



the WILLET

Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Volume 16, Number 2

April, 2003



Spring Thaw Bird Tours

3 Hr Walk-in Tours to the BBO
April 26 and 27

Tours will depart the Beaverhill Lake Nature Center both days at: 8:00, 9:00, 10:00, 11:00, 12:00, 13:00, 14:00, and 15:00. Refreshments provided at the lab.

Pre-registered participants are asked to check in at the Beaverhill Lake Nature Center/Museum, located on the access road into Tofield, 20 minutes prior to the tour departure.

To register, or for further information, contact Town of Tofield by phone (780-662-3269) or email: tofield@supernet.ab.ca

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Peter Pyle Banding Workshop March 9-12, 2003

Lisa Priestley, Bird Studies Canada

What a treat, this year's Banding Workshop was led by Peter Pyle (from Point Reyes Bird Observatory), the author of the 'bible' to North American bird banding. On Sunday March 9, an open public lecture was held at the University of Alberta where the topic was "Banding and It's Uses". Some of the uses of banding include: recovery information, monitoring numbers, productivity measures, and juvenile survivorship.

Peter went on to talk about aging birds in spring using moult limits, or the boundaries between replaced and retained wing feathers and rectrices during partial or incomplete moults (Pyle 1997). When young birds hatch, they must grow feathers quickly, so they are able to fledge quickly. Because of this speed in feather growth they sacrifice feather quality. Juvenile feathers have fewer barbs and barbules and the feathers are generally weaker and wear much more than the new adult feathers that come in over the winter. These adult feathers can be seen alongside the juvenile feathers in the second year birds that return to Beaverhill Lake. Of the 258 Passerine birds in North America, only 36 undergo a complete moult, so that they resemble the adult. All others will show moult limits.

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On March 10, the workshop moved out to Strathcona Wilderness Center. Twenty representatives covering seven banding stations were present: Beaverhill Bird Observatory, Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory, Calgary Bird Banding Society, Last Mountain Lake Bird Observatory, MAPS Scissons Environmental Education Center, Delta Marsh Bird Observatory, and Alaska Bird Observatory.

The workshop consisted of lectures, working with frozen specimens and wing-out study skins, and study sessions. No live banding was possible due to the cold temperatures (averaged -25°C). On March 11, a trip was also made to the Provincial Museum to look through the museum collections of birds, which showed the wide range of color variations in species. This was followed by a tour of the museum and then a pizza dinner. That evening we had a special treat, a slide show on Peter Pyle's work with Great White Sharks. He also had some video footage of the sharks feeding which was quite amazing.

Finally, on March 12, we had a final look at some slides of wings of various species, and had a round-the-room quiz of what the age was and how we determined it. We all passed!! A group photo was taken, books were signed, and we all said our good-byes. It was a wonderful workshop and as Chuck puts it "we learned about banding Pyle Style".

Thanks very much to Peter Pyle for making the trip up to cold and snowy Alberta and for sharing so much information with us. Special thanks to the Provincial Museum for opening the ornithological collections for us, providing specimens, and giving us a tour. Finally, thanks to Brenda Dale for organizing the workshop, we look forward to the next one!

Pyle, P. 1997. Molt limits in North American passerines. *North American Bird Bander* 22(2).



Kevin Hannah, Tim Haughian, Peter Pyle, and Chuck Priestley study variations in bird plumages.

COMOCO 2003 – A Fine Way to Spend a Cold Day

Chuck Priestley

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory's 2003 Bird Conservation and Monitoring Conference (COMOCO) was held on March 7th and 8th in Edmonton. This conference, as the title suggests, was devoted to topics related to both conservation and monitoring of bird populations. This event was such a great success thanks to the speakers that gave presentations, the people who attended, and the Beaverhill Bird Observatory's board of directors who helped organize and run the event. An additional note of thanks should go out to all of our participants and audience for braving those -35°C temperatures to come to this event!

