



Volume 22, Number 1

March 2009

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## Annual General Meeting

*April 14, 2009 at 7 p.m.*

*University of Alberta, General Services Building  
8<sup>th</sup> floor, Weldwood Room*

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### SPRING Staff To Open Bird Observatory on May 4, 2009

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory will officially open the banding station on May 4 to run the Spring Migration Monitoring program. Our normal May 1 start up day has been postponed to allow our staff to attend a banding workshop at Delta Marsh Bird Observatory. Our Bander-in-Charge this year is Katie Calon (formerly Cameron). Katie worked at the bird observatory in the summer and fall of 2006, and is excited about returning to the lab after two years away working for Fiera Biological Consulting. Our assistant bander this year is Ashley Thorsen, a student from NAIT's Biological Sciences program. We encourage you to come out to the lab to see the banding operations this field season. The colourful songbirds are migrating through on their way north to the Boreal Forest and the vast numbers of migrant waterfowl and shorebirds will be breathtaking with all the snowfall runoff filling the wetlands in and around Beaverhill Lake. Read about the latest observations in our bi-weekly updates at:

<http://www.beaverhillbirds.com/summaries.php>



Photo by Jonathan Martin-DeMoor

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### **BIG THANKS TO THE VOLUNTEERS**

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory casino was held on Thanksgiving weekend, October 11-12. We would like to express our sincere thanks to all the volunteers that helped to run the casino this year, which is a very important fundraiser for the BBO. The volunteers were: Jim Beck, Barb Beck, Gerry Beyersbergen, Kim Blomme, Christine Boulton, Lisa Burt, Katie Calon, Ray Cromie, Shirley Cromie, Al DeGroot, Jason Duxbury, Warren Fleming, Matt Hanneman, Alan Hingston, Geoff Holroyd, Janos Kovacs, Jenn Lalonde, Cathy Mowat, Chuck Priestley, Lisa Priestley, Rob Priestley, Ron Redmond, Glen Semenchuk, Bryn Spence, Juanita Spence, Josef Takats, Margaret Takats, Helen Trefry, Annabelle Wiseman. If you are interested in helping out for our next casino, please check our website or newsletter in fall 2010 for the dates and who to contact.

# The OWL FILES

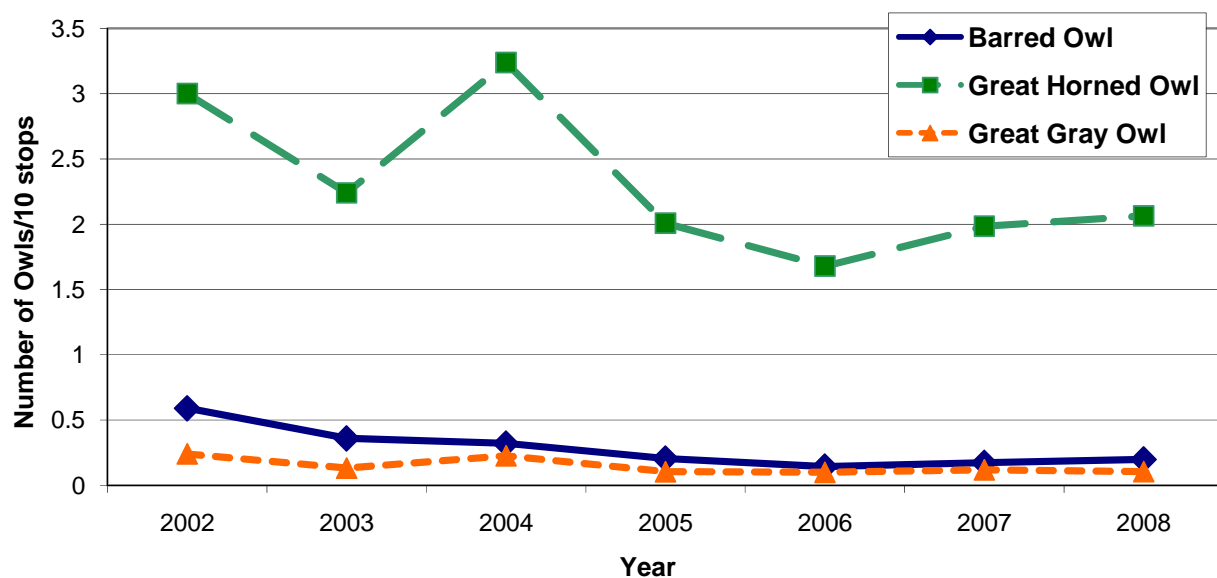
## Nocturnal Owl Survey 2008 Final Report

The Alberta Nocturnal Owl Survey is over for 2008. We had another small increase in the number of routes being run and the number of volunteers participating. A long way from our pilot year in 1998 with 25 routes, we now have 96 routes being surveyed by 185 volunteers. The number of owls detected was higher than the last three years, but lower than 2004 and 2003, evidence that number of owls increase and decrease depending on prey availability and other factors. The number of Barred Owls and Great Gray Owls continues to be relatively steady compared to Great Horned Owls and Northern Saw-whet Owls that fluctuate dramatically.



