



Beaverhill Bird Observatory

# The WILLET

Editor: Julianne Hayes

NEWSLETTER

## 2025 Season Summary

By: Jon Van Arragon, Assistant Biologist

Another year, another field season in the books for the staff at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory! While the season absolutely flew by, it was a ton of fun for all involved and featured some very interesting trends in our captures.

The field season began with the Snow Goose Festival on April 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, where some visitors toured around the Tofield area looking for Snow Geese and others headed out to the BBO for a guided hike and banding demonstration. Captures were slow, as is typical for that early in the season, but we had one exciting capture - an Eastern Phoebe! This was my first time banding the species and was a delight for visitors to see as well.

Spring migration monitoring began on May 1<sup>st</sup> and ran until June 9<sup>th</sup>, and we caught 909 birds over 3038.5 net hours. The overall captures were very similar to last year's 900, but the total net hours this year were higher. Overall, this year's spring migration was much more consistent, with fewer interruptions due to weather but fewer very busy days as well. Highlight captures included 2 Sharp-shinned Hawks and a Philadelphia Vireo.



The BBO Staff on the last day of the field season

MAPS banding began on June 10<sup>th</sup> and ran until August 8<sup>th</sup>, and overall captures were significantly lower with 656 birds this year compared to 774 this year with similar effort. During the first week of MAPS, we observed several boreal breeding birds like Mourning Warblers and American Redstarts were still present in the natural area, suggesting that spring migration may have been slightly delayed.

SOPo was the most productive station with 305 captures, with LILA close behind at 271 captures. BLAB only managed 80 captures, as is typical for that station due to its positioning in the forest interior away from any major habitat edges.

Fall migration monitoring ran from July 20<sup>th</sup> to October 20<sup>th</sup>, with 2957 captures this year compared to 2267 last year. Net hours were roughly the same between the two years, and at first glance these numbers might suggest we had an exceptional migration season! However, total captures does not tell the full story of fall migration this year. While bird volume was exceptional, the number of species captured declined from 65 to 60.

Most species were caught in lower volumes than last year, save one. The Myrtle Warbler. The bread-and-butter of fall migration most years, captures for this species positively dwarfed any other species at 1261! Most of these birds made their way through the natural area in the span of 2 weeks in September, including a day where we caught 120 birds in a single net check! Overall, this year's fall migration was average or slightly below for most species, but a massive rush of Myrtle Warblers led to very respectable capture volume.

120 birds wait in their bird bags. All of these were captured in a single net check and processed very quickly with everyone helping!





A male myrtle warbler. This species was caught more than any other this year, at 1261 captures!

And the last banding program to address...owl monitoring. This year we conducted some early owl monitoring in August to see if there was much activity before the official start of our season. Officially, owl migration monitoring began on September 1<sup>st</sup> and ran until November 5<sup>th</sup>. While a few Long-eared Owl captures initially made the season seem promising, what followed was the lowest number of captures in the history of BBO's owl monitoring program, with only 177 Northern Saw-whet Owls and 4 Long-eared Owls across the entire season (including the added nights in August). Typically, BBO averages 300-500 Saw-whet Owls and 10+ Long-eared Owls, so this year was well off our usual pace.

We don't have a concrete explanation for this year's low captures: some of our speculated reasons 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 there are actually few saw-whets this year! With more time and data we hope to better understand what causes these year-to-year fluctuations in owl abundance, and we also hope that next year will have us catching more owls!



Our final Saw-whet Owl banded in 2025 - this one was an especially cute second year female!

Of course, bird banding is far from the only thing that happened at BBO this year. We had 9 student interns monitoring our Tree Swallow next boxes, House Wren boxes, Purple Martin houses, butterflies, bats, and grassland breeding birds who have helped us continue building long-term datasets in those areas. Each staff member completed their own research project: Emelie monitored Least Flycatcher nests, Xavier surveyed the forest breeding bird grid, Willow surveyed Lister Lake for rails, and I monitored shorebirds in Beaverhill Lake. We hosted our 9<sup>th</sup> Young Ornithologists' Workshop in August, with 10 youth spending the week with us to learn bird banding and participate in all kinds of other birdy fun!



The final capture of fall migration monitoring, a predictably grumpy Black-capped Chickadee.

