



# THE MARSH WREN

BRADDOCK BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY



# BBBO UPDATES

## RESEARCH PUBLISHED

An article based on research conducted at the Observatory will soon appear in the *Journal of Field Ornithology*, an international scientific journal published by the Association of Field Ornithologists. The article, "What are we missing with only ground-level mist nets? Using elevated nets at a migration stopover site," was coauthored by David Bonter, Elizabeth Brooks, and Terri Donovan. Mist nets deployed in a standard ground-level fashion capture birds flying between 0.5–2.6 meters above the ground. In habitats where the vegetation extends above this height, standard mist nets may fail to capture species that tend to move through the vegetation at higher levels. The study revealed that standard ground-level net placement was more efficient than elevated nets in capturing birds at Braddock Bay. However, ground-level nets may not adequately sample the entire targeted community or all age- or sex-classes within species.

## ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

BBBO Board Member Rick Marx has been recognized by the Center for Environmental Information as a recipient of the 2007 Cummings Award. This prestigious annual award is given to a person in the Rochester area who exemplifies the values of environmental conservation and whose actions have had a substantial impact benefitting the environment. Rick has given generously of his time and expertise to a number of projects of benefit to the community, including his involvement with Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, the New York River Otter Project, the Peregrine Falcon Project, and the Genesee Land Trust. Congratulations, Rick!

*Cover photo of Scarlet Tanager and photo of Baltimore Oriole in blossoms (above) by Ryan Kayhart.*

*Right: BBBO supporter Tracy Holmes inspects a Great Black-backed Gull chick during a gull colony census on Appledore Island, Maine. Photo by Sara Morris.*

## \$27,500 DONATION

BBBO is pleased to announce a generous donation to the capital campaign from Tracy Holmes of Fort Worth, Texas. Tracy has a remarkable passion for birds and science. She is a bander-in-training, having spent the past two spring migration seasons learning about birds, banding, and migration on Appledore Island, Maine. Her infectious passion for the natural world and her delightful, self-deprecating humor make her a true joy to be around.

Tracy hopes that her donation will inspire others to contribute to the campaign. Her support brings BBBO closer to reaching our goals for renovating the boathouse at the banding station and creating a world-class research and education center. Thank you, Tracy, for all that you do for birds and conservation!



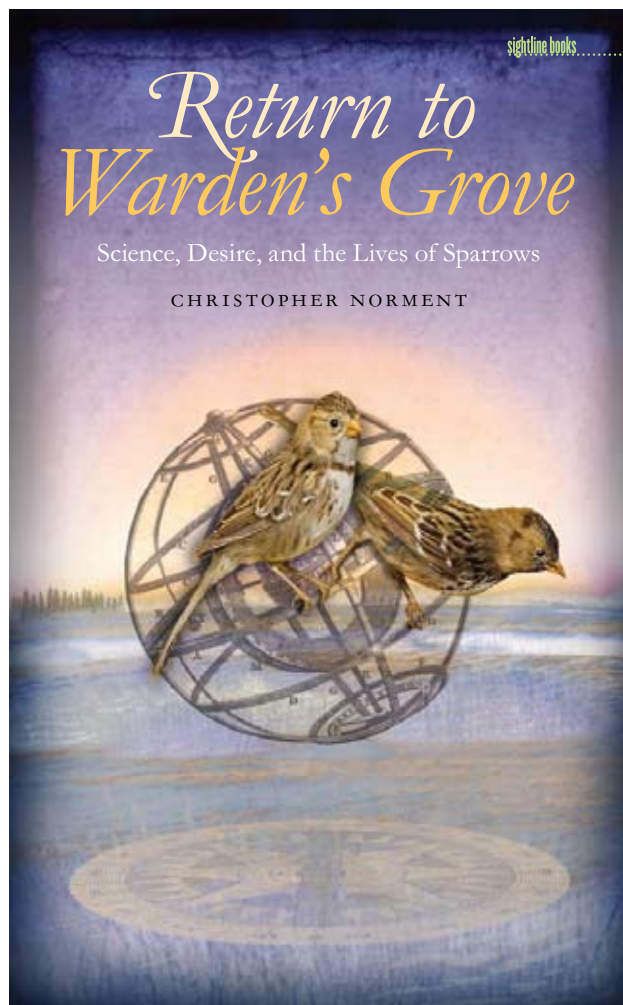
## BBBO RESEARCHER EXPLORES ORNITHOLOGY & LIFE

*A new book by Christopher Norment takes the reader into a pristine arctic wilderness to look into the world of nesting Harris's Sparrows. Norment, a professor at SUNY Brockport and member of the BBBO research committee, not only shares his extraordinary field experiences, he also brings the reader along on a trip that reveals important life lessons. The following excerpt from the chapter "Lines Upon a Graph," gives a glimpse into the remarkable book, Return to Warden's Grove: Science, Desire and the Lives of Sparrows. The book is available through the University of Iowa Press.*

