

Jason Fischer



Jason Fischer is a third year PhD student in the Program for Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology at the University of Illinois. Fischer's IOS grant project will test what's known as the overmatching hypothesis: *High urban densities of birds are the result of low predation pressure and abundant food sources, the combination allows more birds of poor body condition to survive.*

Fischer work consists of the following:

- Studying a community of birds utilizing feeders, along an urban to rural gradient in Champaign County, Illinois.
- Capturing birds at feeders with mist nets, then assessing their body condition and marking them with a unique combination of colored leg bands. The bands allow individuals to be identified during ongoing observations at feeders to determine if there are connections between particular feeding behaviors and body condition.

*Jason Fischer holds a feisty
Rose-breasted Grosbeak.*

Jeffrey Fox



Jeffrey Fox is a graduate student in the Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences Department at the University of Illinois. Fox's IOS grant project evaluates reproductive success of Sandhill Cranes in northeastern Illinois, a continuation of work begun in 2008. (See Fox's article, "Sandhill Crane colt survival in northeastern Illinois," published in Vol. 18, No. 4 of *Meadowlark*).

During the ongoing study:

- Eighty-five Sandhill Crane colts in Lake and McHenry Counties have been captured and then radio-tagged to enable tracking to determine their fate.
- Recaptures were conducted to collect DNA and to band surviving birds before reaching 10 weeks of age – the age when they begin sustainable flight. Permanently marked birds should provide information on the dynamics of the juvenile demographic and recruitment rates in the future.

The data suggest that colt survival may be strongly influenced by annual variations, for example, in weather. Within a given year, hatching date appears to be a less significant determinant of survival. The probability of survival for a bird hatched during the last week of April is the same as for a bird hatched during the last week of May. Models are also being evaluated to determine whether use of different landscapes (e.g. agricultural, wetland) affect survival rates. Current estimates of survival for colts hatched in northeastern Illinois do not yet include any data on whether they are returning and then entering the breeding population. This is an essential component of population studies and the planned focus of future research.

*Jeff Fox holds a newly born Sandhill Crane
at Chain O'Lakes State Park, Lake County.
Photo by Sheryl DeVore.*