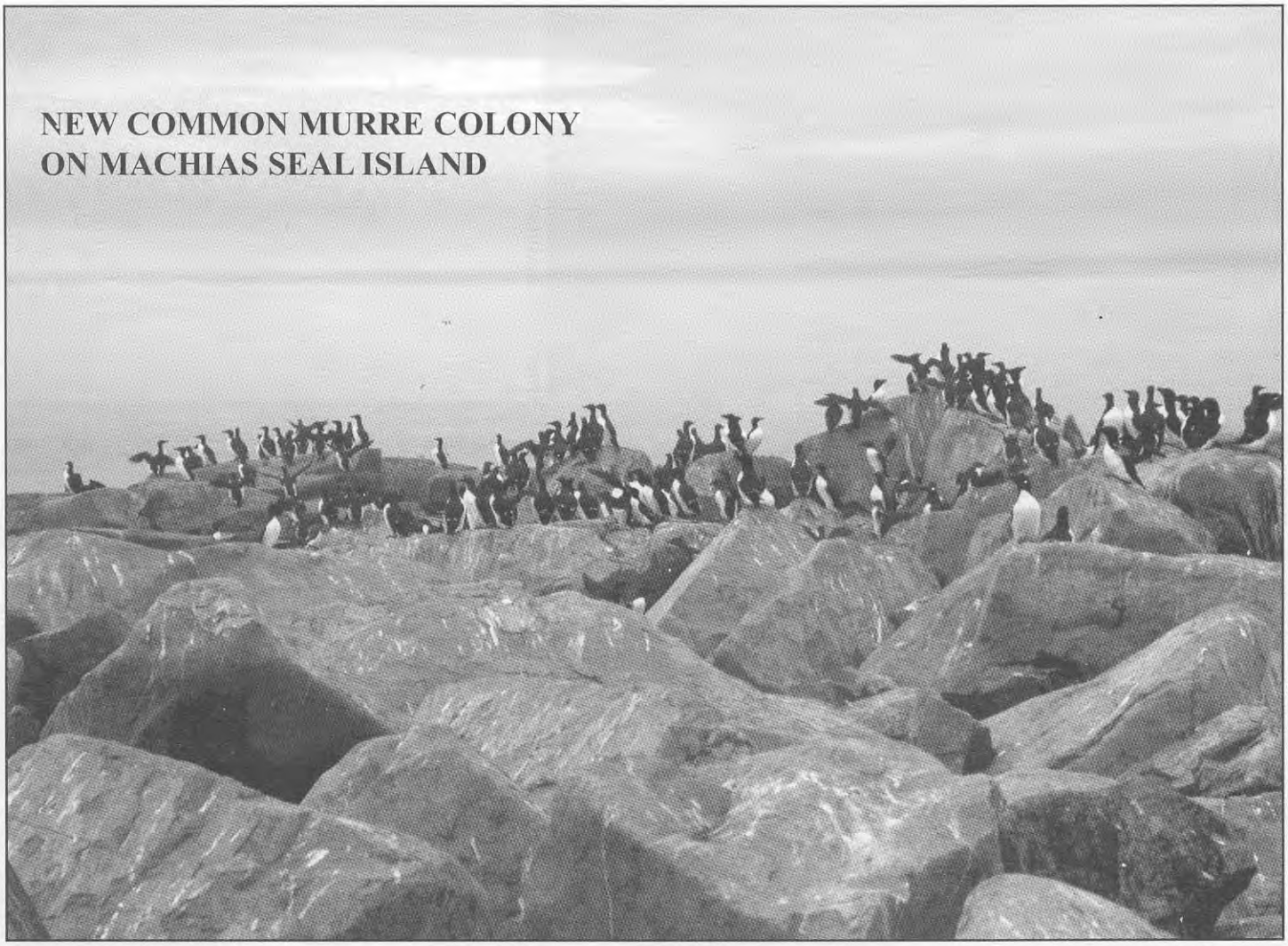


PHOTO: A. W. DIAMOND

COMMON MURRES

A. W. Diamond
diamond@unb.ca

Common Murres *Uria aalge* have increased considerably on Machias Seal Island, N.B., over the last few years. A single egg was found in 1994 (K. Amey, unpublished), but no further breeding was recorded until 2003. Numbers recorded during the 1990s in regular counts throughout the season (May-August) remained consistently below 100 birds, and in 2000 the highest number counted at any one time was 130. Numbers increased sharply in 2001 to over 300, reaching 5-600 in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Breeding began in earnest in 2003, when at least 47 eggs were counted. This is a minimum estimate because many of the nesting sites were under large boulders and were not visible; to minimize disturbance only one of the three areas where the birds were thought to be nesting was monitored. In 2004 at least 148 eggs were laid; this too is a minimum estimate. Early signs in 2005 are that nesting is at a similar level; although at times the number of birds has seemed greatly in excess of previous numbers, the highest count at any one time remains about 600 birds. The murres are nesting among the boulders that separate the bare rock along the southwestern and western coasts from the vegetated centre of the island. They share this habitat with about 600 pairs of Razorbills *Alca torda* and 2800 pairs of Atlantic Puffins *Fratercula arctica*.

Researchers from ACWERN (Atlantic Cooperative Wildlife Ecology Research Network) at the University of New Brunswick have been keeping a close eye on this colonisation, one of several shown by seabirds in the Bay of Fundy in recent years (McAlpine *et al.* in press, Northeastern Naturalist). The nearest known breeding colony of Common Murres is about 13 km east-northeast of Machias Seal Island on Yellow Murre Ledges, which were recolonised in 1973 and where 125 pairs were observed in 1993 (Christie *et al.* 2004, Birds of New Brunswick).

