2009 ANNUAL REPORT

by

Lisa Priestley, Editor

December 2009

Acknowledgements

We thank Katie Calon and Ashley Thorsen for their hard work and commitment over the 2009 field season. We would also like to thank the Golodrinas crew Jenny Aleman-Zometa and Tyler Hallman and Cornell University for working with our Tree Swallows for the summer. We thank the Beaverhill Bird Observatory board of directors: Jim Beck, Christine Boulton, Al DeGroot, Geoff Holroyd, Chuck Priestley, James Sheppard, Bryn Spence, and Margaret Takats. We had many volunteers throughout the season and we thank them for their help (listed in the seasonal reports). Thank you to all the organizations that provided funding for our work in 2009: Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (Casino funds), Alberta Sport Recreation Parks and Wildlife Foundation, Canada Summer Jobs, Community Spirit Program, Mountain Equipment Coop, Nature Canada (Charles Labatiuk Fund), Shell Environmental Fund, Student Career Placement Program, and TD Friends of the Environment. Donations (cash and in-kind) from various people are appreciated. We also thank all the volunteer owl surveyors, Hardy Pletz and Bob Gehlert for their dedication to our programs. We thank all the attendees to our Steaks and Saw-whets and BIG Birding Breakfast events and Janos Kovacs for providing the wonderful breakfast. Support from Edmonton Nature Club, Nature Alberta and Bird Studies Canada is greatly appreciated.

Volunteer chef Janos Kovacs with a young visitor to the lab (BIG Birding Breakfast).

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We, the authorised internal auditors assigned to audit the 2009 Financial Records of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, have examined the attached sheets (together with receipts and cancelled cheques associated with each debit, receipts issued for donations, monthly bank statements and records of deposits made at the bank); and we find that the records as presented are complete, balance and are in order.

Signature

Alan Hingston (BBO member)

Helen Trefry (BBO member)

Date: February 23 2010

BEAVERHILL BIRD OBSERVATORY SOCIETY

Box 1418
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 2N5

Balance Sheet

As of 13th Period 20

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Assets			
Current Assets			
Chequing Account		$14,751.94	
Casino Chequing Account		$7,533.90	
Casino Investment Account		$40,000.00	
US cash		$0.00	
Investments		$25,000.00	
Elson Investment Fund		$5,000.00	
Accounts Receivable		$3,700.00	
Interest Receivable		$0.00	
Deposits Paid		$0.00	
Property & Equipment			
Buildings	$4,236.32		
Donation Boxes	$541.00		
Computer	$2,471.43		
Banding Equipment	$2,350.00		
General Mis. Equipement	$2,176.25		
Display Board	$527.00		
Refrigerator	$2,000.14		
Solar Panels	$2,618.15		
Lab Equipment	$1,122.01		
Total Property & Equipment		$18,042.30	
Total Assets			$114,028.14
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts Payable	$0.00		
Deposits on account	$0.00		
Total Current Liabilities		$0.00	
Payroll Liabilities			
Income Tax Deductions	$1,166.95		
Income Tax Deductions for Casi	$1,800.00		
CPP Payable	$374.06		
CPP Payable Casino Account	$0.00		
EI Payable	$175.05		
E I Payable Casino Account	$0.00		
Workers' Compensation Payable	$0.00		
Vacation Payable	$0.00		
Total Payroll Liabilities		$3,516.06	
exchange		$0.00	
Total Liabilities			$3,516.06
Equity			
Retained Earnings		$64,256.43	
Current Year Earnings		$45,255.65	
Historical Balancing		$1,000.00	
Total Equity			$110,512.08
Total Liability & Equity			$114,028.14

BEAVERHILL BIRD OBSERVATORY SOCIETY

Box 1418
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 2N5

Profit & Loss Statement

13th Period 2009

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	Selected Period	% of Sales	Year to Date	% of YTD Sales
Income				
GRANTS				
Alta Govt - Step	$0.00	NA	$2,940.00	1.9%
Charles Labatiuk Fund	$0.00	NA	$5,000.00	3.3%
AB Sports RPW	$0.00	NA	$5,000.00	3.3%
Community Spirit Program of AB	$0.00	NA	$11,237.95	7.4%
Canadian Govt. - SCPP	$0.00	NA	$5,488.00	3.6%
Shell	$0.00	NA	$6,000.00	4.0%
TD Friends of the Environment	$0.00	NA	$4,000.00	2.6%
Bird Studies Canada	$0.00	NA	$693.20	0.5%
ACA Nest Box 2009	$0.00	NA	$5,000.00	3.3%
ACA Stewardship Project	$0.00	NA	$6,000.00	4.0%
Total GRANTS	$0.00	NA	$51,359.15	33.9%
Memberships	$0.00	NA	$340.00	0.2%
TALKS AND PRESENTAIONS	$0.00	NA	$1,790.00	1.2%
Mis. Income	$0.00	NA	$231.00	0.2%
Donations				
General donation	$0.00	NA	$11,740.00	7.8%
Lab Box	$0.00	NA	$66.25	0.0%
Alberta Owl Surveys	$0.00	NA	$1,856.74	1.2%
Total Donations	$0.00	NA	$13,662.99	9.0%
Interest	$0.00	NA	$557.45	0.4%
Casino Account Interest	$0.00	NA	$180.57	0.1%
GST Refund	$0.00	NA	$220.71	0.1%
GST Refund Casino	$0.00	NA	$254.85	0.2%
Sales				
Pancake Breakfast	$0.00	NA	$170.00	0.1%
Steaks and Saw-whets Event	$0.00	NA	$1,710.00	1.1%
Total Sales	$0.00	NA	$1,880.00	1.2%
Casino Income	$0.00	NA	$80,989.00	53.5%
Total Income	$0.00	NA	$151,455.72	100.0%
Cost of Sales				
Gross Profit	$0.00	NA	$151,455.72	100.0%
Expenses				
Office Expense				
Printing	$0.00	NA	$16.07	0.0%
Telephone	$0.00	NA	$477.21	0.3%
Bank Charges	$0.00	NA	$197.05	0.1%
Miscellaneous Expenses	$0.00	NA	$13.00	0.0%
Office Expenses	$0.00	NA	$1,101.34	0.7%
Total Office Expense	$0.00	NA	$1,804.67	1.2%
Supplies	$0.00	NA	$3,729.39	2.5%
Event Expenses	$0.00	NA	$471.87	0.3%
Repairs & Mntce	$0.00	NA	$233.10	0.2%
Bands & Equipment	$0.00	NA	$1,700.02	1.1%
Dues & Subscriptions	$0.00	NA	$75.00	0.0%
Educational Courses	$0.00	NA	$150.00	0.1%
Property Taxes	$0.00	NA	$141.70	0.1%
WCB Expense	$0.00	NA	$196.37	0.1%
Accommodations	$0.00	NA	$432.42	0.3%
Mileage	$0.00	NA	$6,135.45	4.1%

BEAVERHILL BIRD OBSERVATORY SOCIETY

Profit & Loss Statement

13th Period 2009

1/14/2010
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	Selected Period	% of Sales	Year to Date	% of YTD Sales
Travel Expenses	$0.00	NA	$456.58	0.3%
Payroll				
Wages	$0.00	NA	$25,700.00	17.0%
Contract work done for Beaverh	$0.00	NA	$9,900.00	6.5%
Vacation Pay Expense	$0.00	NA	$1,200.00	0.8%
Employer Expenses	$0.00	NA	$1,941.81	1.3%
AB Noct. Owl Survery Expenses	$0.00	NA	$1,353.07	0.9%
Conference Travel Expenses	$0.00	NA	$8,121.44	5.4%
Casino Expense Accounts				
Bank S/C Casino Account	$0.00	NA	$45.00	0.0%
NSWO Nestbox Monit. Mileage	$0.00	NA	$645.00	0.4%
NSWO Nestbox Monit. Supplies	$0.00	NA	$315.56	0.2%
BBO Poofile - Web & Newslette	$0.00	NA	$554.14	0.4%
Lab Upgrade	$0.00	NA	$1,806.31	1.2%
Bird Survey Field Tech Course	$0.00	NA	$928.22	0.6%
Education Alberta Expenses	$0.00	NA	$8,610.61	5.7%
GST On Contracts	$0.00	NA	$700.00	0.5%
Contract Salary Casino Funds	$0.00	NA	$20,000.00	13.2%
Salary Summer Staff	$0.00	NA	$8,000.00	5.3%
Insurance - Liability & Pro.	$0.00	NA	$663.00	0.4%
Emplorer Expense Casino Accoun	$0.00	NA	$199.34	0.1%
Total Expenses	$0.00	NA	$106,210.07	70.1%
Operating Profit	$0.00	NA	$45,255.65	29.9%
Other Income				
Other Expenses				
Net Profit / (Loss)	$0.00	NA	$45,255.65	29.9%

Beaverhill Bird Observatory
Spring Report 2009

by

Katie Calon

July 2009

Introduction

The summer staff at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO) in 2009 consisted of myself (Katie Calon), and Ashley Thorsen. Though spring migration monitoring commenced on May 1, we were away from the observatory from May 1–4, to attend the annual bird banding workshop hosted by the Canadian Wildlife Service. This year the workshop was held at the Delta Marsh Bird Observatory in Manitoba, and the travel time to get there kept us away from the nets for the beginning of migration monitoring. The outstanding tutelage from Peter Pyle was well worth the delay, however, as we poured over plumage terminology and aging comparisons of feather tracts and were prepared to take on the spring monitoring at the BBO.

Last fall there was a significant habitat change to the northern portions of the natural area. A grass fire occurred on September 28 and burned across the dry lakebed from Francis Point to the Weir, passing through the swallow grid. It burned mostly grass and willows before being stopped by fire crews right underneath nets 8, 9, 9X, and 12 causing some damage to those nets. A second fire occurred on November 3, but did not come as close to the natural area and was stopped quickly by fire crews. The change is quite startling, as what was once chest-high grass in and around the swallow grid now looks like a manicured park, but the bit of rain this spring is showing the vegetation coming in very lush. How the effects of the fire might impact the bird captures this year should prove to be quite interesting.

Songbird Migration Monitoring

The spring of 2009 started slowly, with a single American Robin being captured on the first banding day. This lulled us into thinking it would be a very slow spring, but we were surprised with a total of 38 individuals the second day of banding—quite a jump! Over the course of the spring banding period (May 1–June 9), a total of 500 birds of 39 species were captured in the mist nets in 1608 net hours (31.09 birds/100 net hours). This capture rate is up quite a bit compared to the previous four years, and approaches the capture rates from 2000 to 2004 (Figure 1).

Ashley holding the first bird of the year!

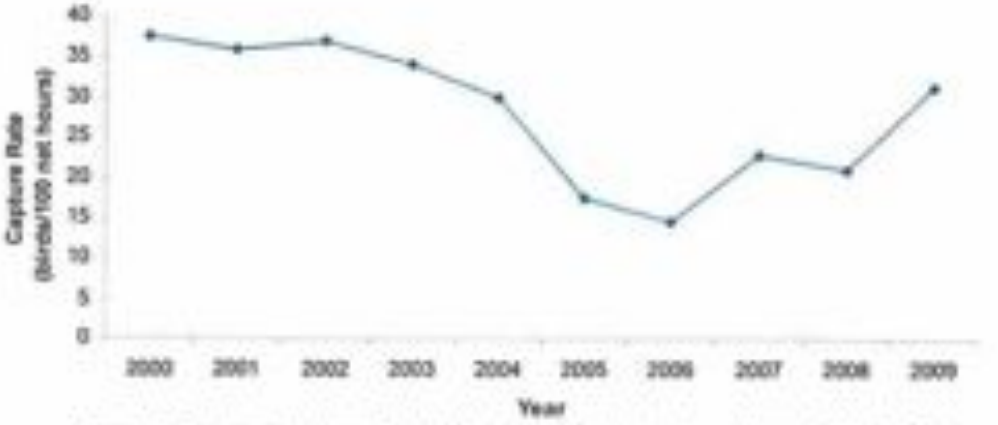

Figure 1. Capture rates from Spring Migration Monitoring from the year 2000 to 2009.

Of the birds captured, 351 were newly banded, 69 were repeats, 33 were returns, and 47 were identified as other captures (Table 1). Some notable species that were captured this spring included a Cooper's Hawk, a

Gray-cheeked Thrush, and warblers including American Redstarts, Connecticut Warblers, Ovenbirds, a Northern Waterthrush, an Orange-crowned Warbler, and an integrade Yellow-rumped Warbler. A particularily lucky net check included the capture of a Least Flycatcher, an Alder Flycatcher, and a Willow Flycatcher allowing for a close comparison of these difficult-to-differentiate species. Some species were conspicuously absent from the spring captures, including Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers. An exciting sighting that did not make it into the mist nets was a male Cape May Warbler that sang his way along net 3 one morning.

Two male Blackpoll Warblers

Connecticut Warbler

The Cooper's Hawk!

Table 1. Birds caught in mist nets at Beaverhill Bird Observatory Spring 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
Alder Flycatcher	2	0	0	0	0	2
American Goldfinch	10	1	0	0	0	11
American Redstart	4	0	0	0	2	6
American Robin	15	5	0	0	0	20
Baltimore Oriole	8	2	1	0	0	11
Black-capped Chickadee	4	2	2	0	0	8
Blackpoll Warbler	5	0	0	0	0	5
Brown-headed Cowbird	1	4	4	0	2	11
Chipping Sparrow	17	0	0	0	4	21
Clay-coloured Sparrow	66	11	0	0	14	91
Connecticut Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	2
Cooper's Hawk	1	0	0	0	0	1
Eastern Phoebe	1	0	0	0	0	1
Gray-cheeked Thrush	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hermit Thrush	2	0	2	0	0	4
House Wren	13	4	0	0	3	20
Least Flycatcher	70	22	11	0	10	113
Lincoln's Sparrow	3	0	0	0	0	3
Myrtle Warbler	35	1	0	0	5	41
Northern Waterthrush	1	0	0	0	0	1
Orange-crowned Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
Ovenbird	2	0	0	0	0	2
Pine Siskin	12	0	0	0	0	12
Purple Finch	1	0	0	0	0	1
Red-eyed Vireo	2	0	0	0	0	2
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	4	0	0	0	0	4
Savannah Sparrow	2	0	0	0	0	2
Slate-coloured Junco	6	1	0	0	0	7
Song Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Swainson's Thrush	25	0	0	0	3	28
Traill's Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	1	2
Tree Swallow	0	0	1	0	0	1
Unknown Yellow-rumped Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
Warbling Vireo	3	4	2	0	0	9
White-crowned Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
White-throated Sparrow	7	0	0	0	1	8
Willow Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	1
Yellow Warbler	18	12	10	0	2	42
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total	351	69	33	0	47	500

[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)

The #1 capture, Least Flycatcher

The top five species captured this spring included Least Flycatchers (70), Clay-coloured Sparrows (66), Myrtle Warblers (35), Swainson's Thrushes (25), and Yellow Warblers (18). These five species made up 43% of the total birds captured. The top five species for each year since 2001 is compared in Appendix A, and the percentage of the total captures made up of the top five species is considerably lower this year than in previous years, which may indicate a higher percentage of a wider variety of species. Least Flycatchers have been in the top five every year since 2001, Clay-coloured Sparrows every year except 2008, and Yellow Warblers every year except 2004. Myrtle Warblers and Swainson's Thrushes have been in the top five for six of the nine years shown (Appendix A).

The total number of net hours was 1608 hours, of a possible 3120 hours. The first four days banding (May 1–4) were lost due to the staff attendance of the banding workshop in Delta Marsh, Manitoba, along with Anna Dalzi (BBO 2007) and Nicole Lindfoot from the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory. Additional days were lost due to weather this spring. There were a number of days lost due to snow, as well as wind and rain, and delayed start times due to frost or sub zero temperatures in the early mornings. The very late snow in early June was especially a surprise, and in addition to affecting the banding, some of the staff's plants were frosted to death, and I had to purchase another bunch of tomatoes. Despite the low number of net hours, compared to the previous years, 2009 had a high capture rate (Table 2), perhaps due to a greater number of birds grounded in the area due to the bad weather.

Katie doing a cold and snowy census

Table 2. Overall banding results from 2009 Spring Migration Monitoring compared to the previous 8 years.

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Birds Captured	875	629	950	754	532	276	242	408	382	500
Birds Banded	672	472	740	546	424	198	169	318	288	351
Net Hours	2330	1756	2569	2219	1809	1570	1615	1813	1828	1608
Capture Rate	37.55	35.83	36.98	33.98	29.41	17.46	14.98	22.84	20.9	31.09
Species Captured	47	39	55	44	38	32	31	44	38	39

Tree Swallows

This year the Tree Swallows were monitored by Jenny Aleman-Zometa and Tyler Hallman from Cornell University as part of the Golondrinas de las Americas Project (website: http://golondrinas.cornell.edu). This project is dedicated to studying the breeding biology of *Tachycineta* swallows across North and South America. Tyler's previous experience with Golondrinas work had even taken him to Argentina where he conducted the same studies on Chilean Swallows. Jenny and Tyler were kept very busy monitoring approximately 50 nest boxes at each of three different grids (R,S, and T) within and around the Beaverhill Natural Area.

