

BEAVERHILL BIRD OBSERVATORY UPDATE SEPT 29-OCT 12, 2007

IT'S BEEN FUN watching the rhythm of the songbird migration as the season has progressed. In



August, the trees were full of warblers headed south. After the warblers had mostly moved through, I started catching sparrows. By the end of this shift (October 9) it was mostly resident species that were hitting the nets.

American Tree Sparrows, sporting their distinctive bi-coloured bills, were the most common species caught this shift. Second most common were Slate-colored Juncos, the eastern colour morph of the Dark-eyed Junco. Juncos, which are actually in the sparrow family, can often be seen in small flocks around feeders (especially if you are feeding millet seeds), and that's how they tend to hit the nets as well- in small flocks, usually even all together on one side of the net!

One species that I really enjoy catching is this funny looking guy pictured on the right, a Brown Creeper. They are small, fluffy, fragile-feeling birds and are (in my experience) fairly uncommonly caught. Beaverhill is at the very northern end of their winter range and they are more commonly associated with conifer stands than young aspen parkland, so I wouldn't expect to see any here through the winter, but you might find them throughout the year feeding in the spruce trees in the river valley in Edmonton.



By the end of the shift, it was the Black-capped Chickadees that I was catching the most frequently. Of all the species around the banding lab, it's the Chickadees that are the most characteristic year-round residents. A group (or a "banditry" which is the proper collective noun for chickadees) of about ten to fifteen chickadees could be found hanging around the lab, and made frequent appearances in the nets.



One of the "mini-disasters" that can strike a mist-netting operation happened this shift- a moose got "caught" in on of the nets!

Besides the obvious damage that a moose will do to a net, the risk is that there will be birds in the net that may be injured when the net is pulled down. Fortunately, I had just done a net check, and this time, the only casualty was the net.

So, with the migrant songbird species all but gone, the geese heading south, the swans coming through in good numbers, and the winter resident species starting to fatten up for the winter ahead, it was time to wrap up this year's songbird migration monitoring efforts and for me to say goodbye to Beaverhill until next spring. All in all, it's been a great way to watch the season go by. Keep reading as the saw-whet owl monitoring continues.

-Jonathan Martin-DeMoor

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Foreign ³	Other ⁴	Total
American Tree Sparrow	35	2	0	0	0	37
Slate-colored Junco	20	0	0	0	0	20
Black-capped Chickadee	7	8	0	0	0	15
Downy Woodpecker	1	3	0	0	0	4
Brown Creeper	2	0	0	0	0	2
Myrtle Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
Purple Finch	1	0	0	0	0	1
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	0	0	0	0	1
White-throated Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Yellow Warbler	1	0	0	0	0	1
Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow	0	1	0	0	0	1
Hairy Woodpecker	0	1	0	0	0	1
White-breasted Nuthatch	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	70	16	0	0	0	86

Net Hours: 375.5 NH

Capture Rate: 22.9 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).

