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1. In May, the first task of the season (after clearing access roads of fallen trees and other obstacles) is to locate breeding pairs, seen here displaying and vocalizing. Photo by Carol Foss.

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2. Then comes the challenge of locating nests. Can you find it? Photo by Carol Foss.

11. In July and August, family groups begin to band together in preparation for their migration south, ending our season in the field. Photo by Carol Foss.



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In the Field with the 2018 Rusty Blackbird Project

by Carol Foss & Dyanna Smith

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10. Lighthawk Conservation Flying, an organization of volunteer pilots, helps us locate individual birds that are transmitting too far from a road to detect from the ground. It is always a relief to locate a fledgling that has been "missing" for a day or two. Photo by Charlotte Harding.



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9. Nests are collected after the young have fledged to look for evidence of bird blow fly parasitism. Photo by Carol Foss.



3. An incubating female sits very tight, guarding the nest intently when danger approaches. Only her yellow eyes give her away. Photo by Wil Hallstrom.

4. Rusty Blackbird eggs hatch after about two weeks of incubation. Photo by Wil Hallstrom.

8. Hand-held receivers and directional antennas help to locate the transmitting fledglings. Photo by Dyanna Smith.



5. Nestlings are ready for banding at 8-10 days old, just before they leave the nest. Getting to them in that tight window of time is another challenge. Photo by Carol Foss.

6. This year, we are studying fledgling survival by attaching radio transmitters to a sample of nestlings. The transmitters are attached with harnesses that are designed to fall off after several months. Photo by Carol Foss.

7. Parents continue to feed fledglings for several weeks after they leave the nest. Photo by Katrina Fenton.