Jenny and Tyler taking in the spring banding at the lab

An ibutton; the device inserted into Tree Swallow nests to record temperature at regular intervals

During the Spring Migration Monitoring period, a great deal of time was spent monitoring nest construction, egg laying, and egg development. Nests were checked almost every day to determine how quickly the eggs were laid, and a device called an ibutton was inserted into the nest. The ibutton measures the temperature of the nest at regular intervals and the data is later downloaded to a computer so that it can be determined what the temperature of the eggs were at a particular time of day. This provides insight into when and for how long the female Tree Swallows incubate the eggs. Using a deviced called an Ovilux, each egg was photographed with a light shining through it to determine its development stage, and as nestlings hatched they were individually marked for farther studies.

In addition to all the studies on the nests and eggs, adults were captured when possible and banded, and Jenny and Tyler were able to capture a total of seven adults during the spring migration monitoring period. Of these, four were recoveries from previous years. One of these individuals was first banded in 2004 and was aged as an after second year bird, meaning it is at least six years old this year!

The "T" grid, one of three grids where Jenny and Tyler were monitoring nests (each location is a nestbox)

Other Banding

This year we were excited to catch a female Purple Finch in the migration monitoring nets, which is a relatively rare occurrence and it inspired us to set up a net near the feeder. We regularly saw up to 30 Purple Finches at the feeder and wanted to target net a few more of the individuals going though. It was quite the learning experience!

We first set the net along the trees where the feeder was hung, and learned that we had no real chance of catching finches—they simply stayed in the trees. We tried hiding in the trees and flushing them off the feeder and into the net, but they simply flew up and not out, staying well away from the net. Next, we moved the feeder out of the trees to the opposite side of the net in the hopes of having them fly into the net on the way to the feeder. The finches were cautious, and would fly towards the feeder, but hover in front of the net before turning off and heading back into the trees. Eventually one smart finch hopped under the net and onto the surface we had placed the feeder on and began to feed. The 'crack' of her first seed brought one finch straight from the trees into the net, but the others copied the first finch and hopped under or around the net to access the feeder.

A male Purple Finch, the prize of our efforts!

Finally, with the feeder full of finches chowing down, we flushed them *towards* the trees and were rewarded with a net full of birds including one flashy male. In the future, starting by setting the net between the feeder and the trees and flushing towards the trees will likely save a great deal of time, and reward us with a greater number of Purple Finch captures. In total, we captured 11 Purple Finches using this method over the course of one banding day.

The only other birds captured and banded this spring that was not in the migration monitoring nets or the feeder net was a single House Wren that was found fluttering around inside the lab one day. It managed to squeeze itself in through the trap door and then couldn't find its way out. Luckily we were in the lab at the time so it wasn't stuck for long. It was promptly released with a shiny new band, and may well have just flown around the corner to the nest box on the north side of the lab.

Raptors

The only raptors that were banded as part of the spring migration monitoring was the Cooper's Hawk that found its way into Net 3 one morning. This is a pretty large bird to get tangled in the nets and we were lucky it didn't rip through. This bird was quite accommodating and flew off after the photo shoot. There was a near miss with a Sharp-shinned Hawk that had attempted to capture a Least Flycatcher in Net 4, but unfortunately it escaped the net as the bander approached.

In the very early spring Geoff Holroyd came out for a few evenings to attempt to catch a Short-eared Owl. He tracked out raptor traps baited with quail on two separate evenings and tried at Francis View Point and near the T swallow grid, extending the traps out into the dry lake bed. With great patience the traps were manned until dark but unfortunately no raptors were caught (Nearly capturing a Rough-Legged Hawk added a bit of excitement to the evening at least.) Geoff's hopes of fitting a Short-eared Owl with a satellite transmitter were not realized this spring despite our efforts, but we were glad to get the experience of helping with this type of targeted trapping. Hopefully we will have another chance to help out with this work.

Nests
One American Robin nest was found this spring parked neatly between the two BBO staff cabins. The female protested our investigation but we discovered three warm blue eggs in the eye-level nest and then left her in peace.

Other Work
The lab has undergone a few improvements this year thanks to the hard work of Al DeGroot and Jim Beck. A large deck has been added to the front where the staff are happy to sit and watch the bird feeder after a day of work, and the awning provides some needed cover on hot or rainy days. An improved solar panel setup has plenty of electricity running through the lab, and the batteries stored in a new exterior compartment cleared up some floor space. The new rain barrel Al put in is going to collect plenty of water for hand washing and plant watering this year.

The staff also spent time cleaning out the storage shed at the back of the lab, putting everything in good order, and repairing the signs posted around the natural area. Many of the signs had been knocked down or were in disrepair.

Interpretation
The 2009 Big Birding Breakfast was held on May 30, 2009 and approximately 25 visitors attended the event. A great deal of Janos Kovacs' fabulous crepes were consumed, as well as a few strips of bacon (quite a few). A number of kids attended the event and listened with rapt attention to the banding demonstration conducted by Katie and Ashley—we hope to see these future ornithologists out again sometime soon! A total of 19 birds were captured for the visitors, including Least Flycatchers, a House Wren, a Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow Warblers, and Clay-coloured Sparrows. It was great to see so many board members out for the event, including Matt Harneman, Geoff Holyroyd, Al DeGroot, Margaret Takats, and James Sheppard—thanks for your attendence! We were also very happy to have Hardy Pletz out at the Observatory for the event, and the reliable help of Keegan Sheppard.

A group of Junior Forest Wardens from Smokey Lake came out to visit on May 18. Unfortunately, the weather was not cooperating at all and we were unable to band due to the snow. We were still able to give them a demonstration using a stuffed Evening Grosbeak we have on site, and explained all aspects of the banding process to them. After the talk we provided cups of tea and the brave group headed back to their vehicles for the long drive home. We were so happy to have them here and hope they can return on a day when the weather is better.

Visitors
Additional visitors came out to the lab during spring to take in the banding, go for a walk, or just visit the staff. We enjoyed the company of Irene, her parents, and her dog Onyx, Steve and Cristen Symes, Helena and Richard Baines with their dogs Dylan and Bailey, Anna Daku and her dog Finn, Isaac Calon, Jean Horne and her dog Marnie, and additional individuals that escaped before signing the guest book. We love to have visitors out to see the banding and hope there will be many more thoughout the summer!

Acknowledgements
There are many people to thank for a successful spring of banding: Thanks to Geoff for taking us owl trapping, Lisa Priestley for helping us train and covering days off, Al DeGroot for all the hard work on the lab, Jim Beck for working on the lab, all the board members that attended and assisted with the Big Birding Breakfast, Janos for cooking breakfast, Jenny and Tyler for their tireless work on the swallow grid, Anna Daku for attending a morning of banding with us, and possibly others whose omission is solely due to my poor memory. We are very grateful to you all!

APPENDIX A.

Top Five species captures from 2001 to 2009

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
#1 Captured Species	Clay-coloured Sparrow (104)	Least Flycatcher (228)	Least Flycatcher (174)	Myrtle Warbler (162)	Least Flycatcher (68)	Least Flycatcher (69)	Clay-coloured Sparrow (72)	Least Flycatcher (84)	Least Flycatcher (70)
#2 Captured Species	Least Flycatcher (100)	Clay-coloured Sparrow (143)	Myrtle Warbler (149)	Chipping Sparrow (39)	Yellow Warbler (47)	Yellow Warbler (32)	Least Flycatcher (70)	Yellow Warbler (37)	Clay-coloured Sparrow (66)
#3 Captured Species	Chipping Sparrow (91)	Yellow Warbler (115)	Yellow Warbler (119)	Clay-coloured Sparrow (31)	Clay-coloured Sparrow (27)	Clay-coloured Sparrow (23)	Myrtle Warbler (35)	Brown-headed Cowbird (33)	Myrtle Warbler (35)
#4 Captured Species	Yellow Warbler (87)	Swainson's Thrush (82)	White-throated Sparrow (68)	Least Flycatcher (51)	Swainson's Thrush (20)	Swainson's Thrush (19)	Yellow Warbler (25)	Myrtle Warbler (27)	Swainson's Thrush (25)
#5 Captured Species	House Wren (33)	White-throated Sparrow (60)	Clay-coloured Sparrow (40)	Swainson's Thrush (40)	Myrtle Warbler (19)	House Wren (17)	House Wren (22)	Swainson's Thrush (25)	Yellow Warbler (18)
% of total Captures	69%	66%	70%	66%	60%	66%	55%	57%	42%

Summer Report 2009

Ashley Thorsen

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August 2009

Abstract

The staff of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO) for 2009 were Katie Calon (bander-in-charge) and Ashley Thorsen (assistant bander). The summer period of breeding bird monitoring went from June 10 – July 30. The Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program continues to be the main method of summer avian research at the observatory. Mist-netting was conducted at three established stations in the Natural Area: BLAB, PARK and WEIR. Staff also conducted point counts throughout the summer at each station. Habitat for these stations has not changed significantly from the last few years. The fire last fall that impacted the Natural Area did not spread anywhere near WEIR or PARK. The very edge of BLAB's range was burnt, but this did not affect any of the net lane habitats. A total of 147 Tree Swallow nest boxes were in operation, and were actively monitored by two representatives of Cornell University's Golondrinas de las Americas project. Nest records were maintained for any nests found in or around the Natural Area, and additional observations of birds, mammals, insects, and plants were documented.

MAPS Research Program

Mist Netting Summary

A total of 900 hours of banding was conducted this summer. This fulfills 100% of the mist-netting hours required by the MAPS protocol. Net hours had to be made up on another day once for the WEIR station due to heavy winds.

A total of 220 birds from 21 different species were captured in the mist nets. Of the 220, 125 were banded. The remaining 95 birds were either already banded (Recapture or Return), escaped unbanded, or were not able to be banded due to permit restrictions (i.e. Ruby-throated Hummingbird). The summary of all species captured was separated by location (Appendix 1). The majority of birds captured were Least Flycatchers (159, 72.3%). This is the highest propoetion of Least Flycatcher captures in the last 8 years. Other common captures included: Warbling Vireo (12, 5.5%), Brown-headed Cowbird (10, 4.5%), and Clay-coloured Sparrow (9, 4.1%). Of the 125 newly banded birds, Least flycatcher comprised 85 (68.0%), followed by Warbling Vireo (8, 6.4%), Clay-coloured Sparrow (5, 4.0%), and Brown-headed Cowbird (5, 4.0%.) There wasvery little discrepancy between the numbers of top *banded* species and top *captured* species. Compared to most previous years, we had fewerYellow Warblers captured. Black-capped Chickadees are regularly in the top five captured species, and yet, we captured none during MAPS this year. We also did not find any Veerys in the natural area, while 2007 and 2008 caught considerable numbers of them. However, itwas a good year for Warbling Vireo captures, particularly at WEIR.

BLAB Station

Banding was conducted at BLAB on June 11, 24, and July 8, 13, 22, for a total of 300 net hours (NH) (no net hours were missed). Eighty-three birds from 10 species were captured at BLAB. Of the 83, 38 birds were banded. The other birds were either banded earlier in 2009, or were returns banded in previous years. BLAB's capture rate was 27.7 birds per 100 net hours. Least Flycatchers were by far the most common capture at 64 birds (77.1%). The next most common captures were Clay-coloured Sparrows (4, 4.8%). Brown-headed Cowbird and Warbling Vireo were each captured 3 times (3.6%). BLAB's recapture rate was 48.2%. This station had the highest capture rate of the three stations.

PARK Station

Banding was conducted at PARK on June 17, 23, and July 10, 15, 21 for a total of 300 net hours (NH) (no net hours were missed).

Fifty-five birds from 8 species were captured at PARK this year; 31 of these birds required bands. Least Flycatchers were certainly dominant at this location, with 46 captures (83.6%). Brown-headed Cowbirds and Clay-coloured Sparrows were caught twice each (3.6%), and the four other species were only caught once each.

WEIR Station

Banding was conducted at WEIR on June 10, 22, 25, and July 12, 16, 23 for a total of 300 net hours (NH). Hours were missed on June 22 due to heavy wind. These hours were made up on June 25.

WEIR had the highest species diversity of the three MAPS stations with 82 birds representing 13 species. Least Flycatchers were still in the majority with 49 captures (59.8%). The other most common captures included Warbling Vireos (8, 9.8%), Brown-headed Cowbirds (5, 5.9%), and Hairy Woodpeckers (3, 3.7%).

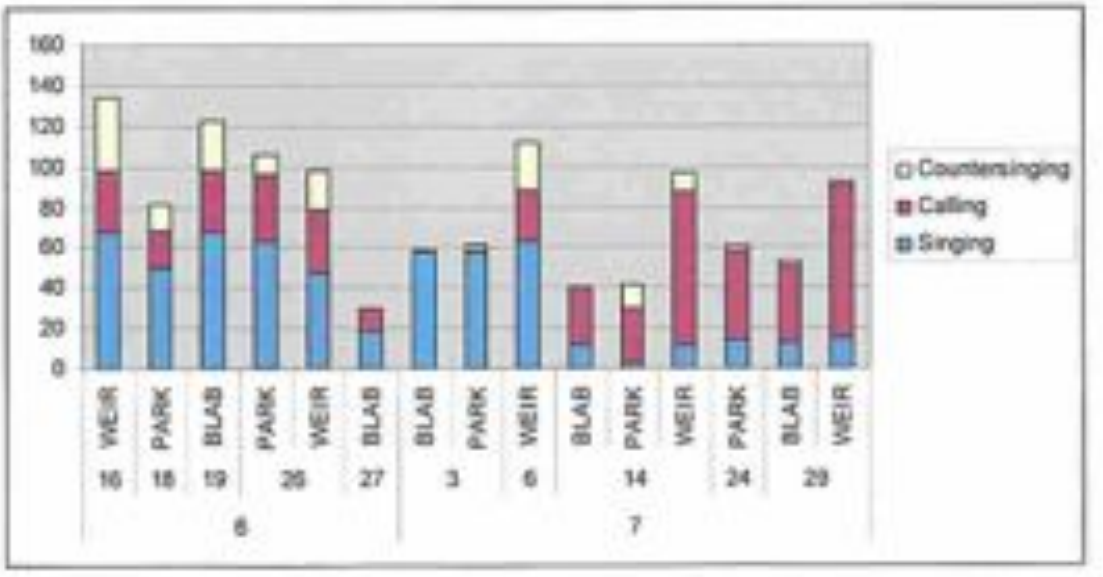
Productivity

Of the three MAPS stations, WEIR had the highest productivity rate with 6 Hatch Year (HY) birds captured. Out of the 220 total birds captured during MAPS mist-netting, this represents a productivity rate of 2.7%. BLAB followed with 4 HY captures (1.8%), and PARK had 0 HY captures. HY species captured were Least Flycatcher (6), Hairy Woodpecker (3) and Downy Woodpecker (1). Overall, these numbers reflect a productivity rate of 10/220, or 4.5%. Productivity rates were most likely affected by a late breeding season due to cold weather and snow into June. Therefore, many HY birds were still in nests or recently fledged when MAPS mist-netting finished on July 23rd. The cold temperatures may have also resulted in smaller clutch sizes or less nesting success. Lack of water would have also negatively impacted plant growth and insect populations, so food supplies might have been decreased.

Point Counts

While no longer a part of the MAPS protocols, standardized point counts continue as part of the BBO summer monitoring protocols. Point counts are conducted at nine set locations for each station, and take place once during each MAPS 10-day period. All bird activity at each point is documented for ten minutes, with distinctions made between observations during the first three minutes, five minutes and ten minutes. Data collected during the initial three minutes is also reported to the Breeding Bird Survey. Observers attempt to distinguish between singing, counter-singing, calling and visual observations of each species detected. Counter-singing is considered the most accurate

confirmation of breeding location for a species, since males are actively defending breeding territory. Singing is also likely breeding habitat behaviour. Calling and visual observations (except visual sightings of a nest or juvenile feeding) are not indicative of breeding locale, but nonetheless indicate the presence of a species at some point during the summer season. Point counts remain a vital part of the BBO summer monitoring, because they document a number of species that are not represented by mist-netting captures, particularly riparian species, grassland species, and species that fly above the treeline. However, while the locations of each point remain standardized, the weather conditions and time of observation are not. Since point counts are of lower importance than mist-netting, point counts are frequently reserved for days which are unsuitable for banding due to poor weather. Heavy wind and/or rain were observed on six of 15 total point counts and likely decreased the amount of detections made.



Nest Records

Table 1: Nests found in and around Beaverhill Lake Natural Area is 2009.

