



## Beaverhill Bird Observatory BirdSmart Education Report 2022/2023

By: Jon Van Arragon  
May 30, 2023

The 2022/2023 BirdSmart season was once again a resounding success! A total of 212 presentations were given from November 19, 2022 to April 27, 2023. These presentations reached nearly 17,500 students and over 1,100 adults, representing a 350% increase over the 2021/2022 season's totals! 187 (88.2%) of this year's presentations were given to schools. Grades 1-3 and 4-6 were the most frequently booked presentations with 73 and 59 presentations, respectively.

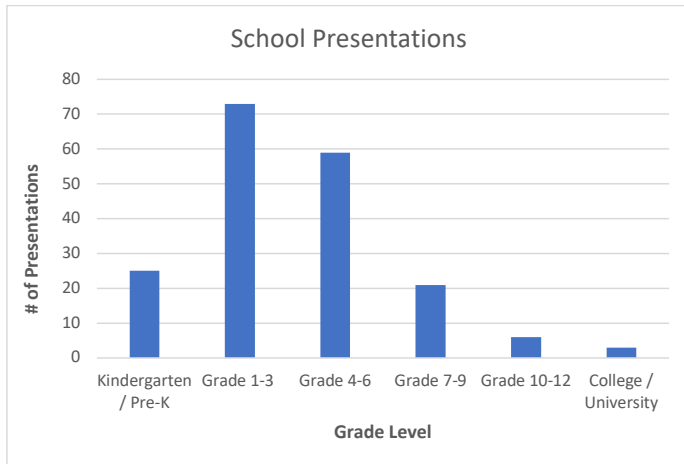


Figure 1: Total number of school presentations for each grade level

While the majority of presentations this year were in-person, staff continued taking bookings for virtual presentations to offer increased flexibility to teachers. 218 presentations were given in-person, with only 4 being given as virtual presentations. The flexibility offered by virtual presentations allowed the BirdSmart Education program to reach students in Fort McMurray despite the distance from Edmonton.

While schools are the primary focus of our education program, 25 (11.8%) of this year's presentations were given to non-school groups. This included after-school groups like Scouts and Girl Guides, senior centers (Shepherd's Care, Excel Society), in-store events (Urban Bird, Wild Birds Unlimited), community events (hockey games, Snow Goose Festival), and private bookings (birthday parties, meet and greets).

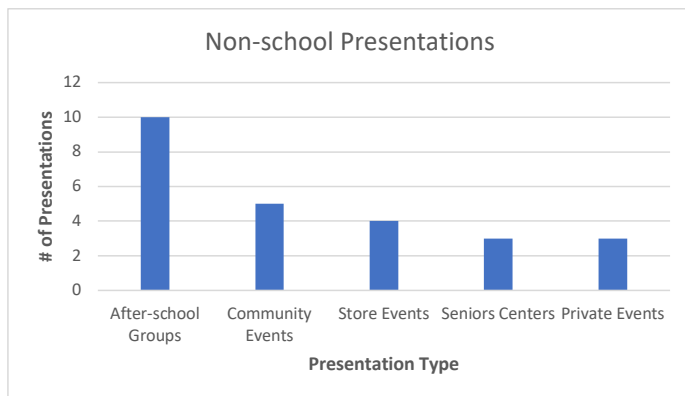


Figure 2: Total numbers of non-school presentations for each presentation type

The BirdSmart Education program was able to participate in the Edmonton Oil King's Hockey Hooky event once again this year! Head biologist, Jana Teefy, and assistant biologist, Jon Van Arragon, went on stage to present to an arena filled with over 12,000 students of all ages. Jana did an interview to talk about the Beaverhill Bird Observatory's monitoring programs, and Jon gave a talk about Peregrine Falcon conservation. Both talks were extremely well received, and multiple teachers cited these talks as the reason why they booked a presentation afterwards.



Figure 3: Jon and Maple present at Hockey Hooky

[Beaverhill Bird Observatory staff also did interviews with various news organizations throughout the winter to reach a wider audience about birds and conservation. Interview topics included the BirdSmart Education Program, the return of the Snow Goose Festival, the Christmas Bird Count, and the impact of climate change on birds. Our chair of the board, Geoff Holroyd, gave 8 such interviews throughout the winter season. Head biologist Jana Teefy and](#)

[assistant biologist Jon Van Arragon also did one interview each. While the number of people reached by these interviews is unknown, the Beaverhill Bird Observatory's role in organizing and promoting the Snow Goose Festival resulted in over 1000 people attending the festival in April 2023!](#)

The BirdSmart Education program reached students across the province including Alder Flats, Beaumont, Calmar, Camrose, Cooking Lake, Drayton Valley, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Fort Saskatchewan, Gibbons, Hastings Lake, Lac La Biche, Leduc, Red Deer, Sedgewick, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove, St. Albert, Stony Plain, Swan Hills, Tofield, Wainwright, Westlock, and Winfield.

