



**Beaverhill Bird Observatory
Spring Report 2025**

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Introduction

Spring at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory was busy, including a successful spring Migration Monitoring season, and many public banding events. The spring also brought the beginning of staff and intern surveys, as well as nestling banding. Overseeing BBO activities were Head Biologist Jana Teefy, supported by Assistant Biologist Jon Van Arragon, and field biologists Xavier Quantz, Emelie Dykstra, and Willow Zilliox. El Whitby, a long-term volunteer, stayed on-site for the duration of Migration Monitoring. Tansi the Great-horned Owl, Nina the Burrowing Owl and Keith the Red-tailed Hawk spent time at the observatory, engaging the public and assisting in educating visitors.



Keith the Red-tailed Hawk

This spring, the BBO staff hosted a variety of events. Kicking off the season was the Snow Goose Festival, on April 26th and 27th, where BBO staff greeted tour groups on their way through the natural area and offered information at the Snow Goose Festival trade show. On May 10th, the staff welcomed visitors on site for World Migratory Bird Day. On May 20th, the staff and volunteers completed a Big Birding Day, encouraging the public to follow along on eBird and social media. On May 31st and June 1st, the BBO hosted the much-anticipated Big Birding Breakfast, serving a crepe breakfast to enjoy between banding demonstrations and activities. Throughout May and June, songbird banding events occurred on the weekend, welcoming new and returning visitors to learn more about bird banding and the BBO.

Staff-run projects have all kicked off. Jon completed the first Shorebird Surveys, Xavier began the Breeding Bird Census, Emelie started monitoring Least Flycatcher nest sites, and Willow commenced Marsh Monitoring surveys. In addition to staff projects, nine post-secondary student interns have begun six projects in the natural area. Long-term nest monitoring projects of Tree Swallows, Northern House Wrens, and Purple Martins are back underway, along with population monitoring projects of butterflies, bats, and breeding grassland birds.



Least Flycatcher sitting on her nest

Migration Monitoring

Spring Migration Monitoring commenced on May 1st, banding every day possible until June 9th. Banding began half an hour before sunrise, lasting for six hours. Nets were open to capture birds only in safe conditions, where there was no inclement weather (such as precipitation, winds over 20km/hour), and temperatures between 0°C and 27°C.



Western Palm Warbler

17 nets were operational for migration banding, situated in young deciduous forest, dominated by trembling aspen and balsam poplar, with sparse underbrush, as well as at the edge between forest and grassland, dominated by willows. Weather was cooperative this spring, despite some high-wind events occurring periodically throughout May. Between May 1 and June 9, 909 birds were caught in 3,038.5 net hours, for a rate of 29.9 birds per 100 net hours (Table 1.). 651 birds (71.6% of captures) were newly banded, and 247 birds (27.2% of captures) were caught with a band already on.

Notable captures included warblers arriving in their beautiful spring plumage. Western Palm Warbler, several Canada Warblers, and a Bay-breasted warbler were especially pleasant visitors. Interestingly, the first bird caught for the season was a Sharp-shinned Hawk, one of two that were caught during migration monitoring. As expected, the top three most frequently captures species were the Least Flycatcher (196 captures, 21.6% of total captures), Yellow Warbler (169 captures, 18.6% of total captures), and Clay-coloured Sparrow (165 captures, 18.2% of total captures). These frequent breeders arrived in familiarly high numbers, together accounting for over half of total spring captures (58.3%).

Compared to last spring, our nets captured only nine more birds, despite having 819 more net hours. Capture rates dropped from 40.5 captures per 100 net hours to 29.9 captures per 100 net hours. This is reflective of the more consistently good weather and steady banding in 2025, compared to the heavy rains in 2024 that led to fewer, busier days.



Clay-coloured Sparrow

Events

The Snow Goose Festival kicked off BBO's event season on April 26th and 27th. A shuttle bus delivered 98 visitors in 13 trips from the Tofield Arena to the Natural Area parking lot. Staff and volunteers guided the tours on their way through the natural area, demonstrating banding despite the slow, pre-migration capture rates. Other guided bus tours took visitors around Beaver County in pursuit of migrating Snow Geese. The BBO hosted a booth at the Snow Goose trade show, along with 16 other vendors, to offer information and interactions with Nina the Burrowing Owl and Keith the Red-tailed Hawk. The Saturday night banquet featured Wes Olson's presentation and a silent auction to raise funds for the festival.

