

# the WILLET

Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Volume 12, Number 1

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The Beaverhill Bird Observatory in cooperation with the Edmonton Natural History Club and the Edmonton Bird Club would like to announce the:

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Banders' Workshop to be held February 26-28, 1999

at the University of Alberta,  
Earth Sciences Building Room 3-47

- February 26, 7 p.m. - Michael Bradstreet from Bird Studies Canada will be speak about the history of BSC, our programs at the local, regional, national and international levels(including Cuba), and our strategic directions for the next few years.
- February 27, 9 a.m. - Talks from a variety of banding stations in Alberta and elsewhere.
- February 27, 1 p.m. - Talks from various banders from the province on special projects.
- February 28, time to be announced - Field trip to look for winter birds, including hawks and owls, led by Gordon Court, Hardy Pletz, and other raptor banders.
- Cost: \$1 for members of BBO, ENHC, or EBC \$2 for non-members or purchase a membership to one of the clubs and get in free.

### Call for Papers

If you would like to present a talk (10-15 minutes) at the workshop, please call Jason at 433-5790 or e-mail to [jdxbury@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca](mailto:jdxbury@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca). We need your name, the title of your talk, and one or two sentences about what you will speak about. Deadline for submissions is February 15.

### Volunteer Owl Surveyors Needed

*Lisa Takats*

After a successful pilot year of a volunteer owl survey in 1998 (see page 3 for the results), the Beaverhill Bird Observatory is asking for volunteers participate in this year's work. Only two evening of time are needed. We will provide an owl tape and instructions on the survey technique. The volunteer needs to provide their own vehicle and a ghetto blaster. Volunteers choose their own routes and can get tax relief for mileage and expenses. If you would like more information about this project, or would like to participate, contact:

Lisa Takats, Raptor Monitoring Program,  
7<sup>th</sup> floor, O.S. Longman Building,  
6909-116 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 4P2  
Phone: (780) 422-9536  
E-mail: [lisa.takats@env.gov.ab.ca](mailto:lisa.takats@env.gov.ab.ca)

### Parrot Fever

Parrot Fever, also called psittacosis, chlamydiosis, or ornithosis, is an infectious disease usually transmitted to humans from birds and most commonly psittacines (ie. parrots, parakeets); however, a large number of other bird species have carried the disease. The bacterium, which only grows in living cells, is an intracellular organism called *Chlamydia psittaci*.

(Con't. page 3)

### In This Issue . . .

The 3 <sup>rd</sup> Annual Bander's Workshop . . . . .	2
Parrot Fever . . . . .	3
Volunteer Owl Survey Results . . . . .	3



## The 3rd Annual Alberta Bird Bander Workshop –

by Jason Duxbury

For the third time in as many years, western Canadian bird banders are invited to Edmonton to share ideas and results. Like the previous two workshops, the workshop will be a three-day event co-sponsored by the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, the Edmonton Natural History Club and the Edmonton Bird Club.

The evening of Friday, February 26, will have a slide presentation on the history of Bird Studies Canada (BSC) by Executive Director of Bird Studies Canada, Michael Bradstreet. Last year's well attended presentation was on the beauty and wonder of the natural history of British Columbia. Following the presentation, refreshments will be served and members of the audience will be encouraged to engage Mr. Bradstreet in conversation about birds, life in the arctic, or any other topic of natural history.

The idea of the 1999 workshop is based on a similar one-day bird banding workshop which was organized by the Beaverhill Bird Observatory in 1997. The same format of sessions will be on Saturday, February 27 as scheduled the previous workshops. In the morning, representatives from the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory, the Calgary Bird Banding Society, and the Last Mountain Lake Bird Observatory (Saskatchewan) will present station descriptions and results from the previous banding season. Also in the morning, Michael Bradstreet, officially wearing his Bird Studies Canada hat, will discuss BSC initiatives and provide the audience with a better understanding of what the BSC is doing for bird research across Canada.

The afternoon will be set aside for presentations by banders and other researchers conducting banding studies. Descriptions of banding techniques, problems and results will be provided on topics such as; warbler identification problems, Piping Plover banding, owl trapping and banding on such species as Burrowing Owls and Saw-whet Owls, and other raptor and songbird banding projects. A very diverse line-up of speakers and topics is expected. Attendance in the previous workshops ranged from bander enthusiasts, bird lovers and university students. Also last year, a successful day ended with small group of people going out for dinner (and beer) at a nearby restaurant where topics were allowed to move from bird banding issues to other entertaining topics!

The final day of the workshop on February 28, will consist of a raptor field trip to be led by experts such as Ray Cromie and Gordon Court. Last year, early in the morning of March 1, people filled 9 vehicles, met at a donut shop in Sherwood Park, and discussed the proposed route. It would take us north of Fort Saskatchewan, then west to an area north of St. Albert, and end the Alberta Grain Terminals where a white phase Gyrfalcon was known to be wintering. The route took us to an area where

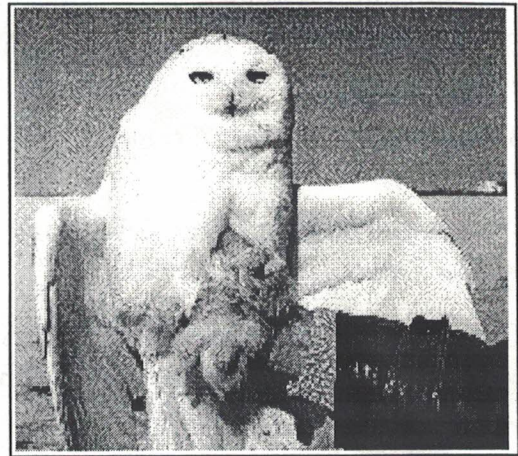


at

Great Gray Owls were found to be 'flocking' during the irruption of 1997, but have been scarce in 1998. We were somewhat disappointed when not a single Great Gray could be found, but our disappointment soon dissipated when a Snowy Owl was sighted. Seven Snowy's were seen in total, including three males that if they were not pure white, they only had a few dark specks within their plumage.