During the fall we also hosted many owl and songbird banding events, the owl events proved particularly popular as always with almost every night being sold out! Visitors ventured into the woods with us to hopefully catch some adorable Saw-whet Owls, with Tansi the ambassador Great Horned Owl providing backup should we fail in that endeavor. September also featured our popular Supper and Saw-whets event, where we served a delicious vegetarian supper to 100 visitors over the course of 2 nights. Many visitors also visited the natural area incidentally, some familiar with the area and many discovering the BBO for the first time.

It takes a village to accomplish this much in a single season, and none of it would be possible without all the amazing volunteers, interns, board members, and visitors who supported the BBO this year. We are just beginning to transition into our winter BirdSmart education program, but we hope the next field season will be just as successful as this one...maybe with a few more owl captures too!

# #GIVINGTUESDAY

**This #GivingTuesday, your impact takes flight.**

When you support the Beaverhill Bird Observatory Endowment Fund, your gift goes twice as far, as all donations will be matched.

Your generosity today helps secure the long-term future of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory and ensures we can continue our mission to protect and understand the natural world. With your support, we are able to:

- Promote the conservation of our natural heritage
- Engage learners of all ages through education
- Advance research that deepens our knowledge of wildlife
- Foster community activities that inspire appreciation of natural history

All with a special focus on the migratory bird species of the Beaverhill Lake area, whose stories connect Alberta to ecosystems across the continent.

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# BBO recognized at the National Philanthropy Day 2025

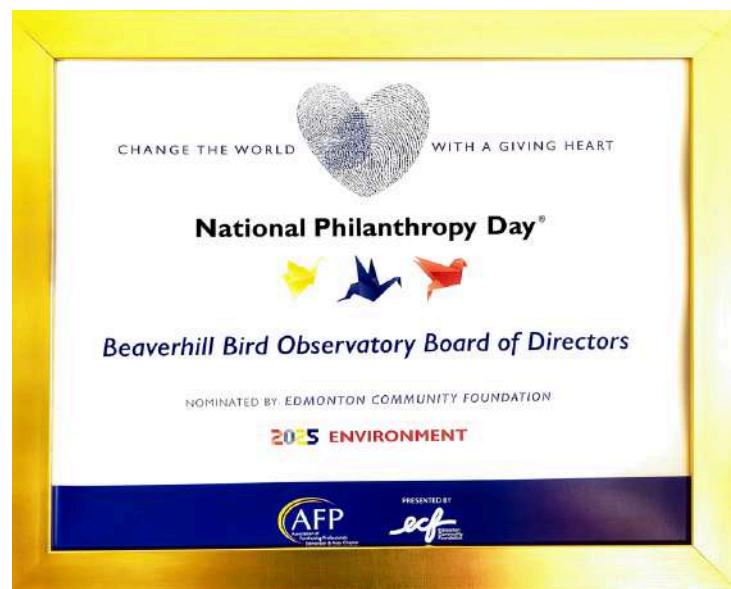
By: Geoff Holroyd, BBO Chair

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. 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.

BBO was presented with a plaque (right), which will be mounted at our education and research center in the spring.

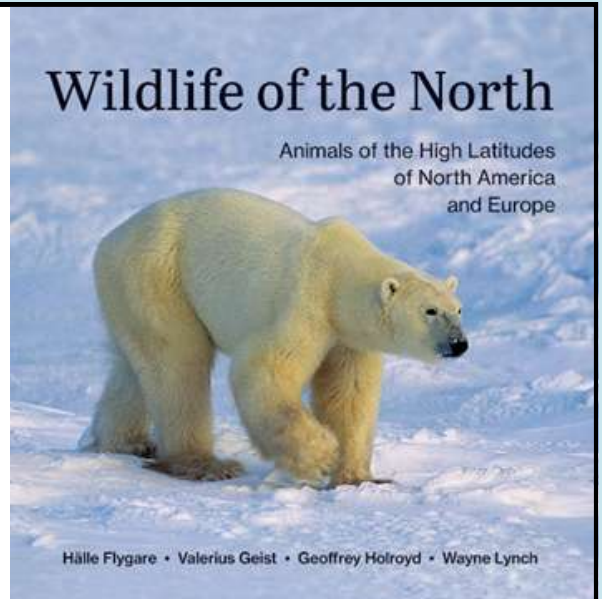


## Wildlife of the North

Read about the polar mammals, birds, plants, icecaps and glaciers of North America and Europe with stunning photos. Co-authored by BBO Chair and ornithology expert with over 36 years experience in the Canadian Wildlife Service, Geoff Holroyd.

