



The WILLET

Editors: Julianne Hayes & Jana Teefy

NEWSLETTER

A Sneak Peek into the 2026 Field Season!

By Jana Teefy, Head Biologist

The warming spring temperatures bring an eagerness to abandon our desks for the great outdoors, fresh air, and of course, birds! We welcome back Jana and Jon as Head and Assistant Biologist, along with Emelie, Xavier, and Willow as field biologists, making five returning permitted banders, a milestone for BBO!

If you've visited the observatory this winter, you would be witness to the thick layer of snow currently blanketing the natural area. We are hopeful the retained snow means Beaverhill Lake will mean higher lake levels this year, bringing new life and biodiversity to the landscape.



BBO biologists: Xavier, Jon, Willow, Emelie, and Jana

Our biologists are looking forward to kicking off the annual projects, like Migration and MAPS banding to monitor our migratory species and local breeders, and our long-term monitoring projects, including nestbox, bat, butterfly, shorebird, marshland, and Least Flycatcher projects.



shadows from the full moon

We are excited to introduce new projects, including nano tagging butterflies with new and novel CTT tags that are detected by cellular Bluetooth technology. We are also partnering with the Bird Genoscape Project to help connect populations across the continent and track movements through genetic sampling.

The staff are also looking forward to hosting our public banding events and outreach this spring, including the Snow Goose Festival, World Migratory Bird Day, songbird banding events, Big Birding Breakfast, and the Young Ornithologists' Workshop.

This year, we are introducing "learn to extract" and "learn to band" workshops for our volunteers to get dedicated hands-on learning opportunities to expand their skills.

Whether you're attending an event or workshop, volunteering, walking the trails, or following along on social media, the team at BBO is ready to welcome you to the 2026 field season!

Snow Goose Festival

By: Jana Teefy, Head Biologist



Experience the Spectacle of Spring Migration

April 25 and 26, 2026

snowgoosefestival.ca

Trade Show

In addition to the tours, the festival features a variety of fun and informative activities. Don't miss the trade show, where you can explore local vendors and wildlife products, and the inspiring guest speakers who will share their knowledge and passion for birds and conservation. The Tofield curling rink will also host a concession stand to keep you fueled throughout the day.

A Night to Remember

Wrap up your festival experience by joining us at the Tofield Community Hall for the Snow Goose Festival Banquet Saturday night featuring delicious food, live music, and a keynote speaker who will share fascinating insights into the world of migratory Snow Geese. It's the perfect way to relax and reflect on the day's adventures.

Volunteer for BBO tour guides [here](#)
Volunteer for Goose Bus tour guides [here](#)

Book tours [here](#)
Attend banquet [here](#)

Join Us on April 25 and 26 for the Snow Goose Festival in Tofield!

The Town of Tofield is thrilled to invite you to the highly anticipated Snow Goose Festival, where you'll witness the spectacle of tens of thousands of Snow Geese as they move through the area. Beaverhill Lake and its surrounding waterbodies serve as a vital staging area for these incredible birds to rest and refuel as they prepare for their final push north to their tundra breeding grounds. It's a must-see event for nature lovers and birdwatchers alike!

Tours

A variety of tour experiences are available throughout the festival. Hop on a comfortable bus for a 2-hour or 3-hour bus tour that will take you around the county to get a closer look at the massive flocks of geese and other interesting bird sightings. For those looking for a more active experience, join us for a 3-hour field hike tour, where you'll enjoy a scenic guided hike through the stunning Beaverhill Natural Area and experience live interpretive bird banding demonstrations. It's a unique opportunity to learn from experts and witness conservation efforts up close.

UPCOMING SPRING Events



April
25-26

Snow Goose Festival

Bus tours
Guided hikes
Trade show
Banquet

Ticketed events

MAY 9
9 AM - 2 PM

World Migratory Bird Day

9 am - 2 pm
Free event
Drop in style

MAY 10

Spring Banding Events Begin

Interpretive
banding
demonstrations

Ticketed events

MAY 20

Birdathon

BBO's Brilliant &
Beautiful
Ornithologists
all day birding
fundraiser

[Donate here](#)

MAY 10

AGM and Board Meeting

1 pm - 2 pm
In person at
BBO

MAY
30-31

Big Birding Breakfast

crepe breakfast
bird banding
kids activities

Ticketed events

beaverhillbirds.com

Upcoming Events

By: Jana Teefy, Head Biologist

Snow Goose Festival on April 25-26,

Marks the beginning of our event season, where you can take bus tours to view the massive flocks of geese, hike the Beaverhill Natural Area and see interpretive bird banding demonstrations, check out the tradeshow vendors, listen to guest speakers, and attend the Saturday evening banquet dinner and keynote speaker.

