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15 December 2006

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INTERNATIONAL

Great Lakes Lesser Scaup in Cuba



15 December 2006 – Several of the Lesser Scaup implanted with satellite transmitters by the Long Point Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Fund (LPWWRF) on the lower Great Lakes in the spring are beginning to arrive at wintering areas throughout the southern United States and beyond. One male (PJ Brandt) and one female (Hope) currently are at a well-known scaup wintering area located at Lake Ponchartrain, Louisiana. Three females (Alta I, Pot, and WRF) are in eastern Florida – two at Merritt Island National Wildlife Area, a major wintering area for scaup in the Atlantic Flyway, and the third is riding the ocean waves just offshore.

Some of the most interesting staging and wintering locations so far have been provided by Howard – a female that spent several weeks at a sewage lagoon in southern Ontario near Strathroy before arriving in Cuba in late November. Sizeable numbers of Lesser Scaup over-winter in Cuba, the Bahamas, and other Caribbean island archipelagos. However, there is little information on the winter ecology of birds in the mid-Americas. LPWWRF will be initiating a satellite study of Blue-winged Teal, and possibly Lesser Scaup, in the Bahamas in winter 2006/2007.

LPWWRF will implant 10 additional Greater Scaup with satellite transmitters this winter at Hamilton Harbor, Lake Ontario. This should increase our understanding of this species winter movement patterns on Lake Ontario as well as their subsequent spring and fall migratory patterns. To learn more about our scaup research visit our [LPWWRF web pages](#) and while there be sure to check “[Scaup Tracker](#)” often over the next few weeks to see where the other satellite-marked birds will spend their winter.

Tragedy for Cerulean Warbler

8 December 2006, Birdlife International – The National Audubon Society and 28 other organizations have expressed grave concerns over the future of the Cerulean Warbler following the decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) not to list the songbird as a threatened species. The Cerulean Warbler is Red-listed as Vulnerable by BirdLife International, the official Red List Authority for birds for the IUCN Red List. The announcement follows six years of campaigning and petitioning by the organizations involved, during which time FWS has been accused of missing numerous deadlines required under the Endangered Species Act.

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The Cerulean Warbler population in the U.S. and Canada has dropped almost 82 percent over the last 40 years, making it the fastest declining warbler on the continent. The rate of decline has quickened and the threats to its survival, particularly from mountain removal mining in the U.S., have worsened while the groups' petition has been pending before the FWS. "The birding community is greatly concerned because the Cerulean has been declining throughout its range for such a long period of time," said Greg Butcher, Ph.D., Director of Bird Conservation with Audubon. Since the petition was filed, new information has come to light about the increasing loss and fragmentation of the Cerulean's eastern forest habitat from mountaintop removal mining. This form of surface mining is expected to increase dramatically in the core of the Cerulean Warbler's range where the bird has already suffered population declines of up to 80 percent. The National Audubon Society and other conservation groups have vowed to continue efforts to protect Cerulean Warbler, including a possible legal challenge to the decision. For information on neotropical migrant habitat conservation visit [BirdLife: Neotropical Migrants in the Tropical Andes](#).

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NATIONAL

Sad Losses for the BSC Family and Canada's Ornithological Community

15 December 2006 - We are deeply saddened by the recent loss of three long-time BSC and LPBO supporters and former Board members.

Bruce Duncan will be remembered by all who knew him as a deeply committed conservationist, whose calm and reasoned approach to the issues was inspiring to all. He was recognized as one of the leading authorities on hawk identification in North America. As an educator, Bruce mentored hundreds of young people, introducing them to the natural world; his knowledge of all aspects of it was seemingly endless. He was a member of LPBO/BSC beginning in the 1960s and served on our Board of Directors from 1986 – 1988.

John P.S. Mackenzie (Jack, as we knew him) was a true "Renaissance Man." His interests in life ran the gamut from finance to culture and history to the natural world. We knew him best as someone deeply interested in the world of birds and as an author of several books including *Birds of Prey* and *Birds in Peril*. Jack served on the BSC Board of Directors from 1996 to 2003 and we benefited greatly from his financial and fundraising experience. He was a major donor to BSC's capital campaign for our new headquarters.

John Miles was a legendary birder and bander in Ontario and a strong LPBO/BSC supporter from our earliest days. He probably participated in more Christmas Bird Counts over the years than any other Canadian and established and compiled more counts than we can count. He was the compiler of the count here at Long Point from 1963 to 1968, served on the LPBO Advisory Committee for many years and our Board of Directors for a total of 12 years at various times from 1968 through 1998. In 1996, John established the Haldimand Bird Observatory and up until this fall was a one-man banding machine, faithfully manning the Selkirk banding station through thick and thin. Over the course of more than four decades, he very likely banded more birds in Ontario than anyone else.