Signed copies available through Geoff Holroyd and at the observatory. Unsigned copies available through Amazon.

Get your copy now!



## BBO Merchandise

The BBO now has an online merchandise store! Purchase t-shirts, hoodies, crew necks, and more with the BBO logo or an adorable Northern Saw-whet Owl on it.

[Check it out today!](#)



## Tru Earth Detergent Fundraiser

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# Unusually low Northern Saw-whet Owl capture rates in autumn 2025

By: Emelie Dykstra, Field Biologist and Education Coordinator

The 2025 owl migration monitoring program at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory was abysmally slow. Despite starting banding efforts in mid-August, two weeks before the standard start date, only 179 Northern Saw-whet Owls were captured by the time the program finished on November 4<sup>th</sup>. In a typical year the BBO expects to catch between 300 and 500 Northern Saw-whet Owls. These low numbers constitute the lowest owl captures since 2008. Even more surprising is the low number includes a second set of nets and a playback speaker, which equals added effort, yet lower numbers.

Northern Saw-whet Owls have been previously found to have cyclical variation in age structure of migrants, with a high number of juveniles occurring every four years (Brittain et al. 2009, Wails et al. 2017). This boom-bust pattern reflects the availability of rodents, which increases food availability in some years, benefiting juvenile success (Brinker et al. 1997, Whalen & Watts 2002, Confer et al. 2014). The abundance of rodents can, in turn, reflect masting years of conifers across the boreal forest. Masting years are when spruce and other conifers have large cone crops in the same summer.

The last peak in Northern Saw-whet Owl captures was in 2016. There was an apparent low in 2020, which follows the four-year pattern. However, the BBO did not observe a peak in 2024, and certainly did not find evidence for one in 2025.



Photo by Sian Ford

There has also been evidence for age-differential migration patterns, since capture rates at different banding stations in the same year have variations in age demographics (Beckett & Proudfoot 2011). Northern Saw-whet Owls experience high migration route fidelity, though they may migrate up to 100km east or west from their original route at least in eastern North America (Beckett & Proudfoot 2011). This could explain the low numbers this year—the owls may have moved east or westward on either side of our station and missed our nets completely.

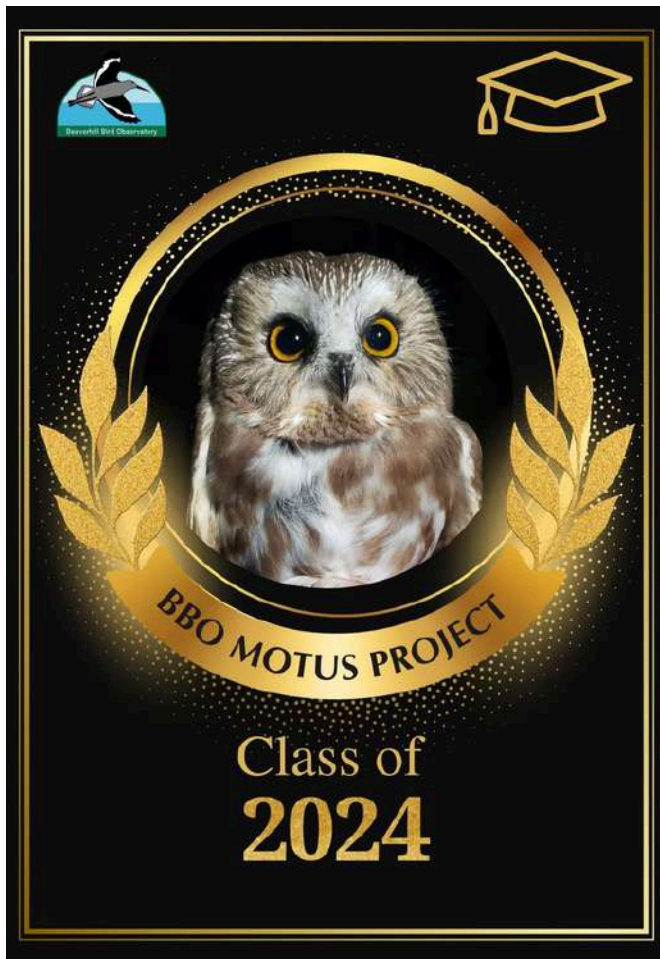
Ultimately, 2025 was a disappointing year for owl migration monitoring at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory. With any luck, future years will yield peak numbers once again!

