

## **BIG Birding Breakfast**

*June 6, 2010*

*at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory*

Join the Beaverhill Bird Observatory for our annual BIG Birding Breakfast in celebration of Spring Migration. We will be serving Crepes made by famous Hungarian chef Janos Kovacs. Bacon, fruit, coffee, tea, and juice is also on the menu. Watch bird banding up close, walk the net lanes with our staff and meet the bird observatory executive and volunteers. Cost is \$10 per person.

To register please contact Lisa Priestley (780) 918-4804 or E-mail [lisa@beaverhillbirds.com](mailto:lisa@beaverhillbirds.com)

Supported by Alberta Conservation Association, Edmonton Nature Club, Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission



## Beaverhill Bird Observatory Lab Opened May 1, 2010



**DAY ONE** of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory lab being open, and we were pleased to catch a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. The lab officially opened on May 1 and our staff, Katie Calon and Meaghan Bouchard, are already into bird migration. Myrtle Warblers and Hermit Thrushes are common now and the resident Black-capped Chickadees are calling for mates. The Sandhill Cranes are making their way north in large flocks, the Snow Geese and White-fronted Geese are already gone, and the sounds of Chorus and Wood Frogs can be heard in the wetlands. Once again Beaverhill Lake is mostly dry, but the birds continue to come through, stopping on their migration

north to the boreal forest. The staff will be banding on most days and welcome you to come out and visit them to observe the banding. Please call to make sure someone will be on site (phone 780-819-9927). We can also offer organized group tours throughout the summer, and if you are interested in booking please contact Lisa Priestley, Executive Director, [lisa@beaverhillbirds.com](mailto:lisa@beaverhillbirds.com). See you at the lab! Check for lab updates at <http://beaverhillbirds.com/summaries.php>.

## Edmonton Bird Banding Society 2009 Results

by Janos Kovacs and Jonathan Martin-DeMoor

Here are the banding results from 2009 for the Edmonton Bird Banding Society. We had a very successful season with 41 species banded (516 birds captured). Banding occurred on 20 days using 6 nets, a total of 446 net hours. Thank you to everyone who volunteered for the 2009 season.

Species	New	Recaptures	Total
Downy Woodpecker	3	1	4
Eastern Phoebe	2	0	2
Alder Flycatcher	14	0	14
Least Flycatcher	21	2	23
Blue Jay	1	0	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	1	0	1
Purple Finch	4	0	4
Hoary Redpoll	7	0	7
Common Redpoll	81	0	81
American Goldfinch	0	1	1
Savannah Sparrow	6	0	6
White-crowned Sparrow	1	0	1
White-throated Sparrow	6	0	6
Chipping Sparrow	2	0	2
Clay-colored Sparrow	38	2	40
Slate-colored Junco	16	0	16
Song Sparrow	8	0	8
Lincoln's Sparrow	1	0	1
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	3	0	3
Tree Swallow	42	0	42
Cedar Waxwing	22	0	22
Red-eyed Vireo	5	1	6
Warbling Vireo	1	0	1
Nashville Warbler	1	0	1
Orange-crowned Warbler	7	0	7
Tennessee Warbler	44	2	46
Yellow Warbler	46	7	53
Myrtle Warbler	15	0	15
Magnolia Warbler	1	0	1
Blackpoll Warbler	1	0	1
Ovenbird	5	0	5
Northern Waterthrush	2	0	2
Wilson's Warbler	13	0	13
American Redstart	10	0	10
Gray Catbird	4	0	4
House Wren	3	0	3
White-breasted Nuthatch	1	0	1
Red-breasted Nuthatch	3	0	3
Black-capped Chickadee	46	2	48
Swainson's Thrush	7	1	8
American Robin	3	0	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>516</b>



Rose-breasted Grosbeak  
(photo by Jonathan  
Martin-DeMoor)

# BEAVERHILL BIRD OBSERVATORY HAS BEEN AWARDED ANOTHER CASINO – DECEMBER 7 AND 8, 2010

We NEED volunteers to help with chip running, count room, banker, and cashier positions. If you would be interested in volunteering for this important fund raising event please contact Lisa Priestley, [lisa@beaverhillbirds.com](mailto:lisa@beaverhillbirds.com) or phone 780-918-4808.

## To Be a Bird Bander

by Robin Pimm

It's mid-May and I awake at 4:00 AM to the sound of beating wings: the Ruffed Grouse has again started its day before me. I get out of my warm bed into the chilly air of my unheated cabin only to put on clothes no warmer than the rest of the forest, but as I step outside I immediately start to warm up. It's still dark out, but I'm off to get some breakfast before work starts. An owl flies overhead, just finishing its nightly activities, moving silently but swiftly through the trees. They are a rare treat to us birdwatchers up in the earliest of hours. I walk the 20 feet to

"the lab", a single building containing the kitchen as well as the banding station and a couple of couches. I fry up some eggs and toast and prepare for the work ahead. My banding partner arrives and we begin setting up the mist nets at 4:30 (½ hour before sunrise) to make sure to capture the first birds up with the sun. Each bird caught is brought into the lab to receive a shiny new band (or for retraps have its number recorded) and be analyzed. We check the nets every 30 minutes and the day takes off in a hurry. We get the first few birds – a feisty chickadee, some very tangled flycatchers, a few placid sparrows and yellow warblers – enough to keep us busy but not so many that we're scrambling to keep up. It's a typical day at the BBO, but with bird banding one never knows what the day can hold.



