



Volume 21, Number 1

February 2008

Annual General Meeting

March 3, 2008

812 General Services Building, University of Alberta

Join the Beaverhill Bird Observatory board of directors for the annual general meeting. Report from our Treasurer, nominations for new board members, and voting.

Time: 7 p.m., cost: Free

Contact: For more information or if you are interested in becoming involved contact Chuck Priestley at (780) 984-6957 or e-mail charles@ualberta.ca.

Snow Goose Chase 2007 – Edmonton Nature Club

by Bob Parsons

photos by Gerald Romanchuk

A total of six buses went out to the Tofield/Beaverhill area on a nice sunny day, four buses of inner city school kids and two buses for the paying public. Excellent scouts were out early in the day, tracking down likely snow goose spots and other areas of interest. Cell phones and walkie-talkies worked well and all people saw snow geese somewhere!! Most buses reported up to 45 species for the day which is pretty good for this time of year.



Various educational activities were set up around the lake area and the Tofield Nature Centre featured the hawks and owls from the Valley Zoo, bugs and beetles, how a watershed is formed and a tremendous exhibit from the Royal Alberta Museum, which included snakes and scorpions. Kim Allen gave a slide show of local wildlife while Ray Cromie and Jack Park had some displays set up at Francis Viewpoint parking lot, including a live Barred Owl. The birding highlight of the day had to be the 100 plus Hudsonian Godwits at Kallal Meadow, mixed in with Marbled Godwits, Pectoral Sandpipers, Black-necked Stilts and many Franklin's Gulls. All taking part saw the Great Horned Owl on nest as well as swans, grebes, bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Sandhill Cranes, Vesper Sparrow and many other birds flying through. Gerald and I thought we may have heard a Hermit Thrush calling but the wind did not help our listening!

Weather conditions on Sunday were a lot calmer as 2 packed buses made their way out to the Tofield area. The same route was used with the first stop at the west side of Hastings Lake, then around to the north side (RR204) with a final stop at the Narrows. Highlights included Black-crowned Night Heron on a nest, Common & Red-breasted Merganser, a lone Common

Loon, Common Grackle, Western Grebe and Says Phoebe. Lunch was special as we had Dr. Ed Jones as guest who gave a brief talk on the importance of Beaverhill Lake. As we boarded the buses, calls came in from our dependable scouts who had located thousands of Snow Geese just north of Ryley. On our way there we came across the same large number of Hudsonians at Kallal Meadow as the day before, and many participants were delighted to see the numerous Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Amisk Creek. Many Rough-legged Hawks and hundreds of Sandhill Cranes were seen migrating overhead. The sight of the Snow Geese was the highlight for many, and the blue phase were obvious to many with binoculars.

The weather was starting to close in by mid-afternoon and the search for swans was mostly unsuccessful. The first Purple Martin was spotted by a disbelieving Gerald Romanchuk, and we also came across Sora, Snipe, and Barn Swallow. The tally for the day was 72 species which is exceptional I think. The tour guides were terrific and the scouts were very helpful with spotting scopes, bird guides and general info. The whole weekend was a tremendous success with a team of over 50 volunteers!! Guess we can do it again next year!!



Enbridge, LeHigh Inland and Rotary Club of Edmonton (downtown) sponsored four inner-city buses.

Inner-city school children, Uncles at Large, Big Brothers and Sisters, & Oliver School all enjoyed a terrific day out on the Saturday. All 4 buses were packed with children, parents, chaperones and volunteers and all took part in the many interactive displays that were setup around Tofield and Beaverhill Lake. Hawks and Owls from the Edmonton Valley Zoo, snakes and scorpions from the Royal

Alberta Museum and a bird slide show courtesy of Kim Allen. Jack Park and Ray Cromie had nature tables set up at the Francis Viewpoint parking lot and a busy Mike Jenkins team captivated all with the bugs and beetles found in wetlands behind the Tofield Nature Centre. Many happy moments were recorded by Gerald Romanchuk, our resident in-house photographer. Dolores Smithson ensured that all buses had extra snacks, games, door prizes... Another wonderful effort! Extra funding for packed lunches was solicited from our friends at Synergy and the law firm of Cummings, Andrew, & MacKay, always a great benefactor of our club!! Highlights of the afternoon bus run included thousands of snow geese, many raptors and close up views of a Great-horned Owl on nest close to Kallal Meadow. A truly wonderful day out! Thanks to Jim Lange and his team for all the pre-event scouting.