# MOTUS 2024 Yearbook

By: Jana Teefy, Head Biologist

We're excited to present a preview of the Yearbook for graduates of the 2024 Saw-whet Owl nanotag MOTUS project.

To view the full yearbook [\*\*click here!\*\*](#)



In 2023, the Beaverhill Bird Observatory launched a project utilizing nanotags to examine the migration patterns of Northern Saw-whet Owls in conjunction with the traditional banding method. This innovative approach enables us to monitor the owls' movements passively through the Motus wildlife tracking network without the need for recapture.

We invite you to celebrate the 2024 cohort by exploring this yearbook



**Luna**  
#153

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Quana**  
#154

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Emmett**  
#155

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Ben**  
#156

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Violet**  
#157

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Male



**Margaret Kerri**  
#158

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Frank**  
#159

Age: Third Year  
Sex: Female



**Juna**  
#160

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Unknown



**Borealis**  
#161

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**Jada**  
#162

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Male



**Robyn2**  
#163

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**Owler1**  
#164

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Male



**Franke**  
#165

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Male



**Owlivia**  
#166

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**Geoffrey**  
#167

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Jasper**  
#168

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**Hootini**  
#169

Age: After Third Year  
Sex: Female



**Raven**  
#170

Age: Third Year  
Sex: Female



**Emma**  
#171

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**Hazel**  
#172

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**Birdnut**  
#173

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**Owl Nut**  
#174

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Octavius**  
#175

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Male



**P.J. Wave**  
#176

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Lizzy**  
#177

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Cutester**  
#178

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Male



**Owl Pacino**  
#179

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Pepino**  
#180

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**#181**

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**#182**

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**#183**

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Unknown



**#184**

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**#185**

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**#186**

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**#187**

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**#188**

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**#189**

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Gabby**  
#190

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**Jay**  
#191

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Unknown



**Katherineine**  
#192

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Unknown



**Sassy**  
#193

Age: Third Year  
Sex: Female



**Shona**  
#194

Age: After Third Year  
Sex: Female



**Aspen**  
#195

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Petite Hibou**  
#196

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Iris**  
#274

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**Tecumseh**  
#275

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Jason Lucien**  
#276

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Unknown



**Ruby**  
#277

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**Tom**  
#278

