

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update May 29 – June 4, 2009

The past week was a bit slower for birds, with only 107 caught, though we still had a nice species diversity to keep things interesting. The Least Flycatchers are making up the majority of our catches now, and one Least Flycatcher was observed carrying nesting material near one of the net lanes, so we look forward to finding nests in the coming weeks!



Willow Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, and Least Flycatcher from left to right, comparing bill size

We had one very fortunate net check where we captured a Willow Flycatcher, an Alder Flycatcher, and a Least Flycatcher all at once. These species all belong in the genus *Empidonax*, a group of flycatchers that look so similar that sometimes they can only be differentiated when they sing. By catching all three at once we were able to compare them in the hand, which was quite an opportunity!

We also caught a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak that had a brood patch¹ this week, indicating she is either sitting on eggs or will be soon. We watched the Ruby-throated Hummingbird doing a very interesting dance among the bushes, flying straight up then down and out to the side, over and over again. We assumed this behaviour was a type of display for a female which may have been perched nearby evaluating the performance.

Non-bird detections this week included the discovery of a few Pale Coralroot Orchids near one of the staff bunkhouses, it is a delicate little plant with very tiny flowers. We were also excited to find a Plains Garter Snake along the Weir. I had never seen one at BBO, though they have been spotted before. This individual appeared to be molting its skin when we saw it.



Pale coralroot orchid



Some attendees of the 2009 Big Birding Breakfast

This round of migration monitoring also included the annual Big Birding Breakfast, and we were thrilled to have Janos Kovacs out making his fabulous crepes and bacon – we don't eat like that every day out here! Approximately 25 people attended, with a good proportion of them being children. We spent most of the day indoctrinating future ornithologists... BBO Board members that were able to attend the event included Matt, Geoff, Chuck and Lisa, Margaret, Al and James. It was great to see them all out visiting and appreciating the birds!

¹ Loss of feathers on the underside of the bird that allows for more direct transfer of heat to the eggs.

Table 1. Results from Spring Migration Monitoring May 29 – June 4, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Foreign ³	Other ⁴	Total
Alder Flycatcher	2	0	0	0	0	2
American Goldfinch	2	0	0	0	0	2
American Redstart	3	0	0	0	0	3
American Robin	2	0	0	0	0	2
Baltimore Oriole	4	1	1	0	0	6
Black-capped Chickadee	1	0	0	0	0	1
Clay-colored Sparrow	10	2	0	0	1	13
House Wren	5	1	0	0	1	7
Least Flycatcher	17	11	5	0	1	34
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1	0	0	0	0	1
Swainson's Thrush	9	0	0	0	3	12
Traill's Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	1	2
Warbling Vireo	2	2	1	0	0	5
Willow Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	1
Yellow Warbler	4	7	4	0	1	16
Total	64	24	11	0	8	107

Net Hours: 269.5 NH

Capture Rate: 39.70 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).



Top Left: House Wren, Top Right: Warbling Vireo, Bottom Left: Baltimore Oriole, Bottom Right: American Redstart.