I love the time of day when the last tasks are finished: tomorrow's bread baked, pails of water fetched from the spring, field notes and journal entries completed. Before climbing into my bunk I step outside for one last look at the view: the sedge meadow immediately to the east, then the narrow band of spruce that hugs the cutbank above the river. Beyond lies the Thelon, then the undulating waves of tundra, rolling off towards the Clarke River. The best evenings come before the full flush of summer, before sparrows fledge their young and clouds of mosquitoes rise into the air. When the night is tranquil and the final bit of sunlight has faded from the Last Light Hills, when the air is calm and the river is still as silence and the last sparrow song has died away, I sometimes have the notion that all is right with the world. Then it's hard to pull myself away from the view and the sense of quiet satisfaction that comes after a good stretch in the field, but I'm usually dog-tired after a day that, more often than not, has stretched on towards eighteen hours. Once in my sleeping bag, I pick up a book and read a few pages, then drift off to sleep. But before doing so I like to replay the day's events and tally my successes—one new nest found, three more birds banded, two more hours of nest observations completed, another snow survey finished. I measure my progress through the field season, and occasionally, through my entire study and doctoral program. I recall MacArthur: "To do science is to search for patterns." I know that I will uncover a few of these patterns, but I recognize another sort of pattern, too—one that's formed by my work. The intensive search for nests, bird trapping and banding, daily nest rounds, weekly arthropod counts, vegetation measurements—these tasks create a kind of rhythm, one flowing within the frame of reference formed by the Barrens. There is the insistent northern wind, the rising tide of migration, the pirouette of ice flows on the spring river, the wandering bears, the flowering heads of sedges rising from brown tussocks, the eggs laid in nests of woven grass, beneath the stunted birch.

I have my work, and it's nice to know that this work is good. I watch the numbers accumulate—usually slowly, but on most days I add a few more items to my cache of data. I take pleasure in this process, in coming to know a few things that haven't been known before, however trivial

they seem in the larger scheme of things. I know that part of this pleasure comes from the pride of possession, and having some small measure of uniqueness in the world. The lives of Harris's Sparrows are clear to me in ways in which they are clear to no one else, and I will produce the tables and graphs, the dissertation and scientific papers to prove it. And yet, beyond this small expression of hubris there lies a more satisfying and worthwhile end. I have, in spite of my own limitations—my impatience and crabbiness, my fears and lack of attention to detail, and my inability to see well—stumbled towards a more complete sense of the world. Through right practice—by sitting and watching, weighing and measuring—and almost in spite of myself, I have entered into the landscape. The focused attention of a female Harris's Sparrow to her eggs and nestlings has focused my attention, too. This concentration has led me into an obsession with *Zonotrichia querula*, but it has led in the opposite direction, too—into the world that spirals outward from a female bird (mass of 33.7 grams) incubating her clutch of eggs (average mass of  $3.09 \pm 0.26$  grams/egg), past the dwarf birch that shelters her nest (average height of vegetation at the nest of  $47.6 \pm 22.4$  centimeters) towards the green sedge meadows (18 percent of the landscape around Warden's Grove) and Last Light Hills and beyond, into the infinite distance that fades into a rumor of blue on the endless horizon.



# THE SEASON AT BRADDOCK BAY

## SPRING BANDING 2008

The 23<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year of spring migration monitoring at the Kaiser-Manitou Beach banding station was carried out for 51 days beginning 19 April and ending on 12 June 2008. There were **3,876 birds banded** of 95 species. Fifty nine Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are included in the list of banded birds and an additional 41 female and 23 male Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were captured and released unbanded. A total of 8,636 net hours of banding resulted in a capture rate of 44.9 birds/100 net-hours. The best day was 26 May when 349 birds of 47 species were banded; other 200+ bird days were 14 May (236 of 41 species) and 20 May (223 of 38 species).