Friday Evening

The BBO was pleased to welcome our keynote speaker, Dr. Gordon Court. Gord emphasized the value of conducting long-term monitoring projects in his presentation on 'The Tundra Peregrine Falcons of Rankin Inlet, Nunavut'. This topic was a very appropriate opener to COMOCO not only because of our audience's keen interest in raptors, but also because Gord's story provided an excellent example of how so much can be learned from on-going cooperative projects.



Saturday

This day was divided into three parts, bird observatory reports, special topics in bird conservation and monitoring and we closed with a special keynote address.

It was wonderful to welcome seven different bird observatories this year. Presentations from Audrey Heagy (Bird Studies Canada – ON), Heidi Den Haan (Delta Marsh Bird Observatory - MB), Tim Haughian (Saskatoon Catholic School Board - SK), Bryn Spence (Beaverhill Bird Observatory - AB), Janos Kovacs (Strathcona Bird Observatory - AB), Jul Wojnowski (Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory – AB) and Kevin Hannah (Alaska Bird Observatory - AK) were greatly appreciated. This year we heard from more bird observatory representatives than ever before and had the widest geographic representation. Thanks to all those who came from afar, it was great to hear what has been going on in your neck of the woods!

After the bird observatory reports, talks were given on other topics such as: Piping Plover conservation programs, economic impact of the Snow Goose Festival, raptor nest card program, raptor electrocution, influence of chickadee capture on capture rates, Alberta bird Atlas, Saw-whets moult, songbirds and climate-change and a boreal research station initiative. It was great to have such a wide variety of topics, which centered on a similar theme, conservation and monitoring of bird populations. Thanks to Paul Goossen, Glen Hvenegaard, Lisa Priestley, Cindy Platt, Kevin Hannah, Philip Penner, Audrey Heagy and Frank Fraser for giving such high caliber presentations.

Finally, we were fortunate to receive a keynote address from Edgar T. Jones. His topic, '108 870 and Counting, an Overview of My Banding Experiences' was informative and inspiring. Edgar's love for bird research really shined through in his stunning slides and

gripping stories. I think that Edgar's presentation provided an excellent example of how successful small numbers of hard-working, dedicated people can be when they know what they love to do and choose to do it despite the difficulties that can be encountered along the way.

Co-sponsorship from the following agencies, Alberta Conservation Association, Bird Studies Canada, Department of Renewable Resources – University of Alberta, Edmonton Bird Club, Environment Canada – Canadian Wildlife Service and Shell Environmental Fund, helped to make this event so successful. In addition, we would like to thank all the aforementioned people who made presentations. Lastly, thank you to all those who attended the conference. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year!

Summer Sundays at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Join one of our volunteers for an exciting hike around the Beaverhill Lake Natural Area. Every second Sunday starting in May we will focus on a different aspect of the plants and animals that call the Natural Area home. On the Sundays that we won't be leading walks, feel free to come out to the lab and our staff will be on site to answer any questions you might have. The hike will be about 2-3 hours of light walking through marshes and aspen woodland.



Refreshments will be served at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory Lab at some point in our adventure. You are encouraged to bring rubber boots with you in your car in case it's muddy. Please, dress for the weather because there is little cover from the elements. You should also bring your water bottle, binoculars and favorite field guide. Please check our website for more information at www.beaverhillbirds.com or email bryn@beaverhillbirds.com

It's Baillie Birdathon Time Again!

Would you like to have a **lot** of fun and help birds and nature at the same time? Do a Birdathon this May! It's challenging, exhilarating, and addictive! More than 7,500 people from across Canada (and from several countries around the world) participate in and/or sponsor Birdathon in May of every year. During a 24-hour period in May, they attempt to find as many bird species as they can, sponsored at a flat rate, or on a per-species basis. Birders can designate a favourite bird observatory as the recipient of fund raising.



