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**Happy 2018 from BBO!**

# 2018 Western Canada Bird Banding Conference

**March 23-25, 2018. University of Alberta**

The BBO will host a banding conference for those interested in banding and other methods of studying bird movements. This will be a chance to exchange what we have learned since the last conference in 2010. There will be talks by featured speakers, western Canadian banding stations, and individuals. This event will finish with an owling field trip to search for Great Grey Owls, Northern Hawk Owls, and other winter birds. This conference is open to anyone from bird banders and students, to interested members of the public.

Pre-registration \$30 (students \$20) online at [www.beaverhillbirds.com](http://www.beaverhillbirds.com), \$40 at the door.

Want to speak on a topic? Send your abstract with your name, contact information and talk title to [educationbeaverhillbirds@gmail.com](mailto:educationbeaverhillbirds@gmail.com). Contact Meghan at 780-655-4152 for more information.

Here is the tentative schedule:

Friday March 23 7:30-8:30pm. Featured speaker presentation: Steven Price, President, Bird Studies Canada will give a talk entitled "100 Years of the Migratory Bird Convention: the Status of North America's Birds and the Need for a Leap in Ambition". He will also provide introduction to BSC and to CMMN (Canadian Migration Monitoring Network).

Saturday March 24 9:00am-4:00pm. Morning will consist of station updates and presentations, afternoon will consist of individual presentations. Break refreshments and lunch provided.

Saturday 5:00-8:00pm. Edmonton Nature Club Banquet option – Sawmill Banquet Center. Featured speaker John Marriott. Cost ~\$50; purchase tickets directly from ENC at <http://edmontonnatureclub.org/2018-banquet.html> later in early 2018.

Sunday March 25. Owling and Birding trip.

## BBOs Education Program- some Highlights by Meghan Jacklin

With the lab closed for the winter, BBO's education program is in full swing! We are educating students about bird conservation, climate change, and having a "hoot"! Staff couldn't help but start off the education season on Halloween day with a bit of fun dress up. Meghan, or "Professor Jacklin" visited Strathcona High school and offered a "Care of Magical Creatures" lesson to the high school students. The students learned a lot about the impacts that humans are having on birds, including habitat destruction, fragmentation, pollution, and climate change. The lecture was viewed by none other than Harry Potter and "Professor Jacklin's" feathery friend Ricki (otherwise known as "Pigwidgeon")! It was a magical time!!!



Meghan and Colonel Slade the Barred Owl attended a book launch at Audrey's Books in Edmonton for the children's title [\*Dark Matters—Nature's Reaction to Light Pollution\*](#) by Joan Marie Galat. *Dark Matters* explores the effects of light pollution on birds and other creatures. Over thousands of years, animals have been used to nights being lit only by the Moon and stars. Humans now produce so much light at night that it is visible from space. This can result in numerous impacts on our birds. Unfortunately, they are often attracted to the

lights while migrating, and hit windows and die. Some birds use the position of the moon and stars to migrate, and may become disoriented during migration if there are too many artificial light sources. They may migrate the wrong way, and risk dying in the cold weather.



Spaces are still available for this series of educational talks, which will end in April. Presentations include grade-specific curriculum topics and talks for youth, seniors and other groups. Our wizards and owls have even enhanced birthday parties. So if you or anyone you know may be interested in booking this program, please contact us at [educationbeaverhillbirds@gmail.com](mailto:educationbeaverhillbirds@gmail.com) for availability and pricing information.

**Thanks to Bill Poulson, Geoff Holroyd, Pam Webb and Kevin Lehman for volunteering to bring Ray back and forth to the city for talks, saving many kilometers of staff driving.**

**May 1 and 2 will be the Casino for BBO, at the Roger's Place Grand Villa Casino. Please mark these dates if you are able to volunteer. [helentrefry@gmail.com](mailto:helentrefry@gmail.com) will be organizing volunteers. This is our main fundraiser so we appreciate your support.**

### **2017 Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding Summary** by Sara Pearce Meijerink

The 2017 Northern Saw-whet Owl (NSWO) banding season was another great year with 363 NSWO captured in less than 2 months. 358 of them were newly banded birds. Our five recapture birds from this year included 2 NSWOs that were banded at the BBO this year at an earlier date, 2 NSWOs banded by Lisa Priestley (one of which was banded in 2016, the other in 2017 eleven days earlier) and the very exciting 1 FOREIGN RECAPTURE!!! This year we caught a second-year female NSWO that was originally banded near Stevens Point, Portage County, Wisconsin as a hatch year bird last year! This owl traveled well over 2,200 km's to visit the BBO on migration this year! Two of our banded owls were reported in the US; one near Loveland, Colorado only 40 days later, and the other in Grand Forks County, North Dakota a year after we banded it.

