


Annual Report - 2011

Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project

all photos by John Hartgerink





**INAUGURAL YEAR OF BIRD BANDING AT
BLUEBONNET SWAMP: LAYING THE
FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS IN
BATON ROUGE**

Bird Monitoring in Louisiana

Louisiana is an ecologically diverse region. Bald-cypress swamps give way to upland hardwood forests providing refuge for hundreds of migratory and resident bird species. Despite the unique nature of Central Louisiana, no year-round bird banding endeavor existed in South Central Louisiana prior to the establishment of the Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project (BBMP). Habitat refugia, such as Bluebonnet Swamp, provide bird communities with the resources necessary to survive urbanization's encroachment upon rural landscapes. BBMP actively works with local agencies to inform management decisions in an effort to identify sensitive species and to keep our common birds common.

**Building a Future through Bird Monitoring and
Environmental Education**

The Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project (BBMP) was founded by LSU's School of Renewable Natural Resources through partnerships with Baton Rouge Audubon Society and the Parks and Recreation Commission of the Parish of Eastern Baton Rouge. Our first banding operation was conducted on March 15, 2010. Since then, hundreds of resident and migratory species have been safely banded at the station laying the groundwork for in-depth demographic analysis. In addition to bird monitoring, volunteers have taught over 300 school children about conservation, ornithology and ecology thereby preparing the next generation of local conservation ambassadors. Undergraduate and graduate students interested in pursuing a career in wildlife biology continue to learn bird-monitoring techniques from skilled biologists at BBMP.

Oiled-Bird Monitoring and Citizen Science

Several weeks after the creation of the Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project (BBMP) the Deepwater Horizon disaster sent uncontrolled crude oil spilling into the Gulf of Mexico thereby threatening Louisiana's coastal bird communities. BBMP coordinators Jared Wolfe and Erik Johnson organized a massive oiled-bird survey along the entire north rim of the Gulf; our protocols have become the standard for volunteer-based monitoring of oiled birds and polluted habitats resulting from major oil spills. Already, we have presented results at professional meetings and begun preparing analysis for publication. Our efforts were further detailed in a March 2011 feature article in 'Birding Magazine.'



Volunteers and Funding

No one working for the Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project (BBMP) is paid. In total, volunteers have donated thousands of dollars in volunteer hours. In particular, Sherri Utley helped design databases and digitally archived all hard-copy data. Her tireless efforts have facilitated our collective ability to compile and analyze the growing database. Matt Brooks, Kristin Brzeski, Emma DeLeon, John Hartgerink, Erik Johnson, Eric Liffmann, Falyn Owens, Luke Powell, Jerry Seagle, Phil Stouffer and Jared Wolfe have routinely dedicated their time and expertise to BBMP's first year of bird monitoring. In-kind funding sources have been provided by Louisiana State University's School of Renewable Natural Resources. BBMP volunteers are thankful for funds provided by the Western Bird Banding Association's 2010 research grant, and from the Peter Pyle Advanced Bird Banding Workshop profits.



