

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Breeding Grid Intern Final Report

Alec Forest

Breeding Grid Intern, 2013

Methods

Methods followed those outlined in the 2005 BBO Water Levels Birds Final Report (Priestley and Holroyd 2005), at the same study area initially established in 1992-93 (Duxbury and Holroyd 1993). Surveys were conducted on 7 mornings this year (June 22, 23, July 4, 5, 6, 13, 18), compared to 9 mornings in 1992, 8 mornings in 1993, and 6 mornings in 2006. No nest searches or mist netting were conducted, in contrast to 2004.

Results

Bird abundance trends seen in 2004 continued. Waterbird territories are still absent from the breeding grid area. Savannah Sparrow territories dropped further, from 32 in 2004 to 25.4 this year. Territories that increased in number were those of Clay-colored Sparrows (43.4 this year, compared to 16 in 2004), Yellow Warblers, and Least Flycatchers. New species monitored this year were the Warbling Vireo and Black-capped Chickadee.

This change in species distribution is consistent with the change from grassland to aspen forest and willow shrub lands this region has experienced since 1992: the Savannah Sparrows enjoy the grassland, and Clay-colored Sparrows prefer it even more dry (Priestley and Holroyd 2006). Now, the most common bird of the region is the Clay-colored Sparrow rather than the Savannah sparrow, which held that title in 2004. This shift toward more Clay-colored Sparrows suggests an increasing dryness since 2004 (Priestley and Holroyd 2006). Forest species such as the Least Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, and Warbling Vireo are also expanding their ranges into the area.

Table 1. Total number of territories observed in 1992, 1993, 2004, and 2013.

Species	# of Territories 1992	# of Territories 1993	# of Territories 2004	# of Territories 2013
Mallard	4	6	0	0
Northern Shoveler	1	0	0	0
Lesser Scaup	6	0	0	0
Blue-winged Teal	3	0	0.5	0
Duck spp.	6	2	0	0.2
Northern Harrier	0	1	1	0
Wilson's Phalarope	11	5	0	0
Short-eared Owl	0	0	1	0
Least Flycatcher	0	0	3	3.8
Marsh Wren	0	0	0.5	0
Yellow Warbler	2	2	4.5	7.8
Common Yellowthroat	1.5	2.5	4	0
Savannah Sparrow	48	35	32	25.4
Clay-colored Sparrow	6	5	16	43.4
LeConte's Sparrow	4	6	1	0
Lincoln's Sparrow	0	0	1	0
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	9	7	4	0
Song Sparrow	0	0	1	0
Red-winged Blackbird	16.5	17	0.5	0.2
Yellow-headed Blackbird	3	0	0	0
Brewer's Blackbird	0	0	1	0
Warbling Vireo	0	0	0	0.8
Black-capped Chickadee	0	0	0	0.8
TOTAL	121	96.5	71	82.4

Literature Cited

- Duxbury, J. and G. Holroyd. 1993. Grass-sedge wetland breeding bird census. Pages 28-29 in Beaverhill Bird Observatory 1993 Annual Report by J. Duxbury (ed.). Beaverhill Bird Observatory, Edmonton, AB.
- Priestley, L. and G. Holroyd. 2005. Bird population changes in drought at Beaverhill Lake. Beaverhill Bird Observatory, Edmonton, AB.
- Priestley, L. and G. Holroyd. 2006. Grassland birds along Beaverhill Lake's shoreline. Edmonton Nature News 3(1): 23-24.