



Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Annual Report 2025

By Jana Teefy

With contributions from Jon Van Arragon, Emelie
Dykstra, Xavier Quantz, Willow Zilliox and Geoff
Holroyd.

January 13, 2025

Notes from BBO Chair, Geoff Holroyd

2025 was another busy, successful year at BBO. Our BirdSmart and Public events told more people than ever about birds and bird conservation. Our environmental impact grows each year. You can read all about the many research activities that we completed with the help of amazing staff and dedicated interns and volunteers. We are now exploring our over 40 years of data to learn about changes in the bird world, often driven by climate change. This data is available on national sites such as NatureCounts, eBird, iNaturalist, Bird Banding Lab and Institute for Bird Populations where researchers are analysing changes as we track climate and human impacts on our birds. Recognition of our efforts were highlighted by the Edmonton Community Foundation's National Philanthropy Day 2025. The ECF's operational grant has allowed us to add another staff member to expand our year-round activities. Our growing Endowment Fund in ECF is also adding to our annual income as well as securing BBO's funding future. And your amazing personal donations are the funding foundation of BBO's budget. THANK YOU. You can read about all these activities below. As a BBO member you are key to our survival and growth. Thank you for supporting BBO and I hope to see you at our field station in the summer. Think Globally, Act Locally.



Geoff in search of flamingos in Colombia

Notes from Head Biologist, Jana Teefy

The 2025 field season flew by in a flash! This year's staff was exceptional. Jon, Emelie, Xavier, and Willow – you are all incredible human beings and an absolute joy to work with. Your unique skills complement each other, and your dedication and kindness made even the busiest days a pleasure. I'm grateful for what we achieved this year, and for the experiences we shared along the way. Thank you.

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory continues to grow in both reach and ambition. With nearly 30 projects on the go, increased visitor turnout, and rising demand for events, workshops, and training opportunities, the pressure on staff capacity has grown alongside our success. Thankfully, this season benefited from four returning permitted staff and a dedicated group of short and long-term volunteers. Their experience and commitment helped us meet these demands while maintaining the quality of our research and public programming.

Operational improvements continue to strengthen our day-to-day work. The transition to digital data entry has significantly improved efficiency, and the development of our volunteer training program has been a major step forward. The positive feedback we've received and the noticeable increase in volunteer confidence and skill have been encouraging.

Each year comes with new opportunities. I was also honoured to contribute as an instructor in a Motus workshop in Mackenzie, BC, this year and to participate in the CMMN meeting at Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario, both of which reinforced the value of collaboration and inclusive leadership in our field.



Jana and Jewels

It continues to be a privilege to be part of the BBO community. I value the connections made with our staff, board, volunteers, interns, members, and visitors, and I am grateful for the trust placed in me as Head Biologist. I strive to create a work environment that is collaborative, inclusive, and supportive.

Looking ahead to 2026, my focus is on continuing to strengthen the foundation we have built by supporting our staff and volunteers, refining our programs, and expanding meaningful public engagement. By continuing to invest in training, collaboration, and thoughtful research, I am confident the BBO will remain a strong and effective organization in the years to come. Jewels and I look forward to what lies ahead.



Jana and Keith

List of 2025 Executive, Staff, and Contact Information

Board	Position	Year
Geoff Holroyd	Chair	1984
Helen Trefry	Vice Chair	2014
Rose Scott	Treasurer	2016
Christie Campbell	Director at Large Fundraising	2022
Darren McGregor	Director at Large Web Designer	2005
Emily Gross	Director at Large Keela	2020
Julianne Hayes	Director at Large Willet Editor	2019
Glen Hvenegaard	Treasurer	2020
Alyssa Bohart	Director at Large	2018
Warren Finlay	Director at Large Willet Editor	2022
Brendan Casey	Director at Large	2022
Richard Hedley	Director at Large	2022
Sian Ford	Director at Large	2024
Carmen Patry	Director at Large	2024
Staff	Position	Year
Jana Teefy	Head Biologist	2021
Jon Van Arragon	Assistant Biologist	2020
Xavier Quantz	Seasonal Biologist	2024
Emelie Dykstra	Seasonal Biologist	2024
Willow Zilliox	Seasonal Biologist	2025

Contact Information:

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Jana Teefy, Head Biologist – biologist@beaverhillbirds.com

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Overview

BBO's 2025 field season officially started on May 1, 2025. Overseeing BBO field activities were Head Biologist Jana Teefy, supported by Assistant Biologist Jon Van Arragon, and field biologists Xavier Quantz, Emelie Dykstra, and Willow Zilliox, the majority of whom were returning staff with banding permits!

Spring and Fall Songbird Migration Monitoring (May 1st to June 9th and July 20th to October 20th), MAPS monitoring (June 10th to August 9th), and Owl Migration Monitoring (September 1st to November 6th) were all successfully completed. Nestling banding took place over the summer as well, which included Tree Swallows, Purple Martins, and Saw-whet Owls. This season, we captured a total of 4506 songbirds, 4015 of which were new bands, 411 were recaptures, 385 were nestlings. Owl captures were a record low this year with 4 Long-eared Owls, all new bands, and 165 new bands, 6 recaptures, and 6 foreign recaptures for a total of 181 Northern Saw-whet Owls.

Staff monitoring projects include Shorebird Surveys, Breeding Bird Census, Least Flycatcher breeding biology, and Marsh Monitoring surveys. In addition to staff projects, the BBO hosted 9 student interns who conducted long-term monitoring of the Tree Swallow and House Wren nest boxes, Grassland Breeding Bird Census, bats, and butterfly projects. No new MOTUS projects were run this year; however, our MOTUS station continues to detect birds, and Jana was invited to teach the Northern Saw-whet Owl backpack harness technique at a Birds Canada Motus workshop in Mackenzie, BC this fall.

