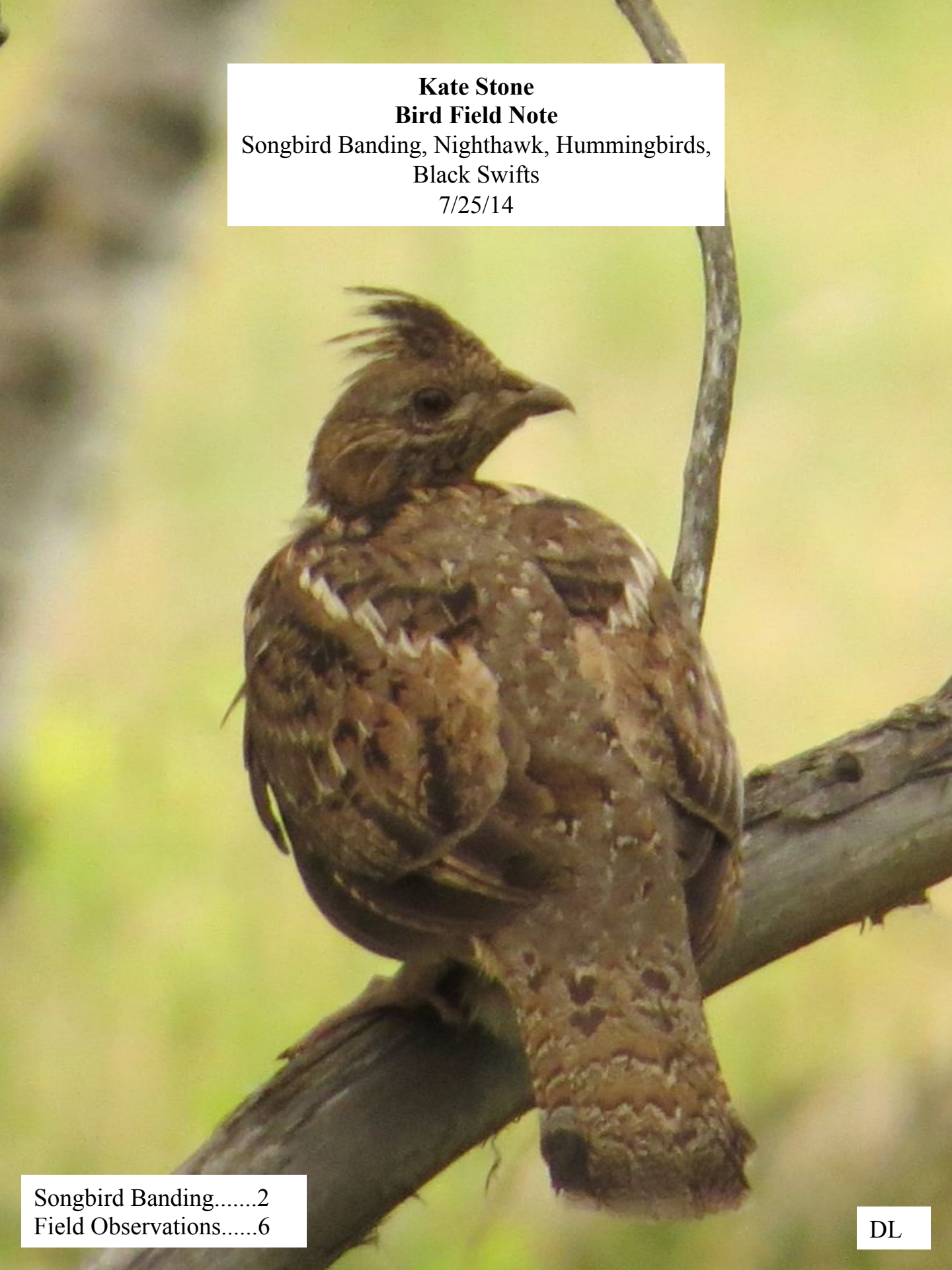

Kate Stone
Bird Field Note
Songbird Banding, Nighthawk, Hummingbirds, Black Swifts
7/25/14

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Avian Science Center: Songbird Banding: July 17th, 24th

July 17th: Many birds molt at the end of their breeding cycle as they prepare for fall migration. During this session, technicians saw their first evidence of adult molting. They also captured many hatch-year birds. Their unusual capture of the day was a Townsend's Warbler; this species typically breeds in higher elevation coniferous forest.

July 24th: Heavy winds led to the closure of some nets by 9:00 and all nets by 10:00. The study area was mostly quiet, suggesting that most birds no longer maintain territories and that the breeding cycle nears its end. However, banders still caught a few females with brood patches and a few hatch-year birds.

Bird Species captured and banded during the July 17th session		
Species Name	**July 17th**	**July 24th**
Yellow Warbler	9	5
House Wren	7	0
Gray Catbird	6	0
Red-naped Sapsucker	5	1
Willow Flycatcher	3	2
Unknown Hummingbird	3	0
Calliope Hummingbird	2	1
Downy Woodpecker	2	0
Lazuli Bunting	1	1
American Goldfinch	1	0
American Robin	1	1
Song Sparrow	1	2
Black-capped Chickadee	1	0
Townsend's Warbler	1	0
Black-headed Grosbeak	0	2
Spotted Towhee	0	1
Western Wood-pewee	0	1
Common Yellowthroat	0	1
Cedar Waxwing	0	1
TOTAL	**43**	**19**

When birds molt prior to migration, they replace every feather on their body. The Townsend's Warbler above exhibits wing molt, which occurs symmetrically on both wings. In order to have flight feathers of the best quality, songbirds typically molt a few feathers at a time to maximize quality of each feather. This strategy also allows them to maintain flight through the molt process. Birds also replace all of their body feathers, called contour feathers. The Yellow Warbler below molts new contour feathers on its belly.

A Black-headed Grosbeak showing the fleshy gape of the bill and fluffy body feathers indicative of a young bird.

Young songbirds often show drab plumage, similar to that of adult females, making them impossible to sex. In addition to a gape and fluffy body feathers, this young Common Yellowthroat has two light wing bars, only present on recent fledglings. It will lose these wing bars in its first molt.

Marirose found the third Common Nighthawk nest of the season on South Baldy Ridge.

A long, graduated tail and rufous throughout the body and under the tail indicate a Rufous Hummingbird.

A perched Rufous Hummingbird shows the long, graduated tail with slight rufous under the tail. This bird lacks rufous on its flanks, suggesting worn plumage of an adult female.

The Montana Black Swift Working Group asked us to apply some of our technological expertise to acoustically detect and monitor Black Swift breeding. We set up an acoustic monitor near the closest swift nest, approximately 20 miles southwest of MPG Ranch. Black Swifts typically nest next to or behind cascading waterfalls. Though they will likely never breed on the ranch, we have seen a few of them flying overhead during spring migration.

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While checking the acoustic monitor, we confirmed at least one Black Swift incubating on a moss nest in the waterfall cavern. We could easily see it using a thermal imagery camera. Cold and wet nesting conditions limit Black Swifts to one nestling per year.

Photo Credits:
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ER: Eric Rasmussen
KS: Kate Stone
MK: Marirose Kuhlman

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