



Beaverhill Bird Observatory

BirdSmart Education Report 2024/2025

By: Xavier Quantz

May 11, 2025

Another successful season of BirdSmart presentations has come and gone! Our first presentation was on November 19, 2024, and we gave our final one on April 26, 2024. Between those dates, 339 presentations were given to 132 different organizations (Figure 1). These presentations allowed the BirdSmart presenters to reach over 7,500 students and almost 2,500 adults for a total of just over 10,000 attendees.



Figure 1. A BirdSmart presentation being given to a large group at Onoway Public Library.

Comparing the 2023/2024 BirdSmart season to 2024/2025 shows an increase of 75 more presentations this year. Despite this, we reached almost 10,000 more individuals during the previous season because BirdSmart presentations were given at Hockey Hookey last year. However, when Hockey Hookey numbers are not considered, we reached about 3,000 more people this year.

Eighty-three percent of this year's presentations were given in schools because BirdSmart presentations have strong curriculum links and, as such, work well in classrooms (see Figure 2). This doesn't mean that BirdSmart only works in schools, however. BirdSmart presentations were also delivered at birthday parties, Boy Scouts and Girl Guide groups, nature shops, long-term care facilities, libraries, online, and many other organizations (see Figure 3).

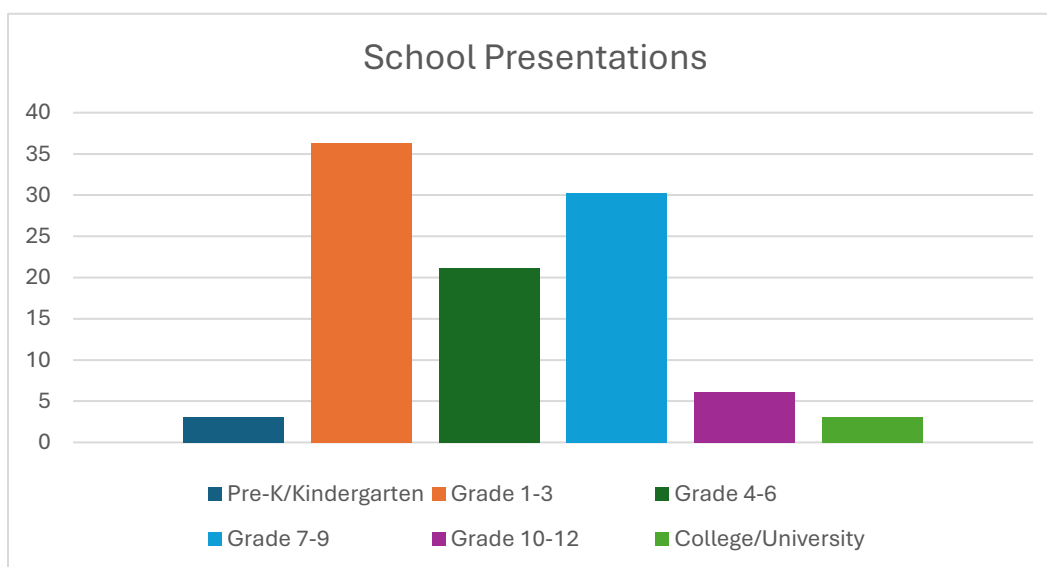


Figure 2. Proportion of school presentations given to several grade categories.

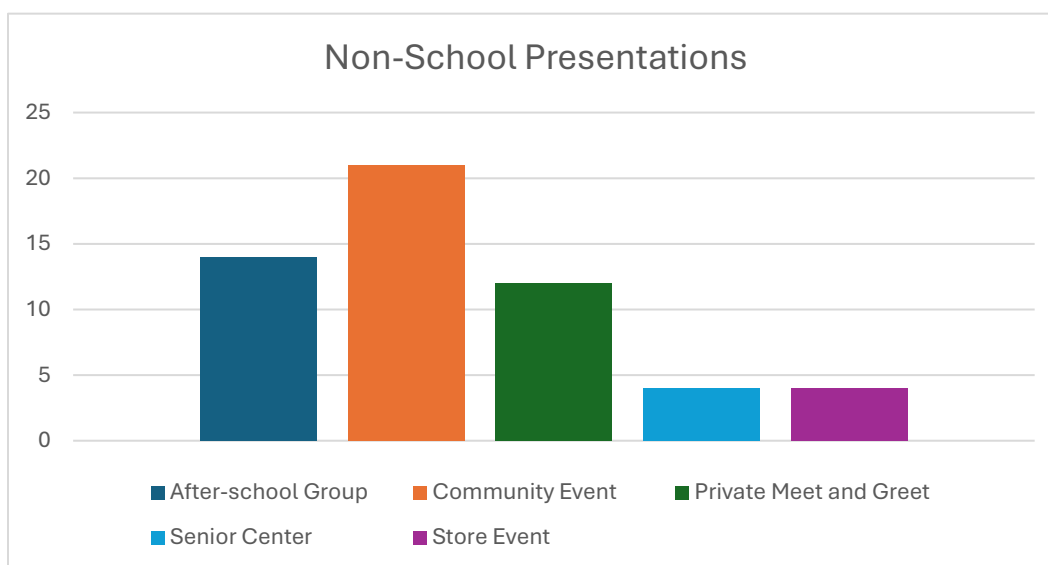


Figure 3. Breakdown of the non-school presentations.

