

Meeting Notes
VIIth CMMN-RCSM National Meeting /
VII^e Rencontre nationale du RCSM-CMMN
22 - 26 October 2009,
Les Bergeronnes, Québec

*As prepared by Audrey Heagy with assistance from
Marcel Gahbauer, Marie-Anne Hudson and Stu Mackenzie*

Note: Discussion points and suggestions raised during the meeting are summarized in section 11, at the end of this document.

1. Agenda and Presentation Files

A copy of the meeting final agenda is included with these notes (1a_2009_Tadoussac_Agenda.pdf). PDF versions of most of the PowerPoint presentations from the meeting are available (see below). The presentation files are named by date, order on the agenda, then topic, (e.g., 23_01_BirdFirstAid.pdf). These file names are listed in the agenda.

Copies of the presentations are posted in the Resources section of the CMMN-RCSM project on the NatureCounts website at: <http://www.birdscanada.org/birdmon/cmmn/resources.jsp>

Note: You need to be registered as a participant in the CMMN project to view the Resources section. Create a User Profile with your login and password. New registrations are usually approved within 24 hours (next business day).

A CD with the presentations and other meeting-related information is available on request, contact ahagy@bsc-eoc.org.

2. Participants

A total of 39 people from across Canada attended the seventh national meeting of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network – Réseau canadien de surveillance des migrations (CMMN-RCSM), hosted by Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac (OOT) at the Explos-Nature facility at Les Bergeronnes, near Tadoussac, Québec.

A list of meeting participants, their station affiliation(s), and contact information is included with these notes (1b_2009_Tadoussac_Participants.pdf).

3. Station Reports (see also PDFs on NatureCounts website)

Twenty-two stations provided very short (~ 5 minute) station reports. This was the first time a standard template for the station reports was provided. The template worked well, both in terms of keeping presenters on track (and more or less within the time limits), and

for allowing easy comparisons to be drawn among stations. Stations not able to send a representative to the meeting were asked to send a presentation and this also worked well.

Topics covered in the station reports included staffing, funding sources, operating protocol, station news, special features, problems, and future plans. It was a lot to cram in to 5 minutes and we ran over the time allocated for this section. However, there was general agreement that the station reports are a very important part of these meetings.

Marie-Anne Hudson summarized the most common themes raised by the stations. Common problems included:

- **Staffing** (e.g. enough staff/day? How to improve retention or facilitate volunteer exchanges between stations? How to attract quality volunteers?)
- **Funding** (e.g. securing stable/long term funding, membership sales, charging for workshops, long-term endowments, improving Birdathon proceeds)
- **Habitat Management** (e.g. importance of site-specific recommendations that will be incorporated in to steering committee site visits)

Positive themes included:

- **Active research projects** (e.g., ongoing research and academic projects)
- **Educational programming** (e.g. banding demonstrations, school visits, etc.)

4. CMMN-RCSM Steering Committee Report

a. Steering Committee Report

Lance Laviolette reviewed the Steering Committee's activities and accomplishments over the past 2 years (see 24_1a_Steering_Committee_Report.pdf).

These included:

- 19 teleconferences, usually on a monthly basis
- Steering Committee News Update No. 6 was emailed to member stations on 15 October 2008
- Finalized the revised Membership Agreement, initiated the Membership Renewal Process (in 2009), and considered and approved three membership applications:
 - McGill Bird Observatory upgraded from Provisional to Full Member
 - Vaseux Lake Bird Observatory upgraded from Associate to Full Member
 - Tatlayoko Lake Bird Observatory accepted as a new Provisional Member
- Completed the CMMN-RCSM Strategic Plan for 2008-2011 (copies distributed at meeting, also available for download from CMMN NatureCounts Resources section)
- Decided that all important CMMN-RCSM documents will be available in French and English including the membership agreement and appendices, CMMN-RCSM Strategic Plan, and CMMN signage
- The 10-year technical report on monitoring population change at CMMN stations was published by BSC, www.bsc-eoc.org/download/CMMNReport2008.pdf
- Annual and seasonal population trend results made available on the Nature Counts web site, <http://www.birdscanada.org/birdmon/cmmn/main.jsp>

