



the Sand Bluff Birder

the official newsletter of the Sand Bluff Bird Observatory—online edition

August 2021

President's Message

Greetings fellow avian enthusiasts,

It's midsummer. Red-eyed Vireos, Indigo Buntings, Common Yellowthroats and many other species can yet be heard advertising their territories with song. Still, there is a sense that the season is moving on from the nesting phase. Many parents have hatched and fledged young. Some will continue caring for their offspring for a few weeks longer and others have already sent them on their way. Fall migration is fast approaching and SBBO volunteers are excited to monitor an influx of adult migrants and their hatch year progeny. Though our response to Covid-19 remains in flux, at this time we are planning to greet visitors outside the building. We hope you will come join us at Colored Sands to witness one of nature's truly extraordinary events.

Ivy Otto
President of SBBO

Weather permitting, nets will be put up August 7 and banding will begin in earnest the following weekend; if not, the plan will be pushed forward a week. Also, if it is safe, pandemic wise, and enough volunteers agree, Owl Nights may be offered again on one to two Friday nights in October, possibly 15, 22, or 29. Information will be posted on the SBBO website or Facebook page in early October whether the event will go forward.

Frequent Fliers Found in SBBO data

Dave Huffman

The vast treasure trove of SBBO data (at the time of this writing, nearly 426,000 records worth, dating back to 1967) includes some recapture gems – repeat visitors to the station's nets we've banded and then recaptured a number of times across multiple years. This provides longitudinal data about the health and progress of individual birds, and adds to the body of data around species longevity. It also shows us which birds are holding territory and nesting in the area. And which birds just seem to love being in a net and coming inside to say "Hi".

I examined the banding data from 2000-2021 and found 296 birds which had been captured 10 or more times. They represent 28 of the 183 species which have been banded at Sand Bluff. Most of the 10+ Club are migratory species which breed locally, like Field Sparrows, Eastern Bluebirds, Gray Catbirds and House Wrens, though year-round residents like Black-capped Chickadees, Northern Cardinals, Downy Woodpeckers, American Goldfinches and White-breasted Nuthatches are also well represented.

A few highlights (note HY=hatch year, AHY=after hatch year):

Our most frequent visitor was the Black-capped Chickadee wearing band 2490 08 560. It first visited on August 12, 2007 as an HY bird (born in 2007) and enjoyed the experience so much it came back 3 more times that fall. Over the winter it learned how to forage and avoid predators, joined up with a winter flock, and returned to the nets the following March, when it was, quite correctly, aged as AHY. It visited the station 11 times in 2008, 5 times in 2009, 8 times in 2010 and 9 times in 2011. The bird was last seen – 3 times that day – on November 12, 2011. That's **37 total visits** over 4+ years, a respectable age for a Chickadee, who typically only make about 2.5 years.

A pair of Northern Cardinals were captured together in the Field nets on March 11, 2012, aged AHY (born 2011 or earlier). The female had been banded the year before, but only made one additional visit. The male, with band 2531 47 401 was captured 9 more times in 2012, 7 times in 2013, 3 in 2014 and 2015, 6 times in 2016 and made one last appearance in the spring of 2017 for **31 total visits**. That makes the bird at least 6 years old, representing a substantial accomplishment, but still not near the record of 13 years for a male Cardinal.

The Field Sparrow wearing band 2400 51 245 first appeared in the nets April 9, 2005 as a AHY bird. It was captured in each subsequent year through April of 2021 suggesting it may have been born in 2004 and established breeding territory at Sand Bluff the following spring. He (as we learned it was indeed a he in 2010 by his breeding condition) was recaptured twice in 2006 and 2007, once in 2008, 3 times in 2009, 7 times in 2010, then twice in 2011 and 2012. Those 23 visits make him **nearly 8 years old** when we last saw him, which is close to the longevity record of 8 years 9 months.

Spring 2021 Banding Report

Well, another spring season of banding is in the books. Data has been checked and double checked and sent into the Bird Banding Lab at the U.S. Geological Survey in Laurel, Maryland.

Even though we had a good start at the station getting nets set up in March, the number of birds captured was pathetic. This had to be the worst if not one of the worst seasons ever. Much like last year, the continuation of stormy weather in southern states held many migrants back or altered their route to breeding grounds in northern areas. The true effect of the icy, snowy weather in Texas and southern tier states is not really known yet. It is believed that many species were affected by the cold and ice. We at Sand Bluff noticed the huge drop of flycatchers and fall numbers may tell us the whole story!

Our total number of birds banded for the season was 1039 new birds, 102 less than last year and having banded ten more days than 2020. Very few warblers and flycatchers were netted, however White-throated Sparrows (144) and Gray Catbirds (107) did come in with reasonable numbers.



