



Volume 25, Number 1

February 2012

Annual General Meeting

February 27, 2012

at the University of Alberta

Report from our Treasurer, nominations for new board members, and voting in the new executive. Come see how the BBO works. Short presentation from Geoff Holroyd on his recent trip to Africa.

Time: 7:00 - 7:30 pm

Location: Weldwood Room, 812 General Services Building, University of Alberta

Cost: Free

Contact: If you are interested in becoming involved with BBO contact Chuck Priestley
780-984-6957 or e-mail chuck@strixecological.ca

New Tree Swallow Project with Science Horizons Support

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory recently received funding to analyze 25 years of Tree Swallow data, our objectives are to:

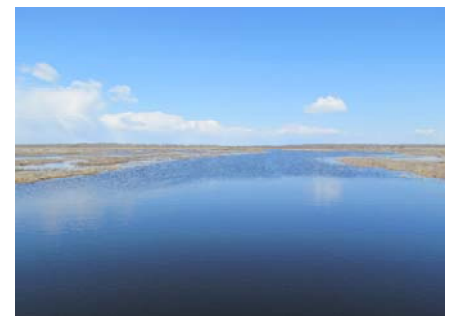
- Determine any long term trends in breeding Tree Swallow data at Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO)
- Compare differences within BBO's 3 nest box grids, and box type
- Compare Tree Swallow data at BBO to elsewhere.
- Recommend future studies of Tree Swallows at BBO

THE ANNUAL SNOW GOOSE CHASE 2011

ARMY OF VOLUNTEERS ASSIST IN ANOTHER GREAT EVENT!

by Bob Parsons

Before sitting down to write my yearly report, I usually glance over articles written for previous Chase outings. None I have seen so far from the past three or four years mention frozen lakes, snow covered trails, water run-off in Kallal Meadow and Amisk creek almost overflowing onto the bridge! This year's event, held on April 30 and May1, will be memorable for the aforementioned situations and despite these unusual happenings, the eight buses of inner-city school children and other low-income family organisations, plus the three buses for the paying public, all had an enjoyable and memorable day out to the Tofield/Beaverhill Lake area east of our city.



(SNOW GOOSE CHASE 2011 Con't)

The Tofield Community Hall was the centre of the morning's activities where various exhibits and displays were set up. The local Junior Forest Rangers group was around to assist and they all did a great job, marshalled by Treva Piekema who is my assistant and liaison in Tofield. We were very fortunate to have John Acorn present this year and he made the morning fun all the more invigorating, posing for photos, chatting with the kids and adults and generally just being the Nature Nut! The wetland area behind the Nature Centre was quite busy and the two great volunteers did a fine job outlining the importance of such an area. Ray Cromie was out at Francis Viewpoint with the Barred Owl demonstration and everyone was pleased to see him after his recent health scare. It would appear from letters that I have received that his display will live for a long time in the kids' memories! Stacey Hunt from Fish and Wildlife Vegreville had his cannon firing on all cylinders, creating much shock and laughter from all those who stuck around to hear the big "boom".

The usual enthusiastic group of scouts had been out all week, trying to pinpoint where the snow geese were resting and feeding up and the buses this year only had to make the short trip out to the area north of Ryley to see the many thousands of geese out in the fields or swimming around the many ponds and sloughs. Sandhill Cranes seemed to be everywhere this year and there were two locations where Jim Lange and Bob Gehlert had found Great-horned Owls on nest close to the road. Ted Hindmarch was out for the entire weekend, sleeping in his van, and he kept all up to date on geese movements. Overall, most buses saw close to fifty species throughout the day but I have to agree with Curtis Manly who thought "it looks like the species diversity was there...but numbers did not seem as high as previous years. I tend to think that the late spring breakup we all experienced this year coupled with the large number of small waterbodies may be a contributing factor". Strong southeast winds before and after the weekend might have resulted in certain bird species overflying the area.

The three buses for the general public were as usual all booked solid and thanks must go to Barb Rowe who again looked after all the bookings in a characteristic determined fashion! The focus for these buses is more on birding and I thought Gerald Romanchuk summed it all up nicely....."there are usually a few familiar faces, folks that come out every year. For some of them, it's almost the only birding they do. Several others are complete novices, just starting to explore the world of birding".

All of this could not happen without the many volunteers who stepped up to help. Club members, students from the U of A and other local colleges, and of course Fred Martin who continues to amaze me and others with his powers of persuasion...door prizes, water, juice, cookies were all willingly donated by various businesses in St Albert. I have learnt much from Fred, just plead poverty, the good cause and the goodies will roll in. I tried that at Staples and it worked!

