



Horned Larks Photo: Ron Ridout

November 10, 2008

Dear members and friends,

Greetings and warm wishes to you from the Bird Studies Canada family. Winter is nearly here, and the snow brings with it anticipation for the holiday season and the exciting year ahead.

It is a season for celebrating and connecting with friends. It is also a time for reflection, as we review the year's accomplishments, and look ahead to the goals and challenges of a new year.

In Canada and around the world, the fall of 2008 will be remembered by many as a time of uncertainty. The state of the economy has been a key topic for our politicians and news media in recent months. Individuals, corporations, and charitable organizations alike have been affected by the current economic environment.

Birds have numerous adaptations to help them cope with lean winters. Some birds band together in winter foraging flocks. Others make periodic irruptions away from their normal ranges when food supplies run low. Species such as Black-capped Chickadee and Gray Jay collect and store food when it is plentiful, and these food caches provide indispensable nourishment when fresh food is not readily available.

Unfortunately, natural and seasonal fluctuations are not the only challenges our birds must overcome. Habitat degradation and loss, often caused by human activities, are among the leading causes of serious bird population declines. Over the last 40 years, 20 of North America's most common bird species have declined by more than 50%. Birds like the Chimney Swift, Bobolink, and Canada Warbler that migrate between Canada and Latin America have suffered from severe population declines over the same time period.



Gray Jay Photo: Peter Ferguson

Now more than ever, it is imperative that we continue to track and analyze changes in the health of Canadian bird populations. To this end, I am pleased to tell you that 2008 has been an extremely busy and productive year for us at Bird Studies Canada.

We launched three very important new endeavours in the Prairies and Western Canada this year. Enthusiastic volunteers across British Columbia began their field surveys for the first season of the BC Breeding Bird Atlas. Pilot studies were undertaken at sites in Alberta and Saskatchewan to inform decisions on how best to develop a Prairie and Parkland Marsh Monitoring Program. Support from the Walter Siemens Memorial Fund and the provincial and federal government enabled us to initiate a study of the threatened Golden-winged Warbler in Manitoba.

The release of the new *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario* was a major accomplishment for Bird Studies Canada and our partners. The publication has revealed surprising changes in bird populations and ranges in recent decades, highlighting the need for further research and action in numerous areas. We continue to play a leading role in the Maritimes and BC breeding bird atlas projects, and the results will be critical to conservation decision-making for many years to come.

In his first year as BSC's Chief Scientist, Dr. Phil Taylor of Acadia University has contributed tremendous scientific oversight of our national and regional programs. As well, his expertise in advanced radar ornithology and telemetry have added an exciting new dimension to the Long Point Bird Observatory's research activities. The results will provide valuable insight into the study of bird migration.



Black-capped Chickadee Photo: Peter Ferguson

In Québec, our first year coordinating Nocturnal Owl Surveys was incredibly successful. Interest in participating was so great that there are already waiting lists for volunteers in some regions of the province. Also in 2008, we completed data analysis and produced a report on the first four years of the Québec Marsh Monitoring Program.

Focussed efforts to monitor, study, and protect at-risk species such as the Bicknell's Thrush and the Piping Plover continued to be an integral part of our ongoing work in Atlantic Canada, and in 2008 we also undertook surveys for the endangered Roseate Tern.

Gifts from supporters like you make all of our national and regional programs possible, and we thank you for sustaining essential research on bird populations across Canada. It is crucial for us to continue working together – to build upon our successes, to strengthen monitoring, stewardship, and conservation efforts at a national level, and to ensure these efforts are guided by sound scientific knowledge.

We need your help. Please renew your commitment to Bird Studies Canada by supporting our work with a one-time donation of whatever you can afford. [Click here](#) to donate online, or call Rosie Kirton at 1-888-448-2473, ext. 141.

Even in financially lean times, we cannot afford to put our research and conservation work on hold. Any deterioration in the global environment will affect all life on Earth – including human life. In the long run, a commitment to the study and protection of biodiversity is one of the best investments we can make.

Thank you for your support! Season's greetings,


Dr. George Finney, President
Bird Studies Canada
www.birdscanada.org



White-breasted Nuthatch Photo: Peter Ferguson