Canada Warbler photo by Jonathan Martin-DeMoor

A couple of hours in and we are suddenly blessed with warblers, a rare Canada and Mourning Warbler fly into our little patch of forest and are greeted by staring eyes and excited voices. Then a breeding pair of Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks with some powerful bites as well as Baltimore Orioles! Such colors! These birds brighten our day as we not only get to catch a rare glimpse of them up close, but we are entrusted with the challenging and rewarding job of figuring out the birds' age and gender. By deciphering subtle clues given by the bird's plumage and breeding status we can uncover information about who the bird is and what it's doing and sometimes they have amazing stories to tell. You can even tell what a bird has been eating by the color of poop on your shirt.

The hours move on relentlessly; time flies when you've got birds to band. More of the common species cycle through our doors and just when we think the day is done, a bomb drops out of the sky in the form of a Sharp-shinned Hawk right into our waiting net. He has a nasty set of talons that can do some real damage, so it's delicate and meticulous work getting him out of the net as gloves are out of the question with such fine mesh to manipulate. After carefully extracting the bird we can finally get a good look at him and I relish this moment – it's not every day I get to meet a sharpie! We process and thoroughly photograph him before releasing him into the surrounding forest, and I can only hope for such an eventful day tomorrow.

Such a job is this, to live in the forest and come face to face with its residents. That evening, as the coyotes howl, the deer bound across the landscape, and the sun sets, the birds begin to quiet. All that is, except the persistent grouse who struts along the forest floor drumming away in his ever-lasting quest for females. And as I close my eyes to go to sleep he is the last sound I hear, and he is my favorite lullaby.



Photo of author with Pileated Woodpecker by Lisa Priestley



## Report on 2010 Western Bird Banding Conference

The 2010 Western Bird Banding conference and associated Raptor Workshop were a huge success. The event started on March 25 and 26 with a Raptor Banding Workshop led by Peter Pyle (Institute for Bird Populations). There were representatives from BC, AB, and SK, and we learned a great deal about feather molt in birds of prey. We also found out that there is plenty more to know, and we need more study on some species, particularly the owls.



On the evening of March 26, the conference was opened by a talk on “PROXIMATE CAUSES OF POPULATION TRENDS IN MIGRATORY LANDBIRDS”. Peter Pyle presented an informative talk on the MAPS program and the various uses the data can have (co-authors James F. Saracco, and D. F. DeSante). Saturday opened with another talk by Peter on “ADVENTURES IN MOLT”. This was followed by talks from banding stations: Rocky Point Bird Observatory Point, BC (Ann Nightingale), Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory, AB (Richard Krikun), Beaverhill Bird Observatory, AB (Katie Calon), Calgary Bird Banding Society, AB (Doug Collister), and Last Mountain Lake Bird Observatory, SK (Alan Smith).

The rest of the sessions were contributed talks from various people:

When Peregrines Fight: Territorial Advertisement and Defense Behaviour - Wayne Nelson, Geoff Holroyd and Gordon Court

Determining Phenology of Raptors in Alberta - Lisa Priestley

Boreal Barred Owls: Testing habitat models in an old mixed wood landscape - Mike Russell

Stopover Site Fidelity - Doug Collister

Origin of fall migrants at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary - Doug Collister

Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) in Mount Revelstoke, Banff, Waterton Lakes and Jasper National Parks - Cyndi M. Smith, Danielle R. Kaschube, Brenda Shepherd and John Woods

A year in the life of a Canada Warbler - Richard Krikun and Tyler Flockhart

Wing tagging Turkey Vulture nestlings in east-central Alberta - Wayne Nelson and Rick Morse

Northern Saw-whet Band Re-encounters From Stations in Alberta and Saskatchewan - Lisa Priestley, Chuck Priestley, Doug Collister, Dan Zazelenchuk, and Matt Hanneman

Sex Determination of Northern Saw-whet Owls - Chuck Priestley, Geoff Holroyd, and Lisa Priestley

Birds, Birders, Banders and Banding – A Celebration to Music - Lisa Priestley

The conference concluded with the Edmonton Nature Club sold out banquet and a talk by Peter Pyle on “Trans-Pacific Migration”. We hope to have another conference in two year. Thanks to all who contributed papers and attended the event, and we would like to acknowledge Edmonton Nature Club, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Beaverhill Bird Observatory and the University of Alberta for funding and in-kind support.

---

### Membership Information

\$10/yr for an individual, \$20/yr for a family, \$25/yr Supporting, \$25/yr Corporate, \$100/yr Sustaining, \$500 (one time) Life Membership

Cheques can be made to the Beaverhill Bird Observatory and sent to: Box 1418, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 2N5

Material for the next newsletter can be sent to:  
Lisa Priestley, Editor, Box 1418, Edmonton, AB T5J 2N5.  
Email: [lisa@beaverhillbirds.com](mailto:lisa@beaverhillbirds.com). Articles and photos can be on Bird banding, bird watching, wildlife viewing, personal nature photos, etc. Deadline: September 1, 2010.



Can you tell what species this is? Photo by Chuck Priestley taken May 13, 2010 in Tofield, AB.