Species	*Date Found*	*Location*	*# Eggs*	*# Young*	*Outcome*
AMRO	2-Jun	BBO	3	2	Success
BARS	22-Jun	Francis Vp	6	4	Success
BARS	22-Jun	Francis Vp	Unknown	5	Success
BARS	8-Jul	Francis Vp	Unknown	2	Success
BRBL	19-Jun	BBO	1	0	Failure
BRBL	8-Jul	Francis Vp	4	3	Success
BRBL	27-Jul	Francis Vp	Unknown	3	Success
CCSP	11-Jun	BBO	3	1	Success
CCSP	11-Jun	BBO	2	Unknown	Failure
CCSP	16-Jun	BBO	1 + 4 BHCO	1 BHCO	Failure
CCSP	17-Jun	BBO	2 + 1 BHCO	0	Failure
CCSP	18-Jun	BBO	0	0	Failure
CCSP	18-Jun	BBO	1 + 1 BHCO	0	Failure
CCSP	18-Jun	BBO	3	2	Failure
CCSP	19-Jun	Francis Vp	4	Unknown	Unknown
CCSP	19-Jun	BBO	1 + 1 BHCO	1 BHCO	Failure
CCSP	19-Jun	BBO	3	Unknown	Failure
CCSP	22-Jun	BBO	3	2	Success
CCSP	24-Jun	BBO	Unknown	3	Success
CCSP	24-Jun	BBO	3	Unknown	Unknown
CCSP	26-Jun	BBO	Unknown	2	Success
CCSP	6-Jul	BBO	Unknown	1	Success
HOWR	19-Jun	BBO	6	5	Success
HOWR	19-Jun	BBO	0	0	Failure
HOWR	19-Jun	BBO	5	0	Failure
HOWR	8-Jul	Francis Vp	Unknown	6	Success
HOWR	14-Jul	BBO	Unknown	2	Success
LEFL	24-Jun	BBO	Unknown	3	Unknown
LEFL	14-Jul	BBO	Unknown	1	Success
LEOW	13-May	BBO	4	3	Success
RUGR	26-Jun	BBO	7	5	Success
SAVS	11-Jun	BBO	4	3	Success
SAVS	19-Jun	Francis Vp	6	Unknown	Unknown
SAVS	22-Jun	BBO	5	5	Success
SAVS	22-Jun	BBO	Unknown	2	Success
VESP	19-Jun	BBO	4	0	Failure
YWAR	18-Jun	BBO	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
YWAR	24-Jun	BBO	Unknown	0	Failure
YWAR	25-Jun	BBO	Unknown	2	Success

Tree Swallows

This year was the first year in which three full swallow nestbox grids were monitored for the Golondrinas project. In 2008, 50 boxes were built and placed East of the initial 'T' Grid. This new grid is called 'S'. Additional boxes were placed strategically along Rowan's Route to create 'R' grid in 2009. In the 'R' grid, boxes were purposefully alternated with the original boxes in an attempt to see which swallows would prefer. This fall, staff intend to document how many of the new boxes were used versus the old boxes. Casual observations thus far suggest the swallows greatly preferred the old boxes. BBO staff also monitored boxes along Range Rd 183 and at Francis Viewpoint (Elson's boxes). Research conducted at R, T and S grids was performed by Jenny Aleman-Zometa and Tyler Hallman from May 15 to July 15. In total, they banded or recaptured 386 Tree Swallows! Their daily observations have provided us with a much more detailed picture of Tree Swallow nesting patterns, as summarized in Table __ below.

Table 2. Results of Tree Swallow nesting in three grids for 2009.

Grid	R	T	S	Total
Available boxes	48	49	50	147
TRES nest attempts	23	39	5	67
TRES occupancy rate (%)	48.0	79.6	10.0	45.6
Boxes with successful TRES nests (%)	39.6	67.3	10.0	38.8
Failed TRES nests	4	6	0	10
Rate of TRES nest failure (%)	17.4	15.4	0	14.9
Avg TRES young/nest	4.2	5.7	4.2	5.1
Highest clutch size	6	7	5	7
Lowest clutch size	1	3	3	1
Latest lay date	23-Jun	29-Jun	16-Jun	29-Jun
Earliest hatch date	17-Jun	15-Jun	21-Jun	15-Jun
MOBL nests	1	1	2	4
HOWR nests	0	2	0	2
Adult TRES banded	27	64	7	98
Adult recapture rate (%)	14.8	39.1	14.3	30.6
Total TRES fledglings	80	187	21	288

Other Monitoring/Observations

Plants

Casual observations of plants throughout the Natural Area were made by staff during the MAPS period. Species noted are listed in Table 3 below. This does not represent a comprehensive account of all plant species at BBO; staff was limited both by time constraints and knowledge of plant species.

Alfalfa	*Medicago sativa*
Alsike Clover	*Trifolium hybridum*
Arrow-leaved Coltsfoot	*Petasites sagittatus*
Aster spp.	
Balsam Poplar	*Populus balsamifera*
Birch	*Betula papyrifera*
Blue-eyed Grass	*Sisyrinchium montanum*
Blunt-leaved Sandwort	*Arenaria latiflora*
Canada Goldenrod	*Solidago canadensis*
Canada Thistle	*Cirsium arvense*
Carex spp.	
Choke Cherry	*Prunus virginiana*
Common Blue Lettuce	*Lactuce latarica*
Common Chickweed	*Stellaria media*
Common Pink Wintergreen	*Pyrola asarifolia*
Common Plantain	*Plantago major*
Common Yarrow	*Achillea millefolium*
Fireweed	*Epilobium angustifolium*
Foxtail Barley	*Hordeum jubatum*
Golden Dock	*Rumex maritimus*
Green Wintergreen	*Pyrola virens*
Long-leaved Chickweed	*Stellaria longifolia*
Marsh Ragwort	*Senecio congestus*
Marsh Skullcap	*Scutellaria galericulata*
Northern Gooseberry	*Ribes oxycanthoides*
Northern Grass of Parnassus	*Parnassia palustris*
Pale Coral Root	*Corallorhiza trifida*
Pale Persicaria	*Polygonum lapathifolium*
Pasture Sagewort	*Artemisia frigid*
Purple Milk-Vetch	*Astragalus agrestis*
Pussytoes sp.	*Antennaria sp.*
Red-osier Dogwood	*Cornus stolonifera*
Rose sp.	*Rosa sp.*
Rough Cinquefoil	*Potentilla norvegica*
Silverweed	*Potentilla anserine*
Slender Blue Beardtongue	*Penstemon procerus*
Star-flowered False Solomon's-Seal	*Smilacina stellata*
Stinging Nettle	*Urtica dioica*
Sweet Clover	*Melilotus officinalis*
Sweet-scented Bedstraw	*Galium triflorum*

Trembling Aspen	*Populus tremuloides*
Two-seeded Sedge	*Carex disperma*
Western Snowberry	*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*
Wild Mint	*Mentha arvensis*
Wild Red Raspberry	*Rubus idaeus*
Wild Strawberry	*Fragaria virginiana*
Willow Spp.	*Salix spp.*
Wire Rush	*Juncus balticus*
Yellow Avens	*Geum aleppicum*

Mammals

Many mammals were seen during the MAPS period. White-tailed deer were frequently seen during banding and point counts. They were spotted most often in PARK in larger numbers. Unfortunately, a doe and her young fawn destroyed one of our nets at PARK while making a hasty retreat. A moose was spotted occasionally near the lab and at PARK, though for the most part, it proved to beelusive through most of the summer. Porcupines were encountered on a couple of occasions, twice at PARK and twice near the lab. I was lucky to witness a mother porcupine nursing her young while I was on a solo walk one evening. While checking Saw-whet owl boxes, Katie and I were surprised by a Northern Flying Squirrel that had taken up residence. Another flying squirrel occupied an old birdhouse adjacent to the lab's clearing. Later in the season, a family of flying squirrels moved into the roof of Raven Roost, and the staff now hear them scrambling about atop the cabins and near the bird feeders each night. This has been a very good year for rodents. There is a group of resident Meadow and Red-backed Voles that enjoy a comfy life around the lab. They have grown quite fond of the feeder seeds dropped by birds, and can often be seen nibbling beneath it. Other mammals included weasels, coyotes, and snowshoe hare.

Other Animals

No regular monitoring of insects was undertaken during MAPS 2009, due to lack of time. Butterfly species noted included: Tiger Swallowtail, Northern Crescent, White Admiral, Fritillary sp., Sulphur sp., Northern Pearly Eye, Mourning Cloak, and Skipper sp. Two Virgin Tiger Moths were seen at BBO.

Due to the complete lack of water all around BBO, it is not likely that any amphibian species are present, save for the abundant and hardy Wood Frogs that were seen hopping along trails throughout all regions of the Natural Area. One evening, a Plains Garter Snake slithered along the Weir to the delight of staff.

Events and Visitors

Beaverhill hosted two major events during the summer MAPS program. Firstly, we were selected by Nature Canada to be the recipient of an endowment left by Charles Labatiuk. In honour of Mr. Labatiuk, who recently passed away, Nature Canada and Charles' family came to BBO on July 18th for a memorial lunch. Jim Beck, Al DeGroot, Katie and I arrived early to set up the observatory for the event. Rented tables were set up, along with large tents to shade the attendees. Lunch was prepared by Lisa Priestley, Margaret Takats, and Margaret's sister-in-law Gail. James Sheppard and his sons Keegan and Paxton barbecued authentic Ukrainian sausages for the crowd. At the Legion in Tofield, Chuck and Lisa Priestley gave a presentation about BBO and bird banding, before leading the entourage of cars and a school bus to the Natural Area. Over 70 people attended on an extremely hot day to pay tribute to Charles. Speeches were given by Nature Canada, Chuck Priestley and Charles' parents. A lot of work went into the very successful and heartfelt tribute. A bench with a plaque has been placed at the Observatory in honour of Charles Labatiuk.

Beaverhill had only a few days to recover from all the excitement before the second event of the summer took place. On July 21st, 25 Aboriginal Junior Forest Rangers from Lac La Biche area and their four supervisors arrived to assist BBO in fire-smarting efforts. Jim Beck and his son spent three labour-intensive days prior to their arrival clearing an area large enough for them to camp. The JFRs set up their four massive tents in the butterfly clearing near the lab, with their vehicles nearby in case of emergency. The fire last fall came close to destroying the lab and staff cabins, so fire-smarting has become a priority. The main project undertaken by the JFRs was clearing an alternate emergency exit for staff. On July 22nd, they were joined by Chuck Priestley and Bryn Spence, and used brushers and clippers to clear Flicker Freeway and Harrier Highway. Harrier Highway has now been widened for vehicle access from the visitor parking lot to Warbler Way. Flicker Freeway's end closest to the lab has also been widened. Hopefully work can be finished next summer, and then regular yearly maintenance should preserve this exit route. Feeding approximately 30 people for 24hrs was a major task. Lisa Priestley, Margaret Takats and her sister-in-law Gail, and Barb and Jim Beck provided the rangers with excellent meals that received rave reviews. Janos Kovacs, who was called out at the last minute to help Lisa prepare breakfast, deserves a special thanks.

Aside from these events, other visitors to the Natural Area included: Irene and her dog Onyx, Richard Tyler (visitor from England who read about BBO on the website), Claudia Cameron (Katie's mom), Steve Symes (friend of staff), and a couple people who were seen walking their dogs through the Natural Area.

Maintenance

A number of changes were made to the lab and its environs during the MAPS period. Al DeGroot added a tarp to the new deck. In order to prepare for our major summer events, the BBO lab received a new coat of paint courtesy of BBO staff. Katie and I also thoroughly cleaned the lab, re-organized the storage area, weed-whacked all tall grass and tree saplings from the lab's clearing, and cut back willow growth on BBO Boulevard. Jim Beck made the lab a firewood bin to store the wood away from the lab. Staff began removing dead shrubs and sticks from around the lab and staff bunkhouses. That is the second major component of the BBO fire-smarting plan, and will continue into the fall.

Acknowledgements

Thanks must be given to Chuck and Lisa Priestley for coordinating the two major summer events. Jim Beck worked tirelessly for many days to prepare for the Junior Forest Rangers, and has also spent many hours developing fire-smarting plans for BBO. Barb Beck, Margaret Takats and her sister-in-law Gail, James, Keegan and Paxton Sheppard, and Janos Kovacs all provided excellent food preparation services for the events. Bryn Spence helped Chuck Priestley lead the Forest Ranger groups. Jenny and Tyler did an amazing job monitoring almost 150 Tree Swallow boxes for 60 days. We also greatly appreciated their lovely company. Finally, I would like to sincerely thank Katie for all of her time spent training me, sharing her infinite bird and butterfly wisdom, and helping with this report.

Appendix

Species	Banded	Repeat	Return/Recovery	Other	Total
American Goldfinch	3	0	0	0	3
American Robin	0	1	0	1	2
Baltimore Oriole	2	0	0	0	2
Brown-headed Cowbird	5	2	3	0	10
Clay-coloured Sparrow	5	0	1	3	9
Downy Woodpecker	1	0	0	0	1
Gray Catbird	1	0	0	0	1
Hairy Woodpecker	3	0	0	0	3
Hermit Thrush	2	0	0	0	2
House Wren	1	0	0	1	2
Least Flycatcher	85	49	17	8	159
Long-eared Owl	0	0	0	1	1
Myrtle Warbler	2	0	0	1	3
Ovenbird	1	0	0	0	1
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2	0	0	0	2
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	0	0	0	1	1
Swainson's Thrush	2	0	0	0	2
Warbling Vireo	8	1	2	1	12
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	0	0	0	1
Yellow Warbler	1	0	2	0	3
TOTAL	125	55	23	17	220

	WEIR				WEIR Total	PARK				PARK Total	BLAB				BLAB Total	Grand Total
Species	New	Rep	ret	Other		new	Rep	Ret	other		New	rep	ret	other		
American Goldfinch	2				2						1				1	3
American Robin												1		1	2	2
Baltimore Oriole	2				2											2
Brown-headed Cowbird	4	1			5			2		2	1	1	1		3	10
Clay-coloured Sparrow	2			1	3	1			1	2	2		1	1	4	9
Downy Woodpecker	1				1											1
Gray Catbird	1				1											1
Hairy Woodpecker	3				3											3
Hermit Thrush	2				2											2
House Wren	1			1	2											2
Least Flycatcher	29	14	3	3	49	27	10	7	2	46	29	25	7	3	64	159
Long-eared Owl									1	1						1
Myrtle Warbler	2			1	3											3
Ovenbird											1				1	1
Rose-breasted Grosbeak											2				2	2
Ruby-throated Hummingbird									1	1						1
Swainson's Thrush											2				2	2
Warbling Vireo	7			1	8	1				1		1	2		3	12
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker						1				1						1
Yellow Warbler			1		1	1				1			1		1	3
Grand Total	56	15	4	7	82	31	10	9	5	55	38	28	12	5	83	220

Spp_Code	BLAB	PARK	WEIR	Grand Total
ALFL			3	3
AMCR	23	33	15	71
AMGO	16	28	41	85
AMRO	2	4	17	23
BAOR	9	6	9	24
BBMA			1	1
BCCH	17	2	6	25
BHCO	23	27	53	103
BLTE	3			3
CAGO		2		2
CCSP	11	11	9	31
CEDW	6	3	8	17
CORA	5	8	8	21
COYE	1	1	1	3
DOWO	2			2
GHOW		2		2
HAWO		1	4	5
HETH	2	7	2	11
HOWR	12	5	11	28
LEFL	96	133	146	375
LISP	1	1		2
MAGO			3	3
MALL	7			7
MODO		2	2	4
MYWA	1		3	4
PISI	5	4		9
RBGR	1		1	2
RBGU			1	1
REVI	2	10	2	14
RTHA	1	1		2
RTHU	5	1		6
RUGR		1	9	10
RWBL	10	15	24	49
SAVS	3	1		4
SOSP		1	5	6
TRES	22	5	9	36
UNDU			1	1
UNGU		3	1	4
UNVI		1	4	5
UNWO		2		2
WAVI	19	19	49	87
YBSA		5		5
YHBL	2			2
YWAR	30	30	25	85
Grand Total	337	375	473	1185

Spp_Code	BLAB	PARK	WEIR	Grand Total
LEFL	96	133	146	375
BHCO	23	27	53	103
WAVI	19	19	49	87
AMGO	16	28	41	85
YWAR	30	30	25	85
AMCR	23	33	15	71
RWBL	10	15	24	49
TRES	22	5	9	36
CCSP	11	11	9	31
HOWR	12	5	11	28
BCCH	17	2	6	25
BAOR	9	6	9	24
AMRO	2	4	17	23
CORA	5	8	8	21
CEDW	6	3	8	17
REVI	2	10	2	14
HETH	2	7	2	11
RUGR		1	9	10
PISI	5	4		9
MALL	7			7
RTHU	5	1		6
SOSP		1	5	6
HAWO		1	4	5
UNVI		1	4	5
YBSA		5		5
MODO		2	2	4
MYWA	1		3	4
SAVS	3	1		4
UNGU		3	1	4
ALFL			3	3
BLTE	3			3
COYE	1	1	1	3
MAGO			3	3
CAGO		2		2
DOWO	2			2
GHOW		2		2
LISP	1	1		2
RBGR	1		1	2
RTHA	1	1		2
UNWO		2		2
YHBL	2			2
BBMA			1	1
RBGU			1	1
UNCU			1	1
Grand Total	337	375	473	1185

Fall Report 2009

by

Lisa Priestley

November 2009

Abstract

Songbird migration monitoring was conducted from August 1 through October 10, 2009. There were 875 birds captured (23.8 birds/100 net hours). Saw-whet owl nets were set from September 10 through November 11 on 48 days. We caught 127 saw-whet owls (capture rate of 15.8 owls/100 net hours). The Steaks and Saw-whets event was a huge success again with over 100 people coming out to the lab to observe saw-whet owl banding. There were also a variety of visitors observing the songbird and saw-whet owl banding through the fall.

Photo of volunteer Anna Duka with Hairy Woodpecker.

