

# the Sand Bluff Birder

the official newsletter of the Sand Bluff Bird Observatory

December 2010

## President's Message

Roll the nets and turn out the lights, the party's over! Sand Bluff officially closed November 30 with a hard working crew taking the nets down and storing them away in our building.

Fall 2010 was eventful with good bird numbers almost every weekend. For small birds, a Le Conte's Sparrow was a treat in October as were some Summer Tanagers.

Hawking this year proved to be busy with 154 Red-tailed Hawks, numerous Cooper's and Sharp-Shinned Hawks and two special, yes two, Peregrine Falcons within 10 minutes of each other. Public "Owl Night" programs were in demand with a good group each night. For the season, about 30 Northern Saw-whet Owls were trapped to the thrill of all in attendance.

As I get close to the end of this writing, I want to wish you all a great holiday season and a safe new year. Don't forget the birds—keep the feeder full and the water thawed. A good seed will make them really warm and happy.

Thank you to all our friends who support Sand Bluff, we greatly appreciate everyone. See you all next spring and put Birdfest on your calendar on Mother's Day 2011.

——Mike Eickman, President

## Bluebird Box Report For 2010

by Mary Kisamore

This was a good year for Eastern Bluebirds at Colored Sands Forest Preserve. Eighty five bluebirds fledged despite some wet and cold weather in the early spring. That is the most birds that have fledged in the five years I have been monitoring the nest boxes for SBBO.

In addition, 70 Tree Swallows fledged in 2010 although they didn't seem to do as well in the hotter temperatures this summer. We are happy the bluebirds liked the weather though!

Thanks to Mike Eickman getting us some new poles, Esther Schippers and I were able to relocate some boxes; we will also be replacing several boxes before the 2011 nesting season. Any donations are welcome!

## The Hawk Trapping "Big Day"

by Lee G. Johnson

When hawk banders get together, eventually, the conversation gets to the Peregrine Falcon. Its great speed and agility of maneuvering make it an exciting bird to watch and a challenging bird to catch. Through the years only a few have been caught here. The last one I caught and banded was five years ago.



Each fall for several years, Don Prentice, one of the founders of the North Central Illinois Ornithological Society (NCIOS or Bird Club) and hawk trapping enthusiast, comes from Arizona and spends a month with Dave Seal to trap hawks at SBBO. During that period, any day there is a chance of catching hawks, you will find Don, Dave, and myself at the hawk building.

One day a Peregrine Falcon came in landing in the middle of the bow net. The release on the net jammed and off it flew, tantalizing us for half an hour by flying over our other nets. This kind of frustration is nothing new to hawk trappers.



About a week later, in came a Peregrine Falcon landing on the west rig, and "wow!"-- we caught it! We were back in the building talking about our good fortune or skill, when, "bam", another Peregrine Falcon was caught in the northeast bow net--just ten minutes later than the first! What a trapping day that was! This anticipation is what keeps us staring out of the hawk building for hours when we see nothing.

The Peregrine Falcon was totally exterminated in the Midwest in the 1950's due to DDT use. Since then it has been re-introduced, and this population seems to be doing better in recent years.



Photos by John Longhenry

# Spring 2010 Banding Report

Lee G. Johnson, Master Bander

This spring season started promising a good season when we caught our first adult male Northern Harrier in the regular mist nets. Previously, we have caught immatures or females. Other unusual birds captured were a Sora and eight Dickcissels. We banded a Cliff Swallow; in the last 60 years, this species has moved into the area from further west. A Carolina Wren also offered hope that their numbers may be improving. A series of very cold winters in the 1970's decimated the entire U.S. population, and they have never returned in their original numbers in this area.

The Forest Preserve District burned the prairie around the Road and Field nets this spring. An increase in the short-grass sparrows provided evidence that changes in habitat affect bird populations. Lark Sparrows, Savannah Sparrows, Vesper Sparrows, and Grasshopper Sparrows had higher totals. Red-winged Blackbirds and Meadowlarks, which return early in the spring, had lower totals.