Some of the highlights for spring 2021 were two Pileated Woodpeckers, one was a new capture and the other a recapture from 2016; of note was a female Lawrence's Warbler, a cross between a Blue-winged Warbler and a Golden-winged Warbler, which was the third caught in 53 years; found nesting in the preserve, that were recaptures from last year, were White-eyed Vireos and Blue-winged Warblers, two species inching ever northward due to climate change, need for new territory and availability of food and habitat. Age of birds always comes into question as to how old some of our recaptures are, so two other birds of note were a Red-bellied Woodpecker from 2014 and a White-breasted Nuthatch from 2016.

As we look forward to the 2021 fall season, we hope to open to the public on a limited space availability, practicing social distancing and sanitary protocol. Large groups, as of now, will not be accepted for lack of space but this may change as Covid is reduced. Our hours of operation will be posted on the bulletin board at the station.

I thank all Sand Bluff volunteers for assisting this spring, putting in a lot of hours even with very few birds. Again, a **Big Thanks** for the continuing support from our donors.

Note: Lawrence's Warbler photo provided by John Longhenry

_____ Mike Eickman, Station Master

SPECIES	COUNT	SPECIES	COUNT	SPECIES	COUNT
BLACKBIRD, RED-WINGED	3	PARULA, NORTHERN	1	WARBLER, BLACK AND WHITE	2
BLUEBIRD, EASTERN	7	PEEWEE, EASTERN WOOD	1	WARBLER, BLACK-THROATED GREEN	2
BUNTING, INDIGO	25	PHOEBE, EASTERN	2	WARBLER, BLUE-WINGED	2
CARDINAL, NORTHERN	25	REDSTART, AMERICAN	20	WARBLER, CANADA	1
CATBIRD, GRAY	107	ROBIN, AMERICAN	30	WARBLER, CHESTNUT-SIDED	5
CHICKADEE, BLACK-CAPPED	6	SAPSUCKER, YELLOW-BELLIED	1	WARBLER, CONNECTICUT	1
COWBIRD, BROWN-HEADED	15	SPARROW, CHIPPING	11	WARBLER, GOLDEN-WINGED	1
CREEPER, BROWN	2	SPARROW, CLAY-COLORED	1	WARBLER, HOODED	1
CUCKOO, BLACK-BILLED	1	SPARROW, FIELD	43	WARBLER, LAWRENCE'S	1
CUCKOO, YELLOW-BILLED	1	SPARROW, FOX	32	WARBLER, MAGNOLIA	5
DOVE, MOURNING	3	SPARROW, LINCOLN'S	3	WARBLER, MOURNING	3
FLICKER, YELLOW-SHAFTED	2	SPARROW, SONG	1	WARBLER, NASHVILLE	8
FLYCATCHER, GREAT-CRESTED	1	SPARROW, SWAMP	29	WARBLER, ORANGE-CROWNED	1
FLYCATCHER, LEAST	5	SPARROW, WHITE-CROWNED	3	WARBLER, TENNESSEE	2
FLYCATCHER, TRAILL'S	8	SPARROW, WHITE-THROATED	144	WARBLER, WESTERN PALM	5
FLYCATCHER, YELLOW-BELLIED	2	SWALLOW, TREE	3	WARBLER, YELLOW	4
GNATCATCHER, BLUE-GRAY	1	THRASHER, BROWN	5	WATERTHRUSH, NORTHERN	32
GOLDFINCH, AMERICAN	28	THRUSH, GRAY-CHEEKED	19	WAXWING, CEDAR	2
GROSBEAK, RED-BREASTED	20	THRUSH, HERMIT	15	WOODPECKER, DOWNY	6
HAWK, SHARP-SHINNED	1	THRUSH, SWAINSON'S	25	WOODPECKER, HAIRY	3
JAY, BLUE	8	THRUSH, WOOD	8	WOODPECKER, PILEATED	1
JUNCO, SLATE-COLORED	25	THRUSH, SWAINSON'S	25	WOODPECKER, RED-BELLIED	1
KINGBIRD, EASTERN	2	TOWHEE, EASTERN	7	WREN, HOUSE	24
KINGLET, GOLDEN-CROWNED	70	VEERY	11	WREN, WINTER	1
KINGLET, RUBY-CROWNED	30	VIREO, BELL'S	1	YELLOWTHROAT, COMMON	38
NUTHATCH, WHITE-BREASTED	5	VIREO, RED-EYED	4		
ORIOLE, BALTIMORE	12	VIREO, WARBLING	1		
ORIOLE, ORCHARD	7	VIREO, WHITE-EYED	4		
OVENBIRD	39	VIREO, YELLOW-THROATED	1		
				TOTAL	1039

PLEASE HELP US ... in any way you can

Our non-profit organization survives because of private contributions of time and money from friends just like you. Please examine the list below and help us continue our important banding program by making your contribution!

