

the WILLET

Beaverhill Bird Observatory

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March 7, 8 and 9

University of Alberta

Room 3-27, Earth Sciences Building

March 7: Doors at 7:00pm, speaker at 7:30pm

March 8: Doors at 8:00am, talks at 8:30am

March 9: Field trip, TBA times etc.

Co-sponsored by: Department of Renewable Resources, U of A; Edmonton Natural History Club; Edmonton Bird Club

Costs: \$5.00 for Friday, \$5.00 for Saturday or \$10.00 for Friday, Saturday and a BBO membership.

Anyone wishing to speak or require information regarding making a presentation, please contact Chuck Priestley at 719-9803 or E-mail: charles@ualberta.ca

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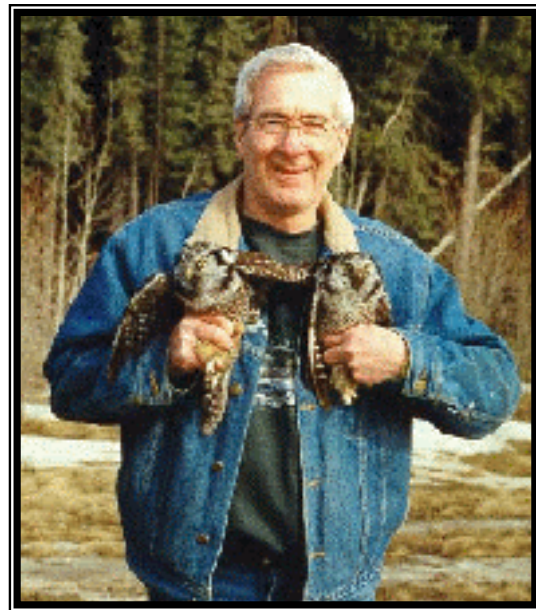
In Memory of Elson Olorenshaw

-Geoff Holroyd

We lost a dear friend and supporter on December 29 when Elson Olorenshaw suddenly passed away at the age of 70.

Elson will be remembered for many things. I will miss his ever-greeting smile, teasing humour and wit. He was friendly to young and old, strangers and friends. He had an inner happiness that was demonstrated in everything he did.

Elson was the treasurer of Beaverhill Bird Observatory for over ten years. No organization can function without an efficient, effective treasurer. Elson brought boundless humour and energy to the position, and made the task of tracking BBO's funds fun.



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...Elson Rembered from page 1

Elson joined BBO in mid 1989. On December 4, 1989, the executive appointed Elson secretary of BBO. Elson was elected to the position of treasurer at the General Meeting on Nov 5, 1990, the same meeting where I was elected chair. The minutes of the next executive meeting on November 19, 1990 indicate Elson dedication to the job "Elson reported that he is working on clearing up some tax difficulties resulting from government confusion over our charitable status." Whatever, the difficulties were, Elson cleared them up and the government has never been confused since.

Memorial donations were dedicated to the Beaverhill Bird Observatory. The donations will be used to initiate an endowment fund in Elson's name. The Elson Olorenshaw Memorial Fund will help perpetuate the bird research he loved so much.

If you would like to make a contribution, please send your donation to the Beaverhill Bird Observatory, Box 1418, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 2N5

It did not matter how many grants or how complicated the paperwork, Elson would take it in stride. Elson kept track of BBO funds that were directed at the monitoring of songbirds at Beaverhill Lake, but always agreed if any of the executives wanted to apply for other grants related to BBO's goals. When a dozen of us went to Guatemala he stayed home and minded the books for our travel expenses. When I wanted to apply for funds to support burrowing owl research in Texas, Mexico, Saskatchewan he immediately agreed to handle the paperwork. Even after his retirement as treasurer he has continued to help with the financial books for the past two years.

For several years Elson applied for summer student funds so that budding biologist staffed the station at Beaverhill Lake, and university students were able to receive first class experience in their chosen field. When we had opportunities for additional grants to support students he happily processed the paperwork and cheques. He took great pride in the role BBO played in students' careers and enjoyed the enthusiasm that the students brought to the banding station. He believed, as I do, that one of the legacies of BBO is as a training ground for biology students.