- Launched the *Origins of Migrants at CMMN-RCSM Stations* project (aka the Feather Isotope project) with two successful collaborative proposals to NMBCA. Feather samples from ca. 20,000 birds of 22 species at 26 sites collected in 2007-08. Draft report prepared by Keith A. Hobson and Steven L. Van Wilgenburg (February 2009).
- Steering Committee members would like to visit the stations. No funding is available so station visits will be done on opportunistic basis. A subcommittee is developing a checklist of topics to cover during station visits.

b. Overview of the CMMN-RCSM Strategic Plan, 2008-11

David Hussell presented an overview of the purpose and contents of the CMMN-RCSM Strategic Plan document, and outlined the Science and Conservation Goals and the Institutional Goals identified in the plan. (See 24_1b_StrategicPlanOverview.pdf)

5. Bird Studies Canada and CMMN

a. CMMN Data Management: The Avian Knowledge Network & CMMN
(24_2a_BSCAKN_Lepage.pdf)

Denis Lepage described the Avian Knowledge Network (AKN) and BSC's Nature Counts website, the AKN partner site hosting the CMMN data. He demonstrated the various data sets included in Nature Counts, the various levels of data access, how data can be downloaded from this site, and the data request form that can be generated and sent to CMMN station's data manager for information and/or approval (depending on their data access policy). He also demonstrated the various tools on Nature Counts for viewing CMMN population trend information and generating data summaries, such as seasonal bar charts.

b. Changes to CMMN Data Analysis (24_2b_BSC_DataAnalysis_Crewe.pdf)

Tara Crewe outlined some of the changes being made to how CMMN data are being analysed. In the future, BSC will analyse more species but will add flags to indicate if there is a concern about the data (e.g. counts include local residents). Annual indices will be generated for these flagged species but not trends.

Tara and Phil are exploring appropriate methods for analysing data for rare species. Initial results seem promising.

Need to determine appropriate migration windows for the additional species at each station. Plan is for BSC to take first cut at defining migration windows and then get the stations to review them. Tara is hoping to use the Nature Counts website to let stations adjust the migration windows.

Tara will be updating analysis using 2008 data. She has started her Ph.D. on analysis of migration data at University of Western Ontario but is continuing to work part-time for BSC.

c. **CMMN Support & Communications** (24_2c_BSC_Support_Heagy.pdf)

Audrey provided an update on BSC's activities related to CMMN support and communications.

i. Baillie Birdathon

CMMN member stations are eligible for an enhanced share of Birdathon revenues raised by their participants. Five of the 22 member stations raised more than \$5000 during the 2009 Birdathon. Birdathon cheques are now being distributed only once a year, in January, after all pledges have been processed.

In addition to the prizes available to CMMN participants, BSC arranges a CMMN station prize each year. In 2009, Beaverhill Bird Observatory was the lucky winner of the KOWA spotting scope. Another KOWA scope has been lined up as the 2010 CMMN Birdathon prize.

Changes to the Baillie Birdathon revenue sharing arrangements will be introduced in 2010. A flat 75%:25% revenue split will replace the current 60-90% sliding scale arrangement. This new arrangement will benefit most CMMN stations but the few stations currently raising more than \$6667 will see their share reduced. BSC consulted with these stations in advance of making this decision and the stations agreed to the changes (albeit reluctantly in at least one case).

ii. Baillie Fund Grants

Starting in 2010, CMMN member organizations will again be eligible to apply for Baillie Fund grants. The application deadline for the Regular Grants program (up to \$5000) is **15 December**. The deadline for the Small Grants program (up to \$1000) is **15 January**. Support of ongoing migration monitoring activities is a **low priority** but the Trustees will consider applications for other projects. Application guidelines and forms are available on the BSC website, or by contacting Audrey Heagy, ahagy@bsc-eoc.org

iii. CMMN Communications

Audrey reviewed the various existing CMMN communication tools (updates, email, list serve, web sites). Most of these are not being used much in between the biennial national meetings. Audrey is looking for feedback and suggestions on how to improve network communications.

