

# the Sand Bluff Birder

the official newsletter of the Sand Bluff Bird Observatory

December 2009

## President's Message

As I look back over the the last year, I reflect on the challenges nature threw our way. The weather covered just about everything from snowy and cold in the spring to very few extremely hot days during the summer. Even fall was different with a rainy and cold October followed by a warmer November. Through all of this, it did not stop birds from doing their thing by migrating to territory. Even if the migration seemed a little late at times the birds surprised us with something unusual. Bird Fest weekend we caught our first Henslow's Sparrow in a long time as well as a Virginia Rail and two Red-Headed Woodpeckers.

This fall it seems like we were busy but not many unusual birds showed up, although we did have a couple Long-eared Owls get caught, one on the night before "Owl Night" and the other on the last Saturday night of banding. The Hawk station had a busy year even without a rare bird. Sand Bluff hawkers worked hard this fall and broke the overall record of 117 total hawks and caught 151 birds. The 131 Red-tailed Hawks should put us at the top in the Midwest region of the Inland Bird Banding Association. We also caught 12 Cooper's Hawks.

Over all I would say we have had a good year and I thank all our birding friends for their donations to our net fund. From the \$5.00 contribution to the largest, Sand Bluff volunteers thank you. Make plans to visit Sand Bluff in 2010! As we head into winter remember to keep feeders clean and full and the bird baths thawed.

May everyone have a joyous holiday season and may 2010 be even better than the last,

——Mike Eickman, President

## Bluebird Box Report For 2009

by Mary Kisamore

Fifty six Eastern Bluebirds fledged this year after a very slow spring start due to cold and wet conditions. Of the 30 boxes, there were bluebirds nesting in 14 boxes at one time or another. There was an unfortunate occurrence with the box placed near the Sugar River Alder Forest Preserve parking lot. Someone bent the pole and knocked the box to the ground resulting in the loss of six bluebird eggs. On the brighter side, a bluebird pair did a third nesting, a first since I have been monitoring bluebirds! These three birds didn't fledge until mid-August. Wisconsin also reported some third nestings this year.

## Meet Julie Thompson

I first came to Sand Bluff while on a school field trip with my youngest daughter. It was exciting being able to see birds up close so I returned occasionally for 3 or 4 years. When Lee Johnson asked if I would be interested in volunteering, I jumped at the idea and have been coming regularly for about 8 years.

My parents had been interested in birds, but all of my life



I have had poor eyesight and was frustrated by not being able to see birds very well in the wild. SBBO alleviated this problem. Having always been an outdoor person, hiking, camping, horse-back riding, gardening and photography have been my interests. I am a proud parent of four wonderful daughters and grandmother to 6 children. My working life has been spent as a school social worker.

The wonderful people, the exciting birds and the divergent knowledge of all who spend time at Sand Bluff keeps me coming back. I feel that those of us who have a love of the natural world share a bond and Sand Bluff gives us an opportunity to connect and to pass this love on to a new generation.

## Fall 2009 Visitors

In addition to those who attended Owl Nights this fall, SBBO had a large number of participants in the educational outreach program for groups: 52 Boy and Girl Scouts with 22 accompanying adults, 152 elementary and high school students with 35 supervisory adults, 60 adults and a birthday party of 8. These included Brownie Troop 12 & Cadette Troop 286 from Washington Academy, Rockford; Brownie Troop 226 from Belvidere; and Cub Scouts from Durand; Rock County Christian School, Janesville; Parker High School Science Club, Janesville; Newark Elementary School, Beloit; Spectrum School, Rockford; and Orfordville Elementary School, Orfordville; Friends of the Arboretum, Madison; and Wesley Willows, Rockford.



On Saturday, September 26, Girl Scouts in Brownie Troop 12 and Cadette Troop 286 from Washington Academy, Rockford, IL visited SBBO. Left to right: Amelia T., Hallas S., Vanessa A., Natalie A., Bree M., Olivia T., and Anjali P. The troops leader is Angie Torre.

Photo by Thelma Bottum

# Spring 2009 Banding Report

Lee G. Johnson, Master Banders

Unusual birds banded this spring were Virginia Rail, Red-headed Woodpecker, Marsh Wren, Loggerhead Shrike, Dickcissel, and Henslow's Sparrow. Southern birds banded that are extending their ranges north included Acadian Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Pine Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Orchard Oriole. We banded 20 Orchard Orioles, a bird that was very rare in the 1960's and 1970's. Over all this was an average year for most species. Numbers are still down compared to the 1960's and early 1970's. Some noteworthy high counts were swallows, House Wren, Cedar Waxwing, Tennessee Warbler, Northern Waterthrush

We start banding again in the spring, usually mid to late March, depending on the weather. Join us in the spring to see the birds being banded as they migrate north.