Finally a huge thank you to our sponsors and supporters. This year Lisa Szabo approached the TD Bank Friends of the Environment who made a very generous donation. Enbridge Pipelines and the downtown Rotary Club along with Cummings Andrews McKay (lawyers) also made wonderful donations. Synergy, UMC Financial and DU Canada provided much needed funds for the many packed lunches and the Wildbird General Store organised a raffle with the help of a donation from Michelle and Curtis Manly. Vanita in the Tofield town office was a wonderful help again this year and the girls at the Tofield Nature Centre made sure there were snacks for everyone!

THE INNER CITY OUTINGS

Close to 14 different Edmonton groups packed into 8 buses took part in this years Snow Goose Chase. Local Tofield schools were also involved in the various activities on the Saturday. A big thank you must go to Treva Piekema, Don Delaney and Lisa Priestly who actively encouraged local school children to take part through school presentations. The Community Hall was quite packed at times and all enjoyed the various exhibits. Peter from the Royal Alberta Museum was a big hit as usual, gently handling snakes, scorpions and other insects. His Elvis-style hairdo continues to impress the kids! The Valley Zoo Hawks and Owls display was amazing as usual and I feel sure the memories will last for a long time. Bugs, beetles, bird carving display, how a watershed is formed created much interest. I think the following quotes from letters I received will highlight many of the kids thoughts.....



Dear Bob Chase.

I loved the trip that we went on. My favourite part was when I got to pet the owl. It was so soft like a fluffy pillow. I felt sad when I was told the owl was partially blind cos it was hit by a car. The snakes were too slimy but I liked Peters hair cut. Thank you for coming to help out. Without you this trip would not have been possible.

Your friend Iana.

Dear Sponsors.

I had a lot of fun on the Goose Chase. My favorite part was when we went to the lookout and someone saw a mouse and a rabbits foot. There were lots of army ants. The marshland was great, some lovely birds singing all the time. The bloodsuckers were amazing but my favorite was the owl. I enjoyed the lunch but did not like the lettuce so took it out. My name is Evelyn, I have 2 sisters one live here one in Vietnam. I hope to do it again next year, will you be there?

Dear Bob Chase.

Thanks for the great trip, it was awesome! I liked all the exhibits and learnt a lot about birds. The food was great and the games on the bus fun. The beaver walk was amazing, especially walking around the pond in the snow. I want to have another field trip now.

From Ken Oliver School.

Hi Bob.

We were so lucky to go on the trip, thanks for paying for it. We learnt a lot about nature and wild animals. The sandwich was very good and we had lots of juice. I met the Nature Man and he was so funny! I liked the gun by the field, I learnt when a bird enters the crop Kaboom. Wow, that was loud. The man with the owl, I would like him to be my uncle. I hope to do it again, I love field trips to places I have not been to before.

Will we be doing the Snow Goose Chase again this year? You betcha. Enjoy the rest of the winter and here's to Tofield April 28/29, 2012.

Backyard Visitor – What Is It?

This bird has been spending the winter in Tofield. It breeds along the edge of boreal forest and tundra in north-central Canada, and spends the winter in the very central region of the United States. In appearance this bird is sometimes confused with the House Sparrow, however the male has black bib with no streaks on chest and the bill is black or yellowish.



100 Routes and Counting

Nocturnal Owl Survey Completes Its 10th Year

The Alberta Nocturnal Owl Survey celebrated its 10th year of monitoring with a 100 routes being surveyed. We had 190 volunteers surveying for owls across Alberta, and nine species of owls were found. No Short-eared Owls or Burrowing Owls were observed. Owl abundance was low this year, and the breeding season was quite late, possibly due to near record snowfalls during the winter. Being out at night our volunteers see many animals you don't see during the day. Volunteers observed wolves, coyotes, lynx, cougar, and northern flying squirrels. In February, March, and April, we presented owl talks to groups in Olds, Lethbridge, Calgary, Red Deer, Tofield, Edmonton, Peace River, Dicksonville, and Holden. There continues to be so much interest in owls, we anticipate the owl survey program will continue to run for many years to come. The volunteer data was also provided to Alberta Innovates and the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Initiative to help inform survey designs for work they are hoping to do in 2012 on the northeast region. Our 10 year report will be ready this year!! Look for it on our website. Funding from Shell Environmental Fund, TD Friends of the Environment, Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Sport Recreation Parks and Wildlife Foundation, and the Nature Canada/Charles Labatiuk Endowment is greatly appreciated.



If you are interested in participating in the program please contact Lisa Priestley lisa@beaverhillbirds.com. Two evenings of time (about three hours) are required between March 20 and May 5. You need a portable CD player, a thermometer, and a reliable vehicle. Let us know where in the province you would like to conduct the owl survey, and a mailing address so we can send you a survey package.

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 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, 2012.

Join us on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/5822270917/>

We gratefully acknowledge Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Sport Recreation Parks and Wildlife Foundation, Community Spirit Program, Environment Canada Science Horizons, Shell Environmental Fund, Mountain Equipment Coop, Nature Canada (Charles Labatiuk Fund), and TD Friends of the Environment for their support.