



Beaverhill Bird Observatory
Spring Report 2019

By
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Executive Summary

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory's spring migration monitoring was conducted by Head Biologist Sara Pearce Meijerink along with Assistant Biologist Emily Grose and summer students Jeremy Lambe, Stephanie Thunberg and Karambir Singh. Standardized spring migration monitoring and a daily census was conducted from May 1st to June 9th. Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO) staff operated thirteen mist nets and recorded 647 captures of 44 species, resulting in an overall capture rate of 25.8 birds per 100 net-hours. Staff, dedicated volunteers, 12 student interns, and board members completed numerous other monitoring programs, education and outreach activities.

Migration Monitoring

Thirteen mist-nets (2, 2X, 8, 9, 9X, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, and 57) were operated from May 1st to June 9th on days that were above zero degrees Celsius, relatively calm (wind below 20 km/h), and free of precipitation. A total of 2503 net-hours was accumulated this spring with only a few weather days that forced us to shut down banding operations for the day. (Table 1). During spring migration 647 birds were captured, of which 491 were newly banded. Our number of captures were slightly higher than in 2018, but our species diversity was the same as last year with capturing a total of 44 different species! Highlights included catching a Rufous Hummingbird, a Myrtle/Audubon Warbler hybrid and a MacGillivray's Warbler.

Table 1. Numbers of captures, mist-netting effort, capture rates, and number of species caught during spring migration monitoring at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory since 2004.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total Captures	532	276	242	408	382	500	497	412
Birds Banded	424	196	169	318	288	351	333	241
Net hours (NH)	1809	1570	1615	1813	1828	1608	2016	1884
Capture Rate (birds/100 NH)	29.4	17.6	15.0	22.5	20.9	31.1	24.7	21.9
Species Captured	38	32	31	44	38	39	38	40

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Captures	459	324	841	810	849	996	607	647
Birds Banded	307	211	561	641	663	802	443	491
Net hours (NH)	1997	1884	2615	2859	3432	2031	2594	2503
Capture Rate (birds/100 NH)	23.0	17.2	32.2	28.3	24.7	49.0	23.4	25.8
Species Captured	39	36	43	45	54	51	44	44



Top Left: Magnolia Warbler

Top Right: Rufous Hummingbird

Bottom: Hybrid Myrtle/Audubon Warbler



The five most commonly caught species this spring were Clay-colored Sparrow (144 captures, representing 22.2% of all captures), Least Flycatcher (123 captures, 19.0% of total), Yellow Warbler (59 captures, 9.1% of total), House Wren (45 captures, 6.9% of total), and White-throated Sparrow (41 captures, 6.3% of total). These five species accounted for 412 or 64% of the 647 total birds caught (Table 2).

Table 2. Total number and type of capture per species during 2019 spring migration monitoring at Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO). Repeat captures were banded in 2019 at BBO, Return captures were banded at BBO in a previous year, 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	Other	Total
American Goldfinch	3				3
American Redstart	7				7
American Robin	7				7
Baltimore Oriole	13	10		1	24
Black and White Warbler	1				1
Black-capped Chickadee	2	4	8	1	15
Blackpoll Warbler	3				3
Blue Jay	2				2
Blue-headed Vireo	1				1
Brown-headed Cowbird	9	5	3		17
Canada Warbler	1				1
Chipping Sparrow	4				4
Clay-coloured Sparrow	116	19	3	6	144
Common Yellowthroat	1				1
Downy Woodpecker	1				1
Gray Catbird	1			1	2
Gray-cheeked Thrush	7				7
Hairy Woodpecker		1	2		3
Hermit Thrush	6		1		7
House Wren	35	3		7	45
Hybrid Myrtle/Audubon Warbler	1				1
Least Flycatcher	88	22	5	8	123
Lincoln's Sparrow	23				23
MacGillivray's Warbler	1				1
Magnolia Warbler	3				3
Mourning Warbler	1				1
Myrtle Warbler	8				8
Orange-crowned Warbler	8				8
Ovenbird	4				4
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1				1
Red-eyed Vireo	2				2
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2	1			3
Ruby-throated Hummingbird				1	1
Rufous Hummingbird				1	1
Savannah Sparrow	1				1
Slate-coloured Junco	8				8