The total number of birds banded during spring 2008 was slightly above the 22-year average of 3,645 birds, but down from 2006 and 2007 totals when 5,296 and 4,752 birds were banded, respectively, in about the same number of net hours. Red-bellied Woodpecker and American Crow were new species added to the cumulative total spring list which now stands at 141 species. More than 600 birds were recaptured during the season; of these, 60 were birds that returned from an earlier season, including a Yellow Warbler in its sixth year and a Common Grackle in its 13<sup>th</sup> year.

Record high numbers of Black-billed Cuckoo (8), Ruby-throated Hummingbird (59), Palm Warbler (147), and Blackpoll Warbler (94) were banded. On the negative side, Golden-crowned Kinglet was missing this spring after being banded in all but two of the past 22 years. Because of the early spring, most early migrants had moved through the area before we opened and so were down in numbers (Winter Wren, American Tree Sparrow, Brown Creeper, Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, etc.).

### EDUCATION

Dave Alexander (Duluth, MN), Noelle Boone (Rochester, NY), J. Alan Clark (Armonk, NY), Sue Evans (Bloomfield, NY), Tom Klotzberg (Waterport, NY), Brad Mudrzyński (Elba, NY), and Emily Runnells (Concord, NH) successfully completed our spring Bander Training Course.

We enjoyed a visit from the Spring Ornithology class from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, students from Dr. Chris Norment's SUNY Brockport Ornithology class, a class from the Farmington Calvary Christian School, and students from the Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury, Vermont. BBBO welcomed Shelly Remillard and her students from the Spencerport 5<sup>th</sup> grade Service Learning Center who donated beautiful nest boxes that they had made. We had visitors from as far away as

Alaska, and gave banding demonstrations to several hundred visitors.

### EVENTS

BBBO held an Open House for members of the Genesee Land Trust on May 18. The members of the Allyn's Creek Garden Club held their May meeting at the banding station. William Loeber and Mary Jean Weld were remembered at a ceremony in our Memorial Garden on May 28.

### APPRECIATION

Thanks to all our faithful volunteers: David Alexander, Jim Bair, Dave Edwards, Judy Engerman, Sue Evans, Chris Gates, Marilyn Guenther, Kathy Habgood, Gary Herbert, Kathleen Holt, Joanna Klima, Greg Lawrence, John Lehr, Dave Levy, Tom McDonald, Chita McKinney, Shirley Meston, Terry Perry, Bill, Lisa and Sandy Podulka, Lee Schofield, Dominic Sherony, Jeanne Skelly, Ruth Stork, Leanna Twohig, Rachel Vallender, Tom Verhulst, Chris Villone, and Megan Whitman. Special appreciation is extended to Bill Kaiser and the Board of the Genesee Land Trust for use of their land.

Banding was conducted by licensed banders Ann Adams, David Bonter, Elizabeth Brooks, Kelly Dockery, Jon Dombrowski, Mark Deutschlander, Erin Karnatz, Ryan Kayhart, Cindy Marino, David Mathiason, Robert McKinney, Taza Schaming, David Semple, and Susan Smith. Banding assistants were Linda Boutwell, Virginia Duffy, Charley Eiseman, Marian Klik, Ember Jandebour, Peggy Keller, Pat Lovallo, Karl Miller, Doug Smith, and Barb Wagner. Our Intern was Noelle Boone; our Field Assistant was Karen Velas; and our Research Assistant was Ryan Kayhart.

### RIT STATION

Banding at the station on the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) campus was very successful this past spring. The station was open for 22 days and 490 birds of 58 species were banded. Special thanks are again due to BBBO volunteers Cindy Marino and Peg Keller who ran the station on Fridays.

The RIT site has changed dramatically since last year because of a wetlands mitigation effort on campus. The station is now located inside a 32-acre conservation easement that consists of approximately 16 acres of shrubland, 14 acres of wetlands, and 2 acres of forest. This spring saw an inundation of shorebirds who feasted in the shallow waters outside our banding