Find [information and tickets here](#).

World Migratory Bird Day on May 9

Celebrate the return of our migratory species with a free drop-in style event from 9 am to 2 pm at the BBO! The theme this year is "Every Bird Counts - Your Observations Matter!" and focuses on citizen science, so we will be competing walking tours of the area, using e-bird and iNaturalist to complete a bioblitz. We will also be offering guided hikes to the weir and other family friendly activities.



Weekend songbird banding events will take flight on May 10

Interpretive banding demonstrations where you can learn about migrating and locally breeding birds, how we age and sex birds, and the importance of bird banding for bird conservation. Light snacks and warm beverages will be provided.

Get your [tickets here!](#)



Birdathon May 20

Celebrate **50 years** of Birdathon with us! BBO staff will be out spotting as many species as they can in one day to support bird conservation. Help us reach 100 species and \$3000.

[Donate here](#) and follow along with our BBO's Bright & Beautiful Ornithologists team live e-Bird on our day of bird-nerding fun!

Big Birding Breakfast May 30-31

Featuring interpretive banding demonstrations, home-cooked crepe breakfast, kids' crafts, face painting, and other family friendly activities.

Get your [tickets here!](#)

Event Information

School field trips - Interpretive Banding demonstrations

Did you know that we offer class field trips to the observatory in the spring and fall for guided hikes and interpretive banding demonstrations? Contact education@beaverhillbirds.com for more information

Workshops

We are excited to introduce adult workshops this year! Spring workshops will be focused on gaining practice with extracting birds from mist nets. Current volunteers who have progressed to Net Check Assistant will be given priority.

Want to improve your extraction skills? [Apply here](#)

Parking

Friendly reminder to park in the visitor parking lot and follow the walking trail into the observatory.

Parking in the staff parking lot is by request only.

Those with mobility difficulties are asked to contact

biologist@beaverhillbirds.com

The BBO believes that great experiences should be affordable to everyone, so we are continuing to offer lowered ticket prices, seniors pricing, and family passes this year.

Please note that to eliminate uncertainty, we are no longer be cancelling events due to weather.

If we are not able to open nets, we will invite you to join us on a guided hike, check out our new specimen display, watch a BirdSmart presentation, and offer various other activities.



Map marking the visitor parking lot and walking trails to the observatory

Beaverhill Bird Observatories, Geoff Holroyd's Young Ornithologists' Workshop



- Are you 15 - 18 years of age?
- Interested in birds and nature?
- Want to spend a week living the life of a field biologist?

Apply for this **FREE** week-long workshop

August 8 - 14, 2026

Beaverhill Bird Observatory near Tofield, Alberta

Visit www.beaverhillbirds.com for more info



Young Ornithologists Workshop applications now open.

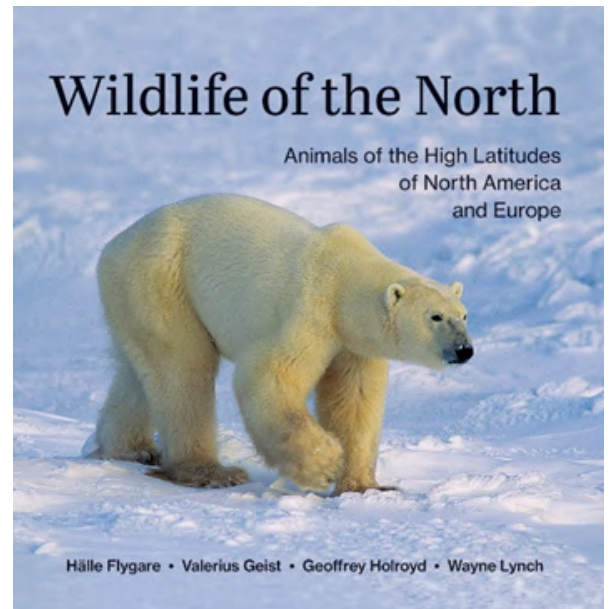
Click [here](#) for more information.

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!



Tru Earth Detergent Fundraiser

Please consider supporting the environment and BBO by ordering through our fundraiser link or scan the QR code to place an order



EARTH MONTH
WEEK 1 - APRIL 1-7

Buy More, Save More

10% OFF (Any 1 Product) **20% OFF** (Any 2 Products) **30% OFF** (Any 3 Products)

Our fundraiser **EARNs** 20% of **EVERY SALE** made through our fundraising link.