Song Sparrow	5			1	6
Swainson's Thrush	25				25
Tennessee Warbler	2				2
Trail's Flycatcher	8		1		9
Tree Swallow	2		1		3
Warbling Vireo	6	2	2		10
Western Palm Warbler	5				5
White-crowned Sparrow	2				2
White-throated Sparrow	39			2	41
Yellow Warbler	24	22	12	1	59
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	1				1
Totals	490	89	38	30	647

May 17th to 24th was our busiest week of spring migration, with 248 captures and the highlight captures were a Tree Swallow, a Blue-headed Vireo and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird! Our single busiest day of banding occurred on May 18th when we caught 52 birds of 12 species, including a Gray-cheeked Thrush and a flashy American Redstart. Other notable captures this spring included a hybrid Yellow-rumped Warbler, 2 Blue Jays, and a beautiful male Rufous Hummingbird!

Staff surveyed birds along a standardized census route each day between May 1st and June 9th. 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. These records are posted on eBird. There were many memorable sightings on census this spring. Staff observed numerous flocks of Sandhill Cranes flying right over the lab building. Many raptor species were also present on census with numerous sightings of a Peregrine Falcon and a Merlin was also spotted. Other highlights included, 4 Purple Martins and a Golden-crowned Kinglet recorded on census. There were also hundreds of duck species and gull species observed over Beaverhill Lake this spring.

Other Activities

A huge thanks to Greg Ottway for helping staff install all the new Alberta Park Signs within the Beaverhill Natural Area. Further, a huge thank you goes to Helen and Phil Trefry and Geoff Holroyd for helping supply tools and equipment. Thank you to our volunteer Sonia Vallocchia and Geoff Holroyd for all the extra help with the sign installation as well. The new signs look very professional and polished!

Geoff and Sara organized a meeting with the Town of Tofield and a dozen other organizations to discuss recreating the Snow Goose Festival in 2020. Be ready to enjoy and volunteer as we reinvent this popular event.

Our new bunkhouse was a hive of snoring as many staff and volunteers enjoyed ideal sleeping conditions in the comfortable new building. John Scott was preparing to screen the porch as the mosquitoes appeared.



Left to Right: Greg Ottway, Emily Grose, Sonia Vallocchia, Karambir Singh, and Jeremy Lambe

Student Interns

The BBO is very fortunate to have had 12 student interns this year!! Each group of interns has a mentor, who volunteers their time to ensure their project is successful. BBO board member Laurie Hunt organizes the BBO internship program, which is funded by SCiP (Serving Community internship Program). In early May, Laurie arranged an intern orientation at the lab, which allowed everyone to meet their mentors and get familiarized with their projects.

This year's Tree Swallows interns are Man Yong, Alexis Anderson, Khoi Nguyen, Sara Conner mentored by Sara Pearce Meijerink; Breeding Bird Grid interns Katie Li, Robert Lu, and Sofia Guest are mentored by Geoff Holroyd; House Wren interns Kelly Musgrove and Emily Jamieson are mentored by Emily Grose; Bat interns Emily Halajian and Jessa Mae Gualter are mentored by Erin Low and Lynne Burns; and Butterfly intern Britni Gray is mentored by Steve Andersen.



Student Intern Orientation on May 5th

Great Canadian Birdathon

The BBO staff and volunteers had a fantastic birdathon this year! 87 species were identified in a 24 hour period, starting with banding followed by birding at Amisk Creek, Tofield Llama pond, Elk Island and Whitemud Creek. Further, we had a total of 20 people participate in our birdathon this year which was incredible! Highlights included a Merlin, 17 species of duck, Least Sandpiper, and a Barred Owl. We raised \$2065! Thank you to all who donated and participated! Geoff and Helen also completed a birdathon to support BBO by visiting Amisk Creek, Tofield Llama pond, Elk Island and Lindbrook area, identifying 104 species (between the two of them!) and raising over \$1,000!



The 2019 Beaverhill Bird Nerds Great Canadian Birdathon Team!

Big Birding Breakfast

The Big Birding Breakfast was another enjoyable event with many visitors and eager kids! We had a total of about 73 adults and children on June 1st and 2nd making the breakfast another very successful fundraiser and awareness days for the BBO! Rickie (Northern Saw-whet Owl) entertained guests between net checks and staff completed crafts and played nature games with many kids while Geoff Holroyd and Andra Bismanis took visitors on nature walks. It was an amazing event and it would not be possible without all our intrepid volunteers who are recognized at the end of this report.

