

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update October 16-31, 2006



The lab dusted in snow

This stretch of days has brought with it the first real snow making it absolutely clear that winter is on its way. A few owling net hours and days were lost because the snow was coming down or the wind was blowing too hard. I have been burning plenty of wood in the stove to keep the lab temperatures up to where my fingers work efficiently, and I like to think that the owls don't mind the warm up before being sent out again to continue their migration.

Since the 16th, 54 Northern Saw-whet owls have been caught which brings the yearly total to 142. Nights have been fairly steady; usually I would catch 6 owls. The last few days I was out it had dropped to 3 owls a night though, so we may be into the time when the stragglers are on their way south.

One exciting catch I had was a recaptured adult female who was at least three years old. This bird had been banded in 2004 by Hardy Pletz near Millet. It is pretty exciting to know that on her path she had crossed over both places, and has done it successfully for a few years in a row!



The last Saw-whet I banded at BBO

And as the month wound down so did my contract working at the BBO, October 31st was my last day out there. The wind was up and it didn't look like I'd be able to band. But wind or no, I headed out in the twilight. I'm glad I went out too; I was rewarded with one of the best moose sightings of my life! Driving along Accipiter Alley and just breaking the trees, I happened to glance into the willows on my left and towering above both me and the shrubs were two male moose! I slammed on the breaks and shut off the car and just watched them. Their outlines were a sharp contrast against the grey-blue sky, and shortly after they trotted off towards the dry lake bed. It was an image I will never, ever forget.



Visitors at the lab enjoying the owls

It has been an amazing 6 months at the BBO, thanks to all of those who made it possible!

KATIE