

Chippewa WFRP Update

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Special points of interest:

- The latin name for the Blackburnian warbler (*Dendroica fusca*) is the combination of Greek words meaning dusky tree dweller. The bird's common name came from Anna Blackburne, an 18th century English botanist.
- In 1937, road crews constructing a bridge over the creek in Itasca State Park reported finding large bison bones and artifacts. Bone recovered from all the excavations at Itasca totaled over 9,000 pieces, of which about two-thirds were the giant bison.

A Partnership for the Birds - 14 years of forest bird monitoring

The National Forests of the western Great Lakes region have among the richest diversity of breeding bird species in North America (Green 1995, Rich et al. 2004). An appreciation of this diversity, along with concerns about potential declines of some species, led to a strong interest in monitoring forest bird populations in the region. The relatively heavily forested landscapes of northern Minnesota and Wisconsin are considered to be population "sources" for many forest bird species and may be supplementing population "sinks" in the agricultural landscapes of the lower Midwest (Robinson et al. 1995, Temple and Flaspohler 1998), highlighting the importance of monitoring trends in forest bird populations in the upper Midwest.



In response to the need for regional population data, a long-term forest breeding bird monitoring program was established in 1991 on the Chippewa and Superior National Forests in Minnesota, and in 1992 on the Chequamegon National Forest in Wisconsin. Through a cooperative agreement, these three Forests are collaborating with the University of Minnesota Duluth's Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI) and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to collect, analyze and interpret forest bird population information. Currently, 435 stands (1,271 points) within the three national forests are surveyed by NRRI field

crews once during each breeding season (June 1 to July 10).

The primary objectives of this monitoring program are:

1. to provide population trend data at the scale of an individual national forest;
2. to identify when and where population changes are occurring and identify potential conservation problems; and
3. to monitor certain management indicator species.

Additionally, this monitoring effort provides invaluable information on the occurrences of forest song birds which are identified on the Regional Forester's Sensitive Species list for each Forest as well as on other bird species of interest.

NRRI staff prepares an annual report for the National Forests with results of the forest bird monitoring program. It focuses on relative abundance trends of individual species, as well as assemblages of species, over the 13 to 14 year time frame of the monitoring. Its intent is to summarize the most important results and to provide detailed information in appendix form for those who need more specific results. This report, as well as annual update reports from 1998 to 2003, can be found on the internet at: <http://www.nrri.umn.edu/mnbirds/reports.htm>.

Highlights of the 2004 annual report can be found on page 4 of this newsletter.

Take A Kid Fishing and National Fishing & Boating Week

The Chippewa National Forest celebrated National Fishing & Boating Week (June 4–12) by working with community volunteers to host kids fishing events across the Forest.

On Saturday, June 4th, the Deer River/Marcell District employees and partners gathered with nearly fifty kids and their families at Clubhouse Lake campground. Forest Service personnel along with the Itasca County Sheriff's Department were there to teach the young anglers Boat and Water Safety. Area residents offered "guiding services" to those who wanted to fish from a boat. Forest Service personnel escorted the remaining group of kids to the fishing pier and shoreline "hotspots". Later in the day, minnow races and other contests were held with prizes being awarded. The Big Fork Lion's Club provided bought & prepared the food, supplies, bait, and prizes.

In Cass Lake, Forest Service staff worked alongside community volunteers to host the Cass Lake Take a Kid Fishing event on Saturday, June 4. Local guides took 37 kids, age 8 to 15, out on area lakes for a morning of fishing. Meanwhile, other volunteers helped younger kids, age 5 to 8, catch some panfish in a pond stocked by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources at Stony Point Resort. The day ended with a fish fry provided by the Leech Lake Reservation and Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. The Leech Lake Community Center provided a rod and reel combo to each participant, while other local busi-

nesses provided additional raffle prizes, snacks, drinks, gas coupons, and bait.

Blackduck District personnel and community members helped with the Bemidji Take A Kid Fishing event at Cameron Park on June 8. Area guides took about 140 kids out fishing for the day, which ended with a fish fry at 5 pm, followed by a photo session for young anglers to show off the results of their fishing skills.

These fishing events could not be successful without the support of fishing clubs, local businesses, bait shops, and other cooperators. Partners donated everything from hot dogs to rods and reels, bait, and tackle boxes. Cooperators generously volunteer their time to help run events and supply prizes. This involvement provides opportunities for forming strong bonds between public resource managers and the surrounding communities.

Fishing is a thriving pastime in the nation, and especially in Minnesota. Nationally, the number of recreational anglers is estimated at 44 million. More people fish than play golf or tennis combined, and the economic impact of recreational fishing is \$116 billion annually. Among the states, Minnesota is first nationally in the sales of fishing licenses per capita, and sport fishing expenditures add approximately \$1.58 billion to our economy. Participating in National Fishing and Boating Week is one way Chippewa National Forest staff can help youth participate in the sport.