6. Environment Canada and CMMN

a. **Update on Environment Canada's Avian Monitoring Review**
(24_3a_ECMonitoringReview.pdf)

Charles Francis presented information on the Avian Monitoring Review being conducted by Environment Canada and its potential implications for CMMN.

Environment Canada is undertaking a review of all its bird-related monitoring programs. They have compiled information and assessed about 190 bird monitoring programs, including the CMMN, to determine whether these programs are addressing Environment Canada's bird monitoring needs.

For this review, the total CMMN annual budget was calculated by rolling up the budgets of all the individual stations and BSC's CMMN budget. Data were incomplete for some stations but the grand total is about \$1,000,000 per year. Of this total, Environment Canada contributes about 15% and other government agencies (regional, provincial, other federal agencies) contributed another 25%. These numbers do not include ~30 person-years of volunteer time. Environment Canada's contributions to CMMN stations are affected by regional priorities.

The CMMN has been identified as a program needing further review with respect to relevance in monitoring population trends for northern birds. The CMMN program also has the potential to meet other Environment Canada information needs.

Next step is for Environment Canada to cost out other options for monitoring boreal bird populations (e.g. expanded BBS coverage). No major change to CMMN funding arrangements for 2010, pending completion of the review process.

b. Bird Banding Office News (24_3b_BandingOfficeupdate.pdf)

Charles Francis presented an update prepared by Lesley Howes of the Bird Banding Office.

- Band recoveries should be reported on website: <http://www.reportband.gov/>, although 1-800 number still in service.
- Recommended band sizes are being updated; banders should send any suggestions for changes to Lesley
- Banders should watch for and report disease outbreaks in wild birds. Disease outbreaks and mortality events involving more than 5 birds should be reported to the Canadian Cooperative Health Centre, 1-866-544-4744, www.ccwhc.ca. Banders should also be familiar with the guidelines on safe handling of wild birds, see <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/fs-hwb-fr-mos-eng.php#4>
- The Banding Office has developed a "bander training report card", which can be used by new bander trainees to track their banding skills development. Copies are available from Lesley at the Banding Office

Charles also reported that CWS is developing a new website, Nature Instructor, which will have tools for training volunteers in bird survey techniques. At present the site has an online version of the *Dendroica* bird identification software developed for atlasers and Breeding Bird Survey participants. They are developing a new application for banders, which will be a photo guide for ageing and sexing birds by plumage.

c. Continental Landbirds (see 24_3c_ContinentalLandbirds.pdf)

Wendy Easton described the scope of a new Partners in Flight (PIF) document being developed to describe landbird conservation needs and priorities at the continental level. This document expands on the previous North American landbird conservation plan (Rich et al. 2004), that covered species found in Canada and the United States, by including Mexico. A central theme of the document is that, due to migratory connections, these three countries have many shared birds, and therefore shared concerns that require shared action. This publication will include some fascinating figures on the total number shared migrants by season, the geography of bird migration, and the importance of the ecological services provided by landbirds (e.g., 50,000 tons of songbirds migrate north and collectively consume 3,000 to 10,500 tons of insects per day). It will be available next year.

7. Visual Migration Counts Session

Bruno Drolet led a discussion on the use of visual migration counts in migration monitoring. Unlike most CMMN stations, OOT relies on visual counts for generating its Estimated Total data. In addition to diurnal raptors counts using the HMANA protocol (hourly counts), OOT collects visual count data on many species of migrating passerine and also waterbirds. OOT uses two observers at two adjacent locations, with radio communications between the observers to avoid double-counting birds. They have had very low turnover in their counters (this has implications for data analysis).

