



Volume 23, Number 1

February 2010

2010 Western Canada Bird Conference

March 26-27, 2010

at the University of Alberta Earth Science Bldg 327

Join the Beaverhill Bird Observatory for our bird banding conference. After a four year hiatus we have re-established this popular gathering of bird banding experts and other interested people. This conference is open to anyone interested in birds and banding efforts. See poster on page 5.



To give a presentation please contact Geoff Holroyd (780) 951-8689 or E-mail Geoffrey.holroyd@ec.gc.ca

Supported by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Edmonton Nature Club, Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission and Alberta Conservation Association

Annual General Meeting

March 1, 2008 at 812 General Services Building, University of Alberta

Join the Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO) board of directors for the annual general meeting. Report from our Treasurer, nominations for new board members, and voting in the new executive for 2010.

Time: 7 p.m. **Cost:** Free

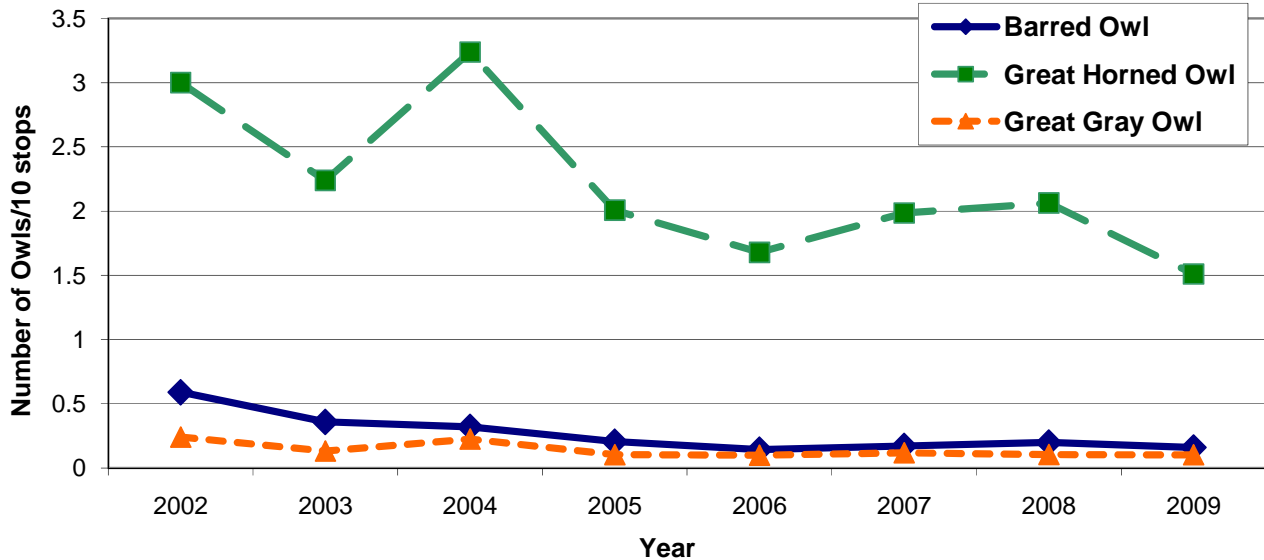
Contact: If you are interested in becoming involved with BBO contact Chuck Priestley at (780) 984-6957 or e-mail chuckp@strixenvironmental.ca.

Alberta Nocturnal and Diurnal Owl Survey 2009

The year 2009 was the eighth year the nocturnal owl survey has been run as a full time program in Alberta. The Beaverhill Bird Observatory also ran a pilot year for the new Diurnal Owl Survey program. We had 185 volunteers do nocturnal owl surveys on 95 routes in Alberta. This year we had the lowest owls per 10 stations detected since the survey's inception. It was also a poor year for nesting owls, as banders reported very few nests with low numbers of young. It is important to use a variety of monitoring programs to track how owl populations are doing. *(Con't page 2)*

THE OWL FILES

We are getting more information on the range of Long-eared Owls in Alberta from our surveys, particularly for the north. Great Horned and Northern Saw-whet Owls continue to be the most common owls detected on surveys.



Number of Barred, Great Horned and Great Gray Owls detected on surveys between 2002 and 2009.

The new Diurnal Owl Survey was initiated this year which targeted Northern Pygmy Owl and Northern Hawk Owl. We had a great response from our nocturnal owl surveyors who wanted to participate in the diurnal survey running their same routes, but also had many new volunteers sign up as a result of an article in the Edmonton Journal. Fifteen routes were surveyed in 2009, and five Northern Pygmy Owls (0.33 owls/10 stations) and four Northern Hawk Owls (0.27 owls/10 stations) were detected. There were no Pygmy Owls or Hawks Owls detected on nocturnal surveys, even though some of the routes that were surveyed on diurnal surveys were also surveyed on nocturnal ones. As the number of routes increase, we will begin to get more information on the abundance of these relatively



unknown species in Alberta.

