

BEAVERHILL BIRD OBSERVATORY UPDATE Sept 15-SEPT 28, 2007

THE WARBLER MIGRATION seems to be winding down. At the beginning of this shift an average day's captures would include fifteen to twenty Myrtle Warblers, by the end of the month I'd be lucky to catch more than three or four in a morning. A few Orange-crowned warblers are still around, but they too were mostly gone by the end of the shift. I hope they all enjoy they're winter vacation down south, and we'll be waiting for them again next spring.



It was interesting to see a greater variety of sparrow species moving through. Although the numbers were fairly low, six different species hit the nets this shift, including one of my favourite sparrow species, the Lincoln's Sparrow pictured at left.

Making up for the dwindling number of migrating songbirds were the increasing numbers of geese, ducks, and cranes overhead. Throughout the whole shift I watched large flocks of Canada, Greater White-fronted, and Snow Geese heading south. Interestingly, the major migration route seems to

be a little further east than the observatory. While conducting the daily census, I would go out into the open at the edge of (what used to be) the lake and look with my binoculars to the northeast and could see huge flocks, although they were too far off to identify specifically. If I'd look off to the west though I'd see relatively few birds. I wonder what landscape features, or other factors, cause the birds to choose their specific course?



I had lots of good help this shift, Jim & Barb Beck and Anna Daku covered a couple days off for me, and Janos Kovacs came out to spend a beautiful morning watching the Sandhill Cranes leave. Near the end of the shift I enjoyed visits from Andrew, Geoffrey, & Angela, who were around for one of the best catches of the shift (a Varied Thrush, pictured at left), and from Sasha, Anika, Jordan, Devon, & Alina and Treva, who were lucky enough to *each* have a bird to release themselves. It's always fun to have visitors to the lab- make sure to swing by sometime if you're in the area!

I guess I've given away my biggest sighting of the shift if you've glanced at the photo at right. While I was setting up the nets on the morning of the 26th I glanced up and saw a great big, very black thing walking towards me down the "Long-eared Owl Lane." It saw me at about the same time, and we spent a couple minutes watching each other (actually, black bears have terrible eyesight, so I was doing the watching, and he was doing the listening and smelling). Eventually, the bear got bored and walked off into the bush to the north. There were signs that, in retrospect, seemed to indicate that he'd been hanging around for at least a day before, and I think he (or she) stayed in the area for another day before moving on. (I have to admit that I didn't have my camera along at the time, the picture is of another bear I came across in Calling Lake). All in all, another exciting shift! -Jonathan Martin-DeMoor



Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Foreign ³	Other ⁴	Total
Myrtle Warbler	105	3	0	0	0	108
Slate-colored Junco	16	1	0	0	0	17
Black-capped Chickadee	9	7	0	0	0	16
Orange-crowned Warbler	16	0	0	0	0	16
White-throated Sparrow	8	0	0	0	0	8
American Tree Sparrow	5	0	0	0	0	5
Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow	5	0	0	0	0	5
Hermit Thrush	4	0	0	0	0	4
Fox Sparrow	0	2	0	0	0	2
Lincoln's Sparrow	2	0	0	0	0	2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2	0	0	0	0	2
White-breasted Nuthatch	2	0	0	0	0	2
Downy Woodpecker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hairy Woodpecker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Least Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	1
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	0	0	0	0	1
Varied Thrush	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	180	13	0	0	0	193

Net Hours: 807 NH

Capture Rate: 23.9 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).



Northern Saw-whet Owl Migration

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL MIGRATION is in full swing now. From the 15th to the 28th we captured 19 saw-whet Owls. Our highest number captured in a night was six on September



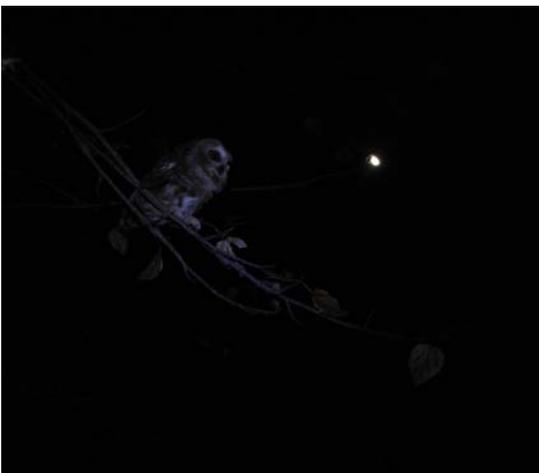
18th. This brings our total to 21 for the year. Seems a bit slow but our peak has been October 3 for the last few years, so we expect things to pick up as we near that date. We set on 12 nights (138 net hours), but nets had to shut early on some of those due to wind. It has been quite a windy fall. Volunteers that covered days are Chuck Priestley, Bryn and Juanita Spence, Jim and Barb Beck, and of course Buttons.

Chuck was fortunate (or maybe not) to catch a northern flying squirrel in mist net. It made a terrible mess, and for a while he thought it might have strangled itself, however he cut a few strings and the squirrel ran off no worse for wear, although he will have a few stories to tell his buddies. We've seen up to four squirrels at one time. I also observed our first Long-eared Owl of the year (there were none seen this summer), perched on the Long-eared Owl sign, which was neat. We named the Lane appropriately I guess.



That black bear Jonathan sighted definitely caused some concern, particularly for the folks working at night. I had visions of tripping over a sleeping black bear on a net check. I've worked in bear country before, but you never know where the bears are, whereas this time we know one was seen. Add to that the fact that a black bear has never been encountered in the Natural Area, and that makes me nervous. We did hear that Elk Island had five black bears this year, so perhaps one decided to disperse to a less busy area. An air horn and bear repellent were the standard fair when walking to check the nets. However, no sightings of the bear, which was nice because we had our big Steaks and Saw-whets event on the 28th and 29th.

I have overviewed the Steaks and Saw-whets event on the events page of the website (<http://www.beaverhillbirds.com/steaks.php>) where you can read about previous years as well, however, I will mention that over 100 people attended over the two evenings (September 28 and 29). The volunteer base was exceptional this year, 12 on Friday and 7 on Saturday, and from the few e-mails we've received from the public, they all enjoyed it. We were also featured in the newspaper Farm and Friends, which goes out to people all over this region of Alberta. Napi, the Burrowing Owl, was a hit.



Well, hope you can join us, we run through mid-November, send me e-mail lisa@beaverhillbirds.com to find out our schedule.

Cheers, Lisa Priestley