

Steaks and Saw-whets

October 2 and 3, 2009

at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Join the Beaverhill Bird Observatory volunteers, staff and executive for an evening barbeque and netting of saw-whet owls. Steaks, chicken, hotdogs, veggie burgers, corn, potatoes, and all the fixings are served. An assortment of homemade desserts is followed by setting up mist nets to capture saw-whet owls on migration.

Time: Dinner is served between 6:00 and 8 p.m. Nets go up at 8:15 p.m.

Cost: \$25 for adults, free for kids under 12.

Contact: For more information and to register, contact Chuck Priestley at (780) 984-6957 or e-mail chuckp@fanweb.ca.

Supported by Alberta Conservation Association and Federation of Alberta Naturalists

Charles Labatiuk's Legacy Helps Beaverhill Bird Observatory



The Beaverhill Bird Observatory was given some long term funding as part of an endowment fund. Charles (Chuck) Labatiuk of Edmonton died in a swimming accident February 9, 2008 during a holiday in southwestern Australia. He was 51. "Chuck was a keen outdoorsman and very fond of nature. He was also a senior environmental manager (most recently, for waste management) with the City of Edmonton. He was a brilliant guy, Ph.D. engineer, and loved to travel (Bob Bott, a member of the Alpine Club of Canada).

To honour Charles Labatiuk's lifelong love of birds and nature, Nature Canada will use his legacy gift to fund community based, on-the-ground conservation activities and education efforts at Beaverhill Lake Important Bird Area. His deeply rooted love of nature was evident throughout his lifetime in so many different ways. From his cherished family time, his prize winning photography,

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his writings, his world travels, his numerous awards and accolades to his career as a Senior Environmental Engineer for the City of Edmonton, his love and passion for nature and the outdoors was part of the very essence of his being (Lorraine Proudfoot, sister).

Nature Canada exists to protect nature, its diversity and the processes that sustain it. Our strategies are based on sound science, a passion for nature, and a belief that every Canadian should feel connected to the vast natural world that surrounds us. Nature Canada is the Canadian co-partner in BirdLife International, a global alliance of conservation organizations working together for the world's birds and people. The Important Bird Area program, which aims to identify, conserve and monitor a network of sites that provides essential habitat for bird populations, is just part of the work that Nature Canada is involved with. Beaverhill Lake was designated an Important Bird Area in 1997.

Future work of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory will be supported through the legacy gift of Charles Labatiuk and the Charles Labatiuk Nature Fund. Chuck Priestley, the chair of the bird observatory is very pleased about the endowment fund. "It is a real honor to be included in Charles' legacy, and we have many programs that will benefit from this funding", he said. Additionally, Nature Canada is establishing the Charles Labatiuk Entrance Scholarship which will be awarded to a young naturalist to attend post secondary studies in the natural sciences and the Charles Labatiuk Volunteer Award which will be awarded to a Nature Canada Volunteer for exceptional bird conservation and stewardship efforts.



On July 18th, the official launch of the Charles Labatiuk Nature Fund was held for Charles Labatiuk's family, friends, and colleagues, with 45 people in attendance. A presentation about the bird observatory's history and programs was held at the Royal Canadian Legion in Tofield followed by a luncheon and cheque presentation ceremony at Beaverhill Bird Observatory. A memorial plaque was placed on a bench near the lab and the Charles Labatiuk Entrance Scholarship and Charles Labatiuk Volunteer Award were announced. We knew about his pride in his Ukrainian-Albertan roots, including his love of sausages, so we cooked up some local ones from Stawnichy's in Mundare. The family and friends

were particularly excited about a special guest that came for a visit, a hand-raised Burrowing Owl from Canadian Wildlife Service that is used for many of our education programs.



Volunteers on the barbeques



45 friends and family



Charles Labatiuk's parents

Fire Smarting in the Natural Area

After two large fires at Beaverhill Lake, the Beaverhill Bird Observatory board of directors took action to help protect the bird observatory. We had a guest speaker, Kelly O'Shea (Fire Management Specialist) attend one of our meetings to talk about fire smarting and the steps we needed to take to make the area around the bird observatory more safe. Some management steps he recommended included clearing all trees 3 meters around the buildings, clearing brush piles 10 meters around the buildings, and having a secondary escape route to get out of the area.

We began to clear some of the trees, shrubs, and brush, around the lab and bunk houses, cleaned debris from under the lab, mowed the grass short near the lab. Jim Beck, our resident forester also brought out his chainsaw and began to take trees out from along Flicker Freeway, our emergency escape secondary route. But his generosity in lending a helping hand with a neighbours downed tree left him with an injury so we lost our chainsaw expert for the duration on the season. The bird observatory also organized to have a Junior Forest Ranger crew from Lac La Biche come to help clear the trails. Flicker Freeway and Harrier Highway were worked on extensively, but more work still needs to be done to complete the clearing.



We have organized a **FIRE SMARTING Work Bee** for **Saturday, September 19**. If you are interested in helped out with clearing brush, clipping vegetation, chainsawing, and/or brushing we would be most appreciative of the help. Please contact Lisa (lisa@beaverhillbirds.com) for details about start time and meeting location. We would like to thank Janos Kovacs for coming out in the morning to help with breakfast preparations for the JFR crew, and Bob Beck and Larry McCann for coming out to do some last minute chain sawing the day before the JFR crew came out.



The OWL FILES

Nocturnal and Diurnal Owl Survey 2009

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory ran a pilot year for the new Diurnal Owl Survey program this spring. We sent out over 50 packages for people interested in getting involved in the program. Data is coming in on both owl surveys and a full report will be in the next issue of the Willet.

Golondrinas Tree Swallow Project Completes Second Year at Beaverhill

by Katrina Calon

This was the second year the Beaverhill Bird Observatory collaborated with the Golondrinas de las Americas Project in studying Tree Swallows (website: <http://golondrinas.cornell.edu>). This year the Tree Swallows at Beaverhill Lake were monitored by Jenny Aleman-Zometa and Tyler Hallman from Cornell University as part of the project is dedicated to studying the breeding biology of *Tachycineta* swallows across North and South America. Tyler's previous experience with Golondrinas work had even taken him to Argentina where he conducted the same studies on Chilean Swallows. Jenny and Tyler were kept very busy monitoring approximately 50 nest boxes at each of three different grids (R,S, and T) within and around the Beaverhill Natural Area.



Jenny and Tyler helping with banding at the lab.



An ibutton; the device inserted into Tree Swallow nests to record temperature at regular intervals

During the Spring Migration Monitoring period, a great deal of time was spent monitoring nest construction, egg laying, and egg development. Nests were checked almost every day to determine how quickly the eggs were laid, and a device called an ibutton (photo left) was inserted into the nest. The ibutton measures the temperature of the nest at regular intervals and the data is later downloaded to a computer so that it can be determined what the temperature of the eggs were at a particular time of day. This provides insight into when and for how long the female Tree Swallows incubate the eggs. Using a device called an Ovilux, each egg was photographed with a light shining through it to determine its development stage, and as nestlings hatched they were individually marked for further studies. In addition to all the studies on the nests and eggs, adults were captured when possible and banded, and Jenny and

Tyler were able to capture a total of seven adults during the spring migration monitoring period. Of these, four were recoveries from previous years. One of these individuals was first banded in 2004 and was aged as an after second year bird, meaning it is at least six years old this year! We look forward to continuing to work with Cornell next year.

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. Stay tuned!!

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: December 31, 2009.