Age: After Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**Stella**  
#279

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**Hugo**  
#280

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female

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**#181**

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**#182**

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female



**#183**

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Unknown



**#184**

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**#185**

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**#186**

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



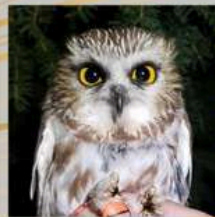
**#187**

Age: Second Year  
Sex: Female



**#188**

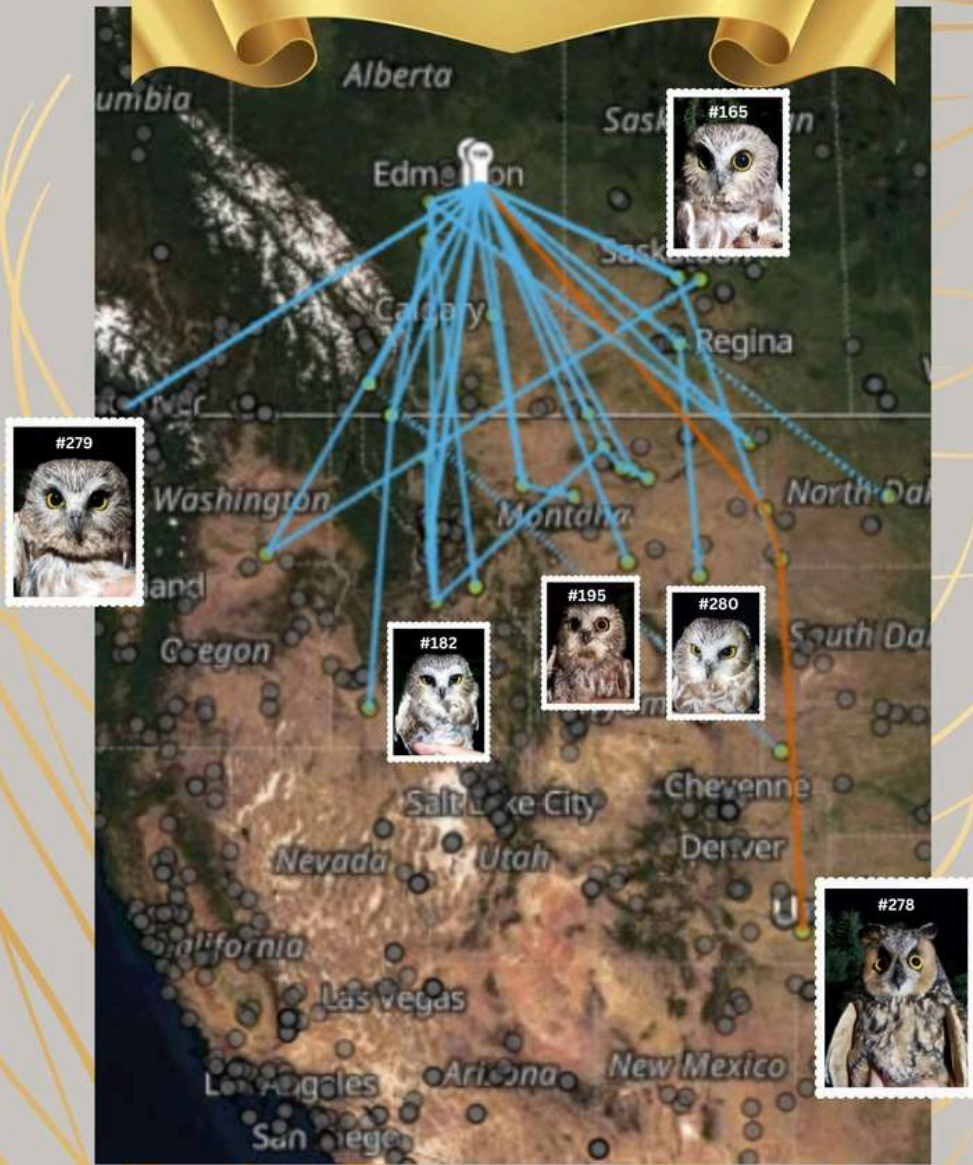
Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female




**#189**

Age: Hatch Year  
Sex: Female

Where are they now?





We are incredibly grateful for your generous donations! Your support has truly been the wind beneath our wings of our nano-tagging project. We're over the moon with your generosity and we couldn't have completed this project without you! Thank you for your support in helping us advance avian research!

*Thank You*

# Canadian Migration Monitoring Network Update

By: Geoff Holroyd, BBO Chair

Beaverhill Bird Observatory was a founding member of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network. The 13<sup>th</sup> in-person meeting of the CMMN was held at Long Point Bird Observatory's headquarters in Birds Canada office at Port Rowan, Ontario on 7-10 November 2025. Since the network hadn't had a face-to-face meeting for many years, we decided Jana Teefy, our head biologist and Jon Von Arragon would attend along with Chair, Geoff Holroyd. The meeting topics were so diverse that the three of us were kept busy networking with the many other bird observatories' representatives. Here is a summary of the meeting.

Jana gave an overview presentation of the diverse programs of BBO while Geoff gave two presentations about our analysis of changing migration timing and morphologies, and an overview of how to adequately fund a bird observatory. Jon was busy talking technical details of data entry, storage and retrieval with other data managers.

Thanks to the contributions of our staff, volunteers and members, BBO clearly shined as a member network. With 4-5 staff delivering our busy summer and winter programs, attendees were impressed with our accomplishments.



Attendees of the 2025 meeting of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network hosted by Long Point Bird Observatory at Birds Canada HQ, Port Rowan Ontario.

Alexandre Terrigeol, Observatoire d'Oiseaux de Tadaoussac, described the declining frequency of 'eruptions' of Boreal Owls. They catch many boreal owls which had peak numbers every 4 years, but the peaks have been smaller and smaller, and in recent years the peaks are non-existent! A cause of concern with no obvious reason.

Ted Cheskey, Nature Canada talked about their study of major fires in Quebec and the possible effects on migratory birds that fly south. While the study was not conclusive, birds may be suffering from the fires and dense smoke.

Catherine Jardin of the Canadian Bird Banding Office reassured us that the 'troubles' south of the border would not affect their support for Canadian banding studies. They order and track bands and have a duplicate of all the 100+ years of banding and recovery data for North America.

Jessica Deakin, Western University, talked about the expansion of the MOTUS towers across Canada with national funding. Over 20 new MOTUS towers went up in Saskatchewan in the past year. We lobbied heavily for more towers in Alberta! Our study of Saw-whet Owls in the past two years, funded by you, our members, was limited by the scarcity of towers in Alberta. Fingers crossed that our lobbying will be successful and we can promote more MOTUS studies with a complete set of MOTUS stations in Alberta soon.