We are still lacking volunteers in northern Alberta, and hope with the new funding from Shell Environmental Fund and TD Friends of the Environment for this coming season we can travel north to promote the program more. Thanks to Manning Forestry Research Fund and Alberta Conservation Association for supporting our owl program in 2009.

Tercera Reunión Internacional de Investigadores del Archipiélago de Revillagigedo

by Geoff Holroyd

In November 2008, two Beaverhill Bird Observatory members, Geoff Holroyd and Helen Trefry joined Mexican biologist Enrique Valdez, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León and traveled to Isla Clarion 1100km west of Manzanillo Mexico in the Pacific Ocean to study the endemic Burrowing Owl. Isla Clarion is part of the Revillagigedo Archipelago that are the Mexican Galapagos. Transportation to the island included 8 days at sea on the Mexican Naval ship. On 12-13 November, 2009 they returned to Manzanillo to attend the conference about the conservation of this Mexican archipelago and to present the results of their field investigations on Isla Clarion. Their findings included stable populations of the four endemic bird species/subspecies, a recently arrived ectoparasite that threatens the endemic subspecies of Burrowing Owl, numerous human activities that are in contravention of the nationally approved conservation plan, and a relatively large breeding population of Green Sea Turtles. Geoff, Helen and Enrique thank BBO for sponsoring their travel to Isla Clarion and to the conference. They gave four presentations at the conference:



-Héctor Enrique Valdez-Gómez, Armando Jesús Contreras-Balderas, Geoff Holroyd and Helen Trefry. Ecology of Clarion Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia rostrata*) in the Most Distant Point of the Mexican Territory.

-Héctor Enrique Valdez-Gómez, Geoff Holroyd and Helen Trefry. Status of Birds on Isla Clarión, Archipiélago de Revillagigedo.

-Geoff Holroyd and Helen Trefry. Breeding notes on the Green [Black] Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) on Isla Clarión, Archipiélago de Revillagigedo.

-Geoff Holroyd, Héctor Enrique Valdez-Gómez, and Helen Trefry. Conservation Issues on Isla Clarión, Archipiélago de Revillagigedo.



Clarion Ravens



Laysan's Albatross

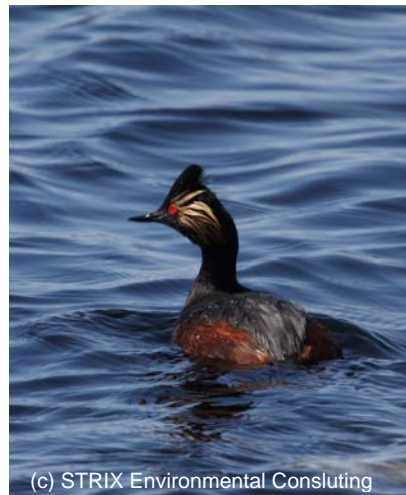
Elson's Bluebird Trail Update

The Alberta Conservation Association has helped fund our work on Elson's Bluebird Trail this year. We spent the summer visiting the hundreds of nestboxes around Elk Island, north and south Beaverhill to assess the boxes, determine repairs and replacements needed and to monitor the occupancy. We will be reporting the results in the next Willet, as this Willet is full. Stay tuned!!

The Prairie and Parkland Marsh Monitoring Program is Seeking Birders and Naturalists!

by Katherine Brewster, Bird Studies Canada

The Prairie and Parkland region has been identified as **one of the most important areas for wetland-associated bird species**, with over 30 species of marsh birds/waterbirds breeding within this area. There remains much to be learned about these birds, as information regarding the distribution, population status, and habitat preferences is limited. To address these information gaps, the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture partnered with Bird Studies Canada (BSC) and in 2009 began implementing the Prairie & Parkland Marsh Monitoring Program (PPMMP). Opportunities exist to participate with the program as a marsh bird survey participant, and BSC is seeking volunteers who are interested in conducting marsh bird surveys at study locations. Marsh monitoring is a fun activity that gives people an opportunity to experience a group of birds that are often overlooked.