Through May and early June, Beaverhill Bird Observatory welcomed visitors for six ticketed songbird banding events, where guests could watch BBO biologists complete mist net checks, banding, and processing birds. All guests were also introduced to our education ambassador birds on site, with opportunities to take photos and ask questions.

In addition to these bird banding events, the BBO hosted the annual Big Birding Breakfasts on May 31st and June 1st. Guests were served a crepe breakfast and were able to observe banding throughout the morning. BBO staff, volunteers, and board members also facilitated other activities, such as kids' crafts, face painting, and window drawing to prevent bird collisions, as well as a feather toss for nesting Tree Swallows. Over 100 guests were in attendance over the two days, making this year's Big Birding Breakfasts another successful event!



Kids participating in window drawing at an event

The BBO welcomed guests for a free World Migratory Bird Day event on May 10th, adhering to this year's theme: Shared Spaces: Creating Bird-Friendly Cities and Communities. BBO staff offered educational materials, window-drawing activities, bird banding demonstrations, and a feather toss for the Tree Swallows.

Nestling Banding

BBO maintains over 200 nest boxes in and around the Beaverhill Natural Area. Nestling banding offers a chance to collect important data on our breeding birds. This spring, BBO staff and volunteers banded one nest box of Northern Saw-whet Owls. Four owl nestlings were banded, as well as the female, who was aged as a third year.



Baby Northern Saw-whet Owl

Volunteers

The BBO relies heavily on the contributions of volunteers to keep operations running smoothly. Thanks to the BBO chair Geoff Holroyd, co-chair Helen Trefry, and the board of directors for helping with various operations and working hard behind the scenes to keep the BBO running smoothly. Special thanks as well to Janos, Geoff, Helen, Carmen, Christie, and Sian, who were tremendous help in facilitating Big Birding Breakfast. We would like to extend special thanks to El Whitby who volunteered for the entirety of the spring season and was invaluable during her stay. Thank you to Patrick, Julia, Gabby, Mariana, Charlotte, Elyse, Kelsey, Stefanie, and Matt, for their help with banding operations.

Table 1. Spring migration 2025 net totals:

<i>Species Name</i>	Banded	Foreign¹	Repeat²	Return³	Unbanded⁴	Grand Total
American Goldfinch	6			1		7
American Redstart	12					12
American Robin	15		3	2	1	21
Baltimore Oriole	30	1	28	4	1	64
Bay-breasted Warbler	1					1
Black-and-white Warbler	1					1
Black-capped Chickadee	1		4	7		12
Blackpoll Warbler	1					1
Brown-headed Cowbird	7		5	2		14
Canada Warbler	2					2
Chipping Sparrow	17					17
Clay-colored Sparrow	137		20	5	3	165
Common Yellowthroat	11					11
Downy Woodpecker	1		2			3
Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow	1					1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1					1
Gray Catbird	4					4

Gray-cheeked Thrush	6					6
Least Flycatcher	131	45	17	3		196
Lincoln's Sparrow	9					9
Magnolia Warbler	3					3
Mourning Warbler	5					5
Myrtle Warbler	11					11
Northern House Wren	15	4	1			20
Northern Waterthrush	2					2
Orange-crowned Warbler	2					2
Philadelphia Vireo	1					1
Red-eyed Vireo	2			1		3
Red-winged Blackbird	5		1			6
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2	2	1			5
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1					1
Ruby-throated Hummingbird				1		1
Savannah Sparrow	2					2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2					2
Slate-colored Junco	1					1
Song Sparrow	8					8
Swainson's Thrush	49					49

Tennessee Warbler	4					4
Traill's Flycatcher	12					12
Tree Swallow	10		2	1		13
Unspecified Yellow-rumped Warbler	3					3
Warbling Vireo	6		2	5		13
Western Palm Warbler	1					1
White-throated Sparrow	17		2			19
Yellow Warbler	92		54	22	1	169
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1		2	2		5
Grand Total	651	1	175	71	11	909

3038.5 net-hours

29.9 captures/100 net-hours

1 - banded 90 or fewer days ago, at the BBO

2 - banded over 90 days ago, at the BBO

3 - banded at a location other than the BBO

4 - caught but not banded (e.g. escaped)



The Beaverhill Bird Observatory is a proud member of the Beaver County and Tofield communities. We thank our many supporters and funders that are shown below plus donations made in memory of Mary Hughes Weir, John Honsaker, and from the Wainwright Wildlife Society. Visit www.beaverhillbirds.com for more information.