Nicole Richardson, of Cornell Lab of Ornithology encouraged bird observatories to take more detailed photos of birds in the hand that could be used to study moult patterns. Turns out Nicole visited BBO two years ago and our staff are already doing this for this Birds of the World Database.

Ann Nightinggale, Rocky Point Bird Observatory, talked about bird injuries. Their assessment of apparent wing injuries in Purple Finches is the result of broken clavicles resulting from weak bones that appear to be short of calcium. We have had minor issues with wings of Least Flycatchers. If these birds are suffering a shortage of calcium for their bones, WHY? Has Ann discovered a new environmental issue that is affecting birds. DDT caused falcons and others to not deposit enough calcium in their eggshells. Is there a new environmental contaminant affecting calcium and bone growth in songbirds? Bird observatories may be at the forefront of new research into this issue.

After our final supper, Yolanda Morbey, Western University gave an overview of many diverse studies that they do at Long Point Bird Observatory which is only 1.5 hours away. They can measure the oxygen-carbon dioxide levels in songbirds' breath, the flight ability of birds in flight chambers, and the composition of the fat and tissues in a songbird with a 2-minute scan with a Quantitative Magnetic Resonance Scanner machine. Studies of Stable Isotopes, DNA and contaminants can be conducted while birds are being banded and measured at LPBO. One discovery of concern is the high levels of mercury in Wilson's Warblers in eastern North America in the autumn as they leave their Canadian breeding grounds but lower levels when they return from the tropics in spring. It appears the contamination is occurring here! Fortunately, the western warblers did not show the same pattern, but the question is WHY? Her talk was an overview of many studies on migrant birds, further demonstrating the value of monitoring birds at bird observatories.

In all about 50 people representing 22 bird observatories participated. It was great opportunity to network with other bird enthusiasts and for Jana and Jon to meet their colleagues from across the county. Geoff was able to say hi to friends from 60 years ago when he was active at LPBO.

# Bird-watching or Mammal-watching? The Non-Avian Inhabitants of the BBO

By: Willow Zilliox, Field Biologist

Not only is the Beaverhill Bird Observatory a wonderful place to see birds, it also nurtures a wide diversity of mammals! Spend enough time in its wilderness and you're bound to see Deer and Moose frolicking by, or hear Coyotes howl together in chorus.

Documentation of our biodiversity is accomplished, in part, by three tree-mounted trail cameras, which provide our biologists with year-round coverage of the goings-on in the natural area. While big-game hunting is prohibited within the bounds of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, monitoring mammals is important for establishing responsible hunting tag limits elsewhere in 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 the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute.



On January 2, 2025, this year's sightings were kicked off by two White-tailed Deer on one camera, followed by a lone Coyote on another. Overall, five animal species were seen on our trail cameras this year: White-tailed Deer, Mule Deer, Coyotes, Moose, and even a bat (whose exact species is unknown)! White-tailed Deer graced the cameras significantly more often than Mule Deer, appearing in hundreds of photos in herds of up to 28 individuals! Coyotes were frequently captured padding past the cameras, including a pack of 4!

Moose were the rarest capture on the trail cameras, yet the most common animal encountered by staff! One particularly moose-y day had staff seeing a group of five moose wading in Lister Lake, plus a sixth on a trail nearby! Bold and curious, these giants would explore the lab clearing or forage unbothered as we worked nearby. A beloved BBO tradition is giving names to our animal neighbours, in a “one name fits all” fashion. Cow moose were thus named “Martha” and bull moose were named “Marty”.

As the snow melted and forests greened, two Moose calves and at least one White-tailed Deer fawn started popping up on the cameras! Watching these animals grow and change through the seasons serves as a heartwarming reminder of the many lives being lived alongside our own.