Help Beaverhill Bird Observatory
Earn Money Sustainably
by purchasing
Environmentally Friendly Products
from

TRU EARTH

Place your orders through our
Fundraising link

<https://fundraising.tru.earth/BBO>

Tracking the migration of Monarch Butterflies from Alberta to Mexico

By: Geoff Holroyd and Jasper June

This year BBO will conduct a totally different study – following Monarch Butterflies with the latest new technology. Monarchs occur in low numbers in southern Alberta. Janine Heber (Jasper June) Master's thesis documented the distribution of milkweed and Monarchs in the past few years with Dr. Andrew Fuyarchuk, Yorkville University. They have identified milkweed patches, successfully located caterpillars and tagged adults. We will join the new continental project on tracking monarchs and make our data freely available

(<https://celltracktech.com/pages/project-monarch-collaboration-2025>).

This project has not tagged any monarchs from Manitoba west. Alberta is at the furthest northwest corner of the species distribution. As climate warms Alberta (and the Canadian prairies) could become important habits for this species. This project will determine the route and timing of Monarchs from Alberta to central Mexico and identify the locations of hazards on route when tags are no longer detected.

We will deploy 10 BluMorpho+ tags from Cellular Tracking Technologies with glue attachment on Monarchs in the summer of 2026 in southern Alberta following the protocol from Project Monarch and CTT Technologies.



Monarch butterfly

Photo by Jasper June

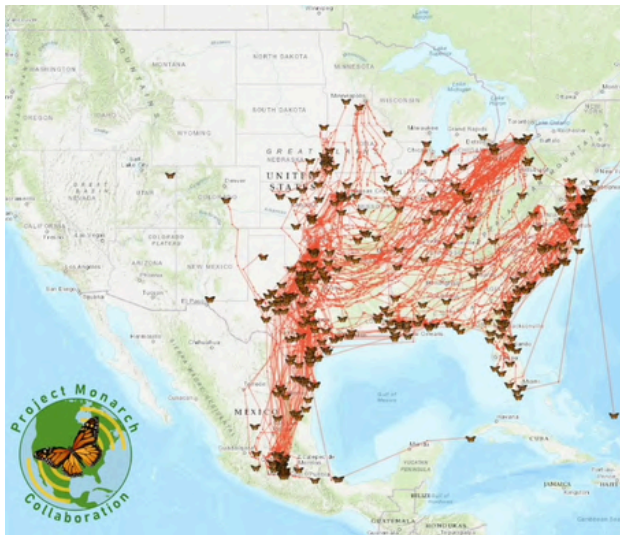
This project is led by Jasper June who caught and tag monarchs previously. Jasper completed their master's degree in psychology at Yorkville University. For their master's, Jasper led a multidisciplinary research project on monitoring monarch butterflies' abundance and their host plant, milkweed, in central and southern Alberta in 2023. Noticing a lack of data on migrating monarchs in Alberta, they created the Friends of the Pollinators Research Lab, which works alongside local partners to plant milkweed and engage the community in citizen science through accessible education. This study involved completing a time series analysis of historical data, completing butterfly surveys, and tagging monarchs.



Monarch with a Motus BLU Series+ Tag

Photo by Samuel Perfect, Birds Canada

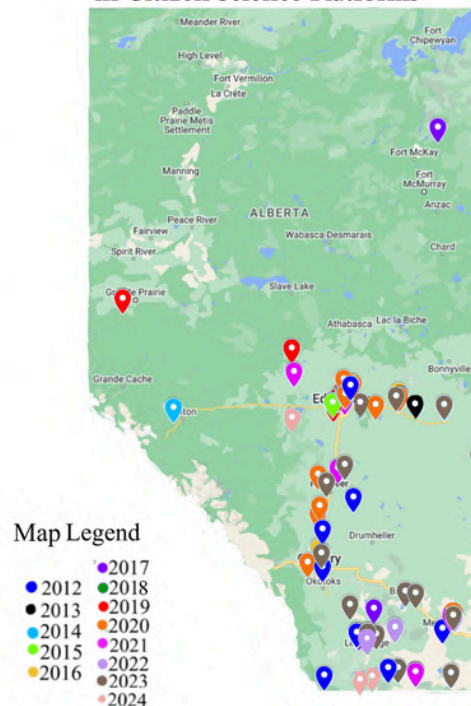
Monarchs are tiny, so how can we track them? Cellular Tracking Technologies (CTT) created a 60-milligram BluMorpho tag that is detected by any smartphone with the Blue Tooth function turned on. The 2025 results were spectacular (see map of North America), tracking the butterflies from Ontario to Mexico. Alberta is at the northwest corner of the Monarch's distribution. Jasper has mapping historic records for the past 20 years and knows where the host plant, milkweeds occur (see her map of Alberta below).



