

LMBO
The Black
&
White Warbler
NEWS



The Black-and-White Warbler—The Newsletter of Last Mountain Bird Observatory (LMBO)
VOLUME 24, NUMBER 1, SPRING 2026 EDITED by Grace Pidborchynski & Alan R. Smith

Inside:

Message from the Editors.....	2
Featured Species.....	3
LMBO Banding Experience.....	4
World Migratory Bird Day.....	5
SK Christmas Bird & Mammal Counts	6
Featured Person.....	7
Spring Update.....	8
Fall Update.....	9
Station Grand Opening.....	10
Thank you to Donors & Funders.....	11



Naturehood at LMBO

Lacey Weekes, Conservation & Education Manager, Nature Saskatchewan

We are thrilled to offer fully funded field trips to the Last Mountain Bird Observatory once again, thanks to Nature Canada and the Naturehood program. We delivered 9 field trips to the banding station, serving a total of 256 students. We are grateful for the strong partnership with Regina Open Door Society. We provided 50 new Canadian youth with the opportunity to connect with nature in their new home and learn about migratory songbirds who share this land. We continue to partner with community schools in Regina. These schools support many marginalized students with a high population of Indigenous and new Canadians. For many of these students, participating in a Naturehood field trip is the first time they have gone bird-watching, used binoculars, or even left the city.

An essential aspect of the Naturehood program is to connect youth to the importance of National Wildlife Areas and Migratory Bird Sanctuaries. This year, we were able to provide 448 youth with 15 field trips and participated in six public events in the Wascana Migratory Bird Sanctuary. During these trips, we emphasize the importance of healthy ecosystems throughout a bird's migration route, providing places to rest and refuel. Students learn about the interconnectedness of these sites and why it's so imperative to maintain and protect them for future generations. In September, we piloted our first paid tour at the Last Mountain Bird Observatory. We gained feedback from partners in the bird tourism industry. Fall tours will be available to book on our website soon.





Message from the Editors

One small action you can do during the spring and summer is planting for birds. You can create just a small garden that helps create patches of habitat that are beneficial to birds. You might even be surprised to what shows up!

Look for and grow native plants to your area as those are the ones that are most beneficial to your local wildlife populations. For food, include plants that produce a variety of food for birds such as seeds, berries, cones, or other types of fruit. You won't be helping just birds, but a lot of other wildlife such, as pollinators.

- Grace Pidborchynski, co-editor

Since its establishment in 1990, we at LMBO have expended a lot of effort gathering data on bird migration in Last Mountain Regional Park. Birds have been banded on over 3000 six-hour banding days, and counted on over 3500 two-hour surveys. This has resulted in the capture and banding over 111,000 birds of 124 species. In addition, over 1 million birds of 260 species have been counted in Last Mountain Regional Park and adjacent waters of Last Mountain Lake. That's a lot of information, but what have we been learning from these efforts?

1. Several species were added to the provincial bird list: the first confirmed records of Cassin's Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Northern Wheatear and Townsend's Warbler.
2. Population trends: these data are regularly analyzed by Birds Canada.
3. Migration Strategies: three strategies have been uncovered: 1. land and refuel, 2. overfly the Prairies, or 3. fly around the Prairies.
4. Phenology, including possible changes due to climate change.
5. Geographic Origins using isotopic analysis.
6. Longevity of locally nesting birds based on inter-year returns. LMBO has established world age records for Brown Thrasher (11 years, 11 months), tied the record age for Western Kingbird (6 years and 12 months), captured a Northern Yellow Warbler within a month of the world record (10 years and 11 months).

Data from LMBO were important source of information for the "Birds of Saskatchewan". Its data has been used by researchers across the Continent. These analyses require a lot of time any money, but Nature Saskatchewan is committed to analysis of our data, or to providing this data to those agencies interested in conducting analyses.

- Alan R. Smith, Co-Editor

Book a Visit at Last Mountain Bird Observatory!

