

Project Update: June 2008

The Moist Highland Grasslands (MGH), now experiencing sub-zero degree temperatures with very little rain, are in a state of close to zero productivity. Grasses, forbs as well as insect life forms are all but dormant. This results in the altitudinal migration of small passerines to warmer more productive systems.

In this low productivity period I am working on the data that were collected in the previous season. These data include over 240 nests that were located and monitored till either completion or failure, in order to assess comparative reproductive success. The chicks in these nests were weighed every second day to obtain growth weight information. Insects were sampled throughout the breeding season with > 35 000 insect sweeps completed through the period. Vegetation was also sampled as vegetation structure is critical for nest construction and concealment. Over 60 000 vegetation sample points were measured in this season.

From these considerable data and those collected in the coming seasons I hope to extract patterns and processes explaining optimal land-use strategies for conservation in the MHG.