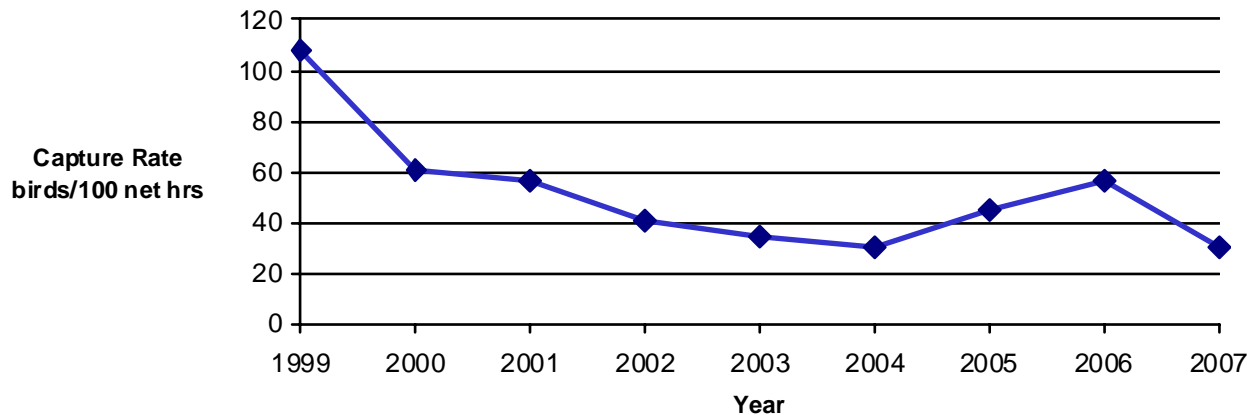
Thanks to All the Volunteers:

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Alana Broomfield | Fred Martin | Karen and Marvin Tully | Peggy and John |
| Andrew Forest | Gerald Keating | Katie Cameron | Folinsbee |
| Av Mann | Gerald Romanchuk | Kevin and Claudia Bolli | Peter Daly |
| Bob Gehlbert | Harvey Kuszmaniuk | Kevin Hannah | Peter Demulder |
| Bob Parsons | Heather Ronnes | Kristin Wray | Ray Cromie |
| Brenda Shaughnessy | Hugh Campbell. | Lance Steinke | Stacey Hunt |
| Brian Hornby | Ingrid Jukes | Lindsay Robertson | Stan Gosche |
| Cecilia Goncalves | Jack Park | Liz Singbeil | Steve Knight |
| Claudia Lipski Cameron | Jan McCrum | Lynn Chandler | Tyler Trhyason |
| Curtis and Michelle Manley | Janos Kovacs | Marie Prill | Zack Breckenridge |
| Dale Dawson | Jaye Lee | Mike Jenkins | |
| Dawn Waring | Jill Anderson | Nik Romaniuk | |
| Dolores Smithson | Jim Lange | | |

Fall 2007 Summary from Beaverhill Bird Observatory Lab

by Jonathan Martin-DeMoor and Lisa Priestley

Songbird migration monitoring was conducted from August 1 through October 9, 2007. There were 1079 birds captured (30.5 birds/100 net hours), the second lowest capture rate since 1999 (Figure below).



A comparison of capture rates (songbirds/100 net hours) 1999 to 2007.