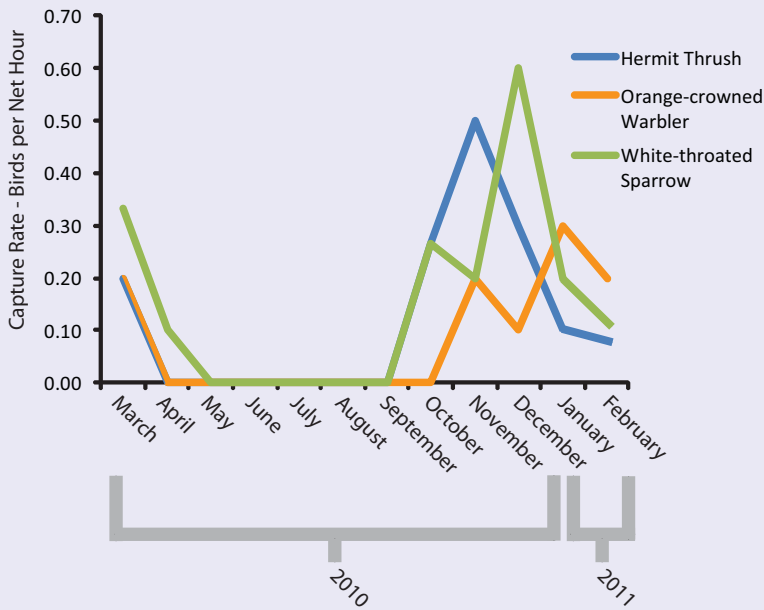
Success through Partnerships

The Parks and Recreation Commission of the Parish of Eastern Baton Rouge (BREC) manages several 'conservation areas' in the greater Baton Rouge area. BREC's commitment to preserving the last vestiges of wild lands in Baton Rouge and the Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project (BBMP)'s focus on monitoring the health of avian communities has created a fruitful partnership. BBMP has also partnered with Costa Rica Bird Observatories in establishing a 'sister' station in the highlands of Cerro de la Muerte, Costa Rica, in order to create continuity in our combined hemispheric wide bird monitoring efforts. BBMP's partnership with Baton Rouge Audubon Society has increased our internet capacity and our ability to coordinate bird banding events. LSU's School of Renewable Natural Resources provided essential equipment and expertise facilitating BBMP's initial success. Finally, all BBMP data are digitally archived through the Landbird Monitoring Network of the Americas (LaMNA).

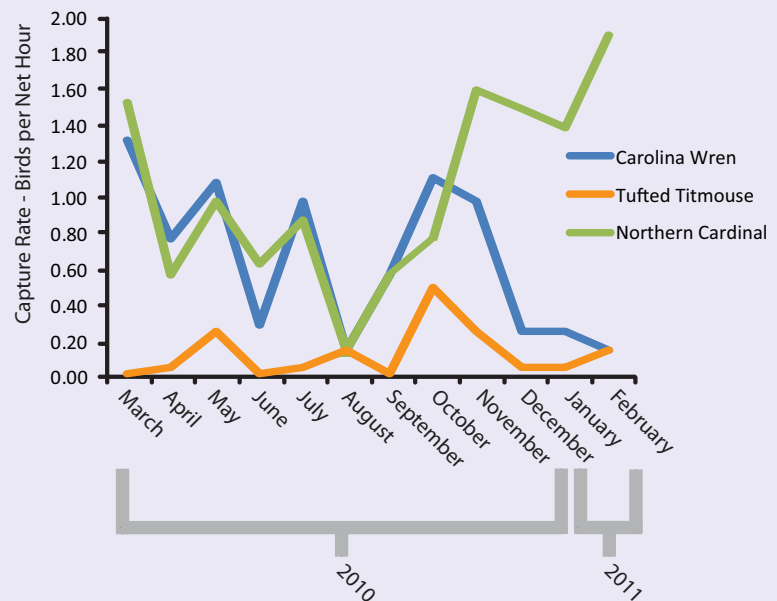


Future Endeavors

In the spring of 2011 the Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project (BBMP) volunteers will conduct exploratory banding sessions at BRAS's Peveto Woods Preserve (a bird sanctuary protecting coastal oak cheneir forest), Frenchtown (another BREC conservation area), and will begin monitoring bird populations at a local organic farm. In the fall of 2011, BBMP volunteers will begin documenting local fruiting plant phenology to begin associating annual movements of migratory and resident birds with the food resources necessary for their persistence. Finally, in the fall of 2011, BBMP will begin an owl monitoring program at Frenchtown conservation area.