Other stations, such as Thunder Cape and Whitefish Point, include extended visual migration counts as part of their standard protocol (in addition to standardized banding). Lesser Slave Lake includes a 5 minute visual count every hour because it does not have the manpower to do a continuous count but even a short count provides useful information on the number of birds migrating on a particular day.

Visual migration counts can be useful at sites where there is a predictable directional migration pattern but not useful at sites where birds do not regularly move during the day or where they often circle around or move back and forth and are not easily counted. Depending on the site and the research question being investigated, it was suggested that stations try 5- to 10-minute counts each hour to assess what species are detected in what numbers.

Resources are always a limiting factor and most stations have found it easier to recruit and train volunteers to help with banding, whereas training or finding qualified people to do visual counts (or census) is harder.

8. Guest Presentations

There were three presentations by guest speakers including:

- Lynn Miller on avian first aid for banders (23_01_BirdFirstAid.pdf),

- Keith Hobson on the preliminary results of the CMMN collaborative project to define catchment areas of CMMN stations using stable isotopes (23_25_Hobson_IsotopeProject.pdf), and
- François Gagnon on using weather radar data to track bird migration along the St. Lawrence River (presentation not available).

9. Other Presentations

There were six technical presentations on station level research projects including:

- Wilson's Warbler isotope analysis at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary (23_26_CBBS_Isotope.pdf)
- Northern Saw-whet Owl isotope project in Alberta (presentation not available)
- Mark-recapture analysis of CMMN banding data: stopover variation and implications for population monitoring (24_6_Calvert_StopoverDuration.pdf)
- Exploring stopover ecology with radio telemetry: what is the scale of a stopover? (24_7_Mackenzie_ScaleofStopover.pdf)
- Stopover site fidelity of transient fall migrants at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary: an update (24_8_CBBC_StopoverSiteFidelity.pdf)
- Sex Determination of Northern Saw-whet Owls (25_2_Priestleyetal_NSWOsexing.pdf)

Two other presentations related to capacity building at the station level:

- Ted Cheskey and Chuck Priestley gave a presentation on the role CMMN stations could play in the Important Bird Areas Caretaker network being developed by Nature Canada, Bird Studies Canada, and local partners (24_4_IBA_Caretakers.pdf)
- Graeme Gibson gave a presentation on how the Pelee Island Bird Observatory had recently been successful in getting a substantial project grant as a result of a longer-term strategy to identify and pursue opportunities to work closely with other local organizations in their community (see 24_5_PIBO_Development.pdf).

In addition, Ann Nightingale demonstrated the software Rocky Point Bird Observatory uses for doing **direct entry of banding data** in the field using a laptop computer (presentation not available). At RPBO they enter data directly into the standard Band Manager software with **SyncBack** software running on the computer so that a copy of the data file is regularly backed up to a flash drive. They use the **SyncBack** software because it can back up files when they are still open, and it is inexpensive (~US\$30), reliable, and flexible (user determines how often data is backed up and where). Ann will be preparing a tip sheet for stations interested in direct data entry.

10. Special CMMN-RCSM Tribute to David Hussell

As part of the meeting, a special presentation was made to David Hussell for his pivotal role and outstanding leadership in the development of the CMMN-RCSM. On behalf of the network, Jon McCracken gave a tribute to David (see 1c_DavidHussell_Tribute.pdf) and Bruno Drolet presented David with a framed photo of an American Pipit.

The significance of this species is that the meeting was held at Les Bergeronnes, which was named by Champlain after “les bergeronnettes”, or wagtails. Presumably, Champlain was referring to the American Pipit, a common migrant.