Map from the Animation of more than 500 Monarch butterflies tracked by the collaboration this fall from across North America.

Credit: Sean Burcher - Cellular Tracking Technologies and Cape May Science and Arts Centre adapted from Birds Canada
<https://www.birdscanada.org/tracking-monarch-butterflies-from-long-point-to-mexico-with-new-motus-technology>, for the full article.

Monarch Sightings from 2012-2024 in Citizen Science Platforms



Sponsor a Tag! - only 3 tags left unsponsored!

Do YOU want to help? Sponsor a tag and Jasper's field work for a donation of **\$400** each. The tags with MOTUS registration, and monthly cell service cost \$250USD and Jasper needs travel funds to find the Monarchs. We are only going to get 10 tags, so sponsor your tags now, and give the tag and butterfly a name if you wish. You will receive a tax receipt for your contribution and a sponsorship certificate with your tag number and a photo of your Monarch.

Contact biologist@beaverhillbirds.com to inquire about sponsoring a tag

Another great way to help is to submit observations of monarchs and milkweed to citizen science apps like iNaturalist! If you would like to learn more about the project visit: <https://friendsofthepollinators.ca/>

We're all scientists: Citizen Science Platforms and World Migratory Bird Day

By: Willow Xilliox, Field Biologist

On May 9th, 2026, Earth's western hemisphere will be celebrating [World Migratory Bird Day](#), revelling in the return of birdsong and admiring the flashy breeding plumage of springtime migrants. This year, the organizers at Environment for the Americas announced that the day's theme is citizen science! The Beaverhill Bird Observatory invites you to participate, at home, at BBO or wherever you travel on May 9th.

Citizen science is a highly important facet of data collection and knowledge building. Datasets created by citizen scientists are enormous, easy to access and analyze, and the data itself is shown to be reliable and has been used in innumerable studies (for an extensive list of such studies, visit the [Research and Conservation Applications](#) page on the eBird website). Not only does citizen science do wonders for the scientific world, it also empowers curious individuals and can accelerate the learning process! Collaborations between professional and citizen scientists help people delve deeper into their interests, recognize their value to science, and transform seemingly inaccessible fields into welcoming spaces!



The Merlin App sound ID feature

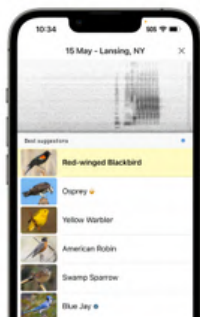


Photo by Willow Xilliox

Fortunately, the entry requirement for birding is very straightforward, notice a bird. Taking the hobby a step further could involve boosting your identification skills, noting the species you encounter into a "life list", or befriending other birders! Many citizen science platforms make it very easy, and enjoyable, to take these steps. They include, but are certainly not limited to, [eBird](#), [Merlin](#), and [iNaturalist](#), all of which are accessible via website or downloadable app.

