

Kate Stone
Field Note
3/17/13





We started point counts this week, focusing surveys in low-elevation grasslands where most species have already returned. Few birds use areas where we removed crested wheatgrass using herbicide treatments. This field once harbored many grasshopper sparrows. The only species using it this morning included a few horned larks and one American kestrel, hunting for small mammals. I detected one grasshopper sparrow in an adjacent, burned grassland, that was left unsprayed by herbicides

Vesper sparrows arrived in full force over the weekend.



Vesper sparrows have a white eye ring and rufous shoulders.



Bullock's orioles arrived this week.



A great horned owl roosts in Partridge Alley. The owl prompts alarm calls from chipmunks, robins, magpies, kestrels, and starlings.





Orange-crowned warbler



Dusky grouse

This week we started trapping long-eared owls in hopes of placing satellite transmitters on them. We trapped at both the conifer forest nests, and this territory in a shrubby draw. We set mist nets up just in front of a clump of shrubs that I observed the owls flushing into on previous visits. Just one walk down the draw flushed the female into the net. The male dove into the shrubbery just over the top of the net. After releasing the female, we decided to wait to try trapping the male since their nest still contained one unhatched egg.



William extracts the female



The female had a large brood patch for incubating eggs (above) and visible fat stores (below).





The patterns of barring on the wing and tail helped us age the long-eared owl.



The female just prior to release.





While William and Shawn processed the female, I used the peeper camera to check on the nest. The nest had 4 eggs on 5/6 (top) and 3 fuzzy young and one egg on 5/12 (bottom).

The female long-eared owl from the Little Baldy territory stuck close on her nest during our trapping efforts. We were surprised to see the male out hunting in the regenerating forest in daylight. He came to our mouse bait at dusk, but bounced out of two mist nets. We expect to have better luck catching females once nestlings develop more and the females resume hunting.



Though we think most of our long-eared owl nests have hatched at this point, this nest in Tongue Creek is the only one where we can easily see young (lower right in nest). We caught the male as he returned to the nest area right at dusk. We saw him fly in from the east, high above the Tongue Creek drainage.



We found our fifth long-eared owl nest, though we did not know owls occupied it when we found the nest. We detected the accipiter stick nest while searching for owls and saw a few downy feathers snagged in the nest area. We could not see any sign of the owl from below or above on the hillside. I went back with the peeper camera and an owl flushed off the nest. Since we only found three eggs, the owl may still be laying or just starting incubation.





Local bird rehabilitator Judy Hoy let us test the harness system and transmitter fit on a captive long-eared owl. She's had this owl for over 20 years. It has a broken left wing that prevents its release back into the wild.



The bald eagle pair continue to sit in the area of their nest. The top half of the tree, including the nest, blew down in a wind storm on Monday night. We are happy they didn't lay eggs this year.

AK47, caught May 10 2012 near the floodplain, controls a nest box 0.5 mile away.



A Bull snake slithers across a trail above upper Tongue Creek





Calypso orchids



Spring beauty



A bear inhabits the wooded slopes southeast of Mt. Baldy. I found three large scat piles in a small area. I also found one tiny scat pile, suggesting we have a baby bear.