This year's presenters were outgoing head biologist, Sara Pearce Meijerink, current head biologist, Jana Teefy, and assistant biologist, Jon Van Arragon. They were joined by educational ambassador birds Remy, the American Kestrel, and Maple, the Peregrine Falcon. Nathaniel Hak also worked behind the scenes to coordinate bookings, scheduling, and invoicing for the presentations.



Figure 4: Jana and Remy present at the Shepherd's Care Seniors Center

After each presentation, teachers received a link to a survey where they could give feedback on the talk. Feedback for this year's presentations was overwhelmingly positive. 100% of survey respondents said they would book another presentation with BBO in the future, and 100% of respondents also said they would recommend the BirdSmart program to other teachers. BirdSmart Education is increasingly being recognized as a classroom resource, with many teachers booking presentations year after year.

Q9 Would you participate in BBO's educational program again?

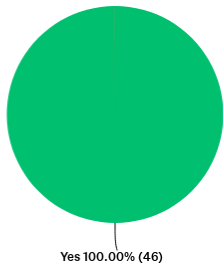


Figure 5: Number of survey respondents who would participate in the BirdSmart program again.

Q8 Would you recommend BBO's educational program to other teachers?

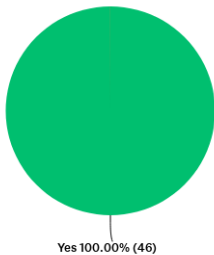


Figure 6: Number of survey respondents who would recommend BirdSmart to other teachers.

**Sample Survey Responses:**

*Jon was hilarious and personable. he did great with grade 8s who ask on topic and off topic questions :) I'm so glad we learned about you guys and would totally have you back.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ - Black Gold Schools

*I recommend you to everyone!!! You guys are amazing and the work you do is so important!!!*  
\_\_\_\_\_ - Backyard Birds Nature Shop

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*Thank you so much! The presentation was fabulous! Jon was fantastic! He knew so much about Falcons and other birds and animals as well. He did a wonderful job of presenting in an engaging manner for the grade level. He was excellent at answering questions and differing students who were sharing stories instead of asking questions, which is a hard thing for some kids! They love the bookmarks and many have put their picture of Remy up somewhere special to "remember him". We will definitely reach out again next year and would love to book another presentation. Thank you so much!*

\_\_\_\_\_ - Father Leduc Catholic School

*We were all enthralled with Maple and the information Jana had for us!*

\_\_\_\_\_ - Brentwood School

*Absolutely the best "in-school" presentation that offered excellent information. Each grade was presented with the appropriate topics that complimented the Alberta Curricular expectations.*

\_\_\_\_\_ - Westlock School

*Jana was lovely and answered all of the residents' questions. She was engaging and knowledgeable around the presentation and gave additional information in regard to other birds located throughout Alberta. Jana was friendly and engaging with our senior residents.*

\_\_\_\_\_ - Shepherd's Care Foundation

*We are so pleased to have BBO visit our store. They are professional and knowledgeable. Their love of birds and nature is infectious, and everyone leaves having had a unique interaction with a beautiful bird.*

\_\_\_\_\_ - Wild Birds Unlimited

This winter's BirdSmart Education Program was subsidized by the Edmonton Community Foundation's Environmental Operating Grant Charter which allowed us to offer presentations at much reduced cost. This BirdSmart Education program was also funded by the Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Commission, and TD Friends of the Environment, for which we are thankful. The Beaverhill Bird Observatory also thanks all our other funders who support our year-round activities: Alberta Conservation Association, Beaver County, Canada Summer Jobs, Bass Pro Shops and Cabella's Outdoor Fund, Birds Canada's Birdathon, Claystone Waste Ltd., Edmonton Nature Club, Employment and Social Development Canada, Engineering Link Incorporated, Nature Canada's Charles Labatiuk Nature Endowment Fund, TD Friends of the Environment Fund, Wild Bird General Store, and Nickle Family Foundation

The BBO would like to thank our presenters Jana Teefy, Sara Pearce Meijerink, and Jon Van Arragon for all their hard work this season. We must also thank our ambassador birds, Maple and Remy, for making our presentations as memorable as they are. We also extend a special thanks to Bill and Inger Paulsen, Billy and Wendy Teefy, and Geoff Holroyd for their assistance in transporting our education birds in and out of Edmonton. And finally, we would like to

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extend a hearty thank you to Phil and Helen Trefry for all they do daily for housing and taking care of our ambassador birds year-round.