



Volume 20, Number 2

May 2007

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## BIG Birding Breakfast

June 2, 2007

At Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Join us as we celebrate the spring birds of Beaverhill Lake. Learn about our various programs and see bird banding up close. Breakfast (crepes, bacon, fruits, juice, coffee, tea) provided.

**Time:** Nets go up at 4:45 a.m. and run till 10:45 (weather dependent). Breakfast served throughout the morning. Guided walks to weir throughout the day if there is interest. Swallow nest box banding in afternoon.

**Cost:** \$10 (or buy a membership and it's free).

**Contact:** For more information and to register, contact Lisa Priestley at [lisa@beaverhillbirds.com](mailto:lisa@beaverhillbirds.com) or phone: (780) 918-4804.

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### ***Welcome to Our Staff***

This year we welcome back Allicia Kelly (right) as our Head Bander and welcome new staff Anna Daku (left). Come meet the staff and Board of Directors at the BIG Birding Breakfast!!



## ***Bird Bags Needed***

Do you have a sewing machine and the secret (or not so secret) desire to help out the birds? The Beaverhill Bird Observatory could use some new bird bags. We lost most of our bird bags last summer and, though we have gained a few more since then, having more bird bags would really help us out.



Wondering what a bird bag is? When we extract a bird that has flown into a mist net, we put it into a small cotton bag and hang it on a post while we remove other captured birds. These bags give each bird a dark, quiet place to stay during their trip back to the lab and as they wait their turn for banding, decreasing the birds' stress and keeping them safe (we use the bags "inside-out" so that birds can't get caught on any thread or extra material from the sewing). We wash the bags after they have been used by a few birds, or as soon as they get dirty (birds like to show their appreciation for this process by leaving, uh, presents, behind in the bird bags). When we catch a lot of birds, we have to make more trips to launder the bags and we reuse the same bags more often. Having a higher number of bird bags would make life easier for us and the birds on the days when we catch several birds at once.

Our favourite "style" of bag is made from lightweight cotton that is thin, but not see through and moves easily, is about 7" wide by 8" tall when sewn, and has a hem at the top for the drawstring that is smaller than 1 inch (makes it easier to close the bag up). We wash the bags in hot water and put them in a dryer, so these measurements are after any potential shrinkage of the cotton. We will provide the cord and string of any new bags on a quiet day at the lab. Color or material does not matter, however we prefer no green as it blends in with the vegetation. You can usually find some nice Christmas patterns on sale at this time of the year!!

If you have any questions or if this sounds like a good way to spend a rainy afternoon (or if you'd like to see some bird bags in action...) give us a call at the BBO lab (819-9927). We and the birds will appreciate your efforts!

And bird bags aside, spring banding this year has been great. We have been catching higher numbers of birds compared with the last few years and several uncommon species have been banded. See our weekly reports on the website. Visitors are always welcome. Come check it out!

***by Alicia Kelly, Head Bander, BBO***

## ***Shoreline Habitat Improvement at Beaverhill Lake***

Even though Beaverhill Lake is recognized as an Important Bird Area, the Beaverhill Lake Natural Area is the only part of the shoreline that is specifically zoned for habitat protection. We feel that bird habitat quality will significantly improve once the fences are fixed. In addition, we would like to put in a barrier around the parking area at the edge of the Natural Area so that trucks, SUVs and ATVs can't drive in. Lastly, we would like to put up signs at the various access points that explain which activities are not allowed in the Natural Area (such as driving).



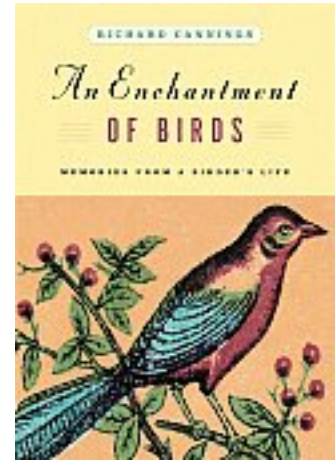
The project that we are conducting has the following objectives:

- (1) Protect a biologically significant area of Beaverhill Lake shoreline habitat by re-establishing fences.
- (2) Non-confrontationally restrict the use of motorized vehicles in the Beaverhill Lake Natural Area using barriers of entry and signage.
- (3) Educate Natural Area user about the activities that are/are not allowed (and why the area is so important – why it is important that these rules are in place).

The parking lot has been cleared and posts have been installed surrounding it. New gates will be erected at all access points on the west side of the Natural Area. Some will be locked to reduce off highway vehicle access, however there will be fence walk throughs installed at all gated fence lines. Nature Canada provided funding for this project and Shell Environmental Fund has just contributed more funding to repair fences and build a fence on the north side of the Natural Area.