Please return this form to: Sand Bluff Bird Observatory, P. O. Box 2, Seward, IL 61077

Enclosed is a (tax-deductible) contribution of

\$10.00 (Subscriber)

\$25.00 (Donor)

\$50.00 (Supporting Member)

\$100.00 (Net Sponsor)

\$250.00 (Sustaining Member)

Enclosed is a (tax-deductible) donation of _____

in memory of _____

to honor _____

for the Sand Bluff Bird Observatory Endowment Fund

I'd like to learn more about volunteering, please call me!

Please contact me to schedule a program/tour for my group!

Name (please print) _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip + 4 _____

Telephone (days) _____ (evenings) _____ (email) _____

Nature Notes—American Goldfinch

_____ Ivy Otto

A frequent visitor to feeders is the lovely bright yellow American Goldfinch. While most bird species by midsummer are well into nesting, American Goldfinches are in the early stages. Goldfinches are almost exclusively seed-eaters. Unlike most other song birds who feed their nestlings insects, they feed them a mix of regurgitated insects and seeds (which is thought to make them poor hosts for Brown-headed Cowbirds, whose nestling diet requires largely insects). Late nesting provides advantages, as it coincides with bountiful seed production and nest building material. Spider webs, thistle and milkweed down are used to line the nest. I was delighted to discover the much-maligned Fall Webworm also contributes.



On August 13, 2019, I observed a female collecting silk from a Fall Webworm nest. The male flew in undulating circles high above her, singing his courtship song. Once she had finished her task, the pair flew together in the direction of the forest edge, presumably to their nest site. This behavior was repeated several times, enough so I was able to video it. Further research led to similar accounts of this behavior. There is always something new to learn, even about one of the most familiar of feeder visitors. What fun!

The Call of the Eastern Whip-poor-will

_____ by Mike Eickman

Do you want to experience the solitude of night without the city lights, see stars in all their splendor, hear the sounds of coyotes baying at the moon, the hooting of Great-horned Owls or the caterwauling of the Barred Owls? This is all possible if you arrive at Colored Sands Forest Preserve early in the morning or late in the evening, that is before sunrise or after sundown. You may even hear the distinct call of the Whip-poor-will.

The Eastern Whip-poor-will (*Caprimulgus vociferus*) is a nocturnal bird of the eastern United States and southeastern Canada, which is sometimes confused with Common Nighthawks, but with a distinct voice. A Nightjar family member, they are brown and gray in color and about 230mm (9 inches) in length.

Typical habitat for Whip-poor-wills is dry deciduous (sandy soil) or mixed evergreen/deciduous forest with very little under brush and close to open areas. Winter habitat is similar in Central America and Mexico. Because of their coloration they are extremely hard to find in the daytime as illustrated in John Longhenry's photo to the right.

Whip-poor-wills, being nocturnal, time their breeding with moon lit nights so that young hatch about 10 days before the next full moon. This gives parents optimum time to catch moths and other flying insects which are regurgitated to feed the young.

Clutch size is usually two eggs laid in leaf litter with an incubation time of 19 to 21 days. Young Whip-poor-wills are covered with an orange-tan down and eyes are closed. After a few days the chicks leave the nest, and the female departs leaving the male to take over the feeding and care. Whip-poor-wills may have a second clutch.

Come out and hear the call of the night.



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P. O. Box 2
Seward, IL 61077



White-eyed Vireos nested in Colored Sands this spring. *Photo by John Longhenry*

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CLASSES AND GROUPS

It is with regret, SBBO must still suspend group visits this fall until the COVID-19 virus is even more under control. When it is possible again, you will be welcomed with open arms. Drop in visitors will be allowed with some limits.

Weekdays or a weekend group of 10 or more can schedule a "group presentation" with a suggested donation of \$5 per person. Smaller groups may join the general visitors.

Call Kathy Hoel (pictured), 815-877-2938 or e-mail kathyhoel6@gmail.com/subject: SBBO group visit, for details and to reserve your spot. Allow 1½ hours to watch the banding process and visit the nets.



Photo by Thelma Bottum

Here's How To Reach Us!

During Operating Hours: 815-629-2671

Mailing Address: Sand Bluff Bird Observatory
P. O. Box 2
Seward, IL 61077

GPS Address: 10602 Haas Rd, Rockton, IL

Be sure to visit our website at: www.sandbluff.org



ADDRESS CORRECTIONS

If you wish to cancel, subscribe or correct your mailing address for the Sand Bluff Birder, please e-mail: bottum4548@gmail.com.



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