In early July, a new shower, dubbed the "Bison Wallow" was implemented at the BBO! It was kindly constructed by Wes Olson with help from Johane Janelle Geoff Holroyd and Helen Trefry.

This season, the BBO hosted over 1900 visitors and school groups. The Snow Goose Festival in late April kicked off our event season, and we were pleased to, once again, host World Migratory Bird Day, Big Birding Day, Big Birding Breakfast, weekly spring and fall songbird events, fall owl events, and the 9th annual Geoff Holroyd's Young Ornithologists' Workshop.

The field season ended on November 6th, just ahead of the year's first big snowfall. Geoff, Jana, and Jon also had the privilege of attending the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network meeting in Port Rowan, Ontario, after the field season concluded.

In addition to field-based monitoring, BBO's education and outreach efforts continued over the winter with our 2024/25 BirdSmart season, including 339 total presentations given to 132 different organizations, allowing the BirdSmart presenters to reach over 7,500 students and almost 2,500 adults for a total of just over 10,000 attendees between November 19, 2024, and April 26, 2025.



BBO staff Xavier Quantz, Jon Van Arragon, Willow Zilliox, Emelie Dykstra, and Jana Teefy



Education Ambassador, Keith, the Red-tailed Hawk

Songbird Migration Monitoring

Spring MM

Spring Migration Monitoring began 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.

17 nets were operational for migration banding, with nets in the aspen forest and grassland habitats along the south edge of Beaverhill Lake, plus a daily census to monitor migrants moving through the natural area. The weather was cooperative this spring, despite some high-wind events, allowing for a total of 909 birds captured in 3038.5 net hours for a total capture rate of 29.9 birds/100 net hours. Of those, 651 birds (71.6%) were newly banded, and 247 birds (27.2%) were within-season and between-season recaptures.

Surprisingly, the first bird caught for the season was a Sharp-shinned Hawk, one of two that were caught during Spring Migration Monitoring. Other notable captures included Western Palm Warblers, Canada



Western Palm Warbler

Warblers, and a Bay-breasted Warbler arriving in their beautiful spring plumage. As expected, the top three most frequently captured species were the Least Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, and Clay-coloured, together accounting for 58.3% of total spring captures.

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 in 2024 to 29.9 captures per 100 net hours this year. While the weather was more cooperative compared to the heavy rains in 2024, the lack of rain led to the drying of Beaverhill Lake early in the season, likely affecting migration patterns and routes of waterbirds.

Fall MM

Fall songbird migration monitoring operated from July 20th to October 20th, again with 17 mist nets and a daily census. This fall, a total of 2958 birds were captured in 6877 net-hours for a total capture rate of 43.0 birds/100 net-hours. Captures were substantially higher than the previous year, when only 2267 birds were captured over roughly the same number of net-hours. However, fewer species were trapped this year, with only 60 species compared to 65 in fall 2024. Myrtle Warblers, Least Flycatchers, and Yellow Warblers were most frequently captured species.

Nevertheless, this year's fall Migration Monitoring was an interesting one. From the beginning of the season until the end of August, captures were



Sharp-shinned Hawk, the first bird of the season



Clay Colored Sparrow

unusually low. Common species, like Yellow Warblers, Clay-colored Sparrows, and Least Flycatchers, appeared in lower numbers compared to previous years. Despite the slow start, capture volume rebounded significantly in September, thanks almost entirely to a single species – the humble Myrtle Warbler, whose captures for this year were above and beyond the usual. A total of 1261 Myrtle Warblers were captured this fall (compared to 481 Myrtles in 2024), a whopping 42.6% of our total capture volume, most of which were captured during the first 2 weeks of September. During this timeframe, we averaged 100 birds each morning, with our busiest day being September 10th where we captured 176 birds - 140 in a single net check, and 120 of which were Myrtle Warblers!



Bird waiting for bands after a single net check



Mountain White-crowned Sparrow

Given the low species total at 60, it is unsurprising that we didn't have any exceptionally rare or unusual captures. Some of our highlights were a Connecticut Warbler, a Nashville Warbler, a handful of Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, and a Mountain White-crowned Sparrow. White-crowned Sparrows are a common fall capture at the BBO, but typically we catch the Gambel's subspecies that breeds widely across the boreal forest, whereas the Mountain subspecies breed in the Rocky Mountains. This subspecies is distinguished by its black lores, compared to the pale gray lores of the Gambel's subspecies. While the difference is subtle, it was an interesting rarity to document!

MAPS Monitoring



A young Yellow Warbler banded at SOPO station

Standard banding operations this season once again included the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program, which collects data on the locally breeding birds in the natural area. MAPS monitoring has occurred annually at the BBO since 1989, commencing each year on June 10th and continuing until August 8th. BBO has three MAPS monitoring stations: Sora Pond (SOPO) by the weir, Lister Lake (LILA) by the lookout, and at the BBO Lab (BLAB) south of the main building. Banding occurs once at each station over 10-day periods using 10 mist nets at standardized locations that are 12m long by 2.6m tall and have a mesh size of 30mm. Nets are opened at sunrise, checked every 30 minutes, and operated for 6 hours for a total of 60 net-hours per day under ideal conditions. A minimum effort of 30 net hours is allowable should weather conditions such as strong winds, precipitation, and temperatures above 27°C become unsafe for the birds and prevent full hours from being achieved. All rounds of the 3 stations were successfully completed this year with 455 new bands, 189 recaptures, and 33 species for a total of 656 captures in 926.5 net hours and a capture rate of 70.8 captures/100nh.

BBO Lab (BLAB)

The BLAB station shares the aspen forests with our migration and owl banding nets, with the nets located mostly south of the Migration Monitoring nets. BLAB was run on June 12th, 21st, July 1st, 12th, 22nd, and 30th, amassing 292.5 total net-hours this season and 80 total captures for the season and 15 species. The species most frequently captured were Least Flycatchers (42), American Robin (11), Warbling Vireo (6), Yellow Warbler (6). A Ruby-throated Hummingbird was captured and despite being released unbanded, was still a beautiful sight. BLAB's low productivity is unsurprising as the surrounding forest canopy has grown well beyond the net height with natural forest succession.