The same suite of presentations from previous seasons were offered this season, with some slight adjustments to address changes to Alberta K-6 curriculum. First, the presentations *Birds in Flight* and *Adaptations for Flight* were combined into one presentation. Second, two new presentations were created: *Birds and Body Systems* as well as *Birds and Migration*.



Figure 4. Emelie and Nina the Burrowing Owl working together to give a presentation.

Once again, this season's BirdSmart presentations were also offered in French, with many thanks to volunteer Jay Froese. While only 6 of these presentations were booked, we are hopeful that more French language schools will book our presentations in the coming seasons.

BirdSmart received grants from Beaver County and Battle River Community Foundation to subsidize travel to the Battle River School Division for this season. This, in addition to an anonymous donor and our increased staff, allowed us to continue improving the reach of BirdSmart throughout rural Alberta. This season, 34% of our presentations were located outside of the immediate Edmonton area. Comparing this number to 28% last season and 21% the season before shows the consistent expansion of BirdSmart.

This year's BirdSmart presenters included the BBO staff Jana Teefy, Jon Van Arragon, Emelie Dykstra (Figure 4), Xavier Quantz (Figure 6), and Willow Zilliox. BBO Chair Geoff Holroyd also gave 28 presentations, two of which Vice-Chair Helen Trefry assisted with. Our Volunteer Julia Froese gave our French presentations. The ambassador birds that accompanied each presenter were Keith the Red-tailed Hawk, Tansi the Great Horned Owl, Nina the Burrowing Owl, and Kali the Prairie Falcon (see Figure 5).



Figure 5. Our four educational ambassador birds (from left to right and from quietest to noisiest): Keith, Tansi, Nina, and Kali. (Photo credits: Johane Jenelle, Emelie Dykstra, Chris Stambaugh, and Jana Teefy)

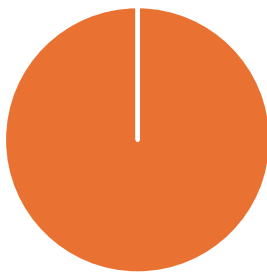
Organizations across Alberta hosted BirdSmart this season. These organizations were based out of Barrhead, Beaumont, Beaver County, Bon Accord, Bragg Creek, Breton, Calgary, Calmar, Camrose, Castor, Chestermere, Cochrane, Cooking Lake, Drayton Valley, Edmonton, Falun, Fort Saskatchewan, Grande Prairie, Hastings Lake, Hinton, Lac La Biche, Lacombe, Mini Thni, New Sarepta, Onoway, Parkland County, Plamondon, Sherwood Park, Smoky Lake, Spruce Grove, St. Albert, Stony Plain, Strathcona County, Tofield, Vegreville, Wabasca, and Warberg.



Figure 6. Xavier and Tansi teaching the students of Barrhead about bird conservation.

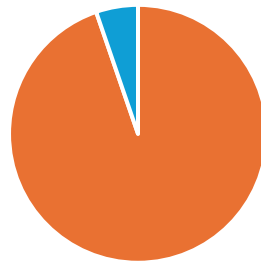
After each presentation, the organization received a questionnaire-style survey about the BirdSmart presentations. All replies to the questions showed the positive experience of the participant organization. All respondents would recommend BBO's education program to other teachers (Figure 7). All but 5% said they would participate in our educational program again (Figure 8), but we don't know why some would not. Almost all respondents (97%) felt that the presentations increase students understanding of the subject.

Participants were asked for additional comments and feedback. Our BirdSmart staff were given excellent reviews, some examples are included on page 6 of this report.



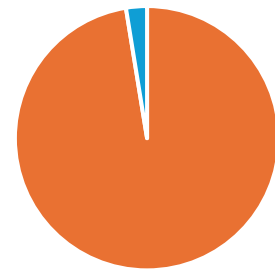
■ Yes (100%)

Figure 7. Responses to the question "Would you recommend BBO's educational program to other teachers?"



■ Yes (95%) ■ Maybe (5%)

Figure 8. Responses to the question "Would you participate in BBO's educational program again?"



■ Yes (97%) ■ Not Applicable (3%)

Figure 9. Responses to the question "Did you feel that the presentation increased students' understanding of the subject matter?"

Additional Comments and Feedback:

“Great Presentation! Students were engaged for the entire hour. Ample time to ask questions. Slides were helpful to give the students visual of the different owls. Definitely would have presentation visit the school next year.”

-New Sarepta Elementary School

“BBO Has presented for us the last 3 years and it has always been a quality presentation.”

-Spruce Grove Composite High School

“It was a wonderful day! So much excitement in the classroom and school!”

-Battle River School Division

“It was a great presentation! The presenter was very good with the age level and was able to share a lot of information with the students and answer their questions! Being able to see the owl up close was a cool experience for the students!”

-Meyonohk School

“This was a great presentation, and I will book as many different presentations as I can. I have shared with other teachers how great it was.”

-St John XXIII Catholic School

Acknowledgements:

This BirdSmart season was made possible by the hard work of our presenters, volunteers, and ambassador birds. Our excellent presenters were Head Biologist Jana Teefy, and Assistant Biologists Jon Van Arragon, Emelie Dykstra, and Xavier Quantz. Our vital volunteers included Julia Froese, Matt Halfacre, and Willow Zilliox, who gave presentations and assisted with large events. Our ambassador birds were housed at Helen and Phil Trefry's farm and, without their help, we wouldn't be able to include these birds in our presentations. We also had several volunteers help with transporting our raptors from the Trefry's farm into the city. These volunteers were Bill and Inger Paulsen, Christie Campbell, Geoff Holroyd, and Billy Teefy.



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