All photos by Lisa Priestley unless otherwise noted.

Songbird Fall Migration Monitoring

Fall migration at Beaverhill Bird Observatory in 2009 was very low compared to previous years. Only 875 birds were captured, a capture rate of 23.8 birds/100 net hours (the lowest rate ever) (Table 1, Figure 1). A total of 3670.50 net hours were run, 65.4% of the total 5616 net hours that were possible. Five full days were missed due to poor weather (wind, snow, cold), thirteen days were missed for staff days off.

Table 1. 2009 fall songbird banding results from Beaverhill compared to previous ten years.

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Birds Captured	2745	1740	2095	1734	1315	975	1256	1969	1079	892	875
Birds Banded	2172	1433	1758	1464	1093	818	1089	1525	952	723	718
Net Hours	2533.5	2843.25	3678.5	4173.75	3818.25	3228.5	2787.25	3476.0	3534.0	3399.5	3670.5
Capture rate (birds/100N	108.3	61.2	56.9	41.2	34.4	30.2	45.1	56.6	30.5	26.2	23.8
Species Captured	58	55	56	62	57	60	59	63	52*	58*	51

* includes Ruffed Grouse caught in net but not banded

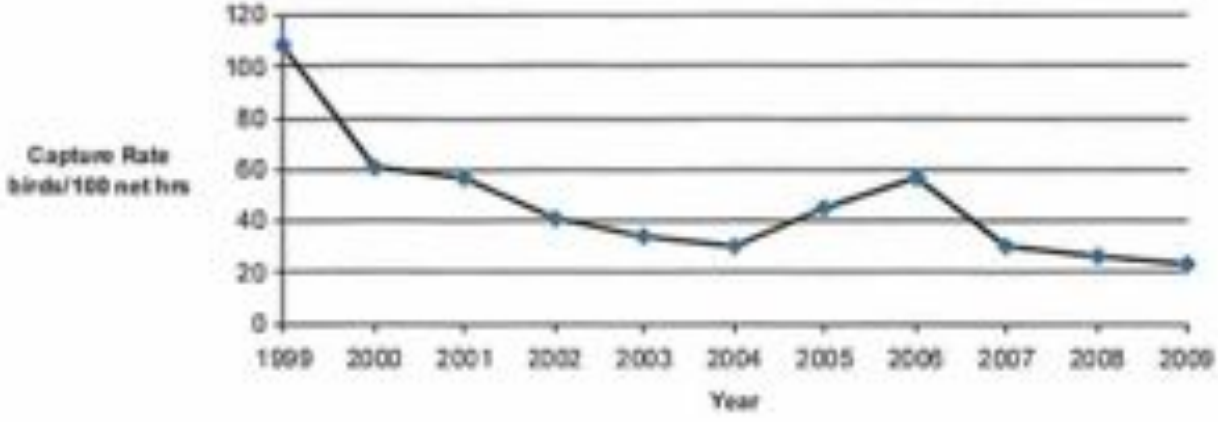


Figure 1. A comparison of fall capture rates (songbirds/100 net hours) between 1999 and 2009.

Top five species representing 66.6% of the captures were: Myrtle Warbler (210), Least Flycatcher (181), Slate-colored Junco (84), Black-capped Chickadee (59), and Yellow Warbler (49). The only unusual species that were captured this fall were a Ruby-throated Hummingbird and a Cooper's Hawk. The species diversity was quite low this year and there were very few warblers captured. September 30 and October 5 were the busiest days for banding, which is quite late in the season for high numbers of birds. Although we complete monitoring on October 10, Katie set up the nets on one extra day (October 23) and caught 18 more birds. This indicates a very late year for migration. The spring migration and summer breeding was also quite late in 2009.

Table 2. Birds caught in mist nets at Beaverhill Bird Observatory fall 2009.

Species	Banded	Recapter e	Foreign	Other	TOTAL
Alder Flycatcher	7	0	0	0	7
American Goldfinch	4	0	0	1	5
American Redstart	7	0	0	1	8
American Tree Sparrow	13	0	0	3	16
Black-capped Chickadee	21	35	0	3	59
Brown-headed Cowbird	2	0	0	1	3
Blue-headed Vireo	1	0	0	0	1
Blackpoll Warbler	2	0	0	0	2
Broad-winged Hawk	1	0	0	0	1
Clay-colored Sparrow	30	5	0	2	37
Chipping Sparrow	1	0	0	0	1
Cape May Warbler	2	0	0	0	2
Cooper's Hawk	0	0	0	1	1
Downy Woodpecker	6	2	0	1	9
Eastern Phoebe	4	0	0	0	4
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	0	0	0	1
Hairy Woodpecker	2	1	0	0	3
Hermit Thrush	4	0	0	1	5
House Wren	24	6	0	5	35
Least Flycatcher	162	14	0	5	181
Lincoln's Sparrow	5	0	0	1	6
Magnolia Warbler	7	0	0	1	8
Mourning Warbler	1	0	0	0	1
Myrtle Warbler	200	5	0	5	210
Orange-crowned Warbler	14	0	0	0	14
Ovenbird	13	0	0	0	13
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1	1	0	0	2
Red-breasted Nuthatch	5	0	0	0	5
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5	0	0	1	6
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	0	0	0	1	1
Savannah Sparrow	12	0	0	1	13
Slate-colored Junco	74	5	0	5	84
Song Sparrow	4	0	0	1	5
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	0	0	1	4
Swainson's Thrush	2	0	0	0	2
Tennessee Warbler	5	0	0	0	5
Tree Swallow	3	0	0	0	3
Traill's Flycatcher	4	0	0	0	4
Vesper Sparrow	1	0	0	0	1
Warbling Vireo	3	0	0	0	3
White-breasted Nuthatch	2	1	0	0	3
White-crowned Sparrow	7	2	0	0	9
Western Wood-Pewee	1	0	0	0	1
Willow Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	1
Wilson's Warbler	11	0	0	0	11
Western Palm Warbler	5	0	0	0	5
White-throated Sparrow	13	1	0	6	20
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	1
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	0	0	0	2
Yellow-shafted Flicker	2	0	0	0	2
Yellow Warbler	38	8	0	3	49
Total	739	86	0	50	875

[1] Repeat indicates it was captured with the last 90 days at the bird observatory
[2] Return indicated it was captured over 90 days before at the bird observatory
[3] Other Captures include escaped birds, released without banding

Saw-whet Owl Migration

Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Northern Saw-whet Owl fall migration monitoring began on September 10 and was completed on November 11. A total of 48 days were covered amounting to 806.50 net hours. We caught 127 saw-whet owls (capture rate of 15.8 owls/100 net hours), the second lowest capture rate since we started in 2002 (Table 3, Figure 2). Feathers were again collected for isotopes and sexing. One Long-eared Owl was also captured, and two were frequently observed around the lab and along Accipiter Alley. The resident male Great Horned Owl was heard on a number of evenings and one Short-eared Owl flew over on a few nights.

Table 3. Number of Northern Saw-whet Owls captured at Beaverhill Lake 2002-2008 (Sept 9- Nov 14).

Year	Number of Nights	Number of Net Hours	Number of Owls Captured	Number of Owls/ 100 Net Hours
2002	55	953.00	142	14.9
2003	48	753.00	150	19.9
2004	59	996.00	306	30.7
2005	37	600.00	135	22.5
2006	42	551.50	149	27.0
2007	50	675.00	184	27.3
2008	47	669.50	131	19.6
2009	48	806.50	127	15.8
Total	--	--	1197	--

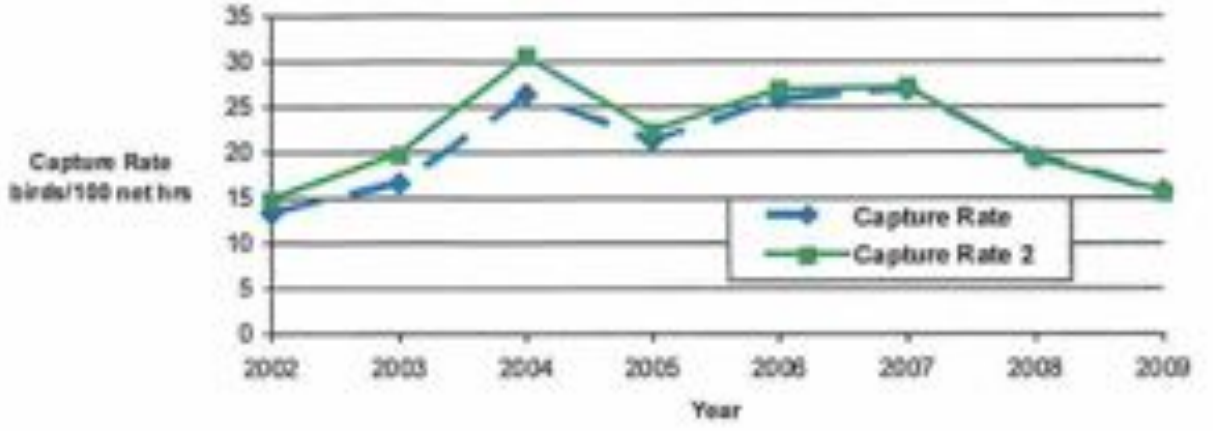


Figure 2. A comparison of capture rates (saw-whets/100 net hours) between 2002 and 2009: capture rate (all captures), capture rate 2 (September 9 to November 14 only).

Pletz Park

Hardy Pletz spent 10 nights (95 net hours) trapping for saw-whets at his acreage Pletz Park, south of Millet, and caught 42 and banded 40 Saw-whet Owls (44.2 owls/100 net hour).

Gehlert's Grove

A new Saw-whet Owl monitoring satellite station was established by Bob Gehlert near Lindbrook (west of Tofield). Bob banded on 27 nights for 440 hours and caught 77 owls (capture rate of 17.7 owls/100 net hours). He also had an exciting re-encounter of a banded owl. On October 7 at 9 p.m he caught an owl that had been previously banded at Nisbet Forest near Prince Albert, SK in 2008. This owl was released by Bob and then was caught at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory four hours later by Geoff Holroyd. So this little owl travelled east about 17 km in under four hours.

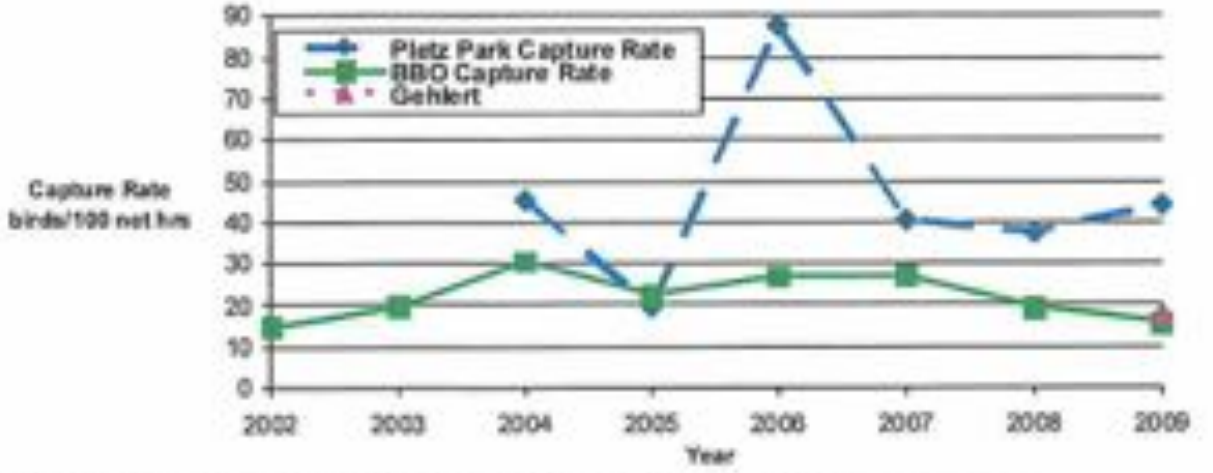


Figure 3. Comparison of saw-whet capture rates of Pletz Park, BBO, and Gehlert's.

Raptor Traps

There were three raptor traps (two drop-lid and one Swedish Goshawk trap) open on site between August 29 and October 10 for 1231 trap hours. Only one Black-billed Magpie and one Cooper's Hawk were captured and banded. There was one trap open at Phil and Helen Trefry's farm and one Cooper's hawk was captured, banded and released at Beaverhill. There were 10 more raptor traps repaired, and are ready to be used next fall if we can secure more lure animals.

Interpretation

On site tours were popular this fall. We had a group from the University of Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society come out on October 16. This group has visited us in previous years, but they set a new record for number of attendees, 50 in all! We also had a home school group, a group from Weyerhaeuser, professors from the university, many people from Canadian Wildlife Service, friends and family come to observe or help. We were also pleasantly surprised by a visit from Peter Dunn, who did his thesis on Tree Swallows many years ago, and helped build the lab in 1986.

We celebrated another successful Steaks and Saw-whets event. This year the event was held October 2 and 3, 2009, and marked our 7th year of running the program. The Friday had been beautiful, sunny and warm for the time of year. People began arriving around 6 p.m. and we had some snacks out to tie everyone over until the steaks and chicken were ready. Our volunteers put

steaks and chicken on the Bar-B-Q, the potatoes and corn cob were ready, and all the fixings were out by 6:45 p.m. At 8 p.m. the mist nets went up and the call of the Northern Saw-whet Owl was played on a CD player. Chuck Priestley gave a short presentation about the bird observatory and the owl work and then Katie Calon led the first group of people to check the nets. Incredibly, we caught an owl the very first net check, and five of them through the evening. Unfortunately, Saturday's weather did not cooperate. We set the nets, but chances were slim for catching owls due to the on and off very light drizzle and the windy conditions. The wind reduces the distance that the sound of the CD call will travel, which is important for attracting owls to the nets. We were shut out on night two for Saw-whet Owls, but were happy to report that a Burrowing Owl made an appearance. We very much enjoyed hosting the event, a

Natural Area Work

Fire Smarting Work

The Fire Smarting work continued in September with a group of volunteers coming out to help on September 19 with chain sawing, clipping brush, and clearing the road along Flicker Freeway (second access to lab). We also worked on clearing piles of brush from around the lab.

Shoreline Improvement Project

This year Beaverhill Bird Observatory completed a project to fence the north side of the Beaverhill Lake Natural Area and to replace all the wire gates with metal hinged ones. Last fall, we lost all of our fencing materials in the first fire on the lake. We were able to apply for additional funding and still had funding available from other grants to complete the fencing project. One of our Board of Directors, Matt Hanneman, convinced his dad Rick Hanneman to take on the project and he completed it very quickly

and professionally with help from a brother and brother-in-law. Over one mile of fencing on the north side of the Natural Area will help keep cattle out of the wetland areas and from damaging nets and nestboxes. Also five gates were installed, one at the parking lot, three along Accipiter Alley, and one at the north access point to the Natural Area. The north gate will be locked for the winter to reduce motorized vehicle access. Thanks to Jim and Marta Boulton for donating two of the gates, that we used along Accipiter Alley.

Publications and Presentations

Lisa and Chuck Priestley attended the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network in Tadoussac, Quebec. This was a meeting of representatives from 14 member stations and three associated stations across Canada, Environment Canada staff, graduate students, the CMMN steering committee, and other supporters. Alberta was well represented with three people from BBO, two from LSLBO and two from CBBS. We presented three talks, one on an overview the BBO, one on sexing saw-whets owls (based on Chuck's thesis), and one on isotopes (again a part of Chuck's thesis work). We also visited the Tadoussac saw-whet/boreal banding station to see how they had their nets set up with the call playback.

We also attended a book launch in Calgary for Margaret Atwood's new book "The Year of the Flood". Margaret penned a short semi-dramatic performance of her book and performances in Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver and Sudbury were fundraisers for Nature Canada. Donations made to Nature Canada at Margaret Atwood's performances directly supported conservation work at Important Bird Areas throughout Canada. The funding also was going into the Labatiuk Fund through which Beaverhill Bird Observatory is supported. A display for Nature Canada was set up, and information brochures on Beaverhill Bird Observatory and Nature Canada were available for people to pick up during the book signing.

The BBO was also in attendance for the free admission day at the John Janzen Nature Center. We had a bird banding demo, a display board, and also had Napi the Burrowing Owl in attendance. We also set up a display at the Don't Hibernate event in Tofield.

Acknowledgements

Funding and in-kind support from the following agencies is greatly appreciated: Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service), MEC Environmental Fund, Nature Canada (Charles Labatiuk Endowment Fund), and Shell Environmental Fund. Our work here at Beaverhill Bird Observatory would not be possible without the wonderful staff and volunteers that spend time checking nets, banding birds, and keeping data. First we need to thank Katie Calon and Ashley Thorsen for conducting the songbird migration monitoring in August. Katie continued the songbird monitoring in September and early October and then switched to Saw-whet Owls for the last half of October. Lisa Priestley conducted the Saw-whet Owl banding from mid-September through mid-October, and in early November. We really appreciate all the volunteers for their help!! Songbird banding volunteers were (# of days): Anna Daku (1), Matt Hanneman (1), and Hedwig Lankau (1). Volunteers that helped with Saw-whet Owl monitoring include: Jim and Barb Beck (2), Gerry (3) and Robyn Beyersbergen (1), Geoff Holroyd (3), Hedwig Lankau (1), Chuck Priestley (3) and Helen Trefry (1). Thanks to Steaks and Saw-whets volunteers On site were Isaac Calon, Al DeGroot, Matt Hanneman, Chuck Priestley, James, Keegan, and Paxton Sheppard, Margaret Takats, Josef Takats. Barb Beck provided her famous owl cupcakes (I never did get one), and Bryn Spence made the signs and T-shirts. Thanks to Katie Calon, our bander-in-charge for switching days off to help with the weekend. Fire Smarting work volunteers were Gerry Beyersbergen, Al DeGroot, Matt Hanneman, Geoff Holroyd, Janos Kovacs, Jonathan Martin-DeMoor, Chuck Priestley, Kate and Sam Priestley, Margaret and Josef Takats. We also thank Hardy Pletz and Bob Gehlert for volunteering their time to run saw-whet owl monitoring at their acreages.