Sora Pond (SOPO)

The SOPO station is located among the willows, aspens, and grasses of the northwest shore of Lister Lake near the weir, extending southwest into the aspen forest and bordering Sora Pond. SOPO boasted the highest number of captures with 305 total, which is 46.5% of MAPS captures. SOPO was run on June 10th, 20th, 30th, July 11th, 23rd, and 31st, for a total of 328.5 net-hours. The most common species captured were Yellow Warbler (95), Least Flycatcher (87), and Black-capped Chickadee (19). An exciting capture from this station was a Mourning Warbler, banded on the first day of M.A.P.S., June 10th!

Lister Lake (LILA)

The LILA station also spans a variety of habitats, from the willows and grasses along Lister Lake near the lookout, to the thicker aspen forests further west. LILA was run on June 11th, 24th, July 2nd, 10th, 24th, and August 1st, for a total of 305.5 net-hours and yielding the second highest captures at 271. At LILA, the most common species captured were Least Flycatcher (69), Yellow Warbler (65), Song Sparrow (13), Traill's Flycatcher (13), and Warbling Vireo (13). On August 1st, a Long-eared Owl was caught in one of the nets at LILA, making for a spectacular final day of M.A.P.S. banding!

Owl Migration Monitoring

Owl migration monitoring began earlier than usual with non-standard netting starting on August 11. Standard owl netting ran from September 1 through early November with 10 nets and 5 audio lures each night. Nets remained open for 6 hours each night in September and November and were kept open for 7 hours during October when owl migration tends to peak. Despite extensive effort, including 1,706.5 audio lure hours, only 179 Northern Saw-whet Owls and 4 Long-eared Owls were captured, making this the lowest Saw-whet Owl capture year since 2009 and the lowest Long-eared Owl capture year since monitoring for this

species began in 2018, for a capture rate of 10.7 birds / 100 lure hours.



Long-eared Owls were also caught in record low numbers this year, despite many being seen in the area this summer.



Possibly the cutest Saw-whet Owl EVER!

The timing of this year's migration was unusual as well: normally our migration peaks around October 8, but this year our busiest night for captures was on October 21, when we caught 16 Saw-whet Owls.

Possible explanations for the low capture rates include a warmer than average September leading to owls not migrating, a higher number of large predatory owls in the area (such as Great Grey Owls) discouraging migrants from sticking around to get caught in our nets, or the possibility of the owls taking a different migratory route that bypasses the BBO this year, or that there is simply fewer Saw-whet Owls this year! Northern Saw-whet Owl populations boom and bust on a roughly 4-year cycle. 2020 was noted to be a down year, so we would typically expect 2024 or 2025 to be down years. We hope that we'll return to peak capture numbers in the coming years!

Nestling Banding

BBO maintains over 200 nest boxes in and around the Beaverhill Natural Area. This spring, BBO staff and volunteers banded 87 Purple Martin and 186 Tree Swallow chicks in our nestbox grids. We also banded 4 Northern Saw-whet Owlets and a brooding female, who was aged as a third year. Nestling banding offers a chance to collect important data on breeding habits and successes of our locally breeding birds.



A nestling Purple Martin getting banded.
Photo courtesy of Johane Janelle.

Monitoring Projects

Various monitoring projects are conducted each year to contribute to long-term monitoring beyond our banding efforts.

Motus

New Motus projects were not run this year; however, this allowed the opportunity for Jana to attend and help teach at a weeklong Birds Canada Motus workshop in Mackenzie, BC. At the workshop, participants learned about tagging ethics and project planning, setting up and troubleshooting a Motus station, data management, navigating the Motus database, and various tagging techniques for shorebirds, songbirds, and, of course, owls. The participants learned hands-on skills for the sensor station and sensor gnome setups, pre-made and custom-fit leg loop harnesses, and Jana taught the participants how to construct and attach the custom-fit backpack harnesses for Northern Saw-whet Owls. The workshop was a great success!



Jana teaching the harness technique at the workshop

Least Flycatcher – Emelie Dykstra

This year's nest monitoring of the breeding population of Least Flycatchers revealed some nest reuse, although less than in the 2024 breeding season, and a drop in overall nest success compared to last year. The nest monitoring was completed over approximately 15 hectares of the Beaverhill Natural Area, using an endoscopic camera on a telescopic pole. The study area was selected by identifying an area around 43 nests from previous years. There were twenty new nests found through nest searching this year, twelve newly constructed, and eight old nests reused from previous years. We included 42 nests in total in regular surveys, which were completed every three to five days, starting three weeks after the first Least Flycatcher was caught at the BBO during Spring Migration Monitoring. All nests were fledged by July 15 this year, which is when the surveys ended. In total, there were fourteen active nests this year (33% of surveyed nests). The 2025 breeding season revealed patterns similar to the 2024 study, with nest reuse, which is uncommon in open-cup nesting passerines, does not increase nest failure. The failure rate of reused nests (62%) was almost identical to that of newly constructed nests (60%) this year. Additionally, no differences in predation risk or initial egg laying dates were found between new and reused nests. However, the overall breeding success rate was lower this year. Interestingly, two nests were destroyed before any eggs were laid, which could indicate that the materials were harvested to construct new nests. Emelie's final report can be found [here](#).