SPECIES	2009	1999	1989	SPECIES	2009	1999	1989
Wood Duck				Orange-crowned Warbler	1	2	3
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	1	1	Nashville Warbler	16	5	8
Cooper's Hawk	1	1	1	Northern Parula			
Red-tailed Hawk				Yellow Warbler	4	1	7
American Kestrel	1	2		Chestnut-sided Warbler	7		6
American Woodcock		4	4	Magnolia Warbler	7	2	13
Virginia Rail	1			Cape May Warbler			1
Mourning Dove	1	2	1	Bk-throated Blue Warbler		1	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	2		2	Yellow-rumped Warbler	41	34	115
Black-billed Cuckoo	2	1	13	Bk-throated Green Warbler			2
Barred Owl				Blackburnian Warbler	1	1	2
Long-eared Owl				Pine Warbler	1	2	
N.Saw-Whet Owl			2	Palm Warbler	75	40	42
Common Nighthawk	1	3	9	Bay-breasted Warbler			1
Whip-poor-will	3	2	5	Blackpoll Warbler	2		1
Belted Kingfisher				Black-and-white Warbler	1	1	10
Red-headed Woodpecker	2			American Redstart	19	1	5
Red-bellied Woodpecker				Worm-eating Warbler			
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	9	6	4	Ovenbird	34	18	44
Downy Woodpecker	2	5	13	Northern Waterthrush	45	7	7
Hairy Woodpecker	4	1	1	Prothonotary Warbler			2
Yellow-shafted Flicker	4	22	12	Kentucky Warbler	1	1	
Olive-sided Flycatcher	2	1	1	Hooded Warbler	2	2	
Eastern Wood-Pewee	10	2	5	Connecticut Warbler	3	1	2
Acadian Flycatcher	1		1	Mourning Warbler	6	1	10
Willow Flycatcher	18	4	21	Common Yellowthroat	22	7	64
Least Flycatcher	6	8	45	Wilson's Warbler	3	1	6
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	3		2	Canada Warbler	3	2	7
Eastern Phoebe	22	14	17	Yellow-breasted Chat	1		
Great Crested Flycatcher	5	4	9	Scarlet Tanager	13	1	
Eastern Kingbird	7	6	6	Northern Cardinal	24	34	25
Tree Swallow	24	5	7	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	20	2	18
N.Rough-winged Swallow	9	2		Indigo Bunting	37	18	46
Barn Swallow	9	1		Lazuli Bunting			
Blue Jay	7	11	34	Dickcissel	5		
Black-capped Chickadee	10	9	18	Eastern Towhee	10	2	6
Eastern Tufted Titmouse	1	1		American Tree Sparrow	54	12	134
Red-breasted Nuthatch				Chipping Sparrow	37	41	24
White-breasted Nuthatch	7	2	5	Clay-colored Sparrow		2	1
Brown Creeper	17	9	6	Field Sparrow	74	35	70
Carolina Wren				Vesper Sparrow	3	1	15
House Wren	53	16	27	Lark Sparrow	3	7	5
Winter Wren	3	1	4	Savannah Sparrow	13	6	10
Marsh Wren	1			Grasshopper Sparrow	11	16	12
Golden-crowned Kinglet	44	17	25	Henslow's Sparrow	2		
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	13	20	95	Fox Sparrow	73	25	52
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	4	1	1	Song Sparrow	101	72	88
Eastern Bluebird	16	26	49	Lincoln's Sparrow	21	8	1
Veery	11	5	26	Swamp Sparrow	61	30	106
Gray-cheeked Thrush	21	22	2	White-throated Sparrow	94	30	109
Swainson's Thrush	75	69	23	White-crowned Sparrow	29	43	2
Hermit Thrush	32	37	39	Gambel's Sparrow			
Wood Thrush	10	12	32	Dark-eyed Junco	216	114	223
American Robin	72	76	78	Oregon Junco			1
Gray Catbird	113	31	125	Red-winged Blackbird	20	13	33
Brown Thrasher	18	21	22	Eastern Meadowlark	9	2	20
Cedar Waxwing	51	2	4	Common Grackle			30
Loggerhead Shrike	2			Brown-headed Cowbird	235	80	99
Northern Shrike		1		Orchard Oriole	20	1	
White-eyed Vireo	1	1		Baltimore Oriole	31	6	77
Blue-headed Vireo			6	Purple Finch			
Yellow-throated Vireo	1		7	Common Redpoll			
Warbling Vireo	3		3	Pine Siskin	1		
Philadelphia Vireo				American Goldfinch	133	193	199
Red-eyed Vireo	12	4	64	House Finch	3		
Blue-winged Warbler	1		3	House Sparrow			
Golden-winged Warbler	2		2				
Tennessee Warbler	33	6					
				TOTAL	2441	1422	2588