One of these magnificent creatures was willing to be trapped by Ray Cromie in order for the field trip participants to witness the banding of an owl up close. Those with cameras were treated with the opportunity to take pictures of this bird with amazingly bright, yellow eyes and pure white feathers. Any disappointment from not seeing Great Gray Owls was quickly forgotten.



Next stop, the grain terminals to find the white phase Gyrfalcon, which had been sighted numerous times during the current winter. Unfortunately, like the Great Grays, this bird was not co-operating either. A complete lap around the building was fruitless, as the falcon was nowhere to be seen. Some pigeon feathers that had been plucked by some predator were the only evidence of the falcon's presence during the winter. However, as if sensing the crowd's

frustration, a female Merlin landed on the edge of the building in front of everyone, only to be dive bombed by a male Merlin before he took off out of site. The female remained long enough for everyone to get a good look at it through a scope. Although not the largest falcon of North America that we were looking for, it was still a pretty cool raptor to end the day with!

If you would like to participate in an event where ideas will be shared, knowledge will be gained, exceptional presentations will be witnessed, and some pretty darn cool raptors will be seen... we will see you on the 26th of February at 7 p.m. in the in Earth Sciences Building 3-27 on the University of Alberta campus for Michael Bradstreet's talk. The banding workshop will commence at 9:00 the following day (see page 1). The three clubs all look forward to meeting you at the 3rd Annual Alberta Bird Bander Workshop. See you there!

## Parrot Fever (Con't. from page 1)

There are two ways this disease is spread:

- 1) a resistant form called the elementary body that is shed in feces and secretions of infected birds and which is the infectious form; these can persist in dried feces for extended periods of time
- 2) by inhaling elementary bodies (in dust), or less commonly by the second form, the reticulate body, which is only found within cells and is not infectious.

Symptoms of the disease are transient and many birds will show no sign of illness. Some birds become extremely ill, and may have poor appetite, a ruffled appearance, eye or nose discharge and diarrhea. Occasionally birds may die from parrot fever. The disease is highly variable in humans. Many people show no symptoms. In others, the infection may pass as a minor respiratory illness. In more severe cases, symptoms are fever, headache, chills, muscle pain, and respiratory difficulty. A high percentage of cases have evidence of pneumonia. The disease may be severe and occasionally may result in death, especially in untreated older people. Incubation period following exposure may range from four to fifteen days.

In humans, the diagnosis can be made by special blood antibody tests. In birds, veterinarians can diagnose the infection by conducting a special chlamydia test on a swab of fecal material. Antibiotics such as tetracycline are often prescribed to both humans and birds to treat the disease. To prevent disease transmissions, clean cages of pets often so that fecal material does not build up, dry, and become airborne. In banding situations, wipe down and wash areas where bird fecal material accumulates.

For more information:

Wobeser, G. and C.J. Brand. 1982. Chlamydiosis in 2 biologists investigating disease occurrences in wild waterfowl. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 10: 170-172.

Bollinger, T. Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre.

## 1998 Alberta Volunteer Owl Surveys

by Lisa Takats

The pilot year of volunteer owl surveys was successfully with 25 individuals participating. Surveys were conducted on 15 transects throughout Alberta and six species of owls were recorded (Table 1). Only one transect did not have owls.

Table 1: Number and species of owls recorded on volunteer surveys.

Species	Number	# transects
Barred Owl	6	3
Boreal Owl	13	4
Great Gray Owl	3	2
Great Horned Owl	12	5
Northern Saw-whet Owl	46	11
Northern Pygmy Owl	7	4
Total Owls	87	15

## CONTACTS

Beaverhill Bird Observatory

P.O. Box 1418, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 2N5 (membership \$10) - Chairperson-Jason Duxbury (433-5730)

Calgary Bird Banding Society

247 Parkside Cr. S.E., Calgary, Alberta, T2J 4J3 (membership \$20) - President-Doug Collister (246-2697)  
- Treasurer-El Peterson (271-3741)

Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory

P.O. Box 730, Slave Lake, Alberta, T0G 2A0 - Chairperson-Marion Whitby (369-3581)

## NEXT WILLET ISSUE

Material for the forthcoming newsletter should be sent to: Lisa Takats, editor, *The Willet*, 3535-105 A Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T6J 2M6. PHONE 437-3860, FAX 422-9685, EMAIL [lisa.takats@env.gov.ab.ca](mailto:lisa.takats@env.gov.ab.ca). Next newsletter deadline: April 1, 1999. Articles can be on bird banding, birdwatching, wildlife viewing, etc.