Least Flycatcher on her nest

Marsh Monitoring – Willow Zilliox

For the 2025 Marsh Monitoring Program at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, eight new survey points were established in the cattails along the north-eastern side of Lister Lake to compliment the 8 survey points established in the previous years of the study. Between May 27 and June 27, 2025, playback surveys were conducted at the now 16 survey points along the lake, focusing on ten “Primary Species” - Nelson’s Sparrow, American Bittern, Least Bittern, Sora, Yellow Rail, Virginia Rail, Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe, Horned Grebe, and Red-necked Grebe. All but the Least Bittern and Red-necked Grebe were observed. In total, 284 individuals from the primary species were detected by sight or sound, with 133 of them being detected during surveys on the near side and 151 detected during surveys on the far side. By far the most encountered species was the mighty Sora, a finding consistent with previous years. Excitingly, Yellow Rails were once again observed this year, their characteristic clicking calls emanating from the sedges on both sides of the lake. Broadening the spatial scope of the Marsh Monitoring Program will help generate a more holistic understanding of the happenings in and around Lister Lake, the collected data certainly underscoring the importance of wetland habitats for bird populations.

Willow’s final report can be found [here](#).



One of the marsh Monitoring survey points on Lister Lake

Forest Breeding Bird Census – Xavier Quantz

The 2025 Forest Breeding Bird Census documented breeding bird territories within a standardized 25-hectare forest plot in the Beaverhill Natural Area, marking the ninth consecutive year of this long-term monitoring program. Six focal species were recorded holding territories, with Least Flycatchers and Yellow Warblers comprising over 70% of all detections, reflecting consistently high breeding densities within the study area. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird nest was found within the grid, confirming a breeding population, and Black-billed Cuckoos were detected on multiple surveys, which is a new species detection, however, breeding was not confirmed. Overall territory numbers were comparable to recent years, with most species falling within historical ranges and Warbling Vireos reaching their highest recorded density to date. A novel analysis examining detection rates across the breeding season revealed that detectability generally peaked mid-season and declined toward late July, supporting the effectiveness of current survey timing while also highlighting species-specific differences and limitations related to small sample sizes. Collectively, the results indicate a typical breeding season for forest birds at Beaverhill and reinforce the value of long-term standardized surveys for tracking population trends and refining monitoring methodologies. Xavier’s final report can be found [here](#).

Shorebird Surveys – Jon Van Arragon

The 2025 Beaverhill Lake Shorebird Surveys documented the continued importance of the lake as a migratory staging area despite extreme and rapidly declining water levels throughout the season. Surveys conducted from late April to early October recorded over 24,000 individual shorebirds representing 24 species, with particularly high numbers of Long-billed Dowitchers, Pectoral Sandpipers, and American Avocets. Survey methods had to be repeatedly adapted as traditional shoreline habitats disappeared, culminating in the relocation of monitoring efforts to Mundare Beach later in the season. Although variable survey locations limited year-to-year trend analysis, results showed that Beaverhill Lake continues to meet national and international significance thresholds for several shorebird species, reinforcing its designation as a Key Biodiversity Area and RAMSAR wetland. The findings also highlight growing conservation concerns related to persistent water loss and underscore the need for continued long-term monitoring. Jon's final report can be found [here](#).



Red Knot seen on a shorebird survey

Nest Searching and monitoring

Throughout the spring and summer seasons, nest boxes and natural nests were monitored by the biologists, including three duck boxes and 18 owl nest boxes. Forty-seven other nests were found and checked upon during the months, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird nest, a Cedar Waxwing nest, a Mallard nest, and 44 Least Flycatcher nests. Of the owl boxes, one hosted a successful clutch of Saw-whet Owls. One of the duck boxes hosted a clutch of duck eggs, but ultimately, the nest failed.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird on her nest

Mammal Monitoring

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory monitors local mammal populations as well as the migrating and breeding birds in the natural area. Documenting our biodiversity is accomplished, in part, by three trail cameras, which provide our biologists with year-round data on mammal movements. While big-game hunting is prohibited within the bounds of the natural area, gamebird hunting is allowed. Monitoring game species is important for establishing responsible hunting tag limits across the province. Our cameras are serviced by staff in May and September and catalogued at the end of every field season. Their data are submitted to multiple organizations, such as Alberta Fish and Wildlife, the Canadian

Wildlife Service, and the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute. Surprisingly, moose were the rarest capture on the trail cameras, yet the most encountered by staff, with up to 6 seen in one day. Bold and curious, these giants would explore the lab clearing or forage unbothered as we worked nearby. Many Mule Deer, White-tailed Deer, and hybrid deer of all life stages in family groups and the occasional coyote stalking the deer were detected on the cameras as they moved through the trail systems. Additional sightings included people, bats, chickadees, and a Great Gray Owl!



Great Gray Owl captured on a trail camera

Purple Martin Egg Study – Anna Richenbach

This volunteer led project studied the unhatched eggs of the Purple Martin Colony to determine the stage of development and cause of embryo death. 10 eggs were collected from nests with known age nestlings from all 4 colony boxes. A combination of surviving nestling age, embryonic development, and egg laying date were used to determine the date of embryo death to determine a possible environmental factor. The embryo deaths ranged from June 18 to July 10, with little overlap even within the same box. There was no clear correlation between death dates and extreme weather events. The ages of the embryos at the time of death range from day 1, the first day of embryonic development, to day 16, right before hatching, with an average of 7.7 days. There does not appear to be a link between mortality, stages of development, and weather events. Genetic abnormalities, developmental issues, or infections may have influenced embryonic development, but we were unable to test for this. Ultimately, the embryonic failure was deemed to be within the normal range and of natural and non-preventable causes.



Unhatched Purple Martin Embryos

Student Internships

Each year, the BBO hosts nine student internships to assist with the long-term monitoring of bats, butterflies, and locally breeding birds. Damek Rivera and Kai Dunkley monitored Tree Swallows, mentored by Ivana Schoepf. Hailey Chalifoux monitored Purple Martins, mentored by Glen Hvenegaard. Lauren Undheim and Judah Flynn monitored House Wrens, mentored by Zach Antoniw. Casey Elliott monitored butterflies, mentored by John Acorn. Finally, Adara Cable and Sarah Sonnefeld monitored bats, mentored by Jody Rintoul. The Grassland Breeding Bird Census was not monitored this year as the intern sustained an injury prior to the project start and was unable to complete the surveys. The intern reports can be found [here](#) on our website.