Beaverhill Bird Observatory photos of fall 2009

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update May 1-7, 2009-05-08

Summer staff for 2009: Katie Calon holding a Hermit Thrush (left), Ashley Thorsen with who knows what in the bag? (right), and Annie in the middle!

Hello all, and welcome to the 2009 banding season at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory! I'm Katie Calon, the bander-in-charge, and am back at the BBO after banding here in 2006 (before I was married!). I am really excited to spend another summer in the Natural Area and am ready to enjoy the birds, butterflies, flowers and wildlife this special place has to offer. Ashley Thorsen is the banding assistant this year, and she is currently in the Biological Sciences Technology Program at NAIT, we are very happy to have you aboard Ashley!

The past week has been quite busy, we started with a trip out to Delta Marsh in Manitoba for the annual Canadian Wildlife Service Banding Workshop. Peter Pyle, guru of all things plumage, came from California to instruct, and the days were filled with careful inspection of birds caught in the field, as well as classroom time covering molt terminology and the crazy ways woodpeckers replace their feathers. Myself, Ashley, Anna Daku (the banding assistant from 2007), and Nicole Linfoot (the banding assistant at Lesser Slave Lake www.lslbo.org) drove out and back. We marvelled at the flocks of snow geese along the way and swapped banding stories, making for a very enjoyable drive!

Due to the workshop, mist-nets were not opened until May 5th, and even then we were delayed a bit due to the cold weather in the morning and couldn't open until 8 AM. The first day we caught only one American Robin, and were lulled into thinking things would be very slow for a few days. Not so! The next day we were surprised and glad to have a total of 38 birds, the majority of which were Myrtle Warblers. Two birds I had never banded before were also caught, including a Purple Finch and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Please look for our banding totals for this week in the table on the next page.

We have also been involved in attempts at trapping a Short-eared Owl this week. Geoff Holroyd, of the BBO board of directors and the Canadian Wildlife Service, has been out for two nights attempting to trap a Short-eared Owl. We are hoping to get a satellite transmitter fitted on an owl, as a great deal of information could be gathered by tracking their movements. Currently, very little is known about where, when, how or why these owls migrate. Though we have spotted them regularly, they are still eluding the traps – the closest we've come to catching anything was a Rough-legged Hawk that actually perched on the trap! Thanks to Geoff for letting us help out with this project.

As I wrap up the first update for this year, I'd like to extend a very sincere welcome to everyone to come out and visit the bird observatory. It is wonderful to have visitors, and it is a great opportunity to see birds up close. Who knows? Maybe you'll get a good look at the Golden-crowned Kinglet that was singing near the lab this week…

Table 1. Results from Spring Migration Monitoring May 1 – 7, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
American Robin	5	1	-	-	-	6
Black-capped Chickadee	3	-	-	-	-	3
Eastern Phoebe	1	-	-	-	-	1
Hermit Thrush	2	-	-	-	-	2
Lincoln's Sparrow	2	-	-	-	-	2
Myrtle Warbler	25	1	-	-	4	30
Purple Finch	1	-	-	-	-	1
Slate-coloured Junco	6	-	-	-	-	6
Song Sparrow	1	-	-	-	-	1
Swainson's Thrush	1	-	-	-	-	1
White-throated Sparrow	4	-	-	-	1	5
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	-	-	-	-	1

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 BBO.

4 Caught in a mist-net but not banded (e.g. escaped net).

Left: Ashley with the first bird of the year, an American Robin. Top Right: Myrtle Warbler, our most common capture this week. Bottom right: The tail of a Myrtle Warbler, growth bars are the result of stress (e.g. lack of food) when the feathers are growing.

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update May 15-21, 2009

Savannah Sparrow

Wow, what crazy weather this week! We lost a few banding days due to the snow and wind, but despite that we had a total of 36 birds caught, so all in all not too bad. Seemed like BBO was sparrow central this week, with Clay-coloured, Chipping, Vesper, Lincoln's, and White-throated Sparrows hopping around in large numbers, and even one Savannah Sparrow captured and banded.

The BBO staff has some company for the next month and a half, Jenny and Tyler are two visiting researchers from Cornell University who will be doing detailed studies on the Tree Swallow grids. If you've noticed the huge number of additional nest boxes in and around the natural area, this is why! Jenny and Tyler are part of an international swallow project and informed us that the Beaverhill Lake Tree Swallows are the most productive known swallows – having clutches of up to 8 young is truly outstanding in comparison to other parts of the world. Who knew?!

A chilly Tree Swallow peeking out at the snow

Northern Waterthrush in the morning light

Exciting captures for this week include an adult male Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a Northern Waterthrush, and an integrade Yellow-rumped Warbler with characteristics of both the Myrtle and Audubon's subspecies. Perhaps most exciting of all was the Evening Grosbeak! Well, okay, it wasn't a real one. We have a toy Evening Grosbeak in the lab which we used to demonstrate the banding process to the Smokey Lake Junior Forest Wardens when they came out for a visit on a cold wet day when we weren't able to band. What troopers!

Raptor sightings this week included a Peregrine Falcon over the weir, and a Broad-winged Hawk that hung around near the lab, maybe looking for an easy meal at the feeder? The Broad-winged was very shy and flushed easily, so often all we saw was it flapping away.

We had many visitors this week, including Anna Daku, Isaac Calon, Irene, as well as the Smokey Lake Junior Forest Wardens (10 people). We hope that spring is now really and truly here, as we see the female Mountain Bluebird is on eggs already!

Integrade Yellow-rumped Warbler
Note partially yellow throat, partial supercilium, eye-ring and weak face mark

Table 1. Results from Spring Migration Monitoring May 15-21, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
American Robin	1	2	0	0	0	3
Black-capped Chickadee	0	1	0	0	0	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	0	0	1	0	1	2
Clay-colored Sparrow	7	0	0	0	2	9
Chipping Sparrow	7	0	0	0	1	8
Hermit Thrush	0	0	2	0	0	2
Least Flycatcher	1	0	1	0	0	2
Lincoln's Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Myrtle Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
Northern Waterthrush	1	0	0	0	0	1
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1	0	0	0	0	1
Savannah Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Swainson's Thrush	2	0	0	0	0	2
Unknown Yellow-rumped Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
White-throated Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	25	3	4	0	4	36

Net Hours: 184.5 NH
Capture Rate: 19.51 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).

Jenny and Tyler admiring the male Rose-breasted Grosbeak

The first eggs we have found this year, the Mountain Bluebird eggs in a swallow box

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Banding Update
May 22-28, 2009

A sunny male Yellow Warbler

This was a great banding week at BBO. The weather looks like it's finally going to stay warm and sunny, and the birds were back in full force to enjoy it. We caught 22 species this week! The bright plumages of warblers, orioles and grosbeaks flooded our Natural Area with vibrant hues and sweet songs. Every day brought a new arrival to our nets, and while we have thoroughly enjoyed our time spent with the variety of sparrows flying through, it was wonderful to finally have some colour!

A beautiful Connecticut Warbler – an uncommon catch!

Our most commonly handled species right now are Least Flycatchers, Yellow Warblers and Clay-coloured Sparrows. You are guaranteed to hear/see them if you come for a visit. The Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Baltimore Orioles spent a lot of time around our feeder this week. We placed orange pieces out for the Orioles who have been going through them at a rapid rate, but we were surprised to see a female Grosbeak nibble at an orange as well! Our feeder (filled with sunflower seeds) has been totally dominated by at least 40 Pine Siskins and 15 American Goldfinches. Bird banders estimate the fat content of a bird by gently blowing aside the body feathers below its neck to see if any fat has collected inbetween its collar bone. When we caught some of these Siskins in our mist-nets, we gasped at their chests completely bulging over with fat. These plump Siskins will definitely have a good amount of fat stored for their next journey.

Stunning male American Redstart

This was an exciting week for hawk sightings, too. We were very surprised to find a Cooper's Hawk in one of our nets one morning. Because it was caught in our mist-nets and we have bands at the lab large enough for its thick legs, we were able to *carefully* band it, making sure to avoid its sharp bill and long talons. Holding a bird that big in your hands is a little intimidating. It's difficult to comprehend how large and powerful raptors are when seen way up in the sky. Returning to handling the toothpick-thin legs of songbirds really emphasized how tiny songbirds are. A Sharp-shinned Hawk was a little too interested in our mist-nets one day, and forced us to close two nets early. The safety of the birds we monitor is always our first concern.

We have a little over a week left of our Spring Migration Monitoring before we begin MAPS. Come out and see the spring migrants before it's too late!

Cooper's Hawk

Table 1. Results from Spring Migration Monitoring May 22-28, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
American Goldfinch	4	0	0	0	0	4
American Redstart	1	0	0	0	2	3
American Robin	4	0	0	0	0	4
Baltimore Oriole	4	0	0	0	0	4
Black-capped Chickadee	0	0	1	0	0	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	1	2	3	0	1	7
Blackpoll Warbler	4	0	0	0	0	4
Clay-colored Sparrow	40	7	0	0	9	56
Chipping Sparrow	9	0	0	0	3	12
Cooper's Hawk	1	0	0	0	0	1
Connecticut Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
House Wren	7	2	0	0	1	10
Least Flycatcher	43	2	5	0	5	55
Myrtle Warbler	7	0	0	0	1	8
Ovenbird	2	0	0	0	0	2
Pine Siskin	12	0	0	0	0	12
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2	0	0	0	0	2
Savannah Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Swainson's Thrush	11	0	0	0	0	11
Warbling Vireo	0	0	1	0	0	1
White-throated Sparrow	2	0	0	0	0	2
Yellow Warbler	13	2	6	0	1	22
Total	**169**	**15**	**16**	**0**	**23**	**223**

Net Hours: 389.5 NH
Capture Rate: 57.25 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).

Two very photogenic male Blackpoll Warblers

An Ovenbird's bright top

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update June 5 – June 9, 2009

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

This was our last period of banding for Spring Migration Monitoring. It definitely ended on a high note. Our last day surprised us with a female Tree Swallow in one of our mist-nets. Swallows don't generally get caught in mist nets, as they are very capable flyers. This female was already adorned with a band, and a look through our records indicated that she's been returning here every year to breed since 2006. June 9th also brought us our 500th capture for 2009. It was great to celebrate this achievement with a special guest appearance – a female Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

As many of you know, the drought impacting Alberta has taken a heavy toll on Beaverhill Lake. The memories of it as an expansive prairie lake are held fondly in the memories of those who knew it. Katie and I can only imagine the lake in its glory. Many wonder how the receding water will affect Beaverhill's breeding and migrant bird populations. For comparison, refer to Figure 1 to see the capture rates of Spring Migration Monitoring from 2000 to this year.

Clay-coloured Sparrow

Ashley and the female Long-eared Owl

Chuck and Lisa Priestley joined us one evening this week to catch and band the female Long-Eared Owl who is nesting in the Natural Area. The group effort proved extremely successful, and the banded mother owl was promptly returned to her brood. The male waited nearby to show his concern, but it is unlikely that we will be able to catch him. This pair has three young hatchlings, and we will be returning to band them once they are good and ready.

The owl nest is a nice introduction to our theme for June and July – monitoring breeding birds at Beaverhill. We feel slightly nostalgic as we look back over our Spring species captured. However, a glance at this week's data shows that our number of recaptures (birds that we've already banded) is increasing markedly. This means that new migrants through the area are dwindling and most of our captures are resident birds. So, as the birds settle into their summer breeding homes, we must bid a fond farewell to Spring Migration 2009 at BBO. The Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program awaits!

Red-eyed Vireo

Table 1. Results from Spring Migration Monitoring June 5 – June 9 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
American Goldfinch	4	1	0	0	0	5
Baltimore Oriole	0	1	0	0	0	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	0	2	0	0	0	2
Blackpoll Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
Clay-colored Sparrow	8	2	0	0	2	12
House Wren	1	1	0	0	1	3
Least Flycatcher	8	9	0	0	4	21
Red-eyed Vireo	1	0	0	0	0	1
Swainson's Thrush	2	0	0	0	0	2
Tree Swallow	0	0	1	0	0	1
Warbling Vireo	1	2	0	0	0	3
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Yellow Warbler	1	3	0	0	0	4
Total	**28**	**21**	**1**	**0**	**7**	**57**

Net Hours: 217 NH
Capture Rate: 26.27 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).

Early Blue Violet

Blackpoll Warbler (female)

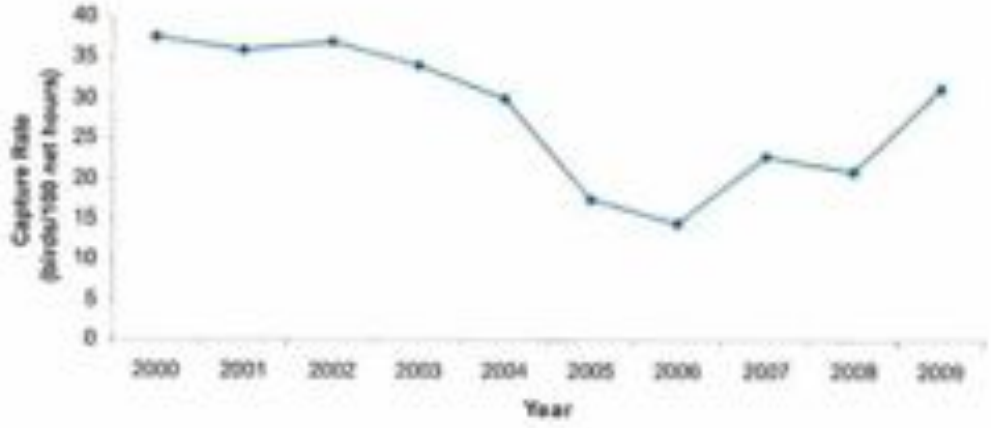


Figure 1. Comparison of Spring Migration Monitoring capture rates at BBO from 2000 to 2009.

Table 2. Results from Spring Migration Monitoring May 1 – June 9, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
Alder Flycatcher	2	0	0	0	0	2
American Goldfinch	10	1	0	0	0	11
American Redstart	4	0	0	0	2	6
American Robin	15	5	0	0	0	20
Baltimore Oriole	8	2	1	0	0	11
Black-capped Chickadee	4	2	2	0	0	8
Blackpoll Warbler	5	0	0	0	0	5
Brown-headed Cowbird	1	4	4	0	2	11
Chipping Sparrow	17	0	0	0	4	21
Clay-coloured Sparrow	66	11	0	0	14	91
Connecticut Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	2
Cooper's Hawk	1	0	0	0	0	1
Eastern Phoebe	1	0	0	0	0	1
Gray-cheecked Thrush	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hermit Thrush	2	0	2	0	0	4
House Wren	13	4	0	0	3	20
Least Flycatcher	78	22	11	0	10	113
Lincoln's Sparrow	3	0	0	0	0	3
Myrtle Warbler	35	1	0	0	5	41
Northern Waterthrush	1	0	0	0	0	1
Orange-crowned Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
Ovenbird	2	0	0	0	0	2
Pine Siskin	12	0	0	0	0	12
Purple Finch	1	0	0	0	0	1
Red-eyed Vireo	2	0	0	0	0	2
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	4	0	0	0	0	4
Savannah Sparrow	2	0	0	0	0	2
Slate-coloured Junco	6	1	0	0	0	7
Song Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Swainson's Thrush	25	0	0	0	3	28
Traill's Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	1	2
Tree Swallow	0	0	1	0	0	1
Unknown Yellow-rumped Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
Warbling Vireo	3	4	2	0	0	9
White-crowned Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
White-throated Sparrow	7	0	0	0	1	8
Willow Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	1
Yellow Warbler	18	12	10	0	2	42
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total	**351**	**69**	**33**	**0**	**47**	**500**

Net Hours: 1608 NH
Capture Rate: 31.09 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).

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update June 10 – June 19, 2009

With the end of spring migration monitoring we have moved on to running the Monitoring Avian Production and Survivorship (MAPS) Program. This consists of banding in three different locations across the natural area, one site around the lab where migration monitoring takes place, one site east of the Weir, and one site south of the lab. It is nice to have some different scenery, and to detect different species we don't see around the lab.

Gray Catbird

We started this round with banding at the Weir station. Walking out there in the morning we were greeted by species we haven't heard during the spring: Alder Flycatchers, Common Yellow-throats, and a Sora (despite the *complete* lack of water in Lister Lake this year). The banding was surprisingly busy, with a total of 37 birds caught at that site, with the highlight certainly being the Gray Catbird. It seems there is only one of these birds captured every year, so we did take some time to photograph and appreciate it.