LMBO is open to the public by registration only starting May 8th. To ensure small group sizes we must have guests register before planning a trip to the banding station. Please register by emailing Jordan Rustad, the LMBO Field Manager, at jrustad@naturesask.ca with the date and time of visit and group size.

For more information on LMBO please visit our webpage at:
<https://www.naturesask.ca/what-we-do/lmbo>

If you would like to learn more about the bird banding process, check out the promotional video for LMBO on Nature Saskatchewan's Youtube channel

Featured Species

Varied Thrush



Jordan Rustad, Bander-in-Charge

It was a quiet day at LMBO, with only a handful of birds and a trio of banders at the table, impatiently waiting for the new banding station to be completed. Surely this net check would be the same as the last, and we would return empty handed once again. As it so happens, we were very wrong. We approached the net thinking, "That's a weird-looking robin," and left internally screaming with excitement (we would never be noisy near the birds while banding). We had caught a Varied Thrush! The Varied Thrush breeds in wet forests in Alaska and British Columbia, so it was an exciting find for the dry prairie near LMBO. They tend to wander quite far east across the Rockies during migration despite being so particular about their breeding habitats. It's not unheard of to see Varied Thrush in Saskatchewan during migration. However, we had only ever caught one before in Spring 2021, and this bird was our ever second capture and first fall capture of a Varied Thrush.

Varied Thrushes are quite striking with an orange chest contrasting with their brown to grey back (depending on sex) and grey neck band. As with many birds, females tend to be duller overall than males. There are no other species that really resemble this thrush, so the identification, no matter the time of year, is relatively easy. They are more often heard than seen, and their songs are described as "perfectly the voice of the cool, dark, peaceful solitude which the bird chooses for its home as could be imagined" (L. A. Fuertes in Bent 1949).

The song starts with a 'vree' call followed by a whistled tone. Like other thrush songs, it has an almost otherworldly quality. The song evokes a deep desire to disappear into a dark, mossy forest, especially if heard during a cold fall morning at LMBO.

Despite being a relatively common bird west of the Rockies, there are many unknowns about the breeding and migration behaviour of the Varied Thrush. These birds tend to be quite shy on the breeding grounds and prefer to be spread out in their territories of thick, wet old-growth forests. They will create a small cup nest in April to May, laying 4 eggs.

Varied Thrush populations cycle every two years, rising and falling. This trend was noticed by participants in Project FeederWatch, a community science project in which people report the birds they see at their feeders. Varied Thrushes can be quite aggressive at feeders, and some males establish small territories in winter.

This thrush eats insects in spring and summer and switches to seeds and fruits in winter. They overwinter along the coasts of British Columbia down through the forests of California. There is some evidence to suggest the birds leapfrog during migration, with northern populations overwintering farther south than other southern breeding populations.

The featured species is always a chance for me to learn more about an uncommon or rare species caught at LMBO, and I was surprised by how little is known about what I would think of a common BC forest bird. It's a good reminder that there is always more research to be done and more data to be collected. Maybe our two data points for this species can help scientists to better understand the species as a whole.

You can stay up to date on the cool birds we capture by following us on Nature Saskatchewan's Facebook and Instagram pages. Happy birding!

Last Mountain Bird Observatory

- ✓ Participate in community science
- ✓ Exclusive tour with banders
- ✓ Guided beach meditation and native plant hike
- ✓ Lunch and snacks included

Cost: \$120
Dates: September
To register visit:
<https://naturesask.ca/what-we-do/last-mountain-bird-observatory>
Contact Details
☎ 1-306-780-9273
✉ info@naturesask.ca
🌐 www.naturesask.ca
📍 Instagram & Facebook @NatureSask

Migratory Songbird Banding Experience

Located in the beautiful Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area





World Migratory Bird Day Event 2026

Saturday, May 9th, 2026

10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Green space beside the Saskatchewan Science Centre



