

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.