Preliminary Report On Seaside Sparrow Population Genetics Project

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Summary of activities of 16-18 July, 2001: With the assistance of Doug McNair, I captured, measured, banded and obtained blood samples from 57 Seaside Sparrows at St. Vincent N.W.R. Sparrows were caught in mist nets, of which 9-14 were set at any given time. Most birds were flushed into nets by DM. Blood samples were preserved in lysis buffer for later extraction of DNA.

Capture locations: I caught five birds in the two years post-burn plot at Mallard Slough, and 52 in the one year post-burn plot. These numbers reflect effort - we set very few nets in the two year plot..

Age ratio: Forty adult birds were captured, and 17 young of the year.

Sex ratio: All adults could be sexed by presence of either brood patch or cloacal protuberance. We caught 18 females and 21 males (I failed to note the sex of one adult). None of the juvenal plumaged birds could be sexed.

Molt: Eight of 26 adults checked on 17 July had commenced wing molt. The most advanced bird had fully grown one primary, grown a second primary to 2/3 of full length, and had a third primary bursting out of its sheath. Most molting birds had one or two inner primaries partly grown. Two thirds to 3/4 of the adults had not yet commenced wing molt. Adult sparrows showed extensive feather wear. None of the juvenal plumaged birds were molting.

Mortality and injuries: No sparrows died during capture and handling. Aside from a few bent feathers, no injuries were noted. Previous work has shown that taking even 200μl of blood from a sparrow size bird results in no detectable ill effects. We took only 1/10 of that amount from each bird, and anticipate no problems for the birds.

This effort provided sufficient samples from the St. Vincent population for inclusion in a wider ranging study of genetic variation in Seaside Sparrows.