Of the owls captured, the majority of them were females with 250 owls, 85 were unknown sexed owls, and 23 male owls. In the owl world, females tend to be larger than males and we sexed them based on a ratio of their weight and wing cord (how long their wings are). There is a certain amount of overlap between the sexes hence why we always have birds of unknown sex.

Most of the owls captured this year were hatch-year birds (258), followed by second-year birds (83), after-second-year birds (16) and lastly one confirmed after-third-year bird! It is normal to have a large number of young birds captured during migration as these young ones were just hatched a few months ago and NSWO will have 5-7 young each year. They have so many offspring as this species is a prey item for many of our larger owls, hence one reason why we catch fewer older birds in comparison. In addition, older owls tend to stay near their nesting territory year-round.

Many visitors came out to enjoy owl banding at the BBO this year. Numerous families and groups of students from Augustana Campus, the University of Alberta and NAIT came out to see owl banding up close. We also had large groups join us for owl banding on the

weekends including; the Friends of Elk Island, the University of Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society, Nature Kids, the Tofield Library, the University of Alberta Outdoors Club, the Augustana Wildlife Club, Junior Forest Rangers and of course our two wonderful owl interns Brittany Whiteman and Marie-Ève Bédard! Brittany and Marie were interning at the BBO this year to learn more about owl banding and migration and were a massive help to the staff and a great aid to enriching the visitor experience. Thank you ladies!

### **TD Friends of the Environment Leadership Workshop, presented by Anima Leadership** By: Kevin Methuen

From November 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, I was fortunate to attend a leadership workshop in Orillia, ON thanks to TD Friends of the Environment. The workshop took place at YMCA Geneva Park and was led by Anima Leadership, an award-winning professional development firm from Toronto, ON. Eighteen other environmental leaders from across Canada participated, each individual with unique skills that they shared with the larger group.

The purpose of this workshop was to develop personal, team, organizational and sectoral capacities to maximize impact within the Canadian environmental sector. Each day of the workshop, broad topics that included team management, harnessing learning, organizational impact, and personal leadership were covered. Overall, the main highlight for me was connecting with the other eighteen participants of this workshop. I introduced many of them to birding, and pointed out neat species to people each day.

YMCA Geneva Park is home to an old forest full of towering trees, a few of which included jack pine, American beech, American basswood, and sugar maple. There was an abundance of cavities in many of these old trees, much to the benefit of the local gray and red squirrel population. As expected, I was outside with my binoculars every chance I had! I enjoyed multiple sightings of Red-bellied Woodpecker, a lifer for me. There were also plenty of Brown Creepers observed each day, in addition to Pileated, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Black-capped Chickadees, and Northern Cardinals. Where the forest ended,



Lake Couchiching began, and yielded Trumpeter Swans, Hooded Mergansers, and naturally, a few Mallards.

Thank you to Carolyn Scotchmer and Sarah Colley from TD Friends of the Environment, Annihid Dashtgard and James Beaton from Anima Leadership, and all of the workshop participants from environmental NGO's across Canada.

## Autumn 2017 Migration Monitoring by Kevin Methuen

Thirteen mist-nets (2, 2X, 8, 9, 9X, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, and 57) were operated from July 30<sup>th</sup> to October 10<sup>th</sup> on days that were above zero degrees Celsius, relatively calm, and free of precipitation. A total of 4202.25 net-hours were accumulated, despite a chilly start to October which did not allow staff to achieve full hours on all days. 1918 birds were captured, of which 1620 were newly banded. This marked the highest number of captures in autumn since 2006, and the highest number of banded birds since 2001! Species diversity was average, with 52 distinct species captured (Table 1).