Kinglet numbers were low; Gnatcatchers, Robins, and Hermit Thrushes had higher numbers. Warbler numbers were average for recent times. Please come out this next spring and share the excitement provided with the ever-changing birding results.

| SPECIES                   | 2010 | 2000 | 1990 | SPECIES                     | 2010 | 2000 | 1990 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|-----------------------------|------|------|------|
| Wood Duck                 |      |      |      | Swainson's Warbler          |      |      | 1    |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk        | 1    | 2    | 3    | Tennessee Warbler           | 5    | 5    | 10   |
| Cooper's Hawk             | 2    |      |      | Orange-crowned Warbler      | 2    | 1    | 3    |
| Red-tailed Hawk           | 1    |      |      | Nashville Warbler           | 22   | 3    | 8    |
| Northern Harrier          | 1    |      |      | Northern Parula             |      |      |      |
| American Kestrel          |      |      |      | Yellow Warbler              | 10   | 1    | 9    |
| American Woodcock         | 5    | 1    | 5    | Chestnut-sided Warbler      | 2    |      | 10   |
| Sora                      | 1    |      |      | Magnolia Warbler            | 9    | 2    | 21   |
| Virginia Rail             |      |      |      | Cape May Warbler            |      |      |      |
| Mourning Dove             | 2    |      | 2    | Black-throated Blue Warbler |      |      |      |
| Yellow-billed Cuckoo      | 2    | 1    | 1    | Yellow-rumped Warbler       | 24   | 23   | 35   |
| Black-billed Cuckoo       |      |      | 16   | Bk-throated Green Warbler   | 2    | 1    |      |
| Barred Owl                |      |      |      | Blackburnian Warbler        | 1    |      |      |
| Long-eared Owl            |      |      |      | Pine Warbler                |      |      |      |
| N.Saw-Whet Owl            |      | 2    |      | Palm Warbler                | 48   | 22   | 28   |
| Common Nighthawk          |      |      | 12   | Bay-breasted Warbler        |      |      |      |
| Whip-poor-will            | 2    | 3    | 5    | Blackpoll Warbler           |      | 1    | 1    |
| Belted Kingfisher         |      |      |      | Black-and-white Warbler     | 5    |      | 2    |
| Red-headed Woodpecker     |      |      | 1    | American Redstart           | 10   | 2    | 14   |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker    | 1    | 1    | 1    | Worm-eating Warbler         |      |      |      |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  | 9    | 2    | 3    | Ovenbird                    | 44   | 27   | 31   |
| Downy Woodpecker          | 5    | 5    | 9    | Northern Waterthrush        | 40   | 17   | 38   |
| Hairy Woodpecker          | 2    | 3    | 4    | Prothonotary Warbler        |      |      | 1    |
| Yellow-shafted Flicker    | 19   | 15   | 14   | Kentucky Warbler            | 1    |      |      |
| Olive-sided Flycatcher    | 3    | 2    | 13   | Hooded Warbler              |      | 1    |      |
| Eastern Wood-Pewee        | 7    | 2    | 10   | Connecticut Warbler         |      |      | 3    |
| Acadian Flycatcher        | 1    | 1    |      | Mourning Warbler            | 6    | 3    | 19   |
| Willow Flycatcher         | 17   | 2    | 23   | Common Yellowthroat         | 40   | 15   | 45   |
| Least Flycatcher          | 12   | 9    | 24   | Wilson's Warbler            | 2    | 1    | 23   |
| Yellow-bellied Flycatcher | 4    | 3    | 6    | Canada Warbler              | 4    | 1    | 25   |
| Eastern Phoebe            | 14   | 15   | 9    | Yellow-breasted Chat        |      |      |      |
| Great Crested Flycatcher  | 3    |      | 5    | Scarlet Tanager             | 12   | 2    | 12   |
| Eastern Kingbird          | 7    | 2    | 2    | Northern Cardinal           | 51   | 30   | 47   |
| Tree Swallow              | 18   | 23   | 10   | Rose-breasted Grosbeak      | 16   | 1    | 18   |
| N.Rough-winged Swallow    |      |      |      | Indigo Bunting              | 28   | 23   | 48   |
| Barn Swallow              | 8    | 1    |      | Lazuli Bunting              |      |      |      |
| Cliff Swallow             | 1    |      |      | Dickcissel                  | 8    |      |      |
| Blue Jay                  | 14   | 3    | 25   | Eastern Towhee              | 5    | 6    | 10   |
| Black-capped Chickadee    | 9    | 7    | 26   | Spotted Towhee              |      |      | 1    |
| Tufted Titmouse           | 3    | 6    |      | American Tree Sparrow       | 1    | 10   | 228  |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch     |      |      |      | Chipping Sparrow            | 59   | 28   | 26   |
| White-breasted Nuthatch   | 4    | 3    | 6    | Clay-colored Sparrow        | 5    |      |      |
| Brown Creeper             | 8    | 9    | 8    | Field Sparrow               | 42   | 51   | 96   |
| Carolina Wren             | 1    |      |      | Vesper Sparrow              | 6    | 2    | 6    |
| House Wren                | 40   | 20   | 23   | Lark Sparrow                | 22   | 2    | 2    |
| Winter Wren               | 3    | 4    | 2    | Savannah Sparrow            | 15   | 8    | 5    |
| Marsh Wren                |      |      |      | Grasshopper Sparrow         | 28   | 9    | 3    |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet    | 1    | 18   | 52   | Henslow's Sparrow           |      |      |      |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet      | 13   | 39   | 44   | Fox Sparrow                 | 11   | 27   | 99   |
| Blue-gray Gnatcatcher     | 9    | 1    |      | Song Sparrow                | 56   | 50   | 153  |
| Eastern Bluebird          | 32   | 11   | 28   | Lincoln's Sparrow           | 26   | 16   | 11   |
| Veery                     | 13   | 14   | 25   | Swamp Sparrow               | 28   | 34   | 66   |
| Gray-cheeked Thrush       | 18   | 23   | 45   | White-throated Sparrow      | 71   | 14   | 129  |
| Swainson's Thrush         | 24   | 28   | 76   | White-crowned Sparrow       | 75   | 19   | 2    |
| Hermit Thrush             | 65   | 38   | 31   | Gambel's Sparrow            |      |      |      |
| Wood Thrush               | 16   | 4    | 22   | Harris's Sparrow            |      | 2    |      |
| American Robin            | 150  | 32   | 68   | Dark-eyed Junco             | 76   | 95   | 201  |
| Gray Catbird              | 124  | 41   | 113  | Oregon Junco                |      |      |      |
| Brown Thrasher            | 31   | 8    | 30   | Red-winged Blackbird        | 5    | 31   | 40   |
| Cedar Waxwing             | 16   | 3    | 7    | Yellow-headed Blackbird     |      | 1    |      |
| Loggerhead Shrike         |      | 1    |      | Eastern Meadowlark          | 2    | 12   | 6    |
| Northern Shrike           |      |      |      | Common Grackle              | 1    |      | 20   |
| White-eyed Vireo          | 1    | 1    |      | Brown-headed Cowbird        | 295  | 93   | 219  |
| Blue-headed Vireo         |      |      | 1    | Orchard Oriole              | 12   | 1    | 2    |
| Yellow-throated Vireo     | 4    |      |      | Baltimore Oriole            | 43   | 10   | 26   |
| Warbling Vireo            | 5    | 1    | 3    | Purple Finch                |      |      |      |
| Philadelphia Vireo        |      |      | 1    | Common Redpoll              |      |      |      |
| Red-eyed Vireo            | 5    | 3    | 14   | Pine Siskin                 |      |      |      |
| Blue-winged Warbler       | 8    | 3    | 11   | American Goldfinch          | 144  | 74   | 155  |
| Brewster's Warbler        |      |      | 1    | House Finch                 |      |      |      |
| Golden-winged Warbler     | 3    |      | 1    | House Sparrow               |      |      | 1    |
|                           |      |      |      | TOTAL                       | 2187 | 1195 | 2800 |