Saw-whet owl nets were set from September 12 through November 14 on 49 days. We caught 183 saw-whet owls (capture rate of 27.1 owls/100 net hours), the second highest capture rate since 2002. We participated in a variety of interpretive events in Edmonton and attended the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network Meeting in Slave Lake. The Steaks and Saw-whets event was a huge success again with over 100 people coming out to the lab to observe saw-whet owl banding.

Funding & in-kind support from Alberta Conservation Association, Nature Canada, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Shell Environmental Fund, and Manning Diversified, Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, Canadian Wildlife Service, and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development is greatly appreciated.

Photo by Doug Hube

Harris's Sparrow Banding Highlight

The Edmonton Bird Banding Society reported on an exciting capture last fall at their station at Strathcona Science Park. A Harris Sparrow was captured on September 30, 2007. This species only breeds along the edge of the boreal forest and tundra line in Canada. There is very little information on the biology of this species. One of the last passerines to have its nest and eggs described in North America, the first nest of Harris's Sparrow was only discovered in 1931.

Although this species winters in the central Great Plains region from South Dakota to Texas, it is present in small numbers in areas outside this range. There have been winter records in Edmonton and Tofield. Keep an eye open for this beautiful sparrow. A fairly large sparrow, in the winter it can be confused with a House Sparrow due to the variable black bib, however it lacks the rust on the back of the head and the gray crown.



The OWL FILES



Results Alberta Nocturnal Owl Survey 2007

by Lisa Priestley

The results are in and the number of owls counted, the number of routes run, and the number of volunteers participating in spring 2007 increased from previous years. The pilot year was in 1998, with 30 volunteers surveying 15 transects. In 2007, there were 184 volunteers surveying 94 routes throughout Alberta. If you completed your survey in 2007 or any other year, **PLEASE** submit your data. If you were not able to complete the survey, but are still interested in participating next year, please let us know.

Results from the 2007 Alberta Nocturnal Owl Survey, abundance presented owls/10 stations.

Species	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Barred Owl	22 (0.359)	27 (0.320)	18 (0.205)	13 (0.143)	16 (0.172)
Boreal Owl	36 (0.588)	45 (0.534)	39 (0.445)	35 (0.386)	39 (0.418)
Great Gray Owl	8 (0.131)	19 (0.225)	9 (0.103)	9 (0.099)	11 (0.118)
Great Horned Owl	137 (2.239)	273 (3.238)	176 (2.007)	152 (1.678)	185 (1.985)
Long-eared Owl	9 (0.147)	28 (0.332)	14 (0.160)	18 (0.199)	19 (0.204)
Northern Pygmy Owl	2 (0.033)	4 (0.047)	4 (0.046)	3 (0.033)	5 (0.054)
Northern Saw-whet	111 (1.814)	269 (3.191)	136 (1.551)	158 (1.744)	172 (1.845)
Short-eared Owl	2 (0.033)	0 (0.000)	2 (0.023)	3 (0.033)	2 (0.021)
Unknown Owl	2 (0.033)	5 (0.059)	6 (0.068)	4 (0.044)	5 (0.054)
TOTAL	329 (5.376)	670 (7.948)	404 (4.607)	383 (4.360)	454 (4.871)
Number of Routes	62	86	90	92	93
Number of Volunteers	116	163	177	180	184



It is with deepest regret that we announce the passing of one of our dedicated volunteers Martina Frey. Martina spent many hours at the bird observatory helping with songbird banding, saw-whet owl banding, and checking raptor traps. She also was a volunteer for a number of years as a Nocturnal Owl Surveyor and at our Steaks and Saw-whets event. She spent time at various other banding stations in BC as well. Martina loved working with the birds, and had a passion for raptors (she even bravely tracked down a Northern Goshawk nest near Bruderheim for us). Her enthusiasm and good natured humour will be deeply missed.

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

Material for the next newsletter can be sent to: Lisa Priestley, Editor, Box 1418, Edmonton, AB T5J 2N5. Email: lisa@beaverhillbirds.com. Articles and photos can be on bird banding, bird watching, wildlife viewing, personal nature photos, etc. Deadline: April 30, 2008