Banding at the station near the lab was more toned down and typical of MAPS with 18 birds caught, many of which already had bands. The MAPS program was designed to assess and monitor the vital rates and population dynamics of North American landbirds, and the recapture of banded individuals provides insight into the survivorship of individuals on the breeding territory and on the wintering grounds. Repeat individuals of migratory species (Table 1) have survivied fall migration, overwintering, and spring migration, which on its own is impressive—it is always nice to see a familiar face from last year.

Flowers are all around the Natural area now

Banding at the Park Station south of the lab was very quiet, as usual for that site, with a total of 11 birds captured. There was a bit of excitement as a female grouse bravely charged and flapped at Katie, who had inadvertently stepped too close to her highly camouflaged, tiny chick. The ferocity of mother animals is astounding, and Katie is still slightly embarrased about her hasty retreat from the essentially harmless, though highly intimidating mother bird.

Table 1. Results from MAPS Program June 10 – June 19, 2009

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
Least Flycatcher	26	3	4	0	0	33
Warbling Vireo	7	0	1	0	1	9
Yellow Warbler	1	0	1	0	0	2
Myrtle Warbler	1	0	0	0	1	2
Clay-coloured Sparrow	4	0	1	0	2	7
Brown-headed Cowbird	5	0	0	0	0	5
Baltimore Oriole	2	0	1	0	0	3
American Goldfinch	2	0	0	0	0	2
Gray Catbird	1	0	0	0	0	1
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total	51	3	8	0	4	66

Net Hours: 180 NH
Capture Rate: 36.67 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).

American Goldfinch caught in one of the mistnets

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update June 30 - July 9, 2009

In the third round of MAPS the Mist nets remained relatively uninteresting, with 34 total bird captures of only 6 different species (Table 1). As usual the captures were dominated by Least Flycatchers, though we were excited about the three return individuals, all of whom were banded for the first time last year. A few rainy days set us back a bit on our banding, but we were able to catch up, and all the surrounding vegetation was glad for the moisture –it all seemed just a little bit greener afterwards.

Extended wing of a Least Flycatcher

The nest finding and monitoring was quite exciting this round, Ashley and I found our first ever Brewer's Blackbird nest by flushing the female off of her four warm eggs. As is usually the case, it was found entirely by accident as we were checking one of the nest boxes at Francis View Point. We are very much looking forward to following this nest! Brewer's Blackbirds are by no means rare or unusual, but the 'first' of just about anything is exciting…

Beautiful blue plumage of the female Mountain Bluebird

We have been busy at Francis View Point monitoring the nest boxes there, and in this round we banded three nests of Tree Swallows, with a total of 11 young between them. We also captured a female Mountain Bluebird, the first adult captured this year, who was sitting on five eggs in her nest box. In addition, we banded 6 House Wren nestlings from one box and found 6 eggs in another! And just to keep us on our toes, a House Wren decided to use a Barn Swallow mud cup nest in the look-out building! While wrens are known to nest just about anywhere, there are probably few records of secondary nesting in Barn Swallow nests!

Jenny and Tyler have also been busy with nests on the swallow grids, and in this round alone have banded a total of 181 young Tree Swallows. And there are more yet to come!

We would like to say a big THANK YOU to Jim Beck and his chainsaw for coming out and cutting us an impressive pile of firewood that we will appreciate this fall when the temperatures drop and we need to use the stove!

Jim Beck working away on our wood pile

Table 1. Results from MAPS program June 30 – July 9, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
American Goldfinch	1	0	0	0	0	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	0	1	0	0	0	1
Hairy Woodpecker	3	0	0	0	0	3
Hermit Thrush	1	0	0	0	0	1
House Wren	1	0	0	0	1	2
Least Flycatcher	12	11	3	0	0	26
Total	18	12	3	0	0	34

Net Hours: 180 NH
Capture Rate: 18.3 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).

Left: the best picture of the House Wren using a Barn Swallow nest. Yes, sorry, this is the best picture, there are small young in the nest at this time. Right: Monstrous mushrooms growing at the BBO (not the scientific name...)

Two of the three young Hairy Woodpeckers we captured out at the Weir one day.

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update July 10 – 19, 2009

Summer is passing swiftly at Beaverhill. Most nestlings have left their nests to survive on their own, and we have started to see and hear juvenile birds in the trees. Even if they don't have obvious baby plumage anymore, they are recognizable by their fluttery, brief bursts of flight and slightly "off" songs. They will need these next weeks to practise before fall migration begins. Some species attempt to raise two sets of young over the summer if food is abundant. We have noted Mountain Bluebirds and Clay-coloured Sparrows with second nests this year. House Wrens appear to nest the latest of all our birds; some wait until another species is finished with a nest before taking it over to begin a nest of their own.

A Mountain Bluebird nestling keeps a straight face

The bright blue eggs of Clay-coloured Sparrows

As Table 1 shows, most of our captures in this MAPS round have been Least Flycatchers. We are still recapturing some new banded birds from previous years, and it is interesting to think that they have managed to breed in the area all season without encountering our nets until now. On July 13th, we had a very exciting recovery of a banded female Warbling Vireo. It was originally banded at BBO in 2004, and has not been captured again until this week! Since it was recorded as being an adult bird in 2004, we know that this female vireo is at least 6 years old.

I saw a juvenile Long-eared Owl in one of our nets this week, but was unable to retrieve it before it wiggled free and flew away. It would have been great to see if it was banded or not, because that would have told us if there was a second nest of Long-eareds in the Natural Area. I am trying to soothe my disappointment by remembering that this sighting at least tells us that this year's offspring are healthy and strong.

Tyler and Jenny, the pair studying our Tree Swallows, returned home to California this week. Most of the swallow nestlings have left their nests by now. Of the 98 adult Tree Swallows that Tyler and Jenny processed, 68 were newly banded and 30 had been banded in previous years. That's a returning adult rate of 31%!

On July 18, 2009, Nature Canada held a special memorial service at Beaverhill for Charles Labatiuk. Nature Canada selected Beaverhill Bird Observatory to be the recipient of an endowment left by Mr. Labatiuk to further bird research and education. A memorial bench has been placed at the bird observatory in his name. The event was attended by over 70 of Charles' family and friends. A special thank you to Al DeGroot, Jim Beck, Margaret Takats and her sister Gail… for helping organise this memorable and heartfelt tribute. A lot of work went into preparing the Natural Area for this event, including a fresh coat of paint for the lab. Stop by to take a look!

Table 1. Results from MAPS Program July 10 – 19, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
Least Flycatcher	19	17	3	0	4	43
Swainson's Thrush	1	0	0	0	0	1
Warbling Vireo	0	1	1	0	0	2
Long-eared Owl	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	**20**	**18**	**4**	**0**	**5**	**47**

Net Hours: 180 NH
Capture Rate: 26.11 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).

A very vibrant caterpillar

This young porcupine is enjoying a relaxing nap up a

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update July 20 – 29, 2009

A very sleepy baby Porcupine

With this round of days, MAPS has come to a close, and after banding at each location one more time we packed up the nets and brought them back. We started banding in PARK this round, and our 6 hours of effort was rewarded with a single Least Flycatcher capture. After such a slow day, we were ready to leave PARK, though we had some good banding days there earlier in the summer. We also were able to observe a mother porcupine and her young one sleeping in trees near the nets. It is nice to see mammals, but PARK always makes me nervous for the nets as there are always so many deer, and we have lost two nets this year due to irreparable deer damage.

We were pleased to welcome 17 visitors to the lab on July 21st, two groups of Junior Forest Wardens (JFW) and their supervisors had travelled down from the Lac La Biche area. We gave them a banding demonstration at BLAB during breakfast, and we were glad it wasn't as slow as it was at PARK the day before! They were able to see a number of Least Flycatchers, one Swainson's Thrush, and an Ovenbird. However, the group was not there solely for banding, they were invited to come and help BBO 'Fire Smart' the natural area – basically by helping to clear an alternate escape route for staff in case of another fire like there was last year. This involved clearing the way for a vehicle along Flicker Freeway and Harrier Highway by removing the overgrown vegetation along those trails. While they were unable to complete the entire route, their hard work was very much appreciated and provided us with a great start. A very special thank you to all the BBO board members and volunteers that helped to feed the board and organize the work, including Lisa Priestley, Margaret Takats and her sister Gail, Barb Beck, Jim Beck, Bryn Spence, Chuck Priestley, and Janos who came out before work to help with the breakfast! These folks worked very hard for days before the event to ensure the JFWs would be comfortable and able to work when they arrived. Thanks all!

The hardworking JFWs taking a break!

Our final day of banding at WEIR rewarded us with… you guessed it, another bunch of Least Flycatchers! We were also happy to catch the first Downy Woodpecker of 2009, and appreciated the company of Steve Symes while we were banding. And with that we sign off for MAPS, refer to Table 2 for a summary of all our captures during the summer. The next report will be on the beginning of fall banding!

Table 1. Results from MAPS Program July 20 – 29, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
Downy Woodpecker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Least Flycatcher	16	8	1	0	0	25
Ovenbird	1	0	0	0	0	1
Swainson's Thrush	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	**19**	**8**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**28**

Net Hours: 180 NH
Capture Rate: 15.56 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).

The JFWs preparing for a day of work

Fireweed in flower near the lab

Table 2. Banding results from MAPS Program June 10 – July 29, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
American Goldfinch	1	0	0	0	0	1
American Robin	0	1	0	0	1	2
Baltimore Oriole	2	0	1	0	0	3
Brown-headed Cowbird	5	2	2	0	0	9
Clay-coloured Sparrow	5	0	1	0	2	8
Downy Woodpecker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Gray Catbird	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hermit Thrush	2	0	0	0	0	2
House Wren	1	0	0	0	1	2
Least Flycatcher	85	50	16	0	5	156
Long-eared Owl	0	0	0	0	1	1
Myrtle Warbler	2	0	0	0	1	3
Ovenbird	1	0	0	0	0	1
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2	0	0	0	0	2
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	0	0	0	0	1	1
Swainson's Thrush	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total	**110**	**53**	**20**	**0**	**12**	**195**

Net Hours: 900 NH
Capture Rate: 21.67 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).

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Fall Update July 31 – Aug 6, 2009

Ashley and I were a bit ahead of the game in finishing up the MAPS program, so we were able to start migration monitoring a day early this fall (July 31st). Apparently it was well worth it to start sooner, as we caught a Tennessee Warbler that very day! It certainly made it feel like fall had already hit. The Tennessee was a female in a very heavy molt, replacing her flight feathers and all over her body as well. Our busiest day so far, August 1st had 36 birds with a nice variety of species (10 total). We are now regularly catching a much higher proportion of hatch year Least Flycatchers, either we have many individuals already starting to migrate through or it was a bit of a late year for them, as very few were captured during MAPS.

Western Wood-Pewee

One net check yielded a Western Wood-Pewee capture, rather exciting I have never banded one before! The flycatcher group can present a bit of a challenge to identify, even in the hand, but our banding manual provides a great deal of wing measurement information that can be used to identify most flycatcher individuals. Once I realized its wing was much too long to be an Alder Flycatcher the other features identifying it as a Wood-Pewee seemed very obvious, including the lack of an eye-ring, the slight crest, and the longer primary projection. It is always nice to catch a bird that makes you think a bit harder. The other fun capture from this week was the juvenile male Rose-breasted Grosbeak, who was surprisingly docile to extract and left Ashley's fingers intact! During MAPS we captured a breeding pair of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and we like to think that this hatch year male was from their successful breeding attempt in the Natural Area. Of course it is not possible to know for sure!

Hatch year Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Thank you to Lisa Priestley and Anna Daku for coming out and covering August 3rd, one of our days off this round, we are jealous of your Hairy Woodpecker capture that we missed! On August 5th we had a nasty surprise of having some of the front nets frozen shut with frost. While this isn't unusual, it seems just a bit early for us to be having this issue! We had to delay opening those nets until the sun hit them and helped thaw them out, but were able to run the nets for the full six hours required thereafter. We know we can look forward to more leaves in the nets, more frost in the mornings, but thankfully along with those things come more birds in the nets!

Table 1. Results from Fall Migration Monitoring July 31 – August 6, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
American Goldfinch	4	0	0	0	1	5
Black-capped Chickadee	5	0	1	0	1	7
Brown-headed Cowbird	1	0	0	0	1	2
Clay-colored Sparrow	8	0	0	0	1	9
Downy Woodpecker	1	0	0	0	1	2
Hairy Woodpecker	1	0	0	0	0	1
House Wren	10	2	0	0	1	13
Least Flycatcher	69	7	0	0	2	78
Myrtle Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	2
Ovenbird	1	0	0	0	0	1
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1	0	0	0	0	1
Savannah Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Tennessee Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
Warbling Vireo	1	0	0	0	0	1
Western Wood-Pewee	1	0	0	0	0	1
Yellow Warbler	10	1	0	0	1	12
Total	117	10	1	0	9	137

Net Hours: 468 NH
Capture Rate: 29.27 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).

Ashley surviving the mighty bite of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak

House Wren molting its flight feathers

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update August 7 – 13, 2009

Young Eastern Phoebe, with rusty edging to the upperparts

The second week of fall migration monitoring here at the bird observatory has yielded a few more fall migrants, and many more young birds hatched this year. It was quite a 'flycatcher-y' week, with many Least's of course, but also an Alder, Traill's, and two Eastern Phoebes caught. One of our favourite captures was a Sharp-shinned Hawk that was molting her juvenile plumage, showing a stark contrast between her old and new feathers. This Sharp-shinned didn't have particularly sharp-shins, as her leg was too big for the recommended size 3A or 3B band. By guaging her leg, we determined a size 4 band would fit her well, and sent her packing with the same size band you would fit on a Magpie or Northern Saw-whet Owl.

Sharp-shined Hawk showing old (brown) and new (blue-gray) feathers

The Sharp-shinned capture has gotten us excited about setting the raptor traps around the natural area again. There haven't been many set since about 2005, except the occasional one to try to catch a Short-eared Owl for Geoff. We are hoping to get a few more set out this year, and have Lisa help to train us on how to handle and band the bigger birds. Lisa was able to come out for one day and help repair the existing traps (Thanks!), and while there is a bit yet to do, we hope to have traps set around the 25th. Daily census is regularly teasing us with sightings of Red-tailed Hawks, Swainson's Hawks, Northern Harriers, and Merlins that we are not yet able to trap. Hopefully they'll stick around for a few weeks still!

The Long-eared Owls are still around, and Ashley had an amazing sighting one night when three owls were flying around her about 150 m from the lab. They were so curious about her that one flew in quite close and there was nearly a collision!

We have spent some time lately walking through the natural area, and it is extremely dry this fall. There is no water in Sora Pond or Lister Lake at all, and Lister Lake has been completely taken over by Marsh Ragwort. There is a puddle of water just north of the Weir, but barely enough to get your toes wet. There is plenty of foxtail barley out on the dry lakebed that will probably be blowing into the trees again soon.

Thanks to Matt, Anita, Kayla, and Leyton Hannemann for helping to cover one of our days off this week!

Table 1. Results from Fall Migration Monitoring, August 7 – 13, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
Alder Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	1
Black-capped Chickadee	3	5	0	0	0	8
Clay-coloured Sparrow	9	3	0	0	0	12
Eastern Phoebe	1	0	0	0	1	2
House Wren	7	2	0	0	1	10
Least Flycatcher	58	5	0	0	2	65
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	0	0	0	0	1
Tennessee Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
Traill's Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	1
Warbling Vireo	1	0	0	0	0	1
Yellow Warbler	13	4	0	0	0	17
Total	**96**	**19**	**0**	**0**	**4**	**119**

Net Hours: 507 NH
Capture Rate: 23.47 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).

All the water by the weir

Ferocious beasts found prowling the natural area. (Ashley's Guinea Pigs enjoying some grass)

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update August 21 – 28, 2009

It was a pretty windy week out at the Observatory, meaning we weren't able to band on some days, or had to close the nets early. It always seems as though the wind picks up when the sun breaks the trees. To ensure bird safety in the nets, we close them during strong winds. However, some of the nets are more sheltered as they are back in the trees, and we were often able to open those nets at least.

Warbling Vireo

A few more bird species have been added to our fall species list this week. New birds to fall migration monitoring include Blue-headed Vireo, Cooper's Hawk, Lincoln's Sparrow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. The Cooper's Hawk was unfortunately an escapee that flew out of the net before Katie could get to him and band him. Ashley was really excited to band the Blue-headed Vireo, and promptly claimed it was one of her favourite birds. Pretty lucky for a birder to get to band a lifer let alone a favourite!

Our Rose-breasted Grosbeak was an interesting individual. Originally captured during the MAPS program this summer, we banded him on June 11th at the BLAB station. At the time, we aged him as a Second Year bird due to his mottled brown (old) and black (new) plumage. He was captured in the same net at the same time as a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak, presumably his mate. Captured again on August 28th we can assume he has been in the Beaverhill Natural Area, or at least nearby, since June 11th. It was also very interesting that he still had the mottled brown and black plumage of a Second Year bird. He had not bothered, or had not had the opportunity to molt into complete adult male plumage, which is white, black and rose. He may still delay this molt until he is on his winter grounds, which could be as far south as Mexico or South America.