# TOP 10 SPECIES BANDED DURING SPRING 2008

## WITH NUMBERS CAPTURED DURING PREVIOUS 10 SPRING SEASONS

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	309	433	611	244	417	395	300	409	524	564	367
Magnolia Warbler	170	323	351	519	249	213	395	160	298	453	290
Gray Catbird	150	187	221	324	180	154	283	192	306	303	225
Yellow Warbler	150	175	258	340	191	143	126	230	261	196	205
Black-capped Chickadee	119	8	555	13	573	12	18	44	1014	17	192
Common Yellowthroat	135	174	212	160	213	178	184	130	241	201	165
American Redstart	167	237	289	334	228	183	254	112	231	212	159
Palm Warbler	3	14	142	105	69	67	141	84	26	30	147
White-throated Sparrow	88	110	184	153	224	168	210	148	151	144	144
Yellow-rumped Warbler	16	35	350	471	194	192	140	96	80	152	137

station window. We are hoping that we can arrange to maintain this area as a shorebird stopover point in future years (negotiations are underway). This spring we banded 28 Least Sandpipers, 9 Solitary Sandpipers, 4 Spotted Sandpipers, 2 Greater Yellowlegs, and 1 Semipalmated Plover. We also banded 12 swallows and a Green Heron.

### ENCOUNTERS OF BANDED BIRDS

We received information from the Bird Banding Laboratory about recoveries of the following birds banded at BBBO: A Red-eyed Vireo banded on 26 August 2006 was found dead in Greece, New York on 15 June 2008. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet banded on 30 April 2007 was recaptured and released alive on 24 October 2007 at Long Point Bird Observatory near Port Rowan, Ontario. An American Goldfinch banded on 13 May 2007 was found dead on 16 March 2008 in Woodstock, Georgia. A Tufted Titmouse banded on 4 October 2007 was recaptured and released alive by bander Anne Schnell in Hilton, New York on 23 February 2008. The band of a White-throated Sparrow banded on 6 October 2007 was found in an owl pellet in the Owl Woods on 2 April 2008. A Black-capped Chickadee banded on 6 October 2007 was found dead on 20 October 2007 in Hilton, New York. A Cedar Waxwing, banded on 20 July 2006, was found dead on 26 July 2008 one mile east of Livonia Center, New York. Finally, a Black-capped Chickadee, banded on 24 October 2007, was found dead in Churchville, New York on 8 November 2007.

- Compiled by Betsy Brooks, Ryan Kayhart, and David Mathiason



Above: Mark Deutschlander and Karen Velas band a Greater Yellowlegs at the RIT station, photo by David Mathiason.

Below: An Eastern Towhee banded at Bradoock Bay, photo by Ryan Kayhart.





Birds banded during spring 2008 included the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and the Yellow-throated Vireo above (photos by Ryan Kayhart).

\*"Traill's" Flycatcher includes both Willow Flycatcher and Alder Flycatcher. These species are difficult to distinguish from one another except by their calls.

Sharp-shinned Hawk	9	Nashville Warbler	67
Cooper's Hawk	1	Northern Parula	6
American Woodcock	1	Yellow Warbler	205
Black-billed Cuckoo	8	Chestnut-sided Warbler	43
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1	Magnolia Warbler	290
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	59	Cape May Warbler	2
Downy Woodpecker	2	Black-throated Blue Warbler	85
Red-bellied Woodpecker	2	Yellow-rumped Warbler	137
Northern Flicker	1	Black-throated Green Warbler	21
Eastern Wood-Pewee	11	Blackburnian Warbler	2
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	40	Palm Warbler	147
Acadian Flycatcher	1	"Yellow" Palm Warbler	1
"Traill's" Flycatcher*	133	Bay-breasted Warbler	13
Least Flycatcher	58	Blackpoll Warbler	94
Eastern Phoebe	1	Black-and-white Warbler	38
Great Crested Flycatcher	10	American Redstart	159
Eastern Kingbird	1	Ovenbird	32
Blue-headed Vireo	12	Northern Waterthrush	54
Yellow-throated Vireo	1	Mourning Warbler	38
Warbling Vireo	7	Common Yellowthroat	165
Philadelphia Vireo	5	Hooded Warbler	8
Red-eyed Vireo	57	Wilson's Warbler	115
Blue Jay	60	Canada Warbler	43
American Crow	1	Scarlet Tanager	1
Tree Swallow	1	Eastern Towhee	3
Black-capped Chickadee	192	Chipping Sparrow	10
Red-breasted Nuthatch	13	Field Sparrow	14
Brown Creeper	9	Savannah Sparrow	4
House Wren	25	Fox Sparrow	1
Winter Wren	4	Song Sparrow	26
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	367	Lincoln's Sparrow	48
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	21	Swamp Sparrow	15
Veery	20	White-throated Sparrow	144
Gray-cheeked Thrush	14	White-crowned Sparrow	32
Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush	3	Dark-eyed Junco	4
Swainson's Thrush	61	Northern Cardinal	15
Hermit Thrush	43	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	8
Wood Thrush	18	Indigo Bunting	35
American Robin	26	Bobolink	1
Gray Catbird	225	Red-winged Blackbird	11
Brown Thrasher	7	Rusty Blackbird	3
European Starling	6	Common Grackle	12
Cedar Waxwing	36	Brown-headed Cowbird	3
Blue-winged Warbler	22	Baltimore Oriole	27
Golden-winged Warbler	4	Purple Finch	1
"Brewster's" Warbler	3	American Goldfinch	67
Tennessee Warbler	13	House Sparrow	1
Orange-crowned Warbler	10		