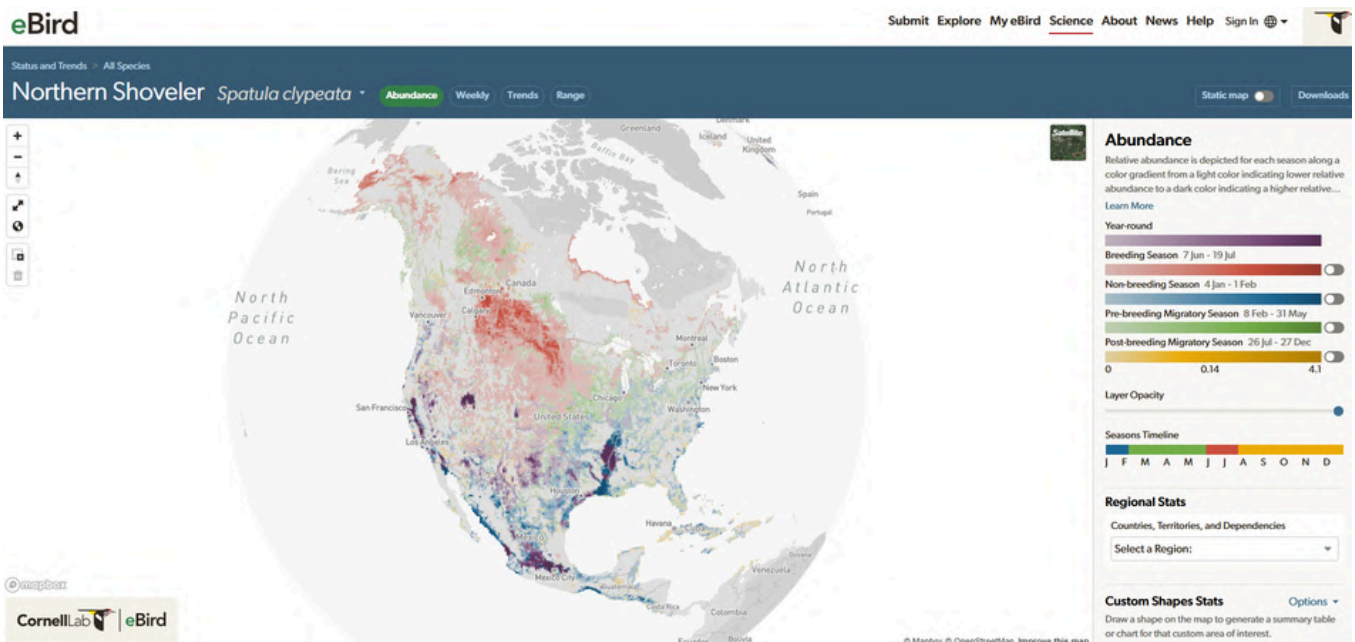
Originating from the National Audubon Society and Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology, eBird and Merlin are wonderful additions to a birder's toolkit. Through user descriptions, photographs, or real-time audio recordings, Merlin makes suggestions on bird identity. It is important to note that this software, while potentially helpful, is not foolproof, and it is more advisable to compare photos and recordings in Merlin's extensive library to what you are witnessing.

Once you have identified a bird, move over to eBird to log the finding! eBird helps you easily make species checklists and generates a 'life list' on your behalf. You can also use their interactive maps to see who birders are finding, and where they're finding them! eBird also provides an [eBird Essentials](#) course to teach new users how to navigate the platform! Staff at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory make great use of eBird, using it to document daily census results and upload lists of all the birds we band and observe every day.

World Migratory Bird Day
From 9am - 2pm May 9th, 2026
visit Beaverhill Bird
Observatory to watch bird
banding, explore the trails,
and participate in fun birdy
activities!

Finally, iNaturalist is a non-profit organization that provides an all-in-one platform enabling identification and documentation of virtually any form of life you can spot. From large animals to species of bacteria, iNaturalist allows you to compare your sightings to galleries of photos and get confirmation or suggestions on your identification from certified experts! Identifications are also displayed on an interactive map. You can even submit observations to specific projects to support the researchers!

So, if you're itching to learn more about the natural world, and contribute to science as you do so, these platforms are a fantastic place to start! Plus, if you're looking for somewhere to celebrate birds and citizen science this World Migratory Bird Day, look no further than the Beaverhill Bird Observatory! Pop by between 9am-2pm to watch bird banding, explore the trails, and participate in fun birdy activities!



See abundance maps, range maps and more on eBird

Wonderful Wetlands: Marsh Monitoring at the BBO

By: Willow Zilliox, Field Biologist

As our feathered friends return to their northern breeding grounds, our ecosystems are growing livelier! Perhaps one of the most stunning transformations occurs in the province's wetland environments.

Wetland enthusiasts will be quick to point out that a marsh is not synonymous with a bog, fen, or swamp. Marshes are distinguished by an abundance of grasses, sedges, and cattails. As with all wetlands, it is a challenge to overstate their value in the environment. Amongst many other benefits, wetlands aid in water filtration, habitat creation, carbon storage, and safeguarding against drought!

Millions of birds populate Alberta's wetlands every year, integrating themselves into complex webs of species relations and ecosystem cycles.



Sora

Photo by Irene Crosland

Birdwatchers delight in visiting these bustling habitats, with many hoping to observe their more elusive residents – a handful of wetland-dependent species aptly referred to as “secretive marsh birds”. Grebes, rails, and bitterns are included in this collection and have a tendency to be heard rather than seen, with the added twist that many of them sound like anything but birds!

Do you hear a shrill telephone or alarm call? That's a Sora making itself known. Oinking, grunting, or a frog-like “ke-DIK, ke-DIK, ke-DIK”? A Virginia Rail might be watching. Pebbles rhythmically tapping together? Lucky you! You're in the presence of a rare Yellow Rail! Water gugging out of a jug? A stealthy American Bittern is lurking in the cattails. Is someone playing a series of notes on a recorder, or could it be that a Pied-billed Grebe just swam by?