Capture rates (birds per mist-net hour) of the three most commonly captured migratory bird species at Bluebonnet Swamp: Hermit Thrush, Orange-crowned Warbler, and White-throated Sparrow



Capture rates (birds per mist-net hour) of the three most commonly captured resident bird species at Bluebonnet Swamp: Carolina Wren, Tufted Titmouse, and Northern Cardinal



Peter Pyle's Advanced Bird Banding Workshop

The Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project (BBMP) invited Peter Pyle, world-renowned bird bander, to teach a four day workshop in mid-April 2011 focused on advanced ageing and sexing techniques. Biologists and students from Tulane University, LSU - Baton Rouge, LSU - Shreveport, University of Southern Mississippi, Puget Sound Bird Observatory and the Louisiana Department of Fish and Wildlife participated in the sold-out workshop. In addition to several days of banding at Bluebonnet Swamp, participants spent a day banding migrant birds at Peveto Wood's Bird Sanctuary in Cameron Parish. The quality of instruction, participant involvement, diversity and abundance of bird species captured exceeded expectations.



List of bird species captured in mist-nets (indicated with an asterick) or detected during audio-visual surveys at the Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project between March-2010 and April-2011

Acadian Flycatcher*
 American Crow
 American Goldfinch*
 American Pipit
 American Redstart*
 American Robin*
 Baltimore Oriole
 Barn Swallow
 Barred Owl
 Belted Kingfisher
 Black Vulture
 Black-and-white Warbler*
 Black-crowned Night-Heron
 Blue Grosbeak*
 Blue Jay*
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
 Blue-headed Vireo*
 Broad-winged Hawk
 Brown Creeper
 Brown Thrasher*
 Brown-headed Cowbird*
 Canada Goose
 Carolina Chickadee*
 Carolina Wren*
 Cedar Waxwing
 Chestnut-sided Warbler
 Chimney Swift
 Chipping Sparrow*
 Common Grackle*
 Common Nighthawk
 Common Yellowthroat*
 Cooper's Hawk
 Double-crested Cormorant
 Downy Woodpecker*
 Eastern Kingbird
 Eastern Phoebe*
 Eastern Towhee*
 Eastern Wood-Pewee*
 European Starling
 Fish Crow
 Golden-Crowned Kinglet*
 Gray Catbird*
 Great Blue Heron

Great Crested Flycatcher
 Great Egret
 Great Horned Owl
 Great-tailed Grackle
 Hairy Woodpecker*
 Hermit Thrush*
 Hooded Warbler*
 House Finch*
 House Sparrow*
 House Wren*
 Indigo Bunting*
 Kentucky Warbler*
 Killdeer
 Little Blue Heron
 Louisiana Waterthrush*
 Magnolia Warbler*
 Mallard
 Mississippi Kite
 Mourning Dove
 Myrtle's Warbler*
 Northern Cardinal*
 Northern Flicker*
 Northern Mockingbird*
 Northern Parula
 Northern Waterthrush*
 Orange-crowned Warbler*
 Orchard Oriole
 Osprey
 Ovenbird*
 Painted Bunting*
 Pileated Woodpecker
 Pine Siskin
 Prothonotary Warbler*
 Purple Finch*
 Purple Martin
 Red-bellied Woodpecker*
 Red-eyed Vireo
 Red-shouldered Hawk
 Red-tailed Hawk
 Red-winged Blackbird*
 Rock Dove
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet*
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird*

Rusty Blackbird
 Savannah Sparrow
 Scarlet Tanager
 Sharp-shinned Hawk
 Snowy Egret
 Song Sparrow*
 Summer Tanager
 Swainson's Thrush*
 Swallow-tailed Kite
 Swamp Sparrow*
 Swainson's Warbler*
 Tennessee Warbler
 Tree Swallow
 Tufted Titmouse*
 Turkey Vulture
 Vaux's Swift
 White Ibis
 White-eyed Vireo*
 White-throated Sparrow*
 Wilson's Warbler*
 Winter Wren*
 Wood Duck
 Wood Thrush*
 Worm-eating Warbler*
 Yellow-bellied Flycatcher*
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker*
 Yellow-billed Cuckoo*
 Yellow-Breasted Chat*
 Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

