



Official Opening Remarks: Bird Conservation in Canada

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It is my pleasure, as Executive Director of Bird Studies Canada (BSC), to take part in the opening ceremonies of the Second International Symposium: Biology and Conservation of Owls of the Northern Hemisphere. It is entirely appropriate that this symposium should take place in one of the colder cities in the Northern Hemisphere, in mid-winter, and it is fitting that temperatures have warmed substantially over the last few days to welcome international visitors. Even the owls are ready to cooperate, and Saturday's field trip promises great camaraderie and great views of Northern Hawk Owls, Great Gray Owls, Snowy Owls and perhaps others.

Bird Studies Canada was established by the Long Point Bird Observatory in 1994 to conduct and promote ornithological studies and to communicate the results to the public. BSC places emphasis on studies that increase understanding of avian distribution, abundance and population changes and their underlying causes and on studies that generate information in support of the conservation or preservation of Canadian birds and their habitats. BSC organizes, conducts, coordinates, and promotes research, surveys, monitoring programs and conservation studies that are international, continental, national, or regional in scope (i.e., usually not confined to one Province or Territory) and, whenever possible and appropriate, involve and promote a high component of volunteer participation.

BSC's affairs are governed by a Council appointed by the LPBO Board. The Council is currently chaired by Dr. J. Bruce Falls and includes representatives from across the country. Two Councilors are appointed by the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Society of Canadian Ornithologists and the Canadian Nature Federation (CNF). These appointments reflect BSC's interest in working in partnership with

national government, academic, and conservation organizations.

Current national programs of BSC include Project Feeder Watch (PFW), the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey (CLLS) and the development of a network of migration monitoring stations across Canada. In PFW, up to 1,500 Canadians participate annually in bi-weekly counts of birds as part of a North American program to track winter birds that visit feeders. Volunteers in the CLLS monitor loon productivity on lakes across the country in relation to human impacts such as acid rain, shoreline development, and jet ski use. BSC is helping to develop a network of migration monitoring stations through development of standards, archiving and analysis of data, and by providing small grants through the James L. Baillie Memorial Fund.

The Baillie Fund was begun in 1976 with part of the proceeds of the annual Baillie Birdathon, a one-day sponsored bird count. Since then, the Fund has provided over \$272,000 in support of 253 bird research and conservation projects in every province and territory. Of particular interest to this audience is our support for the development of a Boreal Owl breeding complex at the Owl Foundation, which you will hear more about from our banquet speaker, Kay McKeever, on Saturday. In addition, the Baillie Fund has supported status reports on Spotted Owl and Barn Owl habitat enhancement in British Columbia, Short-eared Owl research and conservation in Nova Scotia, Operation Burrowing Owl in Saskatchewan, migration studies of Northern Saw-whet Owls in Ontario, volunteer-based owl surveys in Manitoba, and educational programs on owls across the country.

Bird Studies Canada's international activities are coordinated through our designation, jointly with the CNF, as the BirdLife International partner in Canada. BSC and CNF are implementing BirdLife's Important Bird Areas program in Canada. The IBA program is an international conservation initiative designed to identify and protect critical areas of bird habitat worldwide. In Europe, the IBA program has

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demonstrably increased the protection of sites important for bird conservation. In Canada, where the program is just beginning, it has already attracted the support of government agencies, first nations and the birding public in British Columbia, Ontario, and Manitoba, where regional workshops have been held. We plan to hold additional workshops across the country in 1997 and 1998 and to publish a national directory of IBAs in 1999.

Through our BirdLife partnership, BSC has also been involved in research projects on three continents (in Mexico, Cuba, Laos, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Ivory Coast). In addition, we have initiated a program to train Latin American biologists in bird monitoring techniques through 1-month internships at Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario. This CWS-sponsored initiative has already attracted participants from Cuba, Jamaica, Brazil, and Mexico and the demand for training is so large

that we hope to help develop similar programs at additional sites across Canada.

Canada is a very large country and it is challenging to launch a new national initiative, especially in such challenging economic times. But I have been greatly encouraged by the support Bird Studies Canada is attracting. Already, our newsletter, BirdWatch Canada, is being read by over 5,000 Canadians who participate in our programs. It is clear that birds are important to Canadians. Bird images, including a Snowy Owl, grace our money and bird migrations grace our lives.

I wish all of you good science, good friendship and good birding over the next few days. And, on your behalf, I want to thank the organizing committee for bringing us all together to work for owls and their conservation.