**Table 1. Number of captures, mist-netting effort, capture rates, and number of species caught during fall migration monitoring at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory since 2002.**

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total Captures	1734	1315	975	1256	1969	1079	892	875
Birds Banded	1464	1093	818	1089	1525	952	723	718
Net hours (NH)	4174	3818	3229	2787	3476	3534	3400	3671
Capture Rate (birds/100 NH)	41.5	34.4	30.2	45.1	56.6	30.5	26.2	23.8
Species Captured	62	57	60	59	63	52	58	51

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total Captures	880	701	978	631	738	1641	1721	1918
Birds Banded	708	589	776	628	618	1393	1390	1620
Net hours (NH)	3190	3678	3683	3144	2565	4478	4174	4202
Capture Rate (birds/100 NH)	27.6	19.1	26.6	20.1	28.8	36.6	41.2	45.6
Species Captured	60	53	57	45	46	58	53	52

The five most commonly caught species this fall were Myrtle Warbler (587 birds captured, representing 30.6% of all captures), Orange-crowned Warbler (211 captures, 11% of total), Least Flycatcher (190 captures, 9.9% of total), Black-capped Chickadee (131 captures, 6.8% of total), and American Tree Sparrow (108 captures, 5.6% of total). These five species accounted for 1227 or 64% of the 1918 birds caught. Full banding results can be viewed in Table 2.



A Myrtle Warbler that had an unusual amount of white in its plumage and bill and the Baltimore Oriole Banded at BBO by Sara in May, 2017, at BBO and recovered in Columbia, South America in October, 2017. In addition, a Least Flycatcher that was banded at BBO in June 2015 was reported from Linton, North Dakota in August 2016, presumably on its southeast migration route. Finally, a very old Mallard was reported from Calgary. The mallard was banded in March 1988 in Calgary and report there in July 2016 – at least 28 years old!

**Table 2. Total number and type of capture per species during 2017 fall migration monitoring at Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO). Repeat captures were banded in 2017 at BBO; Return captures were banded at BBO in a previous year; Foreign captures were banded at a location other than BBO; and Other captures were caught in a mist net but released un-banded, or caught more than once in a single day.**

Species	Banded	Repeat	Return	Foreign	Other	Total
Myrtle Warbler	560	18			9	587
Orange-crowned Warbler	198	8			5	211
Least Flycatcher	142	36	4		8	190
Black-capped Chickadee	36	88	5		2	131
American Tree Sparrow	102	2			4	108
Slate-colored Junco	86	12			3	101
Tennessee Warbler	59	16	1		1	77
Wilson's Warbler	60	1				61
Yellow Warbler	48	5	1		2	56
House Wren	32	18	3		2	55
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	29	2			2	33
Warbling Vireo	21	6				27
Lincoln's Sparrow	20				3	23
White-throated Sparrow	20				1	21
American Redstart	19					19
Trail's Flycatcher	16				1	17
Ovenbird	17					17
American Goldfinch	11	4				15
Swainson's Thrush	15					15

Cedar Waxwing	9	4	13
Downy Woodpecker	4	8	12
Palm Warbler	11	1	12
Clay-colored Sparrow	11		11
Canada Warbler	10		10
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	7	2	9
Song Sparrow	7		7
Magnolia Warbler	7		7
Common Yellowthroat	6		6
Northern Waterthrush	6		6
Ruby-throated Hummingbird		1	5
Hermit Thrush	4		1
Audubon's Warbler	5		5
Black-and-white Warbler	4		4
Red-breasted Nuthatch	4		4
White-crowned Sparrow	4		4
Red-winged Blackbird	3		3
Blackpoll Warbler	3		3
Mourning Warbler	2		1
Red-eyed Vireo	3		3
Brown Creeper	2		1
White-breasted Nuthatch	3		3
Eastern Phoebe	2		2
Blue-headed Vireo	2		2
Philadelphia Vireo	1		1
Savannah Sparrow	1		1
MacGillivray's Warbler	1		1

Cooper's Hawk	1					1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1					1
Gray Catbird	1					1
Blue Jay	1					1
Oregon Junco	1					1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1					1
Winter Wren	1					1
Swamp Sparrow					1	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1620</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1918</b>

Every fall, there are highlights at the lab that make for unforgettable experiences. In late October, we were notified that a Baltimore Oriole, originally banded at BBO on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017, had been recaptured in Colombia (South America!). In August, we recaptured a Yellow Warbler that had originally been banded at BBO 10 years and 2 days ago! Meghan remarked that this bird had returned for its ten-year 'band-iversary'.