Education and Outreach

The BBO education team, led by Sara Pearce Meijerink and Emily Grose, completed 41 off-site presentations in May and 45 off-site presentations in June! The education program really grew this year thus, requiring the BBO to hire two new summer staff, Karambir Singh and Stephanie Thunberg, to help with all the educational presentations. The education

program ran from September 6th, 2018 until June 20th, 2019. Overall, 246 presentations were given to audiences ranging from pre-kindergarten to seniors. Approximately 5734 students and 434 adults from 88 different schools were reached across all of Alberta! Presentation topics focused on climate change, owls of Alberta, and the main threats facing birds.

Staff also gave presentations to non-school groups which reached approximately 13,051 people at 41 different adult and youth group organizations. In addition to presentations BBO staff and volunteers attended 13 outreach events reaching approximately 12,237 people. All of which included our education birds visiting the public! This year we had Rickie our educational Northern Saw-whet Owl, Colonel Slade the Barred Owl and Moxie the Peregrine Falcon! Emily Grose and volunteer Kerry Norman represented BBO for an open house at the Wildbird General Store on May 11th, and Karambir with volunteer Melissa Chisholm interacted with around 250 visitors at Bless Lake for a nature event on May 18th. Emily and Jeremy hosted a homeschool group at the BBO lab for about 20 people and BBO hosted an International World Migratory Bird Day event celebration with Nature Kids at the banding lab for about 16 people. Other groups visited the lab for banding and site visits was Nature Alberta and High School students, plus numerous other individuals and families. Lastly, Helen Trefry produced another interesting spring edition of our newsletter, the Willet!



Left: Emily Grose gave an Owls of AB presentation to daycare.

Right: Sara giving a bird banding demonstration to Stettler Elementary Students.

Acknowledgements

Volunteers make BBO an awesome place to work and are essential to our success. For the Big Birding Breakfast, thank you to Helen Trefry who was the primary organizer of the event; Janos Kovacs, Joan Kovacs, and Zoltia Domahidi for ensuring everyone had great crepes and coffee. Joyce DeGroot for cooking bacon and Al DeGroot for delivering it. Helen Trefry, Geoff Holroyd and Andra Bismanis for donating muffins and other food. Geoff Holroyd for cutting the grass along the trails prior to the event. Sara, Emily, Stephanie, Karambir and Man Yong for setting up, cleaning up, operating the crafts table, and entertaining visitors while banding.

For supporting our day-to-day operations, thank you Al for setting up solar panels and batteries; Geoff for bringing water to fill the rain barrels, filling and delivering propane; Helen Trefry for producing the Willet; Darren Macgregor for maintaining our website; Rose Scott for managing BBO's finances; Irene Crosland for being an awesome field mom to BBO staff; and Sonia Vallocchia for spending 3 weeks with us this spring helping staff with daily operations at the BBO. Thank you to Greg Ottway for coordinating our new Alberta Park Sign installation while he spent a week at BBO.

Thank you to all other BBO volunteers, board members, and interns who visited and helped with banding, maintenance, and other activities. You make our work more enjoyable and are essential to our success! Thank you to **Steve and Kay** from the **Wildbird General Store** for providing us monthly in-kind support in the form of birdseed. We feel humbled by your generosity! Thank you to the **Tofield Library** and the **Trefry's**, as they are the BBO's afternoon office, complete with couches to write reports, and the ability to scan and print.

Finally, the BBO has to extend a massive thank you to our funders. Our 2019 spring operations were made possible by financial support from the Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Liquor and Gaming Commission, the Alberta Community Environment Action Grant Program, Alberta Serving Communities Internship Program (SCiP), Nature Canada's Charles Labatiuk Nature Endowment Fund, Bird Studies Canada's Baillie Fund, Telus Edmonton Community Foundation, TD Friends of the Environment, The Wildbird General Store, Summer Temporary Employment Program, Canada Summer Jobs, Fortis Alberta, Edmonton Oil Kings Hockey Club, Spencer Environmental Management Services Ltd., and personal donations.