# 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!

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enclosed is a (tax-deductible) contribution of | <input type="checkbox"/> I'd like to learn . . . . . , please call me!       |
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Please return this form to: Sand Bluff Bird Observatory, P. O. Box 2, Seward, Illinois 61077

## Testing for West Nile Virus

by John Longhenry

Tonya Kucharski from the Winnebago County Health Dept. visited SBBO on September 11, 2010, in her official capacity, to conduct tests for the West Nile Virus on migrating birds. She tested a variety of birds including warblers, thrushes, cardinals, chickadees, and sparrows. Tonya was pleased to report that none of the birds tested positive for the disease. We appreciated her visit and, of course, the good results; thanks Tonya and hope we see you again in the future.



**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



What a thrill for Edward Steffen from Rockford, right, who dropped by SBBO on October 16, and got to release a Red-tailed Hawk along with Lee Johnson.

photo by Thelma Bottum

**SBBO ANNUAL BOARD MEEING  
SATURDAY, JAN. 8, 2011  
1:00-3:00 P.M.  
SEVERSON DELLS EDUCATION CENTER  
8786 MONTAGUE RD.  
ROCKFORD, IL  
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC  
\*\*\*TREATS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME\*\*\***

[Severson Dells Forest Preserve is 1-2 mi. west of Meridian Rd. on Montague Rd. in Winnebago County. From Shirland Rd. take Meridian Rd. south (10 mi. +) to Montague, then west (right) on Montague. From westbound Bypass 20 take the Montague Rd. exit, continue west on Montague to SDFP (about 3 mi.) From northbound I-39 or IL 251, take Bypass 20 westbound to Montague Rd. exit, then same as above. From eastbound Bypass 20, exit at Meridian Rd. then continue south to Montague, then west.]

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P. O. Box 2  
Seward, IL 61077



## Purple Finch . . . .

When you get to see an adult male Purple Finch up close, you'll wonder how it's magenta plumage could ever be confused with the raspberry red plumage of an adult male House Finch.

*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

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

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