Note brownish feathers

Nice to have a few visitors out during this week, Ashley's mom Anita Thorndick and her friend Vi Sylvester came out for a day of banding, as did Isaac Calon. A fellow that bands in Cambridge, Ontario also came out and we enjoyed "talking shop" with him for a while. He quite liked BBO's set up of elastics on the nets and said he'd be modifying his nets the same way. The elastics allow for easier furling of the nets, and extends the life of the trammel lines, which can be prone to snapping when stretched too tight or when they become worn.

Table 1. Results from Fall Migration Monitoring, August 21 - 28, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
American Redstart	2	0	0	0	1	3
Black-capped Chickadee	2	1	0	0	1	4
Blue-headed Vireo	1	0	0	0	0	1
Clay-coloured Sparrow	3	0	0	0	0	3
Cooper's Hawk	0	0	0	0	1	1
House Wren	3	2	0	0	3	8
Least Flycatcher	6	0	0	0	0	6
Lincoln's Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Magnolia Warbler	3	0	0	0	1	4
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	0	1	0	0	0	1
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	0	0	0	0	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	0	0	0	1	2
Traill's Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	1
Warbling Vireo	1	0	0	0	0	1
Wilson's Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	2
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	0	0	0	1	2
Yellow Warbler	4	0	0	0	1	5
Total	**32**	**4**	**0**	**0**	**10**	**46**

Net Hours: 500.35 NH
Capture Rate: 14.19 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).

Vole running himself.

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update August 29 – September 11, 2009

Ashley with a Red-breasted Nuthatch

Well with this round I had to say goodbye to Ashley as she headed back to school for her second year at NAIT. Best of luck with the year ahead and hope you'll be able to make it out to BBO during the fall once in a while Ashley! Despite the fact that I was expecting to get tons of birds as soon as Ashley was gone (Murphey's Law), the numbers have remained very low, with only a total of 103 birds caught during this two week time period. The species diversity however, has been pretty awesome with 31 different species caught.

New species for this round captured on their way south included Mourning, Orange-crowned, Western Palm, and Blackpoll Warblers, Willow, and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, as well as Vesper Sparrow, Broad-winged Hawk, Swainson's Thrush, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. What!? Broad-winged Hawk? Yes that's right, a juvenile has been hanging around the lab for a few days now, and while I got a good look a few times I was really hoping he would make it into one of my raptor traps. I didn't even consider that it could get caught in one of the mist-nets, but sure enough I found him upside down in Net 4 on one early morning check. Now that was a very cool bird to catch, and a rare one to even get to see out here! He has been spotted since, sporting his shiny band.

The drop-lid raptor traps have now been up and running daily, and in total 345.5 trap hours were accumulated in this round. Unfortunately all that trapping effort has not yet translated into captured raptors! The very first night the traps were set there was certainly some interest as I walked past Trap #1 to check it before bed. I set this trap in the same location Ashley had her Long-eared close encounter, and sure enough as I shone my headlamp over two eyes looked back at me! The Long-eared stared quizzically at me from the edge of the trap, and then went back to studying just how to get at the mouse. Unfortunately the trap was still open in the morning, so he wasn't willing to take the plunge inside. I'm still hoping to get a few more traps set out in the coming weeks to increase the chance of catching any one of those big birds with sharp talons and a hooked beak.

One of four drop-lid raptor traps

There is certainly some mass fall movement by some of the bigger birds now, Greater White-fronted Geese are heard daily flying south over the natural area. Sandhill Cranes have also been spotted in smaller groups, but heading invariably south. As usual the trees out here are turning yellow much sooner than those in Edmonton. With fall in full swing, that means it is time for Saw-whet owl monitoring to start! Two evenings of running the Saw-whet nets in this round haven't turned up any individuals yet, but they are on their way. Don't forget about Steaks and Saw-whets happening October 3rd and 4th this year, it is always a great event!

Happy to have visitors this round; Tamara Hauglum and her puppies Koda and Rio, Lisa with Sam and Kate (twice!), Isaac Calon, two new U of A professors from Idaho, as well as Lisa and Todd Mahon, and Ashley Thorsen.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet | Lincoln's Sparrow | Red-breasted Nuthatches

Table 1. Results from Fall Migration Monitoring, August 21 - 28, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
Alder Flycatcher	3	0	0	0	0	3
American Redstart	1	0	0	0	0	1
Black-capped Chickadee	5	7	0	0	0	12
Blackpoll Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	2
Broad-winged Hawk	1	0	0	0	0	1
Clay-coloured Sparrow	1	1	0	0	0	2
Cape May Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
Downy Woodpecker	1	0	0	0	0	1
House Wren	3	0	0	0	0	3
Least Flycatcher	6	0	0	0	0	6
Lincoln's Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Magnolia Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	2
Mourning Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
Myrtle Warbler	17	1	0	0	0	18
Orange-crowned Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	2
Ovenbird	9	0	0	0	0	9
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	0	0	0	0	2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2	0	0	0	0	2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	0	0	0	0	1	1
Slate-coloured Junco	1	0	0	0	0	1
Song Sparrow	2	0	0	0	1	3
Swainson's Thrush	2	0	0	0	0	2
Tennessee Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	2
Traill's Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	1
Vesper Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Willow Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	1
Wilson's Warbler	6	0	0	0	0	6
Western Palm Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	2
White-throated Sparrow	2	0	0	0	1	3
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	1
Yellow Warbler	8	1	0	0	1	10
Total	**89**	**10**	**0**	**0**	**4**	**103**

Net Hours: 789.00 NH
Capture Rate: 13.05 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).

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update September 12 – 25, 2009

Well, there goes the second half of September; boy does summer ever go fast when you get to the end of this month. I lost a lot of net hours this round, mostly due to windy weather. As the leaves come down there is really hardly any shelter for the nets. There were a few neat captures during this round, in one net check I came across 11 Savannah Sparrows in net 12. They actually are not all that common in the nets, probably because the Savannah's like open habitat, and all the nets are located in either shrubby or treed areas. On September 23rd I caught the first American Tree Sparrow for fall 2009. This species is usually the last to migrate through the area, so it is a likely sign that songbirds migration is about to wrap up. Another exciting fall capture was the first White-breasted Nuthatch of the year; these neat birds are easily one of my favourites! Maybe because in the hand you can appreciate the giant hind toe (hallux) of this species, which no doubt helps them hang upside down on tree trunks as they forage about.

Sandhill Cranes migrating over the natural area

One evening as I was headed out to check the raptor traps on the swallow grid I witnessed a stunning migration event. Approximately 8000 Sandhill Cranes passed by overhead flying quite low. Each flock consisted of approximately 200 individuals, and as they passed I only had to wait a few seconds before I could hear, and eventually see, another on its way across the horizon. Needless to say I plunked myself down in the grass and watched until the sun went down and I could no longer see them. Some of the birds even settled nearby for a short while, letting me have a good look at them before they continued on their way. It was truly an amazing thing to witness, the combination of so many stately birds flying by and the most beautiful sunset! I feel very lucky to have watched it all.

On September 19th BBO hosted a work-bee to continue the vegetation clearing for the alternate escape route for staff in case of a fire. A huge thank-you to Gerry, Geoff, Lisa, Chuck, Margaret, Josef, Al, Jonathan, Janos and Matt for all your hard work. Certainly hope I won't need to use the escape route, but I'll sleep better knowing it is clear for me!

I enjoyed the company of a group of home school students on one day, the banding was very slow, and we all thought we were only going to get the one Slate-coloured Junco I caught when they arrived. Well, we were wrong, and were surprised by 17 birds in the last net check! I was very glad for the extra hands to help bring all those bags back. Each kid got to release at least one bird and each of the adults too! It turned out to be a great banding day for visitors to witness.

Third saw-whet of 2009

The fox-tail barley has blown into the natural area in a big way, driving in along Accipiter Alley my little red truck can be completely covered. I'm glad I know the route and am able to keep going in a straight line, because I can't see at all! Hate to say it, but I wouldn't mind a bit of snow to pack it down… Well, I'll pass things on to Lisa to update the latest saw-whet owls results, see you next issue! ***—Cheers, Katie***

A short update to start off the saw-whet migration season. We have been very fortunate to have lots of volunteers, and only missed one night in the two weeks of banding. It has been a very slow start with only 21 saw-whet owls captured to date. I began monitoring on September 10, with no luck that night or the next. Geoff Holroyd and Gerry Beyersbergen covered the 12th and caught the first owl. Then I worked the 13th through the 18th again with no owls. I get a knock on my door early Sunday morning

with Geoff and Gerry bragging they caught another owl. Okay, this is getting frustrating. Finally on the 20th I caught my first two owls, and have caught one or more every night since. I was getting a little worried. Well, Steaks and Saw-whets is coming up Oct. 2 and 3, hope you can make it out.

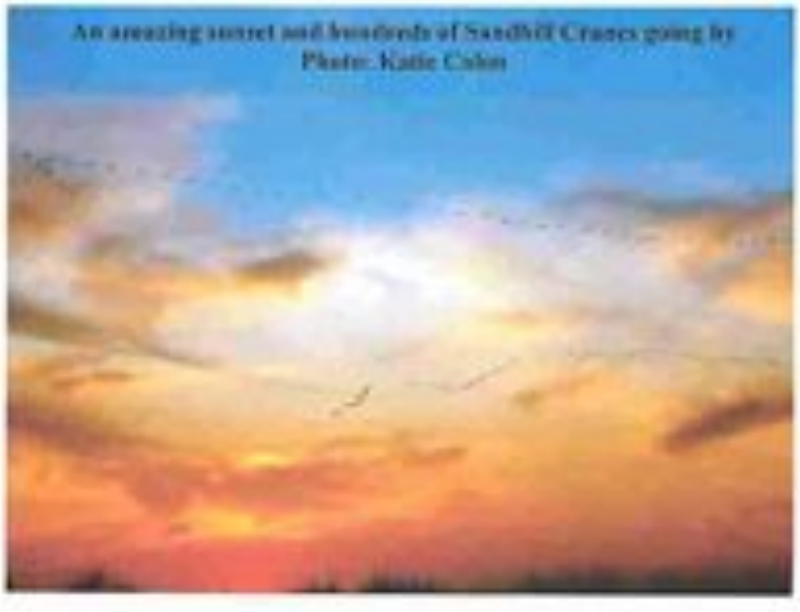
—Cheers, Lisa

Table 1. Results from Fall Songbird Migration Monitoring, Sept 12 - 25, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
American Redstart	1	0	0	0	0	1
American Tree Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Black-capped Chickadee	5	12	0	0	0	17
Downy Woodpecker	2	0	0	0	0	2
Hairy Woodpecker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hermit Thrush	2	0	0	0	0	2
House Wren	1	0	0	0	0	1
Least Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	1
Lincoln's Sparrow	2	0	0	0	0	2
Myrtle Warbler	82	0	0	0	0	82
Orange-crowned Warbler	12	0	0	0	0	12
Ovenbird	1	0	0	0	0	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	3	0	0	0	0	3
Savannah Sparrow	11	0	0	0	1	12
Slate-coloured Junco	4	0	0	0	0	4
White-breasted Nuthatch	1	0	0	0	0	1
White-crowned Sparrow	6	1	0	0	2	9
Wilson's Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	2
Western Palm Warbler	3	0	0	0	0	3
White-throated Sparrow	11	1	0	0	5	17
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Yellow-shafted Flicker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	**154**	**14**	**0**	**0**	**8**	**176**

Net Hours: 411.00 NH
Capture Rate: 42.82 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).



An amazing sunset and hundreds of Sandhill Cranes going by
Photo: Katie Cohen

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update September 26 – Oct 10, 2009

American Tree Sparrow

This round of days included the end of the official songbird migration monitoring period. Usually songbird banding ends on October 10th, though this year the weather stopped me from banding on the 8th, 9th, OR 10th! Mostly I was unable to band due to the cold temperatures. We have a cold cut-off of 0°C, and the temperature just wouldn't rise above that the last three days. Despite the loss of a few banding days, this last round was the busiest for me; my biggest day of all was 66 birds, mostly Myrtle Warblers and Juncos, though I did get a few more of the American Tree Sparrows. There were some other great captures, the only Golden-crowned Kinglet of the year, as well as some late Hermit Thrushes.

The first snow arrived out at the lab on October 8th, which was also the first day I saw a Rough-legged Hawk in the area, cruising above the lab in some pretty high winds. There has also been a Pileated Woodpecker hanging around the lab, and I held my breath as I watched it fly near my open nets. It never flew in though. That's okay, I can appreciate a cool bird without having to band it… I guess. Only one Pileated has been caught and banded at BBO since 1999, Lisa and Robin caught a young one last year.

Hermit Thrush caught on Oct 5th

I have had a number of visitors out to the lab, one day a group of students from the U of A (Hedwig, Ben, and Anna) came out with the hope of doing some songbird banding. Unfortunately the weather didn't cooperate and they had to make do with a bird-less demonstration. Steaks and Saw-whets was held on October 2nd and 3rd, and a group of volunteers stayed out to help with songbird banding during the day, including Isaac Calon, Keegan, Paxten, and James Sheppard. It was nice to have the extra hands because that turned out to be a busy day, with two big flocks of Juncos that hit the nets in quick succession. Barb and Jim Beck also managed to make it out to cover Saw-whet Owl banding one night, and brought me supper as well, thanks guys!

Golden-crowned Kinglet

Since the mornings have been so cool and I wasn't able to open the nets, I've been staying up a bit later and helping out with the owls. It's been great fun hanging out with Lisa and visitors, and staying up paid off big time the night we caught a Long-eared Owl in the Saw-whet nets! Back to you Lisa..... ***Katie Calon***

Table 1. Results from Fall Migration Monitoring, Sept 26 – Oct 10, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat[1]	Return[2]	Foreign[3]	Other[4]	Total
American Tree Sparrow	12	0	0	0	3	15
Black-capped Chickadee	0	7	0	0	0	7
Downy Woodpecker	1	2	0	0	0	3
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hairy Woodpecker	0	1	0	0	0	1
Hermit Thrush	2	0	0	0	1	3
Lincoln's Sparrow	1	0	0	0	1	2
Myrtle Warbler	99	4	0	0	5	108
Slate-coloured Junco	69	5	0	0	5	79
White-breasted Nuthatch	1	1	0	0	0	2
White-crowned Sparrow	1	1	0	0	0	2
Total	**189**	**21**	**0**	**0**	**15**	**225**

Net Hours: 413.5 NH
Capture Rate: 54.4 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).

Thanks Katie, so the Saw-whet Owls have finally begun to move. We captured 47 Saw-whet Owls and one Long-eared Owl. Nets were set on 10 nights, and only two of those nights had no owls captured. We had our BIG night on October 7 when 22 owls were captured. Our lucky volunteer Geoff Holroyd once again has bragging rites for capturing the most owls in a single night for this year (so far).

We also had a really interesting band re-encounter. On October 7, I received an e-mail late at night from Bob Gehlert who is running saw-whet migration at his acreage near Lindbrook (as a subpermitee of the BBO). He had captured a banded saw-whet owl and wanted to know if I know where it was from. The next morning Geoff stopped by to drop the owl gear off and also told me of a banded saw-whet he had captured. When I later looked at the band numbers I realized that the same owl had been captured at both stations. So this little saw-whet traveled 16.5 km east in four hours. We also found that the owl was originally banded at Nisbet Forest (near Prince Albert SK) in September, 2008 (a site run by volunteer Harold Fisher).

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory celebrated another successful Steaks and Saw-whets event. This year the event was held October 2 and 3, 2009, and marked our 7th year of running the program. It was fairly cold at night so we had to make sure there would be lots of warm beverages to keep people warm. We invested in two 5 gallon thermoses for hot water and coffee this year.

The Friday had been beautiful, sunny and warm for the time of year. People began arriving around 6 p.m. and we had some snacks out to tie everyone over until the steaks and chicken were ready. Our volunteers put steaks and chicken on the Bar-B-Q, the potatoes and corn cob were ready, and all the fixings were put out. At 8 p.m. the mist nets went up and the call of the Northern Saw-whet Owl was played on a CD player. Chuck Priestley gave a short presentation about the bird observatory and the owl work and then Katie led the first group of people to check the nets. Incredibly, we caught an owl the very first net check. And the owls kept coming, five of them through the evening.

Unfortunately, Saturday's weather did not cooperate. We set the nets, but chances were slim for catching owls due to the on and off very light drizzle and the windy conditions. The wind reduces the distance that the sound of the CD call will travel, which is important for attracting owls to the nets. We were shut out on night two for Saw-whet Owls, but were happy to report that a Burrowing Owl made an appearance. We very much enjoyed hosting the event, and had many great conversations about birds and birding with many people that were in attendance.