11. Summary of Group Discussions (grouped by theme)

This summary captures some of the discussion points and suggestions raised by the meeting participants. There was no attempt to arrive at a group consensus on these suggestions. No specific motions or resolutions were discussed.

a. Network Communications

- Given the commonality of issues facing the stations (see station reports), it is important for member stations to communicate with each other on an ongoing basis
- Existing communication tools (e.g., list-serve) are not been used much between meetings
- Steering Committee to circulate CMMN News updates regularly (2-3/ year)
- Stations are responsible for letting Audrey know the names of contact person(s) for distribution list for these updates
- Audrey to indicate at the top of emails going to CMMN station contacts whether the email contents are for action, for distribution, for information, etc.
- BSC (Denis) to develop a web-based tool so that stations can share volunteer resumes and/or volunteer’s training report cards

b. CMMN Data Analysis

- BSC & Stations need to be involved in decisions as to flagging species as to data quality
- Tara/Denis to add a text explanation to go with the data flags (BSC)

c. CMMN Nature Counts Website

- BSC & Stations need to customize the station information on the Nature Counts website
- Ideas for populating the Resources list included:
 - Post the **Trend Analysis recipe book** prepared by Dunn and
 - **Bird First Aid** (Marie-Anne Hudson to work with Lynn Miller to develop an information sheet on practical avian first aid for banding stations)
 - **Station Protocol** guidance document (Ricky Dunn to prepare)
 - **Direct entry of banding data** tip sheet (Ann Nightingale on RPBO method)
- Other features to add to the website include:
 - **CMMN Volunteer Registry** with volunteer resumes and volunteer report cards
 - **CMMN Publications database.**
 - Denis (and others) to compile, organize, and list all CMMN publications, report, tech reports, notes, etc.

- Make CMMN documents publicly available except for sensitive materials (e.g. bird first aid/euthanasia) where login access for CMMN stations (can stations share one login among their members?)

d. CMMN Station Issues/Opportunities

- **Availability of qualified staff** a problem for several stations
- Concern that the bar for Canadian **banders** has been set too high, versus concern that Canadian standards are still low relative to elsewhere
- Steering Committee needs to look at **bander training** as a network issue rather than something stations can deal with on their own
- Audrey has contact if stations interested in using bird-friendly coffee as a **micro fund-raiser**
- Stations should seek advice from Steering Committee and others on whether/when/how to make changes to their **operating protocol**
- **Habitat** change is a concern at most stations; habitat management is possible at some sites (Ricky Dunn and David Hussell have a time series of photos from Thunder Cape BO)
- Audrey to attempt to roll up the information in the station reports for comparison
- Stations and Steering Committee should consider provincial/regional scale collaborations when seeking funding

e. Network Development

- A strategy for filling gaps in the network (e.g. in Quebec) could be to increase capacity of existing organizations to cover additional sites
- Steering committee, EC, and BSC need to develop plan for “completing” the network, identifying gaps and establishing priorities
- Fit sites to the monitoring methods versus picking a site and then picking best methods for that site
- No benefit to including **hawkwatch stations** in CMMN as HMANA and Raptor Population Index (RPI) provide equivalent functions
- Steering Committee to continue to pursue network-wide funding opportunistically

f. Scientific output

- Ongoing need to publish more
- Stations (individually and collectively) could do more with their banding data
- Stations should consider developing a science committee (in addition to a fund-raising committee)
- Ricky Dunn available to help stations prepare scientific publications

g. North-South Linkages

- Several stations do work on the wintering grounds (MOSI stations, etc.)
- CMMN could have a special session on north-south linkages at a future CMMN National Meeting
- Jon McCracken, Ted Cheskey (and others) to document existing international projects by CMMN stations

h. Other

- Environment Canada to have **bird weather radar data** available online to public within two years
- MBO and CWS to coordinate efforts re the **online photo guide** project as McGill Bird Observatory already has an excellent online photo guide for banders and there is concern that the CWS product will be duplicating their work
- Stations to contact Ted Cheskey if interested in the **IBA Caretaker Network**
- BSC to circulate BSC's policy statement on **wind energy** as information.

i. Collaborative Research projects

Several topics were identified as candidates for collaborative research projects. These were discussed briefly and project leads identified as follows:

1. **Topic: Return migrants:** How widespread/rare is this phenomena? Are these individuals moult migrants?
Background: see CBBS presentation (24_8_CBBS_SiteFidelity.pdf)
Work plan: Compile comparable data on number and proportion of returning migrants at other CMMN stations.
Target: Publication within 2 years.
Lead: Doug Collister
Add-ons: Keith Hobson noted the value of obtaining feather and claw samples from any return migrants (but this requires knowing that when you catch it as well as having permits in place)
2. **Topic: Origins of Migrants at CMMN Stations (CMMN Isotope Project)**
Background: see Hobson's presentation (23_25_Hobson_IsotopeProject.pdf)
Work plan: Complete publication on first phase of this project. Next phase includes incorporating additional feather isotope data (e.g. Inglewood data), band recovery information, and bird abundance mapping from Ontario and Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlases.
Target(s): Complete a technical publication on phase 1 within 1 year and then work on refinements using additional information.
Lead(s): Keith Hobson et al.
3. **Topic: Northern Saw-whet Owls:** study post-fledgling dispersal of birds in juvenal plumage, use of isotopes for determining origins of "migrants", and developing reliable ageing/sexing criteria.
Background: see WPBO station report (23_12_WPBO) and Priestley presentations (25_2_Priestleyetal_NSWOsexing.pdf).
Work plan: a) Encourage other stations to try summer owl banding project to see how if WPBO phenomena is common, b) get owl banding stations outside of Alberta to collect DNA and/or feather samples.
Target: Publication within 2 years.
Lead(s): Chuck and Lisa Priestley

4. **Topic:** Use of **audio lures** for migration monitoring and research
Background: Various stations are using audio lures to increase captures of certain species (e.g., Bobolinks at PEPTBO; woodpeckers, Rusty Blackbird, and winter finches at OOT, NSW0 and/or BOOW at many stations).
Work plan: Investigate which cryptic/rare species we could learn more about (e.g. phenology, general abundance, migration connectivity, age ratios, etc.) by actively luring birds to nets during migration.
Target: Develop a research project targeting one or more species and do field test within next two years.
Lead(s): Marcel Gahbauer, Bruno Drolet, David Hussell
Add-ons: Possible species for consideration include Canada Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Rusty Blackbird, aerial foragers, etc. (review needed to identify under-sampled species that would benefit most from such an approach)
5. **Topic:** Research and/or Monitoring of **Common Nighthawk** and other Declining **Aerial Insectivores** during migration.
Work plan: Geoff Holroyd is identified as the lead from Aerial Insectivore working group for communicating how CMMN stations can contribute to knowledge gaps re Aerial Insectivore decline.
Target: tbd.
Lead(s): Geoff Holroyd and Aerial Insectivore working group.
6. **Topic:** Migrating **Monarch Butterflies**
Work plan: Expand LPBO monarch migration counts to other stations?
Target: tbd.
Lead(s): Jon McCracken and Tara Crewe
7. **Topic:** Migrating **Bats**
Work plan: General scoping exercise to see which stations observe bats and may be interested in a broader baseline data research project to learn about species distributions, and timing of bat migration across Canada.
Target: tbd.
Lead(s): Stu Mackenzie

12. Next Meeting

Three offers were mentioned:

- Vaseux Lake Bird Observatory – firm offer, choice of meeting venues (see presentation 25_2)
- Delta Marsh – standing offer (central, excellent facilities, close to airport)
- Pelee Island – thinking about it for the future (accommodations and travel to the island are an issue).

Decision: Next National Meeting will be held at Naramata, British Columbia, hosted by the Vaseux Lake Bird Observatory in fall 2011. Date to be determined (participants at the OOT meeting preferred October but we need to consult with absentee stations).

Suggestions for the next meeting:

- Reserve 3 hours for the station reports, continue to provide template.
- Include time for a station visit.
- Use technology to include absentee stations (webcast, etc?).
- Set location, date, and cost early so stations can budget for it.