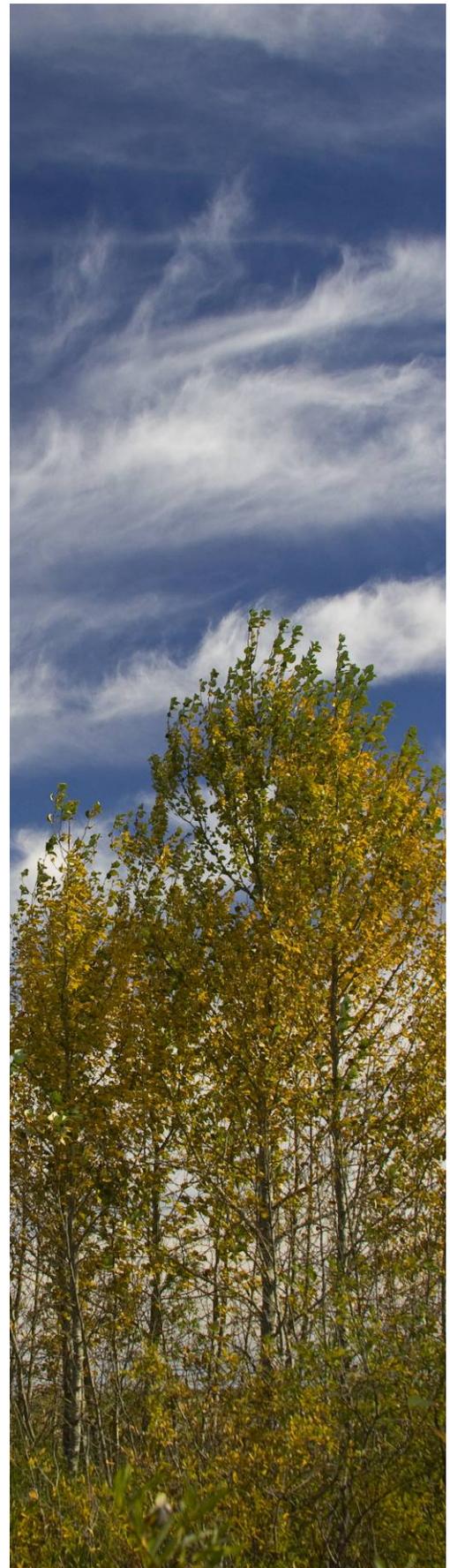


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Photographs from my time at Beaverhill can be found in my online gallery at www.borealisimages.ca.

2007 Fall Migration Monitoring Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Total
Myrtle Warbler	413	9	422
Least Flycatcher	92	6	98
Black-capped Chickadee	39	43	82
Yellow Warbler	66	5	71
Slate-colored Junco	42	1	43
American Tree Sparrow	40	2	42
Tennessee Warbler	35	3	38
Orange-crowned Warbler	34	0	34
Warbling Vireo	18	3	21
Ovenbird	20	0	20
Downy Woodpecker	8	11	20
Swainson's Thrush	17	2	19
American Redstart	16	0	16
Alder Flycatcher	11	0	11
White-throated Sparrow	11	0	11
Magnolia Warbler	10	0	10
Hermit Thrush	6	3	9
Northern Waterthrush	7	0	7
Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow	6	1	7
Red-breasted Nuthatch	6	0	6
Blackpoll Warbler	4	0	4
Lincoln's Sparrow	4	0	4
American Goldfinch	3	1	4
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	3	1	4
Black-and-White Warbler	3	0	3
Philadelphia Vireo	3	0	3
Red-eyed Vireo	3	0	3
Song Sparrow	3	0	3
Wilson's Warbler	3	0	3
White-breasted Nuthatch	2	1	3
Fox Sparrow	1	2	3
Brown Creeper	2	0	2
Canada Warbler	2	0	2
Gray Catbird	2	0	2
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2	0	2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2	0	2
Hairy Woodpecker	1	1	2
Black-billed Magpie	1	0	1
Black-throated Green Warbler	1	0	1
Clay-colored Sparrow	1	0	1
Connecticut Warbler	1	0	1
Eastern Phoebe	1	0	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	0	1
House Wren	1	0	1
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1	0	1
Purple Finch	1	0	1
Traill's Flycatcher	1	0	1
Varied Thrush	1	0	1
Yellow-shafted Flicker	1	0	1
Cooper's Hawk	0	0	1
Total	952	95	1048



Northern Saw-whet Owl Migration

Well, my photos will not match the wonderful pictures Jonathan has taken this fall, however, I hope they will capture the feeling you get out at the bird observatory at night. We had our largest number of saw-whet on October, when 20 of the little pop canned sized fluff balls were captured. Not all were banded, as one particular second-year female owl had a band already on its leg. Yes, our first recovery of the season. It turned out to be a bird banded October 1, 2006 at Calgary Bird Banding Society's station south of Bragg Creek near Crown-Lowrey Provincial Park. It is always interesting to catch birds from other stations. Rich Krikun at Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory recently captured one of Hardy Pletz's owls. Hardy had banded it at his site near Millet last year on migration. So these two females were banded on migration last fall, moved south, presumably headed north to breed in the spring of this year, and then migrated south again.

We had a busy two weeks with 89 saw-whets captured. There was good coverage, 11 of 14 days were run (149 net hours). We have now captured 110 saw-whet owls. Two of the days missed due to wind and one on a day off. We had a contingent of volunteers helping, Chuck Priestley, Gerry and Robyn Beyersbergen, Jim and Barb Beck, and Sarah McLean (from Westworth Associates) who was present during the crazy 20 owl night. Of course Buttons the dog was my constant companion.



We also had a group from the University of Alberta student chapter of the Wildlife Society come out for a night. There were 25 students that made their way to the lab. I need to thank them for finishing one of my crossword puzzles in a few hours that I had been working on the last few weeks. Other wildlife observations include: flying squirrels, Tundra Swans, Canada and White-fronted Geese, Sandhill Cranes, lots of Ruffed Grouse, and our resident Great Horned Owl (probably checking out the grouse).

I headed up to Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory and the new Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation for the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network meeting. This is a meeting of birds observatories from across Canada. It was great to share information and ideas with other people and also had a chance to net some owls with Richard Krikun. Caught 4 on two nights!! Thanks for organizing those owls Rich.



Cheers, Lisa Priestley