Events

Snow Goose Festival

This spring, the BBO staff hosted a variety of events. Kicking off the season was the Snow Goose Festival on April 26–27, during which staff and volunteers guided 98 visitors arriving by shuttle bus through the Natural Area, offered bird banding demonstrations, led bus tours across Beaver County to view migrating Snow Geese, and staffed a booth at the festival trade show alongside other vendors. Visitors also engaged with ambassador birds, including Nina the Burrowing Owl and Keith the Red-tailed Hawk, while the Saturday evening banquet featured a keynote presentation on by Wes Olson and a silent auction to support festival programming.

Public Banding Events

Through May and early June, Beaverhill Bird Observatory welcomed visitors to a series of ticketed songbird banding events that provided guests with close-up views of songbird mist-netting, bird banding, and interpretation conducted by BBO biologists. Visitors were also introduced to the observatory's education ambassador birds, with opportunities to ask questions and take photos. These events offered an engaging way for the public to learn about bird research and conservation while connecting directly with BBO staff and volunteers.



Kids participating in window drawing activities to prevent bird window strikes



Emelie painting a Barn Swallow on Geoff's cheek

BBO also hosted several spring events, including World Migratory Bird Day on May 10, which followed the theme *Shared Spaces: Creating Bird-Friendly Cities and Communities*. This free public event featured educational materials, bird banding demonstrations, window-drawing activities to prevent bird collisions, and a feather toss to support nesting Tree Swallows. The annual Big Birding Breakfasts, held on May 31 and June 1, drew more than 100 guests over two days. Attendees enjoyed a crepe breakfast while observing banding activities and participating in family-friendly programming such as children's crafts, face painting, and interactive conservation activities.

Fall marked the busiest visitor season at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, with more than 1,000 visitors attending 35 events throughout the season. These included popular owl banding nights, which sold out quickly, as well as visits from university groups from the University of Alberta, Red Deer Polytechnic, and NorQuest College. The largest event of the year, *Supper and Saw-whets*, was held on September 26–27 and welcomed 50 guests each night for owl banding demonstrations and a home-cooked vegetarian meal.



Emelie doing an interpretive demonstration with an owl during Supper and Saw-whets

Big Birding Day

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory's annual Big Birding Day Fundraiser was held on May 20, bringing together BBO staff and volunteers for a 24-hour birding challenge in support of bird conservation. The goal of the event was to raise funds for BBO's research and education programs while documenting as many bird species as possible within a single day.

The day began before sunrise at Lister Lake, where the team recorded early highlights including Least Flycatcher, Yellow Rail, and Virginia Rail. Morning banding at the observatory added several migratory species to the list, including Blackpoll, Black-and-white, and Tennessee Warblers, as well as a Gray-cheeked Thrush. When rain forced banding operations to pause, the group continued birding across wetlands and rural areas around Tofield, steadily increasing the species count with waterfowl, shorebirds, and grassland birds.

In the afternoon, the team traveled to Elk Island National Park, surpassing the 100-species mark with the addition of Western Grebe. Other notable sightings included Barrow's Goldeneye, Bonaparte's Gull, Common Loon, Pileated Woodpecker, and Western Tanager. The day concluded on a high note with the long-awaited sighting of a Cinnamon Teal, bringing the final total to 120 species. The fundraiser raised over \$1,100, and while slightly fewer species were recorded than the previous year, the event was a fun and successful way to support bird conservation and community engagement.

Thank you so much to everyone who supported our fundraiser. While we saw fewer species than the previous year, it was a ton of fun and we can't wait to do it all again in 2026!



Big Birding Day team
Xavier, Elle, Emelie, Jana, Jon, Jay, and Willow

Young Ornithologists Workshop

Each August, Beaverhill Bird Observatory hosts the Geoff Holroyd Young Ornithologists' Workshop, welcoming youth aged 15–18 for an immersive week of hands-on learning in bird banding and field biology. In its eighth year, the 2025 workshop brought together ten participants from across Canada and the United States, including Alberta, British Columbia, California, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. Throughout the week, participants learned fundamental banding skills such as extraction, scribing, ageing, sexing, and processing birds at migration monitoring and MAPS stations, guided by BBO biologists and NABC-certified banders.

In addition to banding, the workshop offered a wide range of educational and experiential activities led by experts and volunteers. Youth learned about Tree Swallow and Purple Martin biology, butterfly identification, and falconry, participated in specimen-based learning sessions, and conducted egg autopsies to investigate nesting outcomes. They also took part in a BioBlitz using iNaturalist, documenting more than 250 species of plants, fungi, arthropods, and other organisms within the Natural Area, as well as shorebird surveys and a Big Birding Day that resulted in 113 species observed. Field trips to local birding hotspots, camping on site, and shared meals further enriched the experience.

Owl banding nights held in mid-August allowed participants to observe the banding of Northern Saw-whet and Long-eared Owls, raising questions about local breeding activity and prompting extended experimental monitoring later in the month. The success of the workshop was made possible through the dedication of BBO staff and numerous volunteers who supported instruction, transportation, and meals. Special thanks are owed to Helen Trefry, Ruth Ball, Geoff Holroyd and Jana Teey for coordinating participant recruitment, logistics, guest speakers, and overall program delivery, ensuring another highly successful and memorable year for the Young Ornithologists' Workshop.



Attendees of the 2025 Young Ornithologist Workshop! From left to right: (top) Adam Ross, Mathias Bitter, Adrien Currier, Kalia Vigen, Bannor McEwen, Jewels & Jana Teey, Emelie Dykstra, Willow Zilliox, Kalum Srochenski, Griffen Lepage, (bottom) Mariana Prado, Raymond Liu, Jordan Vigen, Jon Van Arragon, Xavier Quantz, and Raven & Geoff Holroyd. Not pictured: Selise Frolov.

