



the Sand Bluff Birder

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

August 2023

President's Message

It's the middle of summer. The days are warm and long. Many of the spring migrants banded at SBBO are busy raising their young in the Northwoods, while others consider our neck of the woods the best place to raise a family. Some species such as Northern Cardinals may even be attempting a second brood. Midsummer is a fun time to learn about avian family dynamics. While adults are attending fledglings, it's also a good time to improve fledgling identification skills.

Soon adults and young will be on the move again, southward this time, navigating by the sun, stars and earth's magnetic field as they have for millennia. I hope you visit us this fall as we lovingly embrace this truly wondrous event.

——Ivy Otto
President SBBO



Four of the rarer birds banded this spring were a Solitary Sandpiper, Rusty Blackbird, and American Woodcocks and Summer Tanager on page 3.
Photos courtesy of John Longhenry



Education and Volunteers Make a Successful Organization

As a volunteer since 1998, I am part of a body of dedicated individuals who are passionate about birds and the longevity of Sand Bluff Bird Observatory. Unfortunately, we are a body long in age and short in youth! Many of our younger volunteers, some who began in elementary school, are now in college or getting married and having children, thus finding no to little time to volunteer at this stage of their lives. It's why we're always asking for new volunteers who have the time and dedication to come one or more times a week, do net checks hourly and learn to identify the birds. The Covid pandemic was also a game changer for volunteering.

It's so much easier to sit with a cell phone in your hand and play a video game than go out and explore nature, to experience what's really happening in the natural world around us. Birds will tell you—it's not good, not good at all!

Part of the Sand Bluff mission statement and a goal of this group of volunteers is education through programs and being open for the public to observe banding. We love sharing bird facts with visitors. It has been a long-term goal to have enough capital to fund educational scholarships because we need our youth to become passionate about conservation, habitat preservation and environmental issues—all aspects that affect our daily lives. Through generous donations, 20 years of Birdfest and careful investment, we are ready! In partnership with the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, two scholarships will be offered beginning in 2023-2024.

We are hopeful that future scholarship awardees will become volunteers, if not with SBBO, somewhere to benefit our natural world. If you are also a believer in the value of education, we welcome your contributions, both monetary and with your personal time as a new volunteer. Remember, it takes patience and dedication. It's worth every mile driven, every hour given!

____Thelma Bottum, editor

Spring 2023 Banding Report

Spring banding season has come and gone, and it seems to go so fast. The 2023 Spring season was better with the increased number of captured birds, 1860 compared to 1708 in 2022. Each year we are asked several times as to the status of birds migrating back to the Colored Sands area. The answer is yes, there are a few returns every year, and some may be surprises. Many of the birds recaptured with Sand Bluff bands are migrants that travel great distances to return to their breeding territory.

This year's returns from Mexico and Central America are Orchard Orioles, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Baltimore Orioles, Wood Thrushes, Indigo Buntings, Eastern Wood Peewee's, Eastern Kingbirds and Red-Eyed Vireos. Returns from the area of southern United States were House Wrens, Field Sparrows, Brown Thrashers, and American Robins.

One bird which caught our attention was a male Orchard Oriole originally captured in the spring of 2016 and banded under Lee Johnson's permit. Another winter visitor that was re-trapped in March was an American Tree Sparrow banded in 2020. This bird was headed back to northern Canada to its breeding grounds. Hope to see it come back later in the fall.

This year was interesting in that the top ten birds dominating the list were mostly sparrows: White-throated, Swamp, Field, Fox, American Tree, Song and Slate-Colored Junco. Other birds sneaking in with the sparrows were the Gray Catbird, American Goldfinch, American Robin and Swainson's Thrush.

So much for the rambling on with the birds. I would like to thank all the visitors who came out to see birds being banded, and to our donors who help keep us going from season to season and to the volunteers who put in their time to make it a success.

Hope to see you all in the fall!