As a further incentive, sponsors have provided some wonderful prizes for participants to win. Every registered participant receives the Official Birdathon T-Shirt (see logo to right). To find out more about Birdathon, contact Bird Studies Canada at 1-888-448-BIRD (2473), or check out the website <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/organization/brdathon.html>

If you would like to support the **Beaverhill Bird Observatory** in the Baillie Birdathon instead of participating yourself, pick a team you would like to support and fill out the following form and return it to the address below. All designated Canadian Migration Monitoring Stations raising \$500 or more are eligible for a draw to win an **Optio330GS Digital Camera**, courtesy of Pentax Canada Inc. Help Beaverhill Bird Observatory win this prize for the station!!!

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Your Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____
STREET/BOX/APT.# CITY/TOWN POSTAL CODE

E-mail: _____

Please choose the team you would like to pledge:

____ **Team 1 - The Birding Buddies** (Owls are a good bet)
- Chuck Priestley -Lisa Priestley -Bryn Spence - Juanita Mumby

____ **Team 2 – The Backyard Birders** (It's a big yard)
-Jason Duxbury -Sandra Duxbury

____ **Team 3 – The Experienced Ones** (Legendary Skill... if the alarm clock works)
- Geoff Holroyd - Gerry McKeating - Pat Crossely -Helen Trefry

____ **Team 4 – The BBO Birders** (The BBO staff may know where the birds are!)

I would like to pledge the following PER BIRD SPECIES SEEN by a team:

___10¢ ___25¢ ___50¢ ___\$1.00 ___Other (\$_____)

OR You would like to pledge a FLAT RATE of \$_____

(all donations over \$10 will receive a tax receipt)

Please return the form to: Beaverhill Bird Observatory, Box 1418, Edmonton, AB T5J 2N5

BBO Word Search

Words associated with birds can be found vertically, horizontally, diagonally, not to mention backwards. The remaining letters spell the secret phrase. The solution will be provided in the next issue of The Willet.

B	D	R	I	B	W	O	C	E	L	I	M	S	H	R
I	E	M	P	I	D	O	N	A	X	B	I	A	S	E
R	S	A	X	A	L	E	R	G	N	I	L	N	U	D
D	U	N	V	C	O	O	T	L	K	R	A	D	R	T
I	O	U	E	E	S	R	D	E	S	B	N	P	H	A
N	R	T	E	A	R	E	D	H	E	A	D	I	T	I
G	G	H	R	T	W	H	R	O	L	L	E	P	R	L
E	E	A	Y	O	I	E	I	T	R	R	E	E	D	E
H	U	T	R	K	L	P	E	L	E	I	R	R	O	D
N	L	C	N	B	R	W	I	P	L	A	O	B	B	H
O	B	H	R	E	W	A	U	P	A	L	L	L	O	A
O	R	A	V	A	R	F	L	R	C	R	A	O	E	W
L	W	O	T	E	H	W	W	A	S	N	T	K	I	K
E	D	E	N	K	C	U	D	Y	D	D	U	R	E	D
S	R	E	P	P	I	D	N	A	C	I	R	E	M	A

Words:

American	Reed
Dipper	Redhead
BBO	Red-tailed Hawk
Beaverhill Lake	Relax
Birding	Ruddy Duck
Blue Grouse	Sandpiper
Coot	Saw whet Owl
Cowbird	Scale
Crow	Smile
Dark	Sora
Deer	Teal
Dove	Thrush
Dunlin	Trap
Eagle	Veery
Empidonax	Warbler
Hoot	Water
Hut	Wetland
Lab	Wren
Land	
Lark	
Loon	
Nuthatch	
Oriole	
Pipit	



© Lisa Priestley

BRRRRrrrrr!

*Not quite ready for banding.
The Beaverhill Bird
Observatory in late March.
The Natural Area has not
seen snow like this for a
couple of years.*

NEXT WILLET ISSUE

Material for the forthcoming newsletter should be sent to: Jason Duxbury, editor, The Willet, 146 52512 RR 214, Ardrossan, Alberta, T8E 2H1. Email: jduxbury@ualberta.ca. Next newsletter deadline: May 31, 2002. Articles can be on bird banding, birdwatching, wildlife viewing, etc.