- contributed by Jim Mathes, Blackduck District



Heather Olson (Information Assistant) and Lonnie Lymon (Recreation Technician) help kids get ready for fishing at Clubhouse Lake campground.

Did you know that Minnesota has 3,800,000 acres of fishable lakes and 15,000 miles of fishable rivers and streams?

Fire and Water... wet meadow habitat management



The Chippewa's wet meadows provide important habitats for over 70 vertebrate species, including waterfowl, songbirds, raptors, shorebirds, small mammals, and fish. Various threatened, endangered, and sensitive (TES) species occur in these communities, including bald eagles and yellow rail, Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow, and LeConte's sparrow, Sensitive species that breed in open sedge meadow habitats. These species prefer large tracts of open habitat, relatively free of brush, and build nests in the litter layer of dead sedge or grass. Although wet meadows are very common communities on the Forest, large expanses of wet meadows are relatively uncommon within the Forest and elsewhere in the state of Minnesota.

Wet meadows are fire-dependent communities occurring on the floodplains of large streams and lakes, and are dominated by sedges, grasses, and forbs. Historically, fire and flooding kept wet meadows in an open condition. On the Chippewa, there are concerns that the shrub cover has increased

in these communities, due to fire suppression and lowering of the water tables from stream/river channelization. Fire removes litter buildup, allowing the expression of a variety of herbaceous species that are suppressed by heavy litter. Fire facilitates shifts in species composition between various herbaceous plants that would not be duplicated by mechanical treatments.

Since the 1990's, the Chippewa has used prescribed fire in some wet meadows to restore and maintain the plant community and associated wildlife species. Project monitoring has refined our sense of how best to treat these communities. Treatment of wet meadows using prescribed fire has been a joint venture between the Forest Service and a variety of partners, including State, Itasca and Cass Counties, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, and private lands. Cooperative burn plans are often developed with other, adjacent ownerships in order to allow contiguous meadows to be treated simultaneously. (continued, page 4)

The common loon became Minnesota's State Bird in 1961.

Loon Lounging

Each year, staff on the Blackduck District clean up the nesting platforms and head out to Damon and Webster lakes to place some quality nesting habitat for common loons. The "habitat" consists of a 4' x 4' platform with a wooden frame and styrofoam insert that is covered with emergent aquatic vegetation. In the fall, the platforms are pulled from the water and covered for the winter.

Bart (Jay) Tobin and his crews have been placing the platforms at Webster for 20 years



& 12 years at Damon. Over the years, that adds up to a lot of loons, and a lot of help to improve the nesting success for our state bird, *Gavia immer*.

Dr. Jerry Franklin to Present Ecological Forestry Lecture in Grand Rapids

Lecture by Dr. Jerry Franklin on principles of natural disturbance and stand development for application in silviculture will be presented on Thursday, September 8 from 9 am to 12 noon at the Sawmill Inn in Grand Rapids, MN. Franklin's lecture will be followed by a responder's panel of experts featuring Dr. Eric Zenner (University of Minnesota), Ms. Cheryl Adams (UPM-Kymmene), Dr. John Almendinger (MN DNR) and Mr. Gary Swanson (USDA Forest Service, Chippewa National Forest).

This 1/2 day lecture will be followed by a 1- 1/2 day workshop (September 8 and 9) on "Incorporating Principles of Natural Disturbances into Management", led by Dr. Franklin & Brian Palik (North Central Forest Experiment Station, Grand Rapids). As of this writing, the 1/2 day lecture is open, but the 1- 1/2 day workshop is full. 15 Chippewa staff, including silviculturists, biologists, and botanist will be attending the workshop.