BBO was not the only group to benefit from Elson's accounting skills. Elson worked for CNR as a chartered accountant. After retirement, he then taught accounting at a local college. He applied his accounting skills to help many groups. He audited financial statements for Federation of Alberta Naturalists, Edmonton Natural History Club, and Alberta Natural Area Stewards Association among others. He assisted the Alberta Native Plant Council and Friends of the Devonian Botanic Gardens to set up payrolls and administer grants.

And no matter how tedious the task, Elson smiled and joked throughout.

I visited him one morning at home to sign cheques for BBO. Mary Jane greeted me, but Elson was still in bed! She took me to his bedroom and I climbed on the bed, touched his shoulder and said in a soft, high-pitched voice "Good morning, Dear". He sat bold upright, with an alarmed look but with a big smile. The joke was on him that day!

Elson volunteered to do more than be the Treasurer for BBO. He coordinated and participated in the Baillie Birdathons that support the work of BBO and Bird Studies Canada. Elson wrote "This is also an excuse to go watch birds and feel good about raising money at the same time!" His report, titled "The Old-Timers", on his 2002 Birdathon with Jim Faragini starts "We think 93 species is a respectable count for a couple of old guys that poop out quickly and we freely admit that we cheated a bit by picking up 20 at the feeders I have placed at my daughter's acreage."

Ever the joker, he outdid himself more than once. A couple of years ago he hurt his leg water skiing trying to out do his younger brother. He never did admit what stunts he was trying! At the raptor bander coffee club he was teased about being the oldest present. After some sleuthing he found someone that was a few weeks older, and took great joy in returning the tease.

At the Steak and Saw-whet gathering at BBO this autumn he was asked if he would like a crispy square. He smiled, said sure, then admitted he had eaten 6 mars bars and crispy squares already! He left with the recipe and served crispy squares at BBO executive meetings that he hosted this winter!

Elson also maintained over 400 nest boxes for mountain bluebirds and tree swallows around Beaverhill Lake. His bluebird trail started in 1995 when he set up 58 boxes, all used by Tree Swallows that year. By 2001 his trail had expanded to 405 boxes and he recorded 100 bluebird nesting attempts. In 1998 he started banding bluebirds. His total banded, mostly young, increased from 117 and 128 in 1998 and 1999 to 427 in 2000 and 373 in 2001.



-J.Duxbury

He was trapping adult bluebirds and wanted to expand the adult trapping to learn more about the dispersal and life span of Mountain Bluebirds. One of the nesting bluebirds came from a box south of Calmar, and another moved only 4 km from where it was hatched to raise young the following year. He also found lots of Tree Swallows in the boxes, some House Sparrows and House Wrens and one chickadee nest with 4 young. Elson had clearly caught the bluebird bug and was hooked on learning more about these beautiful birds. He wrote "This is a fascinating hobby, should anyone wish to take it up, and if they have a good spot next to grazed prairie I would be more than willing to supply a box or two, just to help the bluebirds!! Just call."

To his family, we express our greatest condolences. We share your loss. We will miss Elson with his ever present smile.

The 2002 BBO Songbird Banding Summary – Richard Krikun

A tiny clearing exists along the southeast shore of Beaverhill Lake. Within this clearing there stands a tiny wooden house (complete with a tiny propane stove, a propane refrigerator, and a solar panel), two wooden bunkhouses, and an outhouse without a roof. From May 1st until October 10th, 2002, this clearing was the home of four dedicated birders. These four birders woke up every morning before the sun peaked over the horizon to set nets with the intention of catching birds. Yes, these four lucky individuals were the banders at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory. Their job, for just over five months, was to monitor the migratory songbirds within this tiny clearing.

Three banding programs are used by the BBO staff to monitor these fine-feathered migratory songbirds. These three programs are: spring migration monitoring, the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program, and fall migration monitoring. In total, 3001 birds were captured in mist nets over the three banding programs. 70 species were represented by the captured birds. Mist nets were opened for a total of 7642.5 net hours. This gives a capture rate of 39.3 birds per 100 net hours. For comparison, the capture rate for 2001 was 48.2 birds captured per 100 net hours. 2001 had 2919 birds representing 60 species captured in mist nets.

The lower capture rate in 2002 means that it took more effort (net hours) to capture birds in than in 2001. The lower capture rate may be an indication of relatively fewer birds during the 2002 banding season. However, it is always great to see that the species diversity was high.