Mike Eickman, Station Master

SPECIES	COUNT	SPECIES	COUNT	SPECIES	COUNT
BLACKBIRD, RED-WINGED	11	OWL, NORTHERN SAW-WHET	0	VIREO, YELLOW-THROATED	1
BLACKBIRD, RUSTY	3	PARULA, NORTHERN	0	WARBLER, BAY-BREASTED	0
BLUEBIRD, EASTERN	11	PEEWEE, EASTERN WOOD	2	WARBLER, BLACK AND WHITE	4
BUNTING, INDIGO	9	PHOEBE, EASTERN	15	WARBLER, BLACKBURNIAN	4
CARDINAL, NORTHERN	30	REDSTART, AMERICAN	26	WARBLER, BLACKPOLL	0
CATBIRD, GRAY	139	ROBIN, AMERICAN	53	WARBLER, BLACK-THROATED BLUE	1
CHAT, YELLOW-BREASTED	1	SANDPIPER, SOLITARY	1	WARBLER, BLACK-THROATED GREEN	1
CHICKADEE, BLACK-CAPPED	9	SAPSUCKER, YELLOW-BELLIED	1	WARBLER, BLUE-WINGED	5
COWBIRD, BROWN-HEADED	20	SPARROW, AMERICAN TREE	120	WARBLER, CANADA	10
CREEPER, BROWN	11	SPARROW, CHIPPING	9	WARBLER, CAPE MAY	0
CUCKOO, BLACK-BILLED	4	SPARROW, CLAY-COLORED	1	WARBLER, CHESTNUT-SIDED	6
CUCKOO, YELLOW-BILLED	1	SPARROW, FIELD	49	WARBLER, CONNECTICUT	0
DOVE, MOURNING	5	SPARROW, FOX	45	WARBLER, GOLDEN-WINGED	0
FINCH, HOUSE	0	SPARROW, GRASSHOPPER	1	WARBLER, HOODED	0
FINCH, PURPLE	2	SPARROW, HENSLOW'S	2	WARBLER, KENTUCKY	1
FLICKER, YELLOW-SHAFTED	1	SPARROW, LARK	0	WARBLER, MAGNOLIA	25
FLYCATCHER, ACADIAN	0	SPARROW, LINCOLN'S	33	WARBLER, MOURNING	2
FLYCATCHER, GREAT-CRESTED	3	SPARROW, SAVANNAH	2	WARBLER, MYRTLE	9
FLYCATCHER, LEAST	8	SPARROW, SONG	56	WARBLER, NASHVILLE	19
FLYCATCHER, OLIVE-SIDED	1	SPARROW, SWAMP	140	WARBLER, ORANGE-CROWNED	4
FLYCATCHER, TRAILL'S	17	SPARROW, VESPER	0	WARBLER, PINE	1
FLYCATCHER, YELLOW-BELLIED	1	SPARROW, WHITE-CROWNED	37	WARBLER, PROTHONOTARY	0
GNATCATCHER, BLUE-GRAY	2	SPARROW, WHITE-THROATED	173	WARBLER, TENNESSEE	11
GOLDFINCH, AMERICAN	79	SWALLOW, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED	0	WARBLER, WESTERN PALM	24
GRACKLE, COMMON	0	SWALLOW, TREE	6	WARBLER, WILSON'S	6
GROSBEAK, BLUE	0	TANAGER, SCARLET	2	WARBLER, YELLOW	8
GROSBEAK, ROSE-BREASTED	30	TANAGER, SUMMER	1	WATERTHRUSH, NORTHERN	28
HAWK, COOPER'S	0	THRASHER, BROWN	20	WAXWING, CEDAR	0
HAWK, RED-TAILED	0	THRUSH, GRAY-CHEEKED	39	WHIP-POOR-WILL, EASTERN	0
HAWK, SHARP-SHINNED	1	THRUSH, HERMIT	36	WOODCOCK, AMERICAN	5
JAY, BLUE	15	THRUSH, SWAINSON'S	56	WOODPECKER, DOWNY	10
JUNCO, SLATE-COLORED	46	THRUSH, WOOD	16	WOODPECKER, HAIRY	1
KINGBIRD, EASTERN	5	TITMOUSE, TUFTED	3	WOODPECKER, RED-BELLIED	4
KINGLET, GOLDEN-CROWNED	22	TOWHEE, EASTERN	8	WREN, CAROLINA	0
KINGLET, RUBY-CROWNED	42	VEERY	22	WREN, HOUSE	40
MEADOWLARK, EASTERN	1	VIREO, BELL'S	1	WREN, WINTER	2
NUTHATCH, RED-BREASTED	0	VIREO, BLUE-HEADED	1	YELLOWTHROAT, COMMON	39
NUTHATCH, WHITE-BREASTED	3	VIREO, PHILADELPHIA	0		
ORIOLE, BALTIMORE	21	VIREO, RED-EYED	4	SPRING TOTAL NEW BIRDS	1860
ORIOLE, ORCHARD	17	VIREO, WHITE-EYED	2	2023 TOTAL NEW BIRDS	1860
OVENBIRD	30	VIREO, WARBLING	5	SPRING TOTAL RETRAPS	705

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 or donate through PayPal on our website: sandbluff.org