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## VIRGINIA DUFFY

Virginia received a Ph.D. in 1992 from the University of Rochester with a concentration in women's mental health. She has been a nurse for 40 years, and a psychiatric nurse for 30 of those years. For the past 14 years she has worked as a consulting Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner in mental health in developmental disability facilities, psychiatric inpatient units, nursing homes, and college health services.

Virginia has a new online business ([www.PsychSense.com](http://www.PsychSense.com)) with the mission of providing mental health information that is practical, jargon-free, professional and useful. She is the author of *Behavioral First Aid: Managing Emotions During Emergencies*.

So how did Virginia get involved with BBBO? She has been a birder for many years, taking trips to Costa Rica, the Amazon, the Dry Tortugas and Arizona. Her hands-on birding began after Debbie Reed invited her to come to the banding station and she was immediately hooked! She successfully completed BBBO's Bander Training Course in May 2003 and has been a regular bander ever since.

Two of Virginia's long-term goals have been to visit Africa (for the birds, of course, and other animals), and to do more volunteer work. She decided to combine those two goals and will be going to Kenya

in October for three months to work in an orphanage and school in Malinda (on the Indian Ocean) and with a street kids' outreach program outside of Nairobi.

There are 25-35,000 street kids in Nairobi, most orphaned due to AIDS. Virginia is working with her church to raise funds for the children's school supplies.

While in Kenya, Virginia is also going to arrange a safari for herself and some friends. She has lots of future plans for travel, including going to the Galapagos in April to watch Blue-footed Boobies dance!

Virginia's favorite thrill about banding is correctly identifying a difficult bird. Other favorites include handling birds and getting a surprise every time she opens a bird bag. And, she adds, "there are also so many caring and special people at the lab that I really like." In addition, as Virginia often says, "running the net lanes is the only form of exercise I truly love."

Thanks, Virginia, for all your hard work for BBBO!

- Betsy Brooks ♦



**WHICH SPECIES IS IT?**  
**CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS**  
**TRICKY WARBLER (RIGHT)?**  
**THE ANSWER WILL APPEAR**  
**IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF**  
**THE MARSH WREN.**



Photos by Ryan Kayhart



**DID YOU NOTICE THE FAINT HOOD ON THIS YOUNG HOODED**  
**WARBLER (LEFT) FROM THE LAST ISSUE OF THE MARSH WREN?**

## Has your membership expired?

If so, this may be your last issue of *The Marsh Wren*. Please check your membership status by finding the expiration date printed on the mailing label below. Memberships expire at the end of the year printed. To join BBBO, please mail a check to:

Braddock Bay Bird Observatory  
PO Box 12876  
Rochester, NY 14612

Membership categories are: Student \$10, Individual \$20, Family \$25, Contributing \$100, Corporate \$250. Thank you for your support!

## BRADDOCK BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY

A non-profit (501(c)(3)) organization dedicated to ornithological research, education, and conservation. The organization is operated entirely by volunteers, and financially supported by our members.

### BBBO Officers and Advisers:

*President* Mark Deutschlander; *Vice-President* David Bonter; *Treasurer* Robert McKinney; *Secretary* Linda Boutwell; *Directors* Matthew Belanger, Elizabeth Brooks, Cindy Marino, Richard Marx, David Mathiason, and John Waud; *Membership Advisor* Chita McKinney. For a complete list of committees and committee membership, visit our web site: <[www.bbbo.org/about/staff](http://www.bbbo.org/about/staff)>

Front page photo of Marsh Wren © Robert Royse. Baltimore Oriole (below) by Ryan Kayhart. Newsletter editing and design by David Bonter.



Join us and the birds at Braddock Bay this autumn! The banding season runs from late August through mid-October.



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