Nature Saskatchewan will be hosting the World Migratory Bird Day free public event on Saturday, May 9th, 2026 in Regina, SK. The event will take place in the green space beside the Saskatchewan Science Centre from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Free BBQ lunch. These organizations will lead nature-based activities at the event: Saskatchewan Science Centre, Royal Saskatchewan Museum, Wascana Centre, Nature Regina, Nature Saskatchewan, Bird Friendly Regina, Friends of Wascana Marsh, and more! To start the event off in a good way, Roland Kaye will be raising a tipi at 10 am. We have expert bird leaders, Dr. Ryan Fisher and Shirley Bartz, leading bird watching walks at 11 am and 2 pm. Games, crafts and art will also be available.

The theme for World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) 2026, “Every Bird Counts – Your Observation Matter” highlights the role of public participation in collecting data on migratory bird populations and their habitats, and on the factors that affect them, thereby contributing to our knowledge of how to protect them. Community science, ranging from backyard bird counts to large-scale coordinated surveys/schemes, provide information on species distribution, abundance trends, migration timing, and breeding success. This data is important to identify conservation priorities and inform effective conservation action plans and strategies. By engaging individuals and communities in monitoring efforts, we not only gather scientific data but also build a deeper connection to nature, raise awareness about the challenges migratory birds face, and inspire direct conservation action.

Saskatchewan Christmas Bird and Mammal Counts: A Historical Summary and Outlook

Alan R. Smith, Data Manager

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is one of the longest running bird surveys in the world. The first counts were conducted at 25 locations in Canada and the United States on Christmas Day in 1900. The first count conducted in Saskatchewan was taken at Lashburn by S. W. Calvert, who saw 7 species in 1913. Counts were conducted sporadically at a few locations across Saskatchewan until 1942 when the first province-wide count was organized. This count involved eight localities and yielded 1811 birds of 26 species. Last year, 667 observers in 67 localities saw 121,000 birds of 89 species.

The Christmas Mammal Count (CMC) was not initiated until 1973 when eight counts tallied 65 animals of eight species. Last year, 652 observers in 64 localities saw 2123 mammals of 29 species. It should be noted that Saskatchewan is probably the only jurisdiction in North America that conducts a CMC! This is a result of the vision of the late Wayne Harris, who as the then compiler of the CBC decided that it would be a good idea to add a mammal count to the CBC. As can be seen from Table 1, a tremendous amount of data has been gathered on these two surveys. Data is, however, most useful when it used to derive population trends or to determine relationships between various species. To accomplish this, data must be collated into coherent databases.

Thanks to assistance from Dr. Ryan Fisher of the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, this has been accomplished for the CMC. The CBC database will soon be updated, a process complicated, however, by recent changes in taxonomy.

Table 1. Summary of all-time results of Christmas Bird and Mammal Counts

	Counts	Birds/Mammals	Species	Observers	Party Hours
CBCs	4,926	5,591,350 birds	198	35,247	66,143
CMCs	3,781	135,918 mammals	52	24,386	48,167

As mentioned, important goals are to describe population trends and interspecies relationships, including those between birds and mammals. For example, Dr. Paul James and I have recently submitted an article to "Blue Jay" analyzing the trends and possible interrelationships among four species of birds. In addition, we hope to make the database CBC and CMC databases available online; contributors will be able to download the long-term results of their counts.



Featured Person

Angela Tremka

Jordan Rustad, Bander-in-charge

Every organization has people who quietly help run things, even though they receive little recognition for their work. For the banding station, that is Angela. She began volunteering at the station in 2021 and was hired on as a banding assistant for the 2022 season. We've not been rid of her since. Angela has a diverse background in kinesiology, communications, non-profit governance, and wildlife rehab. Many people will be familiar with the social media posts she created while working at Salthaven West or as Bird Friendly Regina's coordinator. All of those Bird of the Week were created by Angela's birdy brain. If you have not followed Bird Friendly Regina on Facebook and Instagram, I recommend you do.