Canadian Migration Monitoring Network Meeting

This year was the first in-person meeting of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network since 2019! Geoff, Jana, and Jon attended this meeting to represent BBO and to network with representatives from other stations across Canada. This included a reunion with former BBO employee Shane Abernethy! Shane worked at BBO from 2020-2022 and created the popular “BirdBytes” video series featured on our YouTube channel. It was great to catch up with him and hear about his work as head bander at Tommy Thompson Park Bird Research Station in Toronto.

During the meeting, Jana gave an update about BBO’s station activities for the last 2 years, and Geoff gave talks about the value of morphometric data collected during bird banding and funding strategies for banding stations. Other topics included an update from the Canadian Bird Banding office reassuring banders that bird banding programs will not be affected by disruptions south of the border, information on expansions to the Motus program being led by Birds Canada, a talk from Ann Nightingale (Rocky Point Bird Observatory) about strategies for tracking and preventing bird injuries, and a talk from Nicole Richardson (Birds Canada) highlighting the scientific value of photographs taken of birds in the hand. The meeting was a great source of information and we’re looking forward to putting some new ideas into practice during the next field season.



Geoff, Jana, and Jon birding at Big Creek in Port Rowan during the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network meeting.



Group photo from the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network meeting!

BirdSmart

The BirdSmart education program completed another highly successful season, running from November 19, 2024, to April 26, 2025. During this period, BirdSmart delivered 339 presentations to 132 organizations across Alberta, reaching more than 7,500 students and nearly 2,500 adults, for a total audience of just over 10,000 participants. Compared to the previous season, this represented an increase of 75 presentations, continuing the program's steady growth and demand.

The majority of presentations (83%) were delivered in schools, reflecting BirdSmart's strong alignment with Alberta curriculum and its effectiveness as a classroom-based education program. However, BirdSmart also reached a wide range of community groups, including youth organizations, libraries, nature shops, long-term care facilities, online audiences, and private events. This season saw the introduction of two new presentations—*Birds and Body Systems* and *Birds and Migration*—as well as the consolidation of two flight-related presentations to reflect updates to the K–6 curriculum. Presentations were once again offered in French, expanding accessibility and supporting bilingual education efforts.

With support from Beaver County, the Battle River Community Foundation, an anonymous donor, and increased staffing capacity, BirdSmart continued to expand its geographic reach throughout rural Alberta. This season, 34% of presentations occurred outside the Edmonton area, up from 28% the previous year and 21% two years prior, demonstrating sustained program growth. Presentations were delivered by BBO staff, board members, and volunteers, accompanied by the Observatory's ambassador birds—Keith the Red-tailed Hawk, Tansi the Great Horned Owl, Nina the Burrowing Owl, and Kali the Prairie Falcon.

Feedback collected through post-presentation surveys showed overwhelmingly positive responses, with all respondents indicating they would recommend BirdSmart to other educators and 97% reporting increased student understanding of the subject matter. These results highlight BirdSmart's continued success in delivering high-quality, engaging environmental education and its growing impact across Alberta. A huge thank you to Phil and Helen Trefry who house our ambassador birds when they are not at presentations!



Xavier presenting to a group at the Onaway Library



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

Edmonton Community Foundation Recognition

National Philanthropy Day recognizes those individuals and groups that make a difference in making our communities a better place for others, through their volunteerism and generosity. Whether it is time or money, these individuals often comment that they feel they should give back more to make life better for others, whether they be humans or other beings that share this planet.



Congrats, Geoff!

At a luncheon at the Edmonton Conference Center on 14 November 2025, the Edmonton Community Foundation and the Association of Fundraising Professionals recognized the Beaverhill Bird Observatory Board of Directors in front of the other nominees and hundreds of attendees. The nomination by the Edmonton Community Foundation reads "The Board of Directors at the BBO are passionate about birds, the natural environment and public education. Not only are they enthusiastically hands-on with the work of the BBO, but the Board is also wholly committed to ensuring the organization's financial sustainability. ECF is proud to recognize the BBO Board for their role in promoting the conservation of our

natural heritage by championing their endowment programs. The BBO family of endowments means that there will always be reliable funding so that the important research, education and community activities they undertake each year can continue to flourish and fly." BBO Chair Geoff Holroyd and Board member Helen Trefry represented the Board at the event and were humbled to be among the many recognized for some outstanding contributions to enhance the lives of others. The plaque will be mounted at our education and research center in the spring.

Obituaries

BBO lost two longtime supporters in 2025. Hardy Pletz was a regular contributor to BBO's public events. He would time his local raptor trapping to coincide with our public events and demonstrate local raptors that he caught (See the November 2025 Willet). We also lost Jim Faragini who was a BBO pioneer during the building and establishment of BBO. He played key roles in the start of early growth of BBO, including help with the construction of our early building, always with a big smile. He was part of our expedition to Guatemala where we learned about local birds in support of conservation efforts to successfully establish a new national park. One notable event was Jim traveled there with a toilet seat at our request, which made our stay more comfortable. Both Hardy and Jim are missed.

Willet Newsletters

The Willet is the official newsletter of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory. Three editions are produced annually, containing information about upcoming events, stories from the field and more. These were produced by BBO board member Julianne Hayes and were sent out to our lifetime members. She did a wonderful job of keeping you informed of all the work we do. Past editions of the Willet from 2025 or earlier can be found by visiting our website [HERE](#).