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enclosed is a (tax-deductible) contribution of | <input type="checkbox"/> Enclosed is a (tax-deductible) donation of _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10.00 (Subscriber) | <input type="checkbox"/> in memory/honor of _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25.00 (Donor) | <input type="checkbox"/> for the Sand Bluff Bird Observatory Endowment Fund |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50.00 (Supporting Member) | <input type="checkbox"/> for the Sand Bluff Bird Observatory Scholarship Fund |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100.00 (Net Sponsor) | <input type="checkbox"/> I'd like to learn more about volunteering, please call me! |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250.00 (Sustaining Member) | <input type="checkbox"/> Please contact me to schedule a program/tour for my group! |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Please do not share /publish my contact information | |

Name (please print) _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip + 4 _____

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

Sand Bluff Bird Observatory Scholarships

Sand Bluff Bird Observatory is pleased to announce that it will be offering two scholarships to graduating seniors and current college students beginning with the 2023-2024 school year. The scholarships will be offered through a partnership with the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois (CFNIL). Application for the \$500 scholarships will be available on the CFNIL website from December 1, 2023 to February 1, 2024.

One scholarship is named in honor of the founders of the Sand Bluff Bird Observatory, Lee and Lynda Johnson. A second scholarship is named in honor of one of our long-time and current volunteers Dave Seal. Contributions to the SBBO scholarship fund can be made through our website, by mail to SBBO with a check or directly through the CFNIL website. We are excited for this opportunity to support students who are furthering their education in an environmental or conservation related field.



Sincerest sympathy is extended to volunteer Ivy Otto whose mother-in-law, Phyllis Messinger, died in July; to volunteer Stacey Clark whose father, Jack Baxter, died in June and to former volunteer Lisa Weckerly whose husband, Ronald, died in June.

Motus update

The SBBO Motus receiver spent the spring quietly listening for tiny radio tags attached to migrating birds. Not all the data is in yet, but it appears we didn't have any detections during the spring.

As reported in previous issues of *The Sand Bluff Birder*, late last fall Sand Bluff put up a radio tower and receiver to participate in the Motus network. Our Motus installation listens for radio tags on 166.380 MHz (and on 166.320 MHz for a test calibration target tag we have installed). Bird researchers around the globe are putting the tags on birds and then monitoring the Motus network for reports of detections. For a few days we thought we'd had some detections from tags on Slate-colored Juncos installed by a researcher at Indiana University, but it turns out it was a data attribution error and they were actually detected by a tower installed at Illinois Beach.

Our station uses hardware provided by the Ward Avian Lab at the University of Illinois. They now have 4 stations stretching across northern Illinois, forming a "radio fence" to improve the likelihood that tags on migrating birds are recorded as they pass north or south.

While we've been patiently (sort of) waiting for detections, we've managed to find some bugs in the receiver and report them to the manufacturer, then install updated firmware - the computer code that runs the receivers detection and reporting - with fixes to the issues we saw. And we've swept a lot of mouse droppings off the receiver table. Look for more updates in future issues.

Dave Huffman

the Sand Bluff Birder

P. O. Box 2
Seward, IL 61077



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CLASSES AND GROUPS

This fall, SBBO is easing back into allowing small groups and drop-in visitors to observe banding.

Thursday or weekend mornings, groups of 10–15 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

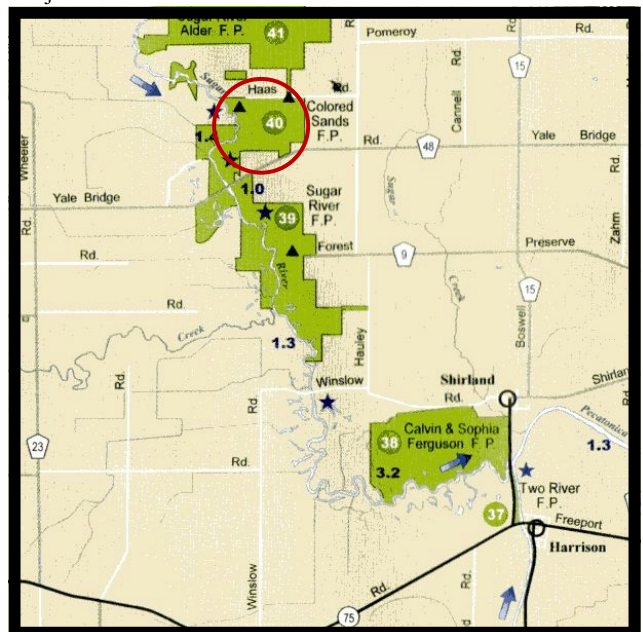
GPS Address: 10602 Haas Rd, Rockton, IL

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



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