During her time at the banding station, she has become a great bander and birder and shown her love for education. Her passion for sharing information, and love for nature and wildlife shine through as she demonstrates banding to the public.

Angela is a highly organized person who firmly believes that everything should run smoothly and that everything should be put away just so. These qualities were especially helpful as we went through the old trailer and decided what to bring into the new station. If I had my way, I would have held on to everything that wasn't nailed down, and Angela made sure that we only took things that were actually useful and had not been tainted by years of mouse habitation. Spoiler: my collection of empty jars and the futon did not make the cut. Angela helped enormously during station construction. While I was off dealing with contractors, she kept the station running and morale high. The latter was especially important while we were living out of tents, waiting for construction to finish. Angela has a no-nonsense attitude toward work and banding. She is the person who will get it done once she starts.

Her energy, attitude, and skills have made her an invaluable addition to our observatory team. We are lucky to have her again for a portion of the 2026 season as she embarks on a new chapter with a new banding job and starting school. We wish her all the best of luck with her adventures!





Last Mountain Bird Observatory - Spring 2025

35th consecutive spring of coverage (34th of standardized coverage).

A. R. Smith, Data Manager & Jordan Rustad, Field Manager/Bander-in-Charge

Migration Monitoring:

First Day of coverage: 9 May.

Last day of coverage: 31 May.

Total days of coverage: 23 of a possible 23 (100%).

Number of staff: 2 (Jordan Chambers-Field Manager/Bander-in-Charge, Angela Tremka-Bander-in-charge, Ash Latta-Banding Assistant).

Number of volunteers: 11 (Marla Anderson, Shirley Bartz, Emily Dornstauder, Ryan, Dudragne, Shelly Fisher, Nick Harper, Cobie Smeller, Hannah Wilson, Brand Yarnton, Duane Yarnton, Zohra Zahir).

Number of person-days effort: 66 (last year 61).

Observation effort: census, casual and incidental observations.

Trapping effort: 13 12mx30mm mist nets for 1032 net hours; 305 birds/1000 net hours (1992-2024 average: 445).

Number of species observed: 105.

Number of species captured: 41 (1992-2024 average: 48).

New birds captured: 276 (1992-2024 average: 572); returns to LMBO from previous years included 16 birds of 5 species.

Species peak: 14 May, 17 species.

Banding peak: 24 May, 36 birds.

Top 10 Captures:

House Wren	47	Northern Yellow Warbler	14
American Robin	24	Swainson's Thrush	12
Mourning Dove	16	Eastern Warbling Vireo	10
Yellow-rumped Warbler	15	Baltimore Oriole	10
White-throated Sparrow	14	Brown-headed Cowbird	9

Comments: The total number of birds captured at 276 was the fewest in the history of LMBO. The total number of species at 41 was also a record low. The catch rate of 304 birds/1000 net hours was also below the average of 445. This slow spring followed a record slow fall and may be due to poor breeding success in 2024.



Last Mountain Bird Observatory - Fall 2025

35th consecutive spring of coverage (34th of standardized coverage).

A. R. Smith, Data Manager & Jordan Rustad, Field Manager/Bander-in-Charge

Migration Monitoring:

First day of coverage: 5 August.

Last day of coverage: 7 October.

Total days of coverage: 64 of a possible 67 (96%)

Number of staff: 3 (Jordan Rustad – Field Manager/Bander-in-Charge, Angela Tremka - Bander-in-Charge, Ash Latta - Banding assistant, Caitlin Acquiroll – Banding Assistant).

Number of volunteers: 22 (Marla Anderson, David Clarke, Ryan Dudragne, Brandon Finke, Shelly Fisher, Stephanie Flaman, Ben Haight, Mercy Harris, Mark Harrison, Catherine Ivey, Sydney Jones, Chloe Krivoshen, Sarah Ludlow, Nathan McCarville, Gavin Robertson, Laura Schnell, Ashley Schrader, Tanner Stevens, Kale Warman, Hannah Wilson, Salthaven West Interns – Kaylyn and Savannah).