Acknowledgement of Volunteers and Members

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory relies heavily on the dedication of its volunteers and board members to keep operations running smoothly. Sincere thanks are extended to Chair Geoff Holroyd, Vice-Chair Helen Trefry, Treasurer Rose Scott, and Board members Alyssa Bohart, Carmen Patry, Christine Campbell, Darren McGregor, Emily MacLellan, Glen Hvenegaard, Julianne Hayes, Richard Hedley, and Sian Ford for their leadership and behind-the-scenes support throughout the season. Special thanks to Andra, Brenda, Carmen, Christie, Dave, Irene, Janos, Ruth, and Sian for their contributions to major events including Big Birding Breakfast, the Young Ornithologists' Workshop, and Supper and Saw-whets.

We also thank Adara, Bannor, Caelyn, Camile, Carmen, Carolyn, Charlotte, Chelsey, Christie, Damek, Dani, Elyse, Emily, Ethan, Gabby, Hazel, Holly, Irene, Ivy, Jac, Jacqueline, Jay, Jenelle, Jessica, Jordyn, Judah, Justin, K, Kalia, Katheryn, Katie, Keagan, Kelsey, Kylli, Laura, Lucias, Lucile, Mariana, Martine, Matt, Maud, Meghan, Mikayla, Nikolas, Patrick, Regina, Shaely, Sian, Stephanie, Wanda, and Xavier for their invaluable help with songbird and owl banding efforts. Additional gratitude is extended to long-term volunteers Anna, Anna, Aaron, El, and Linda for their extended on-site support with banding, surveys, and events.

We are grateful to intern mentors Glen Hvenegaard, Ivy Schoepf, Jody Rintoul, John Acorn, Jon Van Arragon, and Zach Antoniw, as well as interns Adara Cable, Casey Elliott, Damek Rivera, Hailey Chalifoux, Judah Flynn, Kai Sunkley, Lauren Undenheim, and Sarrah Sonnefeld for their dedication and hard work.

Our ambassador birds were generously housed and cared for at Helen and Phil Trefry's farm, with transport support provided by Bill and Inger Paulsen, Christie Campbell, Geoff Holroyd, and Billy Teefy.

Finally, heartfelt thank you to BBO staff Jana Teefy, Jon Van Arragon, Emelie Dykstra, Willow Zilliox, and Xavier Quantz for their commitment throughout the field season, and to Jewels, our Pawsitive Vibes Specialist, for warmly greeting volunteers and guests.

It truly takes a village, and the BBO's work would not be possible without the time, dedication, and generosity of this incredible community.

Thank you to our sponsors and donors

The BBO can only continue its long-term monitoring and public engagement programs thanks to the generosity and support of our sponsors. We sincerely thank the following organizations for helping to fund our research and education programs: Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Gaming Liquor & Cannabis Commission, Canva, Backyard Birds, Beaver County, Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund, Birds Canada, Canada Summer Jobs, Edmonton Community Foundation, Eco Canada, Edmonton Oilers Community Foundation, Edmonton Oil Kings, Edmonton Nature Club, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Link Tree, MCS Net, Nature Canada's Charles Labatiuk Nature Endowment Fund, Spencer Environmental, TD Friends of the Environment Fund, Wainwright Wildlife Society, and Wildbird General Store. We are also grateful for the many personal donations made by our members, including in memory of Mary Hughes Weir and John Honsaker

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Without your support, BBO would not be able to continue to do the vital research and programming we offer the public. Thank You!

Appendix

Spring Songbird Migration Monitoring

Spring Migration Monitoring Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat	Return	Unbanded	Total
American Goldfinch	6		1		7
American Redstart	12				12
American Robin	15	3	2	1	21
Baltimore Oriole	30	29	4	1	64
Bay-breasted Warbler	1				1
Black-and-white Warbler	1				1
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	169
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	2	2	5
Grand Total	651	176	71	11
				909

1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO

3038.5 net hours

2 Banded at the BBO >90 days prior to recapture (e.g. in a previous year).

28.9 captures / 100 net hours

3 Caught in a mist-net but not banded (e.g. escaped net).

Fall Songbird Migration Monitoring

Fall Migration Monitoring Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Unbanded ³	Total
Alder Flycatcher	6				6
American Goldfinch	4				4
American Redstart	35				35
American Robin	1	1			2
American Tree Sparrow	16	3			19
Bay-breasted Warbler	2				2
Black-and-white Warbler	7				7
Black-capped Chickadee	51	83	3	1	138
Blackpoll Warbler	23				23
Blue Jay	2				2
Blue-headed Vireo	5				5
Brown Creeper	2				2
Canada Warbler	1				1
Cedar Waxwing	5				5
Clay-colored Sparrow	66	1		4	71
Common Yellowthroat	14				14
Connecticut Warbler	1				1
Downy Woodpecker	3	6	2		11
Eastern Phoebe	3				3
Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow	9			1	10
Gray Catbird	3	2	1		6
Gray-cheeked Thrush	1				1
Hairy Woodpecker	3	1	2		6
Hermit Thrush	7	5			12
Least Flycatcher	285	78	2	7	372
Lincoln's Sparrow	16			1	17
Long-eared Owl		1			1
Magnolia Warbler	26			2	28
Marsh Wren	3				3
Mountain White-crowned Sparrow	1				1
Mourning Warbler	4				4
Myrtle Warbler	1196	53	1	11	1261
Nashville Warbler	1				1
Northern House Wren	59	22		3	84
Northern Waterthrush	6				6
Orange-crowned Warbler	147	12		1	160
Ovenbird	37	1			38

Red-breasted Nuthatch	1			1
Red-eyed Vireo	5			5
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1			1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	28	2		30
Ruby-throated Hummingbird			1	8
Ruffed Grouse				2
Savannah Sparrow	6			6
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1			1
Slate-colored Junco	23	2		25
Song Sparrow	10			10
Swainson's Thrush	34			34
Swamp Sparrow	2			2
Tennessee Warbler	45			45
Traill's Flycatcher	56	3		1
Vesper Sparrow	1			1
Warbling Vireo	21	5	2	28
Western Palm Warbler	26			26
White-breasted Nuthatch	3	2		5
White-throated Sparrow	24	3		4
Wilson's Warbler	14			14
Yellow Warbler	201	33	4	1
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	4			4
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	5	9		1
Yellow-shafted Flicker	2			2
Grand Total	2564	328	18	48
				2958