Nestled in the Beaverhill Lake Natural Area are two things: a marsh and an organization of curious bird biologists. They are a perfect match; annually, staff at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO) run a Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP) within the wetland surrounding Lister Lake, a small waterbody just south of Beaverhill Lake. Protocols for these surveys are adapted from The Prairie and Parkland Marsh Monitoring Program (PPMMP) by Birds Canada. Designed with secretive marsh birds in mind, the program uses a technique known as “callback” where bird calls are broadcast from a speaker in hopes of triggering a response from the target species.

It is important to emphasize that callback should be reserved for scientific purposes, not personal use. Inappropriate callback practices will disturb bird breeding behaviour, and great care is taken during the MMP to eliminate harm.

The Beaverhill Lake Natural Area has been designated as a Key Biodiversity Area and recognized by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the glowing results of these surveys leave no question as to why this is. In an area smaller than 4km² (400 hectares), the observatory's MMP surveys have documented more than 50 bird species! This includes eight of the protocol's ten target species: American Bittern, Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe, Horned Grebe, Virginia Rail, Sora, Yellow Rail, and Nelson's Sparrow.

During this year's Snow Goose Festival, visitors partaking in hiking tours to the Beaverhill Bird Observatory will be led along the western shore of Lister Lake. Many of the MMP survey sites are located along this trail, as well as a few viewpoints overlooking this marsh!

So don your binoculars, hit the trails, and spend this summer basking in the bizarre symphony of your local wetlands! But, before excitedly adding a secretive marsh bird to your list, make sure you're not being fooled by a nearby speaker!

From top to bottom: American Bittern, Yellow Rail, Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe



Alberta Young Birders 2025 Update

By: David Grinevitch



Alberta Young Birders (AYB) is a club that was created under the umbrella of the BBO designed to create a community for young birders (age 10-17) to meet one another and improve their birding skills together. Young adult leaders organize and lead monthly walks in the city, as well as driving trips to destinations outside of Edmonton. In 2025, the club held eight events.

In January, we visited Whitemud Creek Ravine in the city where an elusive Black-backed Woodpecker and pair of Great Horned Owls were highlights. In March, we held our first driving trip to the Opal area in search of Great Gray and Northern Hawk Owls, and were successful in finding both. Our mid-April trip to the Bruderheim area produced many spring migrant waterfowl and several pairs of Mountain Bluebirds.



Top: Northern Hawk Owl spotted in the Opal area. Bottom: Alberta Young Birders on the December field trip near Tofield.

After a subsequent hiatus, we explored the Grey Nuns Spruce Woodlot in St. Albert and the Ravencrest riverside trail in August and September – both hotspots for fall warbler migration around Edmonton, where we saw a great diversity of songbirds including 10 warbler species. October saw another city walk to Hermitage Park, followed by a driving trip to Wabamun Lake in November. Stopping at various access points around the lake to scope, we found two species rare for the time and place – White-winged Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks, among an assortment of other waterfowl and grebes. Two Short-eared Owls and four Snowy Owls concluded the year on a field trip around Tofield in December.



The group remains small, with 4-5 participants typically coming on each trip, excluding leaders. We hope to increase that number as much as possible throughout 2026 with continued monthly events, and welcome all new participants, regardless of skill-level or prior knowledge. Please reach out to the leaders - Patrick Goa, Julia Froese, Nikolas Robinson and David Grinevitch - at **albertayoungbirders@gmail.com** to be notified of upcoming events.

Top to bottom, left to right: Yellow-rumped warbler, Red-winged blackbird, Hairy Woodpecker, and AYB members visiting Grey Nuns Spruce Woodlot



Volunteer Spotlight - Linda Aldridge

My love of birds has been a lifelong companion, first sparked during childhood summers at our family cottage in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia. Inspired by my father's awe for the natural world, I grew up surrounded by the sounds and colours of loons, evening grosbeaks, ruby-throated hummingbirds, goldfinches, and ospreys. Those early experiences quietly shaped a deep appreciation for birds that stayed with me through the busy years of work and raising a family.

With our two sons grown, I finally took the leap into birding in 2023, jumping into the deep end by volunteering on the Brooks and Writing-on-Stone bird counts and banding with the Calgary Bird Banding Society along the Bow River. From the very beginning, I was struck by how welcoming and generous the birding community is—always eager to share knowledge, stories, and passion. It's truly its own universe, complete with nicknames, mnemonics, and a shared language that makes learning endlessly rewarding.



These experiences led me to volunteer during the fall 2025 migration at the BBO, where it was an honour to learn to scribe, handle birds, and accurately age songbirds and Northern Saw-whet Owls (NSWO). Holding an NSWO is pure magic, and I remain deeply grateful to Jana and her team for welcoming me so warmly. Like many others, I know I will return year after year.