All of us at BSC offer our deepest condolences to the families of Bruce, Jack and John. We hope that they can take comfort in the knowledge that each of them made a great and lasting contribution to the understanding and conservation of Canada's birds and their habitats. We are grateful to have been associated with them.

Season's Greetings and Our Holiday Schedule

15 December 2006 - All of us at BSC would like to wish you and your family a joyous holiday season and a very happy New Year. If you need to reach us in the next while, we'll be here at the office until the afternoon of December 22nd. After that, we'll be off Christmas Counting and FeederWatching and the offices will be closed until 8:30 a.m. on January 2nd, 2007. Have a great Christmas Bird Count season!

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REGIONAL

Help Needed in BC to Monitor Pine-dependent Birds

17 December 2006 – In the Thompson Region of BC, particularly around Kamloops, the Mountain Pine Beetle is having a catastrophic impact on Ponderosa Pine forests. In the last 18 months alone, beetles have killed as much as 80 percent of mature Ponderosa Pine stands. This last year there was a massive Ponderosa Pine seed crop produced in response to the die off, but because of the pattern of Mountain Pine Beetle kill, there will be a dearth of seed for many years to come. One of the bird species that could be dramatically affected by the absence of a large seed crop is the Pygmy Nuthatch *Sitta pygmea*, whose life history appears closely linked to the availability of Ponderosa seed. Birds cache the high-energy Ponderosa seeds in pine bark during the fall, which provides them with a vital energy source to survive through the winter. It is possible that Pygmy Nuthatch populations in areas of extensive pine kill could decline dramatically in winter 2007-08. Ponderosa pine mortality is beginning to increase in the Okanagan Valley as well, and it will be important to track bird numbers there if the pine die-off continues.

Pygmy Nuthatches are regular visitors to feeders in winter, and Project FeederWatch provides a methodological basis to monitor the situation. In addition, the eBird and Christmas Bird Count programs will provide important data to track any changes in distribution and abundance of winter bird populations that exploit pine seeds as a key food resource. This is an important time to encourage friends and local naturalists to enroll in Project FeederWatch – it could make the perfect Christmas gift. To participate in Project FeederWatch, we ask that you first become members of Bird Studies Canada (BSC), a national, non-profit research institute studying birds and their habitats for conservation. For an annual \$35.00 membership fee, participants receive the FeederWatch instruction booklet, resource manual, data forms, a calendar, a poster of common feeder birds, and BSC's quarterly publication, *BirdWatch Canada*. Members may also participate in other BSC programs, including the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey and the Christmas Bird Count. To register, fill out the [online form](#) or call 888-448-2473. If you are already a BSC member and would like to register for Project FeederWatch, please call our toll free number at 888-448-2473 ext. 210. For more information, please e-mail pfw@bsc-eoc.org.

Call for Winter Raptor Observations

13 December 2006 – To all winter birders in Ontario: Help is needed to collect important information about Short-eared Owls and Bald Eagles over the winter months. Bird Studies Canada (BSC) is now in the fourth year of a wintering Short-eared Owl survey in Ontario. These owls, characterized by a distinctive and erratic moth-like flight pattern, are listed as a species of Special Concern in Canada's Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife. Large concentrations of these owls, however, are observed during the winter months in southern Ontario. Little is known about the species, and why numbers are declining. For more information on Short-eared Owl monitoring [click here](#).

Through the Southern Ontario Bald Eagle Monitoring Project, BSC tracks eagle nesting success and productivity. To complement this research, winter observations are of interest within the lower Great Lakes basin (from the Ottawa valley through to the Bruce Peninsula). We would like to identify potential winter roost sites and determine the number of eagles wintering in this area. For more information on the Southern Ontario Bald Eagle Monitoring project, [click here](#). If you see either of these raptors please take note of the date and time of sighting, number of birds, age class (adult/juvenile), habitat, geographic location, and activity. Observations may be submitted by email to Jody Allair, Recruitment and Outreach Coordinator at raptor@bsc-eoc.org.

Marsh Monitoring Staff Attend "State of the Lakes Ecosystem" Conference

10 November 2006 – Bird Studies Canada's Aquatic Surveys Scientist, Steve Timmermans, and Marsh Monitoring Program Assistant Coordinator, Ryan Archer, attended the "State of the Lakes Ecosystem" Conference (SOLEC) 2006 from 1 - 3 November in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. SOLEC 2006 was the seventh biennial conference wherein the governments of Canada and the United States assess and report on the condition of the Great Lakes basin ecosystem. The focus of this year's conference was chemical integrity; Day 1 of SOLEC focused on the state of the Great Lakes based on indicator assessments, and Day 2 focused on the chemical integrity of the Great Lakes as well as the indicators needed to assess chemical integrity. Ryan and Steve attended several workshops regarding the use of indicators for lake assessment during this three day event. For more information about SOLEC 2006, [click here](#).

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