1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO

6877 net hours

2 Banded at the BBO >90 days prior to recapture (e.g. in a previous year).

43.0 captures / 100 net hours

3 Caught in a mist-net but not banded (e.g. escaped net).

MAPS Monitoring

BLAB Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Unbanded ³	Total
American Robin	5	5		1	11
Baltimore Oriole	1	1			2
Black-capped Chickadee	1	1			2
Brown-headed Cowbird		1			1
Gray-cheeked Thrush	1				1
Least Flycatcher	23	11	7	1	42
Northern House Wren	1				1
Red-eyed Vireo			1		1
Red-winged Blackbird	1		1		2
Rose-breasted Grosbeak		2			2
Ruby-throated Hummingbird				1	1
Swainson's Thrush	1				1
Warbling Vireo	3	2	1		6
White-throated Sparrow			1		1
Yellow Warbler	3	1	2		6
Grand Total	40	24	13	3	80

1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO

297 net hours

2 Banded at the BBO >90 days prior to recapture (e.g. in a previous year).

26.9 captures / 100 net hours

3 Caught in a mist-net but not banded (e.g. escaped net).

SOPO Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Unbanded ³	Total
American Goldfinch	1	1			2
American Redstart	1				1
American Robin	4	1			5
Baltimore Oriole	4	3			7
Black-and-white Warbler	2				2
Black-capped Chickadee	12	3	4		19
Brown-headed Cowbird	4		1		5
Cedar Waxwing	3				3
Clay-colored Sparrow	2	2			4
Common Yellowthroat	3				3
Downy Woodpecker	1	2			3
Gray Catbird	4	2	1		7
Least Flycatcher	66	16	5	1	88
Mourning Warbler	1				1
Northern House Wren	8	1	1	1	11
Ovenbird	1				1
Red-winged Blackbird	6	4	2	1	13
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1				1
Song Sparrow	4	1	1		6
Swamp Sparrow	4	1			5
Tennessee Warbler	1				1
Traill's Flycatcher	5				5
Warbling Vireo	9	3			12
Yellow Warbler	62	21	10	1	94
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	4	2			6
Grand Total	213	63	25	4	305

328.5 net hours

92.8 captures / 100 net hours

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 Caught in a mist-net but not banded (e.g. escaped net).

LILA Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Unbanded ³	Total
American Goldfinch	8	1	1		10
American Robin	2		1	1	4
Baltimore Oriole	3	1			4
Black-capped Chickadee	9	2	1		12
Brown-headed Cowbird	2	2	2		6
Cedar Waxwing	10				10
Clay-colored Sparrow	2		1		3
Common Grackle	2				2
Common Yellowthroat	3		1		4
Downy Woodpecker	1		1		2
Gray Catbird	3	2			5
House Wren		2			2
Least Flycatcher	50	13	5	2	70
Lincoln's Sparrow	1				1
Long-eared Owl	1				1
Mourning Warbler	1				1
Northern House Wren	3		1		4
Red-eyed Vireo	1				1
Red-winged Blackbird	10		1		11
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1				1
Song Sparrow	11	1	1		13
Swamp Sparrow	2	1			3
Tennessee Warbler	3				3
Traill's Flycatcher	11			1	12
Warbling Vireo	9	2	2		13
White-throated Sparrow	1		1		2
Yellow Warbler	50	9	5	1	65
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	2	2		6
Grand Total	202	38	26	5	271

1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO

310.5 net hours

87.3 captures / 100 net hours

2 Banded at the BBO >90 days prior to recapture (e.g. in a previous year).

3 Caught in a mist-net but not banded (e.g. escaped net).

Owl Migration Monitoring

Owl Monitoring Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Foreign ³	Total
Long-eared Owl	4				4
Northern Saw-whet Owl	165	5	1	6	177
Grand Total	169	5	1	6	181

1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO

NSWO Male Lure 1

342 lure hours

91 captures

26.6 captures / 100 lure hours

2 Banded at the BBO >90 days prior to recapture (e.g. in a previous year).

3 Originally banded at a location other than BBO

NSWO Male Lure 2

353.5 lure hours

58 captures

16.4 captures / 100 lure hours

Long-eared Owl Lure

367 lure hours

3 captures

0.8 captures / 100 lure hours

NSWO Female Lure

329.5 lure hours

10 captures

3.0 captures / 100 lure hours

Boreal Owl Lure

314.5 lure hours

19 captures

6.0 captures / 100 lure hours

Nestling Banding

Nestling Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Total
Northern Saw-whet Owl	4	4
Purple Martin	87	87
Tree Swallow	186	186
Grand Total	278	278

Non-standard Netting

Non-standard Netting Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Total
Black-capped Chickadee	7	10		17
Least Flycatcher	18	1	1	20
Northern House Wren	1			1
Warbling Vireo	2			2
Yellow Warbler	12	6	1	19
American Goldfinch	3			3
Traill's Flycatcher	1			1
Tennessee Warbler	1			1
Myrtle Warbler	1			1
Song Sparrow	1			1
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		1		1
Cedar Waxwing	1			1
Marsh Wren	1			1
Grand Total	49	18	2	69

1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO

71.5 net hours

96.5 captures / 100 net hours

2 Banded at the BBO >90 days prior to recapture (e.g. in a previous year).

Financials



Beaverhill Bird Observatory Society Financial Statements

*** Available in May 2026 after our AGM ***

Funders



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 along with personal donations including in memory of Mary Hughes Weir, John Leonard Honsaker, and the Wainwright Wildlife Society. Visit www.beaverhillbirds.com for more information.



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