# 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!

- Enclosed is a (tax-deductible) contribution of
  - \$5.00 (Subscriber)
  - \$15.00 (Donor)
  - \$25.00 (Supporting Member)
  - \$50.00 (Net Sponsor)
  - \$100.00 (Sustaining Member)
- 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) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip + 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (days) \_\_\_\_\_ (evenings) \_\_\_\_\_ (e-mail) \_\_\_\_\_

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

## SBBO Volunteers Discover Rare Whooping Cranes

by Lynda Johnson

Steve Torre and his son, McKinley, stopped at the Nygren Wetland Preserve Overlook off of Rockton Road, on Sunday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, on their way home after banding for the morning at SBBO. They were pleased to see two Sandhill Cranes through their binoculars, when FIVE WHOOPING CRANES landed right next to the Sandhill Cranes. Steve ran to his car to get his bird book to verify that they were indeed Whooping Cranes, then he called Lee and Lynda Johnson who dashed over there to look. The black on the tip of the wings is the identifying field mark.

At that point they were calling all the SBBO volunteers and the North Central Illinois Ornithological Society bird hotline and staff from the Natural Land Institute. The International Crane Foundation has identified the five birds from photos that were sent to them by the order of colored bands on both legs: a breeding pair—a male from 2004 and a female from 2005 (they have tried to nest two times but have not been successful, yet)—and three single males from 2005, 2007, and 2008. They did not leave Wisconsin at the same time, so it is a mystery where the five hooked up together. This sighting is a first for Winnebago County and the Nygren Wetland Preserve.

These birds are adults, part of the flock that is captive-bred and taught to follow the ultra light airplane down to Florida their first fall. Once the young cranes are led to Florida, they return to Wisconsin on their own, and follow the migration path on their own in succeeding years. It is interesting to note that 20 first year Whooping Cranes stopped in western Winnebago County with the ultra light, and left early morning November 15<sup>th</sup>, the same day the adults arrived at the Nygren Preserve.

The Whooping Cranes are very rare and endangered. The walking path around the Nygren Preserve was closed to keep people from getting too close and disturbing these magnificent wild birds. By the time this newsletter is mailed, they will be on their way to spending the winter in Florida. We all need to be reminded to support conservation organizations, like the Natural Land Institute, who work very hard to preserve critical habitat for birds, other wild creatures and native plants.



Long-eared owl  
banded on  
October 17, 2009

Photo by Thelma Bottum

**GROUP VISITS--** Schools, groups, clubs, retirees, etc. may call now to schedule a special weekend or weekday visit during the spring migration season. Experience the banding process and a net run with trained volunteers. A per person donation is expected. Call Lisa Weckerly at 815-623-1815 to make a reservation.



Photo by John Longhenry

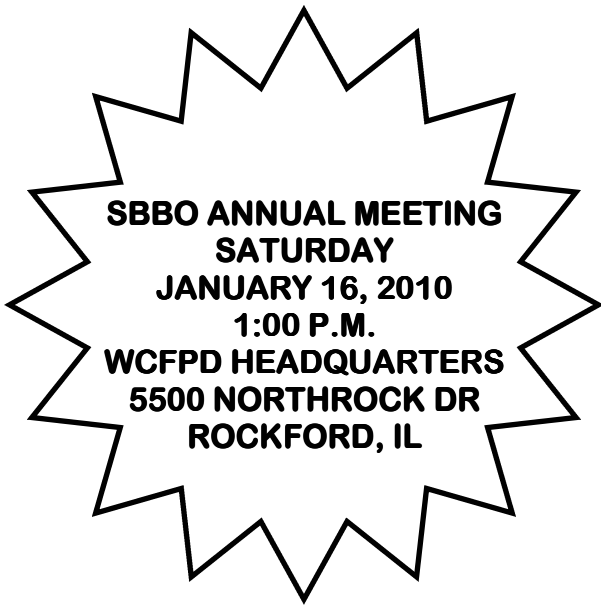
Lynda Johnson removes a bird from the net while students from the Parker High School Science Club, Janesville, WI, observe on Saturday, Oct. 3. Science Club advisor is Deb Hilger.

Photo by Thelma Bottum



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P. O. Box 2  
Seward, IL 61077



*Black-throated Blue Warbler banded on September 19, 2009*  
Photo by Thelma Bottum

### Did You Know . . . .

If you find a dead bird that has been banded, remove the band from the leg and enter the band number and location of the recovery at <http://reportband.gov>. You and the bander will each receive documentation about the bird.

### 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

Be sure to visit our website at: [www.sandbluff.org](http://www.sandbluff.org)

### ADDRESS CORRECTIONS

If you wish to cancel, subscribe or correct your mailing address for the Sand Bluff Birder, please e-mail: [dtbottum@hotmail.com](mailto:dtbottum@hotmail.com).  
Subject: SBBO Birder



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