# The Effect of Outside Temperature on Habitat Selection for Bat Roosting Sites at Beaverhill Natural Area

By: Sarah Sonnefeld, BBO intern

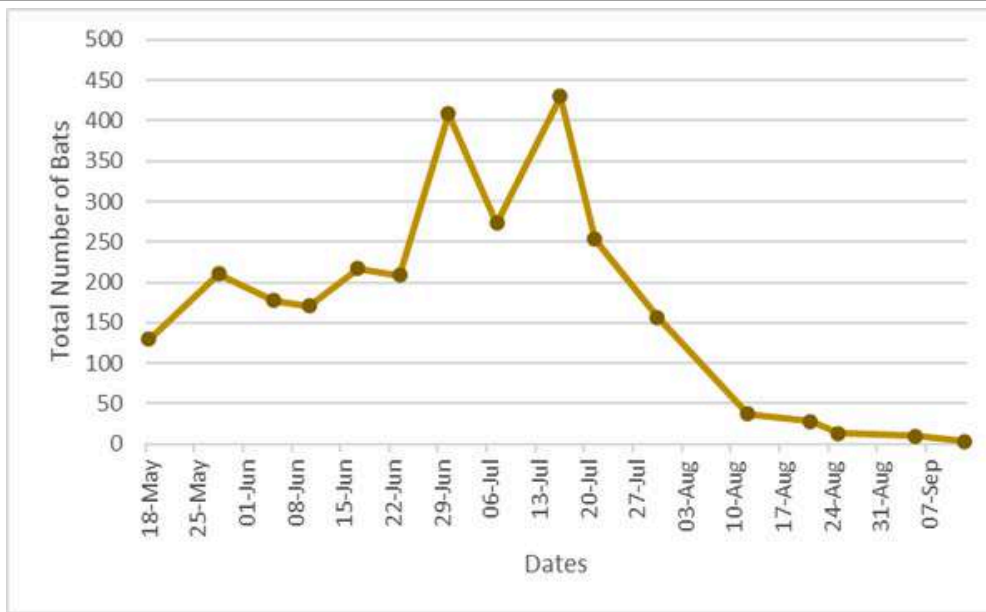


Image 1: Multi-chamber bat house with four chambers. The chambers are labeled 1-4 based on vicinity to the tree the house is attached to (image taken during 2025 survey).

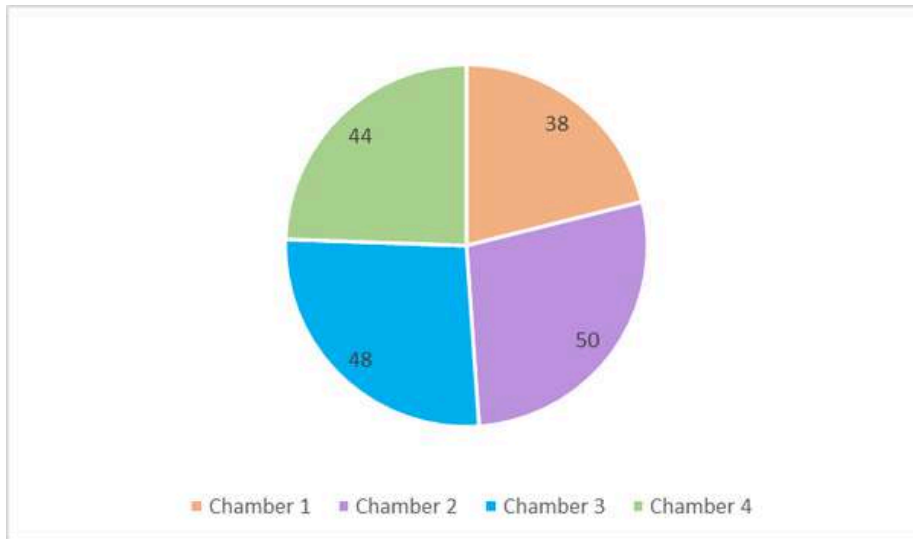
The Beaverhill Natural Area (BNA) is home to multiple species of bats, notably Little Brown Bats which make up most of the cavity roosting bats in the area. The natural area provides a wide range of environments from wetlands and lakes to Aspen-Balsam forest and grasslands. Within these many environments the Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO) installed the bat houses in 2016, within the BNA. Since then, they have been annually monitored over the summers.

In this study I focused on the preference of Little Brown Bats (*Myotis lucifugus*) at house occupancy in different habitat locations within the BNA. Chamber preference within multi-chamber houses was also explored in this study. As for the chamber usage I hypothesize that the inner most chamber will be the most popular as their natural roosts is within the cavity of trees so the chamber closest to the trunk may most closely simulate a natural roost and would also be the most sheltered from the weather (Image 1).