Among other notable events this fall were the number of Canada Warblers we caught. Usually we are lucky to catch one of these beauties every few years; this fall we caught ten! Additionally, from September 12<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>, we caught over 800 songbirds! Our busiest days saw capture totals of 219, 146, 133, and 120 birds! It was a very exciting time at the BBO.

Staff surveyed birds along a standardized census route each morning between July 30<sup>th</sup> and October 20<sup>th</sup>. Each year, census results are combined with other incidental observations and daily banding totals to produce a Daily Estimated Total (DET) of the number, and type of species migrating through the Beaverhill Natural Area. This fall, raptor highlights included five Turkey Vultures flying over the banding lab on one morning in early August, and a Northern Goshawk that was spotted multiple times. We observed tens of thousands of Greater White-fronted and Snow Geese, which attracted a number of visitors towards the end of September. From early to mid-October, we observed a good number of Golden-crowned Kinglets, Brown Creepers, Rough-legged Hawks, and Tundra Swans moving through.

### **Acknowledgements by Kevin Methuen**

The conservation and outreach activities we conduct each year would simply not occur without the ongoing support we receive from our funders, volunteers, board members, and interns.

Thank you to everyone who made Steaks and Saw-whets a success, which saw more than 100 people attend over 2 evenings: Fraser & Rena Methuen, Natasha Annich, Laura Garland, Thea Carpenter, Steve Andersen, Scott Wilson, Emily Upham-Mills, Caitlin Mader, BBO staff, Darren MacGregor, Rose Scott, Rolly Perrott, Geoff Holroyd, and Helen and Phil Trefry.

Thank you to our long-term volunteers this fall, Alyshia Skurdal, Amanda Shave, and Luke Zhou. Thank you to Helmi Hess for inventorying our mist nets, patching the road, helping remove barb-wire fence, and for helping with a bunch of other tasks. Thank you Irene Crosland, Gerry Beyersbergen, Emily Cicon, Brittany Whiteman and Marie-Eve Bedard for assisting with owl banding. Also, thanks to Greg Ottway, Lawrence Lam, and Sabina Mastrolonardo for your assistance with banding.

Thanks to Geoff Holroyd for mowing the trails in the Natural area, and for keeping the BBO staff in line! Thank you to Al Degroot and Geoff for winterizing the lab, and to Al for maintaining our solar power at the lab. Thank you to Helen Trefry for producing another stellar edition of the Willet and housing our education owls, and to Laurie Hunt for coordinating our internship program.

A huge thanks to all other volunteers, board members, and interns who helped with a variety of tasks and activities. You make the BBO a special place!

Thank you to **Steve and Kay from the Wildbird General Store** for providing us monthly in-kind support of bird seed. Thank you **Connie, Diane, Susan, and Ashley at the Tofield Library** for your daily and weekly support.

**Finally, the BBO extends massive thank yous to our funders. Our 2017 fall operations were made possible by financial support from the Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, TD Friends of the Environment, Nature Canada's Labatiuk Fund, Bird Studies Canada's Baillie Fund, World Wildlife Fund Canada, the Community Environment Action Grant Program, Serving Communities Internship Program (SCiP), Canada's Farmers Grow Communities (Monsanto Fund) and personal donations. THANK YOU!**

## **Beaverhill Bird Observatory's Geoff Holroyd Young Ornithologists' Workshop: August 5-11, 2018**

Are you 15-18 years old and interested in birds and nature?

Would you like to learn and practice how to ID, sex, age and band birds?

Would you like to experience what it is like to be in a camp setting with other teens learning from biologists?

Check out our web site [www.beaverhillbirds.com](http://www.beaverhillbirds.com) for information on how to apply to attend this free workshop or contact [helentrefry@gmail.com](mailto:helentrefry@gmail.com).