## **Book Review – An Enchantment of Birds by Richard Cannings**

Richard Cannings is a consulting biologist in Naramata B.C. and teaches at the University of British Columbia. His new book “An Enchantment of Birds, Memories from a Birder’s Life” is a compilation of short stories about encounters with various favourite bird species throughout his life. The book is nice to read as each chapter is a short story (about 6-10 pages), and can therefore be read in between a busy schedule. Not only is this book looking into the life of Cannings, but it also is full of detailed biological information about each species, and therefore you feel you’ve learned something after reading each chapter.



There is a nice variety of species, from the common Western Meadowlark and Northern Saw-whet Owl, to the less common and secretive Flammulated Owl and the White-headed Woodpecker. The species covered are not only from British Columbia, but also from his travels across North America. When reading this book, you feel like you are right there next to Cannings searching the treetops, listening quietly for the birds he is pointing out. This comes from his ability to bring the reader outside on an excursion right from the comforts of a comfy couch with a throw blanket wrapped around you while you sip tea on a rainy day.

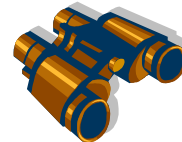
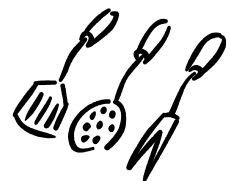
I would recommend the book to anyone who has had a long time passion for birds, or even a new birder looking for more information on where to find birds and to learn more about their habits. It is a book that caters to all ages. Thanks for sharing your stories.

**by Lisa Priestley**

### **Beaverhill Bird Observatory Wish List**

#### Gently Used

- Pots and non-stick pans – various sizes
- Barbeque utensils (metal tongs, flipper, etc.)
- Coffee percolator (stove top)
- Stove top kettle
- Thermos
- Coffee mugs
- Table cloths
- Replacement kitchen cupboards
- Front door for lab (or glass/plexi to repair broken window)
- Screen door for lab
- Lawn chairs
- Single mattresses and Single mattress covers
- Picture/poster frames (Plexiglas)
- Binoculars
- Blankets (for visitors at events)
- Rainwater barrel (or new one)



#### New

- Candles (suggest dollar store stick candles, \$3/box)
- Rainwater barrel (or gently used one)

If you would like to donate any of these items, please contact: Lisa Priestley  
Phone (780) 918-4804 or email: [lisa@beaverhills.com](mailto:lisa@beaverhills.com)

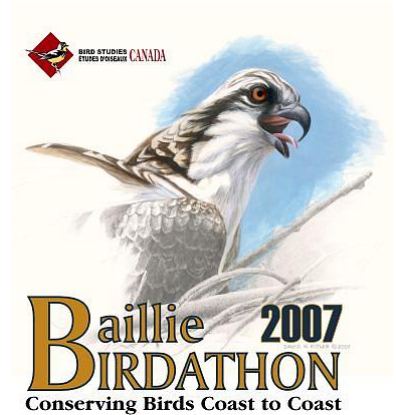
## **Congratulations to BBO parents Lisa and Chuck!**

Kate Rose Priestley was born on Wednesday May 2, 2007 at 8:30 a.m.

Kate is their second child, her brother Sam is 16 months old, and has already seen five species of owls. To sponsor Kate in her first birdathon check out the article below.

### ***May is Baillie Birdathon Month***

More than 7,000 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 conservation organization to receive a portion of the funds they raise. Bird observatories can also be designated as recipients of fund raising. Volunteers can request a free T-shirt for participating and are also entered into a contest for some great prizes.



To participate in the Birdathon you can register at Bird Studies

Canada's website: <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/support/birdathon/index.jsp?targetpg=index&lang=en>

To sponsor a Beaverhill Bird Observatory team please e-mail: [lisa@beaverhillbirds.com](mailto:lisa@beaverhillbirds.com)

### ***Membership Information***

\$10/yr for an individual, \$20/yr for a family, \$25/yr Supporting, \$25/yr Corporate, \$100/yr Sustaining, \$500 (one time) Life Time Membership

Cheques can be made to the Beaverhill Bird Observatory and sent to: Box 1418, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 2N5

### ***NEXT WILLET ISSUE***

Material for the forthcoming newsletter should be sent to: Lisa Priestley, Editor, Box 1418, Edmonton, AB T5J 2N5. Email: [lisa@beaverhillbirds.com](mailto:lisa@beaverhillbirds.com). Articles can be on bird banding, bird watching, wildlife viewing, personal nature photos, etc.

Photo of water flowing over the weir between Lister and Beaverhill May 2007 by Alicia Kelly