Summary of 2004 NRRI Forest Bird Monitoring

- A total of 132, 134, and 164 stands (1,246 survey points) were surveyed for breeding birds in the Chequamegon, Chippewa, and Superior National Forests (NF), respectively, in 2004.
- Trends in relative abundance were calculated for 69 bird species, including 55 species in the Chequamegon NF, 54 in the Chippewa NF, and 45 in the Superior NF.
- The percentage of increasing species on each national forest ranged from 9% in the Chequamegon NF, to 20% in the Superior NF. The percentage of decreasing species ranged from 24% in the Chequamegon NF, to 33% in the Chippewa NF.
- The short-distance migrant guild showed highly significant declines on all national forests. Long-distance migrants declined in the Chequamegon and Superior NF and increased in the Chippewa NF. Permanent residents increased on the Chippewa and Superior NF and were stable on the Chequamegon NF.
- The ground nesting guild declined on all national forests, while shrub/sub-canopy nesters increased on all national forests. The canopy and cavity nesting guilds showed stable trends, except for a decrease in canopy nesters in the Chequamegon NF and an increase in cavity nesters in the Superior NF.
- The lowland coniferous, deciduous and early-successional forest bird guilds showed widespread declines on our study areas. The upland coniferous bird guild increased on the Superior NF. The mixed forest bird guild increased on the Chippewa NF and declined on the Superior NF.
- Evidence from recent regional studies have demonstrated greater nest predation rates on ground nests near forest/clearcut edges, as well as a significant increase in the creation of forest edges in recent years. Increasing amounts of forest edge and nest predation may be having negative effects on declining ground-nesters such as the Winter Wren, Veery, Hermit Thrush, Ovenbird, and White-throated Sparrow.
- Many of the declining trends that we have detected have been consistent across the years and are not likely due to annual variation. One of the main goals of this monitoring program is to identify potential declines of forest bird species. This is especially true for species of conservation concern such as the Eastern Wood-Pewee, Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Ovenbird, and White-throated Sparrow. The declines observed over the past years for common species such as the Ovenbird and White-throated Sparrow are a continuing concern and special management consideration should be given to these species.

Fire and Water... continued from page 3

Very large meadow areas are divided where natural features allow, and blocks ranging in size from less than one hundred acres to up to several hundred acres are burned. These are alternated with unburned blocks of habitat that could provide nesting habitat in any given year. Some wet meadow areas are burned multiple times over a ten year period, in order to restore plant community composition to the desired condition. Following this "restoration phase" of management, wet meadows enter a "maintenance phase", during which fire frequency would be reduced to once every 5 to 10 years.

Objectives for implementing this type of wildlife habitat and native plant community enhancement project in

wet meadows include :

- To provide vegetation patterns that are primarily a product of relatively frequent prescribed fire, and high water tables;
- To provide high quality wet meadow native plant communities;
- To reduce or minimize exotic and invasive plant species, such as Canada thistle and reed-canary grass; and
- To provide standing residual sedge and grass material that is readily available over large portions of the meadows to serve as nesting structure for a variety of bird species.

Look for more articles on this topic in future newsletters.

**Welcome
summer
staff!**

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILDLIFE,
FISH, & RARE PLANTS STAFF

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*Did you know??
DNA evidence and
feather and bill
structure of the common
loon suggest a close
relationship with
penguins.*



Every year, the Chippewa's Wildlife, Fish, and Rare Plant staff expands exponentially, as student interns and seasonal hires fill the office. This summer, we welcome:

- Jeff Nail - student intern from Bemidji State University on stream crossing inventory crew
- Craig Rhoads- student intern from Missouri Southern State University on stream crossing inventory crew
- Nick Daigle, Becky Houdek, and Dustin Nelson - from Deer River, working on forestwide Inventory and Monitoring Team in Deer River
- Craig McLane - from Bowstring, working on forestwide Inventory and Monitoring Team in Deer River

Notes from the Editors.....

WFRP staff is excited about the rediscovery of the ivory-billed woodpecker. The following are some quotes from Al's new book....

"The Race to Save the Lord God Bird" by Phillip Hoose:

"The Ivory-bill has frequently been described as a dweller in dark and gloomy swamps, has been associated with muck and murk, has been called a melancholy bird, but is not that at all... The Ivory-bill is a dweller of the tree tops and sunshine; it lives in the sun.... In surroundings as bright as its plumage. It is true that the man trying to watch and follow these birds is proba-

bly in the shade and mud, among the fallen trees and running vines, but that does not affect the Ivory-bill in the least. He stays above all that and is a handsome, vigorous, graceful bird." - James Tanner

"A majestic and formidable species... his eyes brilliant and daring, and his whole frame is so admirably adapted for his mode of life and method of procuring subsistence, as to impress on the mind of the examiner the most reverential ideas of the creator" - Alexander Wilson, writing about the ivory-billed woodpecker



Calendar of Upcoming Meetings & Events

July 2005

12-13: Forest Leadership Team meeting

18: Center for Research & Innovation, Bemidji State University, Natural Resources Consortium: "Allelopathy as a Mechanism for the Invasiveness of *Typha angustifolia*", 3 p.m.

20: Supervisor's Office Natural Resources Team meets with Forest Supervisor

28: Chipp Biologists & Botanists meet w/ Forest Supervisor

August 2005

3-4: Aquatic Plant Workshop, Bemidji State University

9-10: Forest Leadership Team meeting

10-12: Golden-winged Warbler Workshop, Siren, WI.

15: Center for Research & Innovation, Bemidji State University, Natural Resources Consortium: "Red Lake Walleye Recovery", 3 p.m.