Participation in this program can require as little as 12 hours per year, although individuals are encouraged to do as many surveys as they wish. Marsh bird surveys involve recording all birds detected during a 15-minute period at a specified survey location. Participants will survey a route of ~6-8 survey stations, which in most cases will require walking a few kilometers over uneven terrain. Marsh birds are most active during the morning and evening, so surveys are conducted between sunrise and 10am or between 6pm and sunset to coincide with peak bird activity. The survey targets 10 focal species (including rails, bitterns, and grebes), but approximately 50 other wetland-associated species are documented. Participants need to be able to identify these 60 species of birds by sight and about half of them by sound. Therefore, some prior experience with bird identification is necessary. We encourage involvement by anyone who is not currently proficient with this task, but is interested and willing to learn to identify all 60 species prior to May. Training



materials will be provided and in places where there is group interest, on-site training by BSC staff can be arranged. Currently in Alberta there are study locations near the following communities: Aetna, Big Valley, Bow Island, Brownfield, Cereal, Consort, Coronation, Delburne, Donalda, Dunmore, Etzikom, Ferintosh, Hanna, Hay Lakes, Hill Spring, Hobbema, Holden, Hughenden, Mundare, Magrath, Medicine Hat, Milk River, Murray Lakes, Rochon Sands, Rumsey, Smoky Lake, Stettler, St. Paul, St. Mary's Reservoir, Tofield, Vegreville, Veteran, Viking, and Warner. We are hoping to continue to expand program coverage in 2010 and beyond.

For more information, please contact Katherine Brewster at:

Email: prairieprograms@birdscanada.org

Phone: (306) 249-2894

Mail: 115 Perimeter Rd.
Saskatoon, SK
S7N 0X4

Thank you for helping us to better understand marsh birds and improve marsh bird conservation!

2010 Western Canada Bird Banding Conference

March 26-27

University of Alberta, Earth Sciences Building 3-27

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Friday, March 26 keynote speaker: Doors at 7:00pm

Peter Pyle, Institute for Bird Populations, California

**"Proximate Causes of Population Trends in Migratory Landbirds:
Results from the MAPS Program."**

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Saturday, March 27: Doors at 8:00am - 5pm
Plenary talk by Peter Pyle: "Adventures in Molt"

Presentations from Western Canadian Bird Observatories and a variety of bird marking and conservation topics. Additional talks welcome.

We invite you to give a talk about your projects.

Contact: Geoff Holroyd to give a talk (geoffrey.holroyd@ec.gc.ca or 780-951-8689)

Cost at the door: \$20.00 for the two days (includes coffee breaks)

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Sunday, March 27

Search for owls, hawks, and resident bird species in the Edmonton area. Departure times and location will be announced on Saturday.

Hosted by:



EDMONTON



NATURE CLUB

Government of Alberta ■
Sustainable Resource Development

Also Announcing:

Annual Edmonton Nature Club Banquet

Saturday, March 27, 2010

Speaker: Peter Pyle "Trans-Pacific Migration"

Time: Doors and cash bar at 6 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m., talk to follow

Cost \$ 40 per person (prepaid)

Tickets: Available at ENC museum meetings or call Katie Calon at 780-425-5466 or

E-mail katie.calon@gmail.com

For more information visit: www.beaverhillbirds.com

Collaborative Golindrinias/Beaverhill Tree Swallow 2009 Project Results

by Ashley Thorsen

This year was the first year in which three swallow nestbox grids were monitored for the Golondrinias project. In 2008, 50 boxes were built ('S' grid) and placed East of the initial 'T' Grid (49 boxes). Additional boxes were placed by Geoff Holroyd along Rowan's Route to create 'R' grid in 2009. In the 'R' grid, new boxes were alternated with some older original boxes in an attempt to see which boxes swallows would prefer. Observations thus far suggest the swallows greatly preferred the old boxes. BBO staff also monitored boxes along Range Rd 183 and at Francis Viewpoint (Elson's boxes). Research conducted at R, T and S grids was performed by Jenny Aleman-Zometa and Tyler Hallman from May 15 to July 15. In total, they banded or recaptured 386 Tree Swallows! Their daily observations have provided us with a much more detailed picture of Tree Swallow nesting patterns, as summarized in Table below.



Results from the 2009 Tree Swallow nestbox monitoring program for Beaverhill Bird Observatory.

Grid	R	T	S	Total
Available boxes	48	49	50	147
TRES nest attempts	23	39	5	67
TRES occupancy rate (%)	48.0	79.6	10.0	45.6
Boxes with successful TRES nests (%)	39.6	67.3	10.0	38.8
Failed TRES nests	4	6	0	10
Rate of TRES nest failure (%)	17.4	15.4	0	14.9
Avg TRES young/nest	4.2	5.7	4.2	5.1
Highest clutch size	6	7	5	7
Lowest clutch size	1	3	3	1
Latest lay date	23-Jun	29-Jun	16-Jun	29-Jun
Earliest hatch date	17-Jun	15-Jun	21-Jun	15-Jun
MOBL nests	1	1	2	4
HOWR nests	0	2	0	2
Adult TRES banded	27	64	7	98
Adult recapture rate (%)	14.8	39.1	14.3	30.6
Total TRES fledglings	80	187	21	288

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: May 1, 2010.