Volunteer Spotlight - Sian Ford



I first started working with the BBO through an internship rebuilding and monitoring the Elson bluebird trail in the summer of 2013. As part of my undergraduate degree I had taken the ornithology course and from then on I was hooked. I can remember having to convince the program coordinator at the University of Alberta to give me approval to take the course since it was outside of my degree specialization in genetics. He asked me to justify taking "the birds course" and I justified it to him by saying "What if birds is my thing?" Over a decade later, I think I have the answer to that!

After the internship, I volunteered with the banding program until I moved to Hamilton, Ontario in 2016. During my graduate studies in McMaster I continued banding regularly at Haldimand Bird Observatory until my return to Alberta in 2023. One of the first things I did when I moved back was contact the BBO to get involved with volunteering so that I could keep banding birds and contributing to migration monitoring.

I've been fortunate enough to band birds across Canada and in South Africa, meeting and learning from many wonderful scientists and stewards along the way. Bird banding and bird watching have become a big part of my life and have helped me get through some tougher times. Being able to connect with nature and contribute to conservation have been huge motivators for me and I am excited to continue working alongside the BBO for years to come.

The Fleeting Shores (And Shorebirds) of Beaverhill Lake

By: Jon Van Arragon, Assistant Biologist

During the 2025 field season, I had a very simple assignment: count shorebirds in Beaverhill Lake. Doing this requires 2 key ingredients: shorebirds, and a lake. Unfortunately, the 2025 shorebird surveys only scored a grade of 1/2 in those categories. I spent many days observing shorebirds during my surveys, but I was also observing dramatic declines in the water levels of Beaverhill Lake at the same time.

The shorebird counts this year showed some interesting trends despite the fleeting water levels. Over 24,000 shorebirds were observed across 18 surveys, which took place from April 30 to October 2. The most common species was Long-billed Dowitcher with nearly 7000 observations, followed by Pectoral Sandpiper and American Avocet. Other common species included Least Sandpipers, Lesser Yellowlegs, and Semipalmated Sandpipers. Some noteworthy sightings included a pair of Red Knots, a Hudsonian Godwit, and an Upland Sandpiper - all uncommon species!

The decline in water levels was the biggest story of the 2025 surveys. Shoreline survey points established in 2024 were dry on my first visit, and the survey transect along the south shore of Beaverhill Lake continually shifted north throughout the year, chasing the retreating edge of the lake. By August, water had essentially disappeared from the main body of Beaverhill Lake, and shorebird surveys were relocated to the east arm of the lake near Mundare Beach. Examining satellite imagery shows just how quickly the drying occurred, with the position of the shoreline shifting by kilometers in a matter of weeks at times.