Being the 3rd summer that I have worked at the BBO as a bander (the roofless outhouse keeps calling me back), I had thought I had seen all the birds possible captured in the nets. Oh, how I was wrong. Three new species introduced themselves to me in 2002: the Winter Wren, the Gray-cheeked Thrush, and the Veery. What better way to end a banding summary than a list of rare/unique/really neat birds?



The following is the 2002 species capture list for the 2002 banding season:

Species Caught	Number Caught	Species Caught	Number Caught
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	Cape May Warbler	4
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	2	Magnolia Warbler	29
Yellow-shafted Flicker	4	Myrtle Warbler	241
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	5	Yellow-rumped Warbler	1
Downy Woodpecker	12	Black-and-white Warbler	11
Hairy Woodpecker	3	Black-throated Green Warbler	2
Western Wood-Pewee	4	Bay-breasted Warbler	2
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	3	Blackpoll Warbler	32
Alder Flycatcher	3	Western-palm Warbler	3
Least Flycatcher	720	Yellow Warbler	425
Traill's Flycatcher	53	Mourning Warbler	14
Eastern Pheobe	2	Connecticut Warbler	1
Blue-headed Vireo	11	Canada Warbler	8
Red-eyed Vireo	11	Wilson's Warbler	20
Philadelphia Vireo	6	Ovenbird	26
Warbling Vireo	30	Northern Waterthrush	16
Tree Swallow	3	Common Yellowthroat	13
Black-capped Chickadee	229	American Redstart	170
Brown Creeper	1	American-tree Sparrow	17
White-breasted Nuthatch	1	Chipping Sparrow	14
Red-breasted Nuthatch	14	Clay-colored Sparrow	199
House Wren	70	Fox Sparrow	5
Winter Wren	2	Savannah Sparrow	30
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2	Lincoln Sparrow	12
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	33	Song Sparrow	7
Veery	4	White-throated Sparrow	74
Gray-cheeked Thrush	2	White-crowned Sparrow	4
Swainson's Thrush	94	Slate-colored Junco	42
Hermit Thrush	29	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	5
American Robin	6	Brown-headed Cowbird	20
Gray Catbird	8	Red-winged Blackbird	1
Cedar Waxwing	2	Baltimore Oriole	13
Tennessee Warbler	109	Purple Finch	1
Orange-crowned Warbler	40	Pine Siskin	2
Nashville Warbler	1	American Goldfinch	15
		Grand Total	3001



Northern Saw-whet Owls at Beaverhill Lake - Chuck Priestley

This past year, the BBO is conducted a Northern Saw-whet Owl fall migration-monitoring program for the first time. In previous years our staff, BBO board members and volunteers have experimented with the idea of Saw-whet Owl monitoring at the BBO by setting up nets on a couple of evenings. During those 'experimental' years we were able to catch a few owls, which indicated that there was the potential for a good monitoring program at the BBO.

Goals of our program this year include:

1. Determining when Saw-whets pass through the Beaverhill Lake area during the fall.
2. Determine relative abundance of owls that pass through (number of owls caught using netting technique)
3. Inform the public about our program
4. Encourage volunteer participation

On September 14th we had our first annual Steaks and Saw-whets event at the lab. We encouraged visitors to come out to meet the staff, board members, volunteers and other interested bird enthusiasts, enjoy a meal with us and hopefully band a few owls. Ways that we informed the public about our event included: an article which appeared in the Edmonton Journal, our website, contacts at the Wildbird General Store and word of mouth. The response that we received to our idea was overwhelming!

In light of the strong response we scheduled 2 Steaks and Saw-whets events (September 14 and October 5). Likely due to warmer weather, our September event had far more participants, all in all, 58 visitors came out to take part in the event with us that day! The October event brought six people to the lab. Both evenings were successful in terms of owls, 1 was caught at the September event and 3 were caught at our October event.



The highlight of the events for me, and for many other people that I have talked to that participated, was the public participation. It was really nice to bring everyone together after the summer to swap stories, show each other pictures and enjoy each others company.

I look forward to continuing our work on the Northern Saw-whet Owl at Beaverhill Lake and I hope to see you all next year at the lab for Steaks and Saw-whets II.

Photos

Northern Saw-whet Owl – Chuck Priestley

Visitors at Steaks and Saw-whets event – Lisa Priestley

Acknowledgments

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory would like to thank the following funding agencies for providing support for our work on Northern Saw-whet Owl projects: Alberta Ecotrust, Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Allen Family Fund and Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service).