Results from the 2008 Alberta Nocturnal Owl Survey, abundance presented owls/10 stations.

Species	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Barred Owl	27 (0.320)	18 (0.205)	13 (0.143)	16 (0.172)	19 (0.198)
Boreal Owl	45 (0.534)	39 (0.445)	35 (0.386)	39 (0.418)	43 (0.448)
Great Gray Owl	19 (0.225)	9 (0.103)	9 (0.099)	11 (0.118)	10 (0.104)
Great Horned Owl	273 (3.238)	176 (2.007)	152 (1.678)	185 (1.985)	198 (2.063)
Long-eared Owl	28 (0.332)	14 (0.160)	18 (0.199)	19 (0.204)	22 (0.229)
Northern Pygmy Owl	4 (0.047)	4 (0.046)	3 (0.033)	5 (0.054)	6 (0.063)
Northern Saw-whet Owl	269 (3.191)	136 (1.551)	158 (1.744)	172 (1.845)	207 (2.156)
Short-eared Owl	0 (0.000)	2 (0.023)	3 (0.033)	2 (0.022)	1 (0.021)
Unknown Owl	5 (0.059)	6 (0.068)	4 (0.044)	5 (0.054)	4 (0.042)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>670 (7.948)</b>	<b>404 (4.607)</b>	<b>383 (4.360)</b>	<b>454 (4.871)</b>	<b>510 (5.313)</b>
Number of Routes	86	90	92	93	96
Number of Volunteers	163	177	180	184	185



Number of Barred, Great Horned, and Great Gray Owls detected in the Alberta Nocturnal Owl Survey.

## Fire Puts Fencing Project on Hold Until Spring

Two large fires on Beaverhill Lake last fall were an eye opener to Board of Directors of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, who were not accustomed to thinking about fire but were more worried about flooding in the past. The first fire started about 1 p.m., on September 28 and burned about 6000 acres which spread from Francis Point all the way to the weir in the Natural Area that separates Beaverhill Lake and Lister Lake. It was caused by a spark from an all terrain vehicle that caught fire in the dry grass and foxtail barley. An estimated 100 firefighters from Mundare, Ryley, Tofield and Strathcona County responded. Two fire trucks burned in the fire. The fire came within 100 meters of the bird observatory but was put out before it caught in the trees. Although only a few nets were damaged on site, we did lose our 3 bundles of fence posts that were piled on the ground ready for completing the north fence that would enclose the Natural Area. The second fire on November 3, started further north than the previous fire and was put out more quickly.



## Unusual Bird Sighting in Lac La Biche

*by Ken and Jean Kemke*

A strange looking bird showed up at a feeder in Lac La Biche in December 2008. Ken and Jean Kenke reported a 'canary-looking bird' was observed on multiple occasions. When they sent the photo to Jennifer Okrainec, president of the Lac La Biche Birding Society, she knew it was something exciting. She forwarded the photo on to Beaverhill Bird Observatory who forwarded on to a few bird experts. Jocelyn Hudon from the Royal Museum of Alberta responded and expressed great interest in this color variant of the Evening Grosbeak. He had published a paper in the Canadian Field Naturalist several years ago (Can. Field Naturalist [1997] 111:652-654), and is always interested in other sightings.



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# BIG Birding Breakfast

*May 30, 2009 at the  
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). 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:** To register, Lisa Priestley  
[lisa@beaverhillbirds.com](mailto:lisa@beaverhillbirds.com) or ph: (780) 918-4804.

Support for this event provided by Alberta Conservation Association.



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## CMMN Major Report Released

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory is part of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network. The network is supported by Bird Studies Canada, but involves the cooperation of 21 bird monitoring stations across the country. All the bird observatories collect data in a standardized way which can be analyzed to calculate trends. The methods involve a combination of standardized banding and standardized daily counts. The stations, are actively involved in the field work, counting and banding birds across the country. The 10 Year Report on Monitoring Landbird Population Change has been completed. It can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/download/CMMNReport2008.pdf>



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## 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](mailto:lisa@beaverhillbirds.com). Articles and photos can be on bird banding, bird watching, wildlife viewing, personal nature photos, etc. Deadline: July 31, 2009.