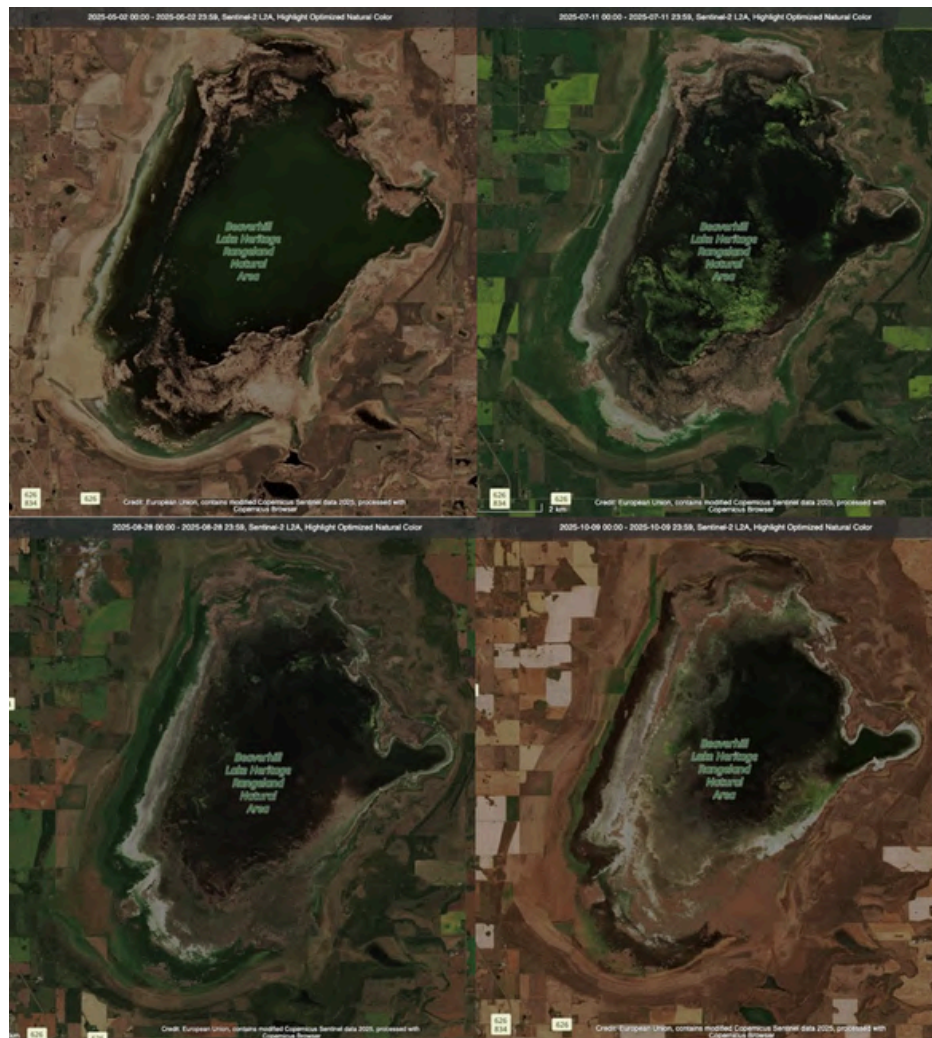


Shorebird congregate on the shallow water of Beaverhill Lake on a May 9 survey.

None of this is unusual in a vacuum. Beaverhill Lake has dried up before, most recently in 2005. Beaverhill Lake was not the only water body in the area to dry in 2025. Many of the shallow sloughs and marshes surrounding Tofield dried up as well, likely owing to a poor spring runoff and insufficient summer precipitation. Nationally, shorebird populations have declined 42% in the last 50 years, and the loss of formerly productive breeding and staging areas is a major contributing factor to that.

Beaverhill Lake is still an important and precious water body, even if it is fleeting. Flocks of Long-billed Dowitcher, Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, and Pectoral Sandpiper at Beaverhill Lake were larger than anywhere else in the province in 2025.

Interested in reading more about shorebird numbers? Check out the full [2025 Shorebird Survey Report!](#)



Progression of water levels in Beaverhill Lake over the 2025 field season. Photo dates from left to right, top to bottom: May 2, July 11, August 28, October 9.

BirdSmart at a Glance: The 2025-2026 Education Season

By: Emelie Dykstra, Field Biologist and Education Coordinator

The 2025-2026 BirdSmart season has seen great success! The education team this winter consisted of Jana Teefy (head biologist), Jon VanArragon (assistant biologist), Willow Zilliox (field biologist), Emelie Dykstra (field biologist, education coordinator), as well as Geoff Holroyd (chair). The team was able to deliver four presentations in French, with the help of volunteers Jordyn, Kalia, and Camille. Store events were aided by Xavier (field biologist and volunteer). As of March 16th, 2026, the staff and volunteers have given 194 presentations, reaching 4387 students and 2286 adults. At the time of writing, there are 101 presentations left in the season until the staff return to the field for the Snow Goose Festival, for 295 presentations total. We are projected to complete the season just shy of last year's presentation count, 326. Included in these presentation numbers are circuits to Wabasca, Wainwright, and ten different Battle River School Division. So many presentations local to the BBO Lab were made possible by the generosity of the Battle River Community Foundation.



Emelie and Keith, the Red-tailed Hawk

Despite the interruption to the school year, due to the Alberta teacher's strike in October of 2025, many incredible teachers hosted BirdSmart in their classrooms to foster connections between students and nature.

This education season, the BBO didn't attend teacher's conventions, instead choosing to focus on keeping all dates available for presentation bookings. There was no significant drop in bookings, and the typical trend of March and April being the busiest months continued.

At the time of writing, the staff have completed 5 after school group presentations, 9 community event presentations, 4 private meet and greets, 153 school presentations, 19 senior center presentations, and 4 store events. Of the survey responses so far, 91% of organizations rated the topic as excellent, and 94% reported the presenter as excellent. 100% of respondents said that they would recommend the BirdSmart program to other teachers. 97% of respondents said that they would like to book the program again.

Overall, the education season yielded incredible results, reaching thousands of people and delivering educational content in several venues. Many thanks to the schools and other organizations for hosting the program, and volunteers for making this winter such a success.

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 for more information.



TD Friends of the Environment Foundation



Environment and Climate Change Canada