In addition, thanks to Phil and Helen Trefry for bringing our friend Ranger, the Burrowing Owl, along for our September event, everyone really enjoyed his company! Beaverhill Bird Observatory Society (near Edmonton).

Northern Saw-whet Owl Monitoring: The Data – Richard Krikun

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory has been monitoring the fall migration of the Northern Saw-whet Owl through the Beaverhill Lake Natural Area for the past couple of years. However, the monitoring consisted of setting up two mist nets with an audio lure (playing the Saw-whet breeding call) for a few hours once or twice a week in the fall. The success rate for capturing the Saw-whets was quite high, even with the sporadic monitoring. 9 Saw-whets were captured in the fall of 2001.

The results of the work done in these previous years show that the owls are migrating through the Beaverhill Lake Natural Area. But to obtain more information on the Saw-whet migration, an extensive monitoring program would have to be set up.

The plan was to start monitoring early in the fall, before Saw-whet migration would have begun, and monitor nightly until the migration had ended. In other words, mist nets were set along side an audio lure every night from August 16th until November 15th. Throughout this time, the number of mist nets used increased from 2 to 4 and the monitoring time increased from 3 to 6 hours. But as this was the pilot year, methods were expected to be improved through by trial and error.

The results blew everyone away. A total of 145 Saw-whets were captured in mist nets. Only 2 of those captured birds were repeat captured banded by the BBO on a previous night. As an added bonus, a Long-eared Owl flew into the nets on the 4th night of monitoring.

Not only did we find that a large number of Saw-whets migrate through the Natural Area, but we also found the timing of migration (Figure 1). The Saw-whet migration began as a trickle on September 9th. The last owl was caught on November 7th. The peak migration period lasted through the last week of September and the first week of October. The busiest night was on October 3rd when 9 Saw-whets were captured in 4 hours!

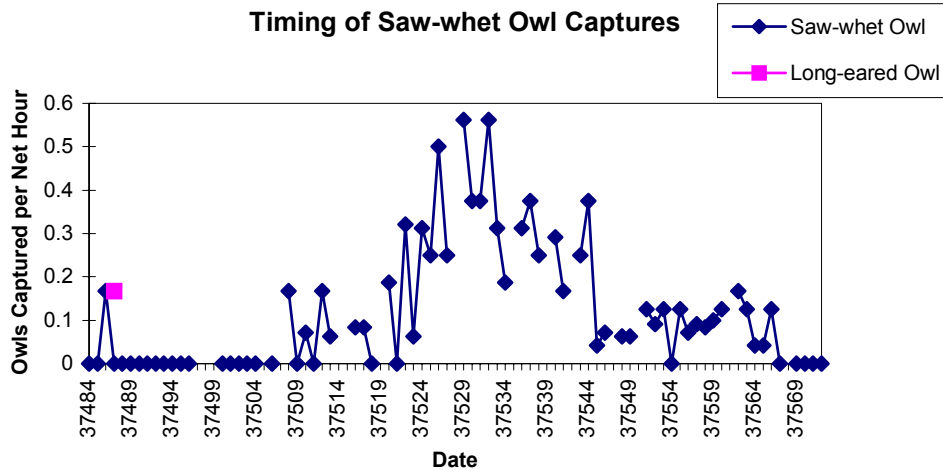


Figure 1: Timing of Saw-whet Owl migration at the BBO

This project gave us a greater understanding about the timing and magnitude of the Saw-whet Owl migration at the BBO. The BBO would like to thank the many volunteers who helped make this project a great success.

Announcement:

**Beaverhill Bird Observatory's
Annual General Meeting**

Where: University of Alberta, Earth Sciences Building, Room 3-27

When: March 8, at the conclusion of COMOCO 2003

Who: Any BBO member or those who wish to join the BBO

NEXT WILLET ISSUE

Material for the forthcoming newsletter should be sent to: Jason Duxbury, editor, The Willet, 1142 Saddleback Rd, Edmonton, Alberta, T6J 4Z4. Phone: 780-433-5790, Email: jduxbury@ualberta.ca. Next newsletter deadline: May 1, 2002. Articles can be on bird banding, birdwatching, wildlife viewing, etc.