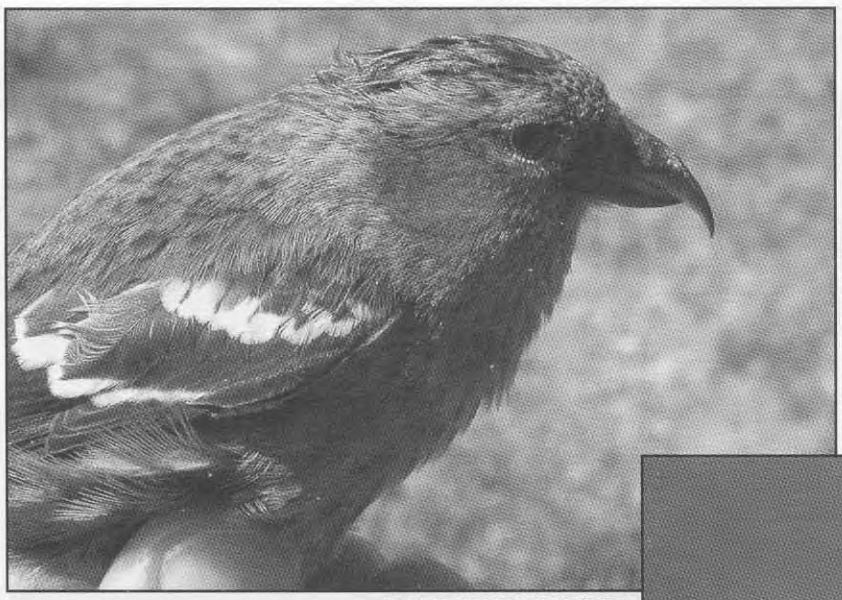


PHOTO: A. W. DIAMOND

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL

PHOTO: CHARLES FRANCIS

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW

POETRY CORNER

The Edges

I am drawn to the edges
where humanity meets nature.
Unwanted things are left
And questions are all around.

Birds sing and live
among the plastic, fluttering in the trees.
A lost child's mitt, a sock,
what could the stories be?

A feather, then another, then too many…
a bottle, a toy, a sad dog tied on a short rope.
A cold wind and a warm toque
blowing on the ground.

Something in the water, floating,
the rush of wings over head.
Cards lying in the grass, badly played,
some face up and some face down.

Spring has exposed the abuses of winter,
the evidence is there, but no matter,
because the snow is fast melting
and a warbler flits in the branches.

Philip Merchant
May 15 2005

Written in Inuvik, NWT, on a piece of litter
with a pencil found on the ground.

Society of Canadian Ornithologists/Société des Ornithologistes du Canada
WEBSITE: www.sco-soc.ca/index.html

Standing Committees and Work Groups

See inside front cover for contact information for those with # beside name.

Doris Huestis Speirs Award Committee (annual award for excellence in Canadian Ornithology)
Gilles Seutin, chair, Email: *gilles.seutin@pc.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)
Four awards: James L. Baillie 1K$, Taverner (2 awards) 0.5K$. Fred Cooke Travel Award.
Bob Clark, chair.

Meetings Committee
Charles Francis #, Sue Hannon #

Picoides Committee
Dorothy Diamond #, Jean-Pierre Savard #, Tony Diamond, University of NB, ACWERN, PO Box 45111, Fredericton, NB E3B 6C2; Voice: 506-453-4926; Email: *diamond@unb.ca*

Journal Committee
Charles Francis, chair, #, Jean-Pierre Savard, Erica Nol.

Editors of ACE-ÉCO
Tom Nudds
Marc-André Villard

Finance and Investment Committee
Pierre Lamothe #

Bird Studies Canada Representatives
Richard Elliot, Email: *richard.elliot@ec.gc.ca*
Jon McCracken, James Duncan

Ornithological Council Representatives
Lesley Evans Ogden,
Email: *lesleyje@interchange.ubc.ca*
Liana Zanette #

North American Banding Council Representative
Brenda Dale, Voice: 780-951-8686;
Fax: 780-495-2615; Email: *brenda.dale@ec.gc.ca*

Findings on the SCO/SOC web site

WEBSITE: www.sco-soc.ca/index.html

Membership Application form
Notes about Annual Meetings
SCO/SOC Award information
Officers of SCO/SOC
For Jobs and to post job openings see our link to the Ornithological Newsletter:
www.ornith.cornell.edu/OSNA/ornjobs.htm

Graphic Designer of Picoides: Matthew McFarlane
(506) 452-2137
Email: mmcfarlane1031@rogers.com

PICOIDES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PICOIDES

June 2005

Volume 18, Number 2

RESEARCHERS LAURA AND JIM TRANQUILLA HAVING FUN WITH CASSIN'S AUKLET CHICKS ON TRIANGLE ISLAND, BC

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:

Reg. $25.00
Non-resident $35.00
Student $10.00
Sustaining $50.00

Membership Secretary:
Thérèse Beaudet
(Address inside front cover)

Picoides is sent to all members. To advertise or to send articles and abstracts for inclusion in Picoides, contact the Editor. Picoides is published by the Society of Canadian Ornithologists/Société des Ornithologistes du Canada, c/o Dorothy Diamond, 430 King's College Road, Fredericton, NB E3B 2G2