

## Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update May 8-14, 2009



White-crowned Sparrow

Hello everyone and happy May long weekend! I'm Ashley Thorsen, the assistant bander for Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO) this summer, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to live in the Beaverhill Natural Area. Becoming a part of this place has allowed Katie and I to watch Spring's daily advance without all of city life's distractions. The leaves aren't out on the trees yet, but each day brings new plants, butterflies and, of course, migrating birds.

We were only able to band 11 birds this week, and that total wasn't helped by strong winds and bad weather, which kept the nets closed for two and a half days. But we definitely weren't short on excitement or surprises in spite of our low capture rate. Our Gray-cheeked Thrush, an uncommon migrant caught once every four years or so, was very thrilling. I loved holding the tiny Orange-crowned Warbler, as well as the stunning White-crowned Sparrow. We also had a special visit from a Black-capped Chickadee originally banded at BBO back in 2007!



Gray-cheeked Thrush!



A male Purple Finch in his brilliant raspberry plumage

The feeder by the BBO lab was filled with dozens of Purple Finches at the beginning of our work week, but we had only been able to catch one in our regular banding nets. We spent a couple of afternoons devising ways to catch these wily finches. Much to our amazement, Purple Finches are extremely adept at avoiding mist-nets, always pulling away at the last second. Eventually, we were able to catch and band 9 finches by placing a net inbetween the feeder and the trees and then waiting *very patiently*.

Nests are starting to pop up at BBO. A pair of Eastern Phoebes have been hanging around the eaves of one of the cabins and we set out a saucer full of mud for them. We were thrilled to see them fill their beaks with the mud and return to the cabin and are very excited to watch their nest develop. We are also really excited that we found a Long-Eared Owl nest in the Natural Area, which we will continue to carefully monitor. Our last two days at Beaverhill this week were cold and snowy (yes, *snowy*), but all the exciting bird developments have kept our spirits high as we head into our next week of Spring Migration Monitoring.

Table 1. Results from Spring Migration Monitoring May 8-14, 2009.

| Species                | Banded    | Repeat <sup>1</sup> | Return <sup>2</sup> | Foreign <sup>3</sup> | Other <sup>4</sup> | Total     |
|------------------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| American Robin         | 3         | 2                   | 0                   | 0                    | 0                  | 5         |
| Black-capped Chickadee | 1         | 0                   | 1                   | 0                    | 0                  | 2         |
| Gray-cheeked Thrush    | 1         | 0                   | 0                   | 0                    | 0                  | 1         |
| Least Flycatcher       | 1         | 0                   | 0                   | 0                    | 0                  | 1         |
| Myrtle Warbler         | 2         | 0                   | 0                   | 0                    | 0                  | 2         |
| Orange-crowned Warbler | 1         | 0                   | 0                   | 0                    | 0                  | 1         |
| Slate-colored Junco    | 1         | 0                   | 0                   | 0                    | 0                  | 1         |
| White-crowned Sparrow  | 1         | 0                   | 0                   | 0                    | 0                  | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>11</b> | <b>2</b>            | <b>1</b>            | <b>0</b>             | <b>0</b>           | <b>14</b> |

*Net Hours: 244 NH*  
*Capture Rate: 5.74 birds/ 100 NH*

- 1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO.
- 2 Banded at the BBO > 90 days prior to recapture (e.g. in a previous year).
- 3 Banded at a location other than the BBO.
- 4 Caught in a mist-net but not banded (e.g. escaped net).



Orange-crowned Warbler (see how large our fingers look?!)



Katie completing a very cold and snowy census