Number of person-days effort: 178 (137 last year).

Number of visitors: 329 (206 last year).

Observation effort: census, casual and incidental observations.

Standard trapping effort: 13 12mx30mm mist nets for 3256 net hours; 636 birds/1000 net hours (1992-2024 average: 678).

Number of species observed: 150.

Number of species captured: 68 (1992-2024 average: 73).

New birds captured (standard banding; includes birds released without banding): 2071 (1992-2024 average: 2636). Three birds of 2 species returned from previous years.

Species peak: 22 on 10, 18 August, and 2 September.

Banding peak: 132 on 14 September.

Top 10 Captures:

Yellow Warbler	199	White-throated Sparrow	79
Dark-eyed Junco	126	Tennessee Warbler	72
Alder Flycatcher	111	Swainson's Thrush	62
Orange-crowned Warbler	108	Least Flycatcher	48
Ovenbird	79	Blackpoll Warbler	40

Comments: The number of birds captured in the autumn of 2025 was slightly lower than the average. Our second Varied Thrush was banded, with the previous bird captured on the 16 May 2021. For the first fall in the history of LMBO, no American Goldfinches were captured. Goldfinches were, however, frequently noted on the daily census. No new species were banded - the total number of species banded in the fall remains at 112; for both seasons the total is now 124. Our banders contended with the most rustic conditions to date while waiting for the new station to be completed. They banded off of a folding table and had only an umbrella to shield them. An unexpected visitor was a Big Brown Bat who was roosting under the umbrella for the day.



Join us for the Last Mountain Bird Observatory Station Grand Opening—fun, birds, and cool nature vibes!

Join Us on **Saturday May 30th** for the Last Mountain Bird Observatory Station
Grand Opening!

We're super excited to invite you to the grand opening of our brand-new bird observatory station. Spend some time learning from expert bird banders, check out the site, make crafts, play games, and get to know some amazing local birds up close. Whether you're a seasoned birder or just curious, there's something for everyone! Free BBQ lunch included.

Also visit the Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area headquarters and their new Interpretive Centre.

Don't miss out on this fun day filled with birdwatching, good vibes, and great company. See you there!

Transportation from Regina is available. Departure 8:30 am return to Regina 5:00 pm

Space is limited please register at:

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/1987834949846?aff=oddttdtcreator>

We thank our 2025-26 Donors:

Sumiko Asai	Leonard Fisher	Ken & Myrna Priebe
Birds Canada/Oiseaux Canada	Bob Gehlhert	Dorothy I. Rhead
Jared Clarke & Kristen Martin	Martin Gerard	Lorne Scott
Shayna Cossette	Anne Harris	Margaret Skeel
Roberta Cox	Sheila Hart	Paul Steffens
Albert & Joan Dalziel	Al Hartley	Colette & Richard Stushnoff
Don Delhomeau	Ron Jensen	Jan Whitridge
Teresa Dolman	Bonnie & John Lawrence	Saskatchewan Chapter of the
Ryan Dudrange	Annie McLeod	Wildlife Society
Heather Dufault	Marilyn Meyer	Dan Zazelenchuk

*Donations of \$10 or more are tax deductible. Donate online at www.naturesask.ca
or mail cheques payable to Nature Saskatchewan to 206-1860 Lorne St, Regina SK S4P 2L7.
Please note that the donation is for LMBO.*

We thank our 2025-26 Sponsors:

The LMBO is managed by:



This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada



LAST MOUNTAIN
REGIONAL PARK



South
Saskatchewan
Community
Foundation

G. Murray and Edna Forbes Foundation

Nature Saskatchewan receives funding from:



Follow us on Facebook and Instagram, and subscribe to our YouTube channel to stay up to date!



naturesask.ca