We would like to thank all the volunteers that helped make the event a success. On site were Isaac Calon, Al DeGroot, Matt Hanneman, Chuck Priestley, James, Keegan, and Paxton Sheppard, Margaret Takats, and Josef Takats. Barb Beck provided her famous owl cupcakes (I never did get one), and Bryn Spence made the signs and T-shirts. Thanks to Katie Calon, our bander-in-charge for switching days off to help with the weekend. And a big thanks to Amy Trefry and Jason Staka for providing babysitting for me to work at the lab for the event. Thanks to Alberta Conservation Association and Federation of Alberta Naturalists for supporting our event. ***—Lisa Priestley***

the WILLET
Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Volume 22, Number 1 March 2009

Annual General Meeting

April 14, 2009 at 7 p.m.
University of Alberta, General Services Building
8th floor, Weldwood Room

SPRING Staff To Open Bird Observatory on May 4, 2009

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory will officially open the banding station on May 4 to run the Spring Migration Monitoring program. Our normal May 1 start up day has been postponed to allow our staff to attend a banding workshop at Delta Marsh Bird Observatory. Our Bander-in-Charge this year is Katie Calon (formerly Cameron). Katie worked at the bird observatory in the summer and fall of 2006, and is excited about returning to the lab after two years away working for Fiera Biological Consulting. Our assistant bander this year is Ashley Thorsen, a student from NAIT's Biological Sciences program. We encourage you to come out to the lab to see the banding operations this field season. The colourful songbirds are migrating through on their way north to the Boreal Forest and the vast numbers of migrant waterfowl and shorebirds will be breathtaking with all the snowfall runoff filling the wetlands in and around Beaverhill Lake. Read about the latest observations in our bi-weekly updates at: http://www.beaverhillbirds.com/summaries.php

Photo by Jonathan Martin-DeMoor

BIG THANKS TO THE VOLUNTEERS

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory casino was held on Thanksgiving weekend, October 11-12. We would like to express our sincere thanks to all the volunteers that helped to run the casino this year, which is a very important fundraiser for the BBO. The volunteers were: Jim Beck, Barb Beck, Gerry Beyersbergen, Kim Blomme, Christine Boulton, Lisa Burt, Katie Calon, Ray Cromie, Shirley Cromie, Al DeGroot, Jason Duxbury, Warren Fleming, Matt Hanneman, Alan Hingston, Geoff Holroyd, Janos Kovacs, Jenn Lalonde, Cathy Mowat, Chuck Priestley, Lisa Priestley, Rob Priestley, Ron Redmond, Glen Semenchuk, Bryn Spence, Juanita Spence, Josef Takats, Margaret Takats, Helen Trefry, Annabelle Wiseman. If you are interested in helping out for our next casino, please check our website or newsletter in fall 2010 for the dates and who to contact.

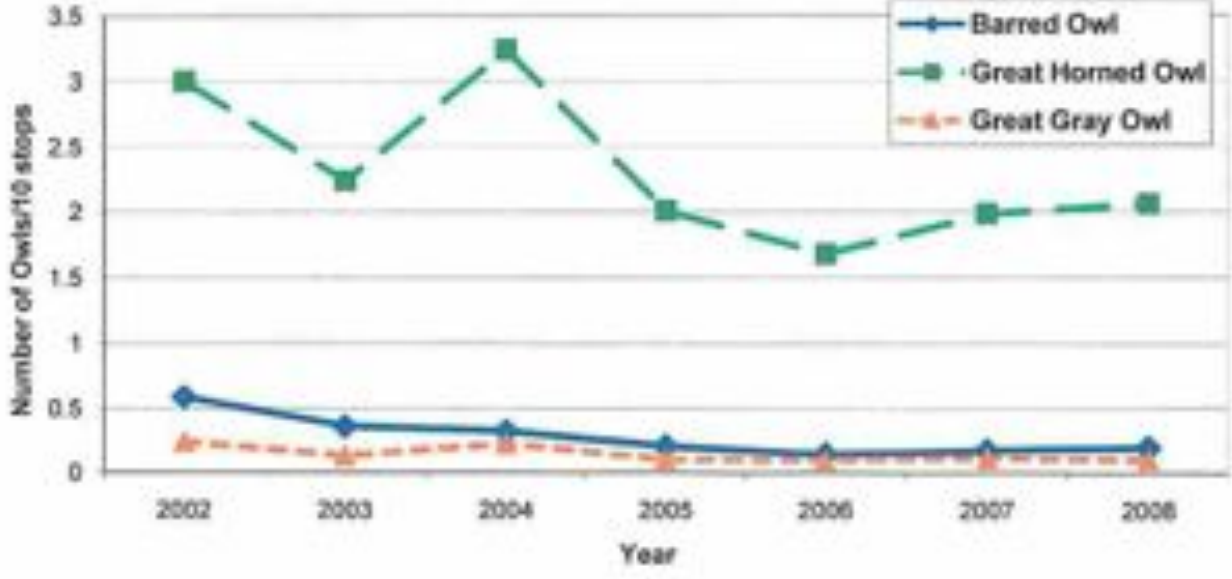
The OWL FILES

Nocturnal Owl Survey 2008 Final Report

The Alberta Nocturnal Owl Survey is over for 2008. We had another small increase in the number of routes being run and the number of volunteers participating. A long way from our pilot year in 1998 with 25 routes, we now have 96 routes being surveyed by 185 volunteers. The number of owls detected was higher than the last three years, but lower than 2004 and 2003, evidence that number of owls increase and decrease depending on prey availability and other factors. The number of Barred Owls and Great Gray Owls continues to be relatively steady compared to Great Horned Owls and Northern Saw-whet Owls that fluctuate dramatically.

Results from the 2008 Alberta Nocturnal Owl Survey, abundance presented owls/10 stations.

Species	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Barred Owl	27 (0.320)	18 (0.205)	13 (0.143)	16 (0.172)	19 (0.198)
Boreal Owl	45 (0.534)	39 (0.445)	35 (0.386)	39 (0.418)	43 (0.448)
Great Gray Owl	19 (0.225)	9 (0.103)	9 (0.099)	11 (0.118)	10 (0.104)
Great Horned Owl	273 (3.238)	176 (2.007)	152 (1.678)	185 (1.985)	198 (2.063)
Long-eared Owl	28 (0.332)	14 (0.160)	18 (0.199)	19 (0.204)	22 (0.229)
Northern Pygmy Owl	4 (0.047)	4 (0.046)	3 (0.033)	5 (0.054)	6 (0.063)
Northern Saw-whet Owl	269 (3.191)	136 (1.551)	158 (1.744)	172 (1.845)	207 (2.156)
Short-eared Owl	0 (0.000)	2 (0.023)	3 (0.033)	2 (0.022)	1 (0.021)
Unknown Owl	5 (0.059)	6 (0.068)	4 (0.044)	5 (0.054)	4 (0.042)
TOTAL	670 (7.948)	404 (4.607)	383 (4.360)	454 (4.871)	510 (5.313)
Number of Routes	86	90	92	93	96
Number of Volunteers	163	177	180	184	185



Number of Barred, Great Horned, and Great Gray Owls detected in the Alberta Nocturnal Owl Survey.

Fire Puts Fencing Project on Hold Until Spring

Two large fires on Beaverhill Lake last fall were an eye opener to Board of Directors of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, who were not accustomed to thinking about fire but were more worried about flooding in the past. The first fire started about 1 p.m., on September 28 and burned about 6000 acres which spread from Francis Point all the way to the weir in the Natural Area that separates Beaverhill Lake and Lister Lake. It was caused by a spark from an all terrain vehicle that caught fire in the dry grass and foxtail barley. An estimated 100 firefighters from Mundare, Ryley, Tofield and Strathcona County responded. Two fire trucks burned in the fire. The fire came within 100 meters of the bird observatory but was put out before it caught in the trees. Although only a few nets were damaged on site, we did lose our 3 bundles of fence posts that were piled on the ground ready for completing the north fence that would enclose the Natural Area. The second fire on November 3, started further north that the previous fire and was put out more quickly.

Unusual Bird Sighting in Lac La Biche

by Ken and Jean Kemke

A strange looking bird showed up at a feeder in Lac La Biche in December 2008. Ken and Jean Kenke reported a 'canary-looking bird' was observed on multiple occasions. When they sent the photo to Jennifer Okrainec, president of the Lac La Biche Birding Society, she knew it was something exciting. She forwarded the photo on to Beaverhill Bird Observatory who forwarded on to a few bird experts. Jocelyn Hudon from the Royal Museum of Alberta responded and expressed great interest in this color variant of the Evening Grosbeak. He had published a paper in the Canadian Field Naturalist several years ago (Can. Field Naturalist [1997] 111:652-654), and is always interested in other sightings.

BIG Birding Breakfast

May 30, 2009 at the
Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Join us as we celebrate the spring birds of Beaverhill Lake. Learn about our various programs and see bird banding up close. Breakfast (crepes, bacon, fruits, juice, coffee, tea) provided.

Time: Nets go up at 4:45 a.m. and run till 10:45 (weather dependent). Guided walks to weir throughout the day if there is interest. Swallow nest box banding in afternoon.

Cost: $10 (or buy a membership and it's free).

Contact: To register, Lisa Priestley lisa@beaverhillbirds.com or ph: (780) 918-4804.

Support for this event provided by Alberta Conservation Association.

CMMN Major Report Released

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory is part of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network. The network is supported by Bird Studies Canada, but involves the cooperation of 21 bird monitoring stations across the country. All the bird observatories collect data in a standardized way which can be analyzed to calculate trends. The methods involve a combination of standardized banding and standardized daily counts. The stations, are actively involved in the field work, counting and banding birds across the country. The 10 Year Report on Monitoring Landbird Population Change has been completed. It can be downloaded at: http://www.bsc-eoc.org/download/CMMNReport2008.pdf

Membership Information

$10/yr for an individual, $25/yr for a family, $25/yr Supporting individual, $25/yr Corporate, $100/yr Sustaining, $500 (one time) Life Time 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. Articles and photos can be on bird banding, bird watching, wildlife viewing, personal nature photos, etc. Deadline: July 31, 2009.

the WILLET
Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Volume 22, Number 2 August 2009

Steaks and Saw-whets

October 2 and 3, 2009

at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Join the Beaverhill Bird Observatory volunteers, staff and executive for an evening barbeque and netting of saw-whet owls. Steaks, chicken, hotdogs, veggie burgers, corn, potatoes, and all the fixings are served. An assortment of homemade desserts is followed by setting up mist nets to capture saw-whet owls on migration.

Time: Dinner is served between 6:00 and 8 p.m. Nets go up at 8:15 p.m.

Cost: $25 for adults, free for kids under 12.

Contact: For more information and to register, contact Chuck Priestley at (780) 984-6957 or e-mail chuckp@fanweb.ca .

Supported by Alberta Conservation Association and Federation of Alberta Naturalists

Charles Labatiuk's Legacy Helps Beaverhill Bird Observatory

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory was given some long term funding as part of an endowment fund. Charles (Chuck) Labatiuk of Edmonton died in a swimming accident February 9, 2008 during a holiday in southwestern Australia. He was 51. "Chuck was a keen outdoorsman and very fond of nature. He was also a senior environmental manager (most recently, for waste management) with the City of Edmonton. He was a brilliant guy, Ph.D. engineer, and loved to travel (Bob Bott, a member of the Alpine Club of Canada).

To honour Charles Labatiuk's lifelong love of birds and nature, Nature Canada will use his legacy gift to fund community based, on-the-ground conservation activities and education efforts at Beaverhill Lake Important Bird Area. His deeply rooted love of nature was evident throughout his lifetime in so many different ways. From his cherished family time, his prize winning photography,

(Con't from page 1)

his writings, his world travels, his numerous awards and accolades to his career as a Senior Environmental Engineer for the City of Edmonton, his love and passion for nature and the outdoors was part of the very essence of his being (Lorraine Proudfoot, sister).

Nature Canada exists to protect nature, its diversity and the processes that sustain it. Our strategies are based on sound science, a passion for nature, and a belief that every Canadian should feel connected to the vast natural world that surrounds us. Nature Canada is the Canadian co-partner in BirdLife International, a global alliance of conservation organizations working together for the world's birds and people. The Important Bird Area program, which aims to identify, conserve and monitor a network of sites that provides essential habitat for bird populations, is just part of the work that Nature Canada is involved with. Beaverhill Lake was designated an Important Bird Area in 1997.

Future work of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory will be supported through the legacy gift of Charles Labatiuk and the Charles Labatiuk Nature Fund. Chuck Priestley, the chair of the bird observatory is very pleased about the endowment fund. "It is a real honor to be included in Charles' legacy, and we have many programs that will benefit from this funding", he said. Additionally, Nature Canada is establishing the Charles Labatiuk Entrance Scholarship which will be awarded to a young naturalist to attend post secondary studies in the natural sciences and the Charles Labatiuk Volunteer Award which will be awarded to a Nature Canada Volunteer for exceptional bird conservation and stewardship efforts.

On July18th, the official launch of the Charles Labatiuk Nature Fund was held for Charles Labatiuk's family, friends, and colleagues, with 45 people in attendance. A presentation about the bird observatory's history and programs was held at the Royal Canadian Legion in Tofield followed by a luncheon and cheque presentation ceremony at Beaverhill Bird Observatory. A memorial plaque was placed on a bench near the lab and the Charles Labatiuk Entrance Scholarship and Charles Labatiuk Volunteer Award were announced. We knew about his pride in his Ukrainian-Albertan roots, including his love of sausages, so we cooked up some local ones from Stawnichy's in Mundare. The family and friends were particularly excited about a special guest that came for a visit, a hand-raised Burrowing Owl from Canadian Wildlife Service that is used for many of our education programs.

Volunteers on the barbeques

45 friends and family

Charles Labatiuk's parents

Fire Smarting in the Natural Area

After two large fires at Beaverhill Lake, the Beaverhill Bird Observatory board of directors took action to help protect the bird observatory. We had a guest speaker, Kelly O'Shea (Fire Management Specialist) attend one of our meetings to talk about fire smarting and the steps we needed to take to make the area around the bird observatory more safe. Some management steps he recommended included clearing all trees 3 meters around the buildings, clearing brush piles 10 meters around the buildings, and having a secondary escape route to get out of the area.

We began to clear some of the trees, shrubs, and brush, around the lab and bunk houses, cleaned debris from under the lab, mowed the grass short near the lab. Jim Beck, our resident forester also brought out his chainsaw and began to take trees out from along Flicker Freeway, our emergency escape secondary route. But his generosity in lending a helping hand with a neighbours downed tree left him with an injury so we lost our chainsaw expert for the duration on the season. The bird observatory also organized to have a Junior Forest Ranger crew from Lac La Biche come to help clear the trails. Flicker Freeway and Harrier Highway were worked on extensively, but more work still needs to be done to complete the clearing.

We have organized a FIRE SMARTING Work Bee for **Saturday, September 19**. If you are interested in helped out with clearing brush, clipping vegetation, chainsawing, and/or brushing we would be most appreciative of the help. Please contact Lisa (lisa@beaverhillbirds.com) for details about start time and meeting location. We would like to thank Janos Kovacs for coming out in the morning to help with breakfast preparations for the JFR crew, and Bob Beck and Larry McCann for coming out to do some last minute chain sawing the day before the JFR crew came out.

The OWL FILES

Nocturnal and Diurnal Owl Survey 2009

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory ran a pilot year for the new Diurnal Owl Survey program this spring. We sent out over 50 packages for people interested in getting involved in the program. Data is coming in on both owl surveys and a full report will be in the next issue of the Willet.

Golindrinas Tree Swallow Project Completes Second Year at Beaverhill

by Katrina Calon

Jenny and Tyler helping with banding at the lab.

This was the second year the Beaverhill Bird Observatory collaborated with the Golondrinas de las Americas Project in studying Tree Swallows (website: http://golondrinas.cornell.edu). This year the Tree Swallows at Beaverhill Lake were monitored by Jenny Aleman-Zometa and Tyler Hallman from Cornell University as part of the project is dedicated to studying the breeding biology of *Tachycineta* swallows across North and South America. Tyler's previous experience with Golondrinas work had even taken him to Argentina where he conducted the same studies on Chilean Swallows. Jenny and Tyler were kept very busy monitoring approximately 50 nest boxes at each of three different grids (R,S, and T) within and around the Beaverhill Natural Area.

An ibutton; the device inserted into Tree Swallow nests to record temperature at regular intervals

During the Spring Migration Monitoring period, a great deal of time was spent monitoring nest construction, egg laying, and egg development. Nests were checked almost every day to determine how quickly the eggs were laid, and a device called an ibutton (photo left) was inserted into the nest. The ibutton measures the temperature of the nest at regular intervals and the data is later downloaded to a computer so that it can be determined what the temperature of the eggs were at a particular time of day. This provides insight into when and for how long the female Tree Swallows incubate the eggs. Using a device called an Ovilux, each egg was photographed with a light shining through it to determine its development stage, and as nestlings hatched they were individually marked for further studies. In addition to all the studies on the nests and eggs, adults were captured when possible and banded, and Jenny and Tyler were able to capture a total of seven adults during the spring migration monitoring period. Of these, four were recoveries from previous years. One of these individuals was first banded in 2004 and was aged as an after second year bird, meaning it is at least six years old this year! We look forward to continuing to work with Cornell next year.

Elson's Bluebird Trail Update

The Alberta Conservation Association has helped fund our work on Elson's Bluebird Trail this year. We spent the summer visiting the hundreds of nestboxes around Elk Island, north and south Beaverhill to assess the boxes, determine repairs and replacements needed and to monitor the occupancy. We will be reporting the results in the next Willet. Stay tuned!!

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 Time 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. Articles and photos can be on bird banding, bird watching, wildlife viewing, personal nature photos, etc. Deadline: December 31, 2009.