

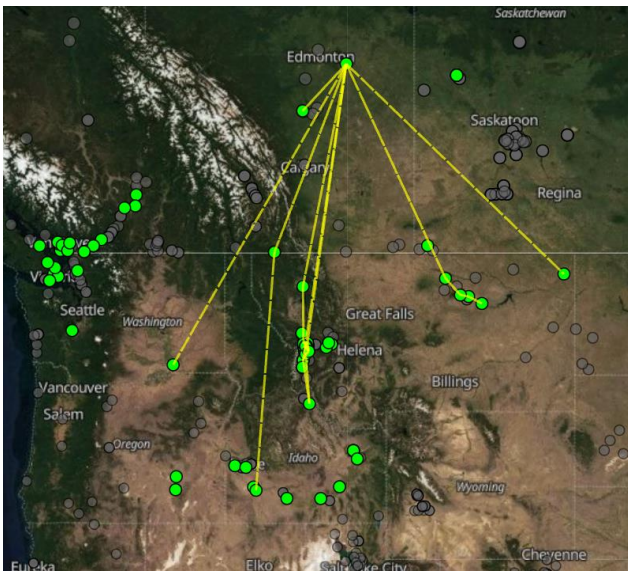
Saw-whet MOTUS update #3 – **HIGH SPEED TRANSIT**

4 December 2023 by Geoff Holroyd, Beaverhill Bird Observatory, chair@beaverhillbirds.com

Field Code Changed

Immediately after the last update an owl gave us a spectacular movement, but I wanted to wait until after the Willet was sent out with a summary for all BBO members before sending out update #3.

So, what was the new flight? An owl that had been undetected for over a month, on 16 November at 11:49pm MST was near Snake Butte, Montana southeast of us and southeast of Havre Montana. It was detected for only 6 minutes by the Snake Butte tower indicating that it was flying past the tower quickly. Thirty (30!!) minutes later it was 61 km further east, a travel speed of 89kph according to MOTUS. After 4 minutes it went to the next tower 23km southeast. It must have paused because that took 46 minutes, but it was only detected there for 2 minutes. Then it was detected by a fourth tower 42 km away with an estimated speed of 48 kph. In total 11:55 pm and 1.49am, it was detected by 4 stations that are 126 km apart in about 114 minutes. That owl was on a mission. A 35kph following wind would have been a factor in its rapid flight. The 35kph was reported at Coumts at midnight at ground level. I would surmise that the wind was stronger at higher elevation, but don't know the wind, nor the elevation of the flying owl. So, we are left to be amazed by this rapid flight, 126 km in under 2 hours. We can only wonder how many hours did it fly; 250 km in 4 hours or 375 km in 6 hours? Remember that darkness is over 12 hours in mid-November.



We now have 9 Saw-whets that have been detected south of BBO in Alberta, Montana, Idaho and Washington. None of our owls have been detected by the dense grid of MOTUS stations in eastern Canada and US, yet we know some have gone there from our past bird band recoveries. Some MOTUS stations are not connected to the internet. Any tags that are detected by those stations are recorded on SD cards which must be downloaded by the station owners. We can only wait, hope, and wonder what news awaits.

In the next update; loitering in saw-whets 😊

As a distraction before the next update, what do you think of this poem. Please read the poem before you look on page 3 for the origin and credits.

ODE TO SAW-WHET OWLS

In moonlit woods, where shadows play,
Saw-whet owls quietly hold sway.
Feathers soft, in hues of night,
They dance with stars, a silent flight.

With eyes aglow, like lanterns small,
They listen to the moonlight's call.
Perched on branches, wise and keen,
A secret world in darkness, seen.

Their saw-like hoots, a woodland song,
In echoes, the night belongs.
Tiny guardians of the trees,
Whispering secrets on the breeze.

Among the pines, they softly soar,
A symphony of forest lore.
In shadows deep, where dreams unfold,
Saw-whet tales, forever told.

The origin of this poem is on the next page !

"Write me a poem about saw-whet owls" prompt. *ChatGPT 3.5*, Jan 2022 version, 25 Nov 2023. chat.openai.com/chat. (Prompted by Doug Inkley, Certified Wildlife Biologist.)

The above poem was sent by Doug Inkley to the Project Owl Net list serve in November 2023. Doug wrote "Andy Brown and I are banding tonight on Lamb's Knoll near Boonsboro, Maryland. I asked the A.I. app ChatGPT to write a poem about saw-whet owls, which it did, and we thought you might like."