In 2025 the highest count for a single week was 430 compared to 2024 highest count of 344 resulting in a 25% increase. These counts are higher than counts in previous years, a welcome, positive trend. Weekly surveys of the bat boxes showed that the number of bats peaked in late June and mid-July (Figure 1). As usual, there were far more bats in the maternity, larger boxes that in the single layer boxes. More bats occupied boxes in clearings than in the forest interior.



**Figure 1:** Total Number of Bats Counted in Houses from May - September 2025



**Figure 2:** Pie chart of the total number of bats counted in each chamber of the four chamber houses between May 18 to July 21. Chamber 1 was closest to the post/tree and chamber 4 was the farthest.

For the use of specific chambers, only four chambered houses were examined and data from May 18<sup>th</sup> to July 21<sup>st</sup> were used, which was the peak of multi-chamber use during the survey. Figure 2 shows the different use between the chambers with most used being chamber 2 at 50 sightings and chamber 1 with the least at 38 sightings. There was no significant difference in which chamber was occupied ( $F = 1.64$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p = 0.198$ ).

I recommend that future studies use temperature sensors in the box chambers to determine the variability of conditions within the compartments of these maternity colonies. My full report can be found at <https://www.beaverhillbirds.com/publications/student-interns/>

# November 2025 Willet Volunteer Spotlights

## Volunteer Spotlight - Kelsey Poloney

I've been a volunteer with BBO since 2024 and have previously volunteered (since 2023) with MAPS banding through the Edmonton and Area Land Trust. I've been interested in birds my whole life, learning all the birds at the feeders and obsessively reading field guides as a kid.

When I moved to Edmonton, I looked for any opportunities to volunteer outdoors to make the most out of our short summers, and working with birds was the obvious choice for me. I was able to spend more time volunteering at BBO after moving to part-time work, and it has been so fulfilling to be able to learn and help with field work during the spring and fall migrations.

I have loved learning more about songbirds through banding, and volunteering has played a big part in my decision to return to school last year to shift careers. When I began volunteering, I worked in various roles in libraries, but I am now studying biology at MacEwan University in order to pursue a career in conservation.



## Volunteer Spotlight - Mariana Prado



Hello! I'm a lifelong nature enthusiast but started to become interested in birds during my last two years of my undergraduate studies. I studied Biology in Nayarit, Mexico, and wrote my honour's thesis about a little known endemic hummingbird species; the Mexican Woodnymph.

I was visiting Edmonton in 2024 and was looking for ways to get involved with local conservation efforts and since I heard about BBO from my husband who is a birder and had visited the observatory before, I started to volunteer and felt welcomed by the team. I had the opportunity to help scribe and started to get familiar with Canadian bird species (some of which migrate to Mexico!) and learn the basic techniques of bird banding.

I also helped out with the food prep for the Young Ornithologists' workshop and learned about many of the wonderful projects that are carried out at BBO. I came back in 2025 to help with scribing in the spring and the fall and also banded three birds!! I am very excited to get more practice and band more birds!

## Volunteer Spotlight - Camille Jodouin

I discovered the amazing world of birds during an ornithology course at the end of my B.Sc. in Ontario. When I moved to Edmonton for my master's in ecology, one of the first things I did was research places where I could keep learning about birds. This was how I learned about the BBO, and I signed up soon after to volunteer! I've been involved with the organization since 2021, mostly helping with the fall migration and owl banding.

As a biologist, I've worked with a variety of critters ranging from mites to polar bears, but I think there's something truly special about working with birds. Studying insects often requires killing them and spending long hours staring at them through a microscope.

Amphibians, small mammals and large carnivores are elusive, and having direct contact with those animals is rare, requires extensive permitting, and/or involves sedating them. Further, to find some of these creatures, one might need to trudge through a wetland or bushwack in a thorny forest.

To me, bird banding offers the best of all worlds - you get to see a lot of birds up close without harming them, and looking for birds usually involves a nice walk in the woods, surrounded by birdsong and the chattering of squirrels. Plus, birds are adorable and fuzzy! I never get tired of admiring their plumage and always leave the banding station having learned something new about them.



I'm very grateful for all the wonderful experiences I've had scribing, extracting, and banding (despite occasionally getting my fingers pecked) at the BBO. I love the Beaverhill Natural Area, where the observatory is located, and the staff does a phenomenal job at making anyone feel welcome at the banding station. I'm looking forward to potentially helping with outreach events this coming winter and am excited for more bird-y adventures next spring migration!

# Thanks to our Sponsors



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](http://www.beaverhillbirds.com) for more information.

