

May 1-10 Weekly Update

Well, to begin with, my apologies to those who have anxiously been awaiting the weekly BBO update. As the Beaverhill Bird Observatory's most recent Bird Banders for the summer of 2004 Jill Thompson and myself (Crystal Rausch) wish to extend our warmest salutations to all of you bird-lovers, bird watchers, and fair-feathered friends of ours---Welcome to Spring!

Yes folks, spring is here and the air is alive once again with the sounds and sights of many a birds who are coming through on spring migration after a long, cold winter. So don't you delay...Grab those binoculars, and come on out to the BBO for a day.

I will admit that the start of spring migration was a little slow out here at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory. It seemed as though for the first seven days of spring banding we could not seem to exceed our record of 4 birds caught in a day. Granted, this was partly due to the fact that winter seemed intent to linger a little longer, but fortunately, as is always the case spring has prevailed and gradually our persistent passerines are returning. This became most evident on May 8th. I remember it as though it were yesterday...waking up to the melodious song of the Hermit Thrush, we opened the nets at 0530...and waited...before long the nets seemed full of birds, which continued through until we closed them...I had never seen anything like it in all my days out at the BBO (8 days and counting at the time), though I have been told that "I aint' seen nothin' yet!!", Yes can you believe it...the day before we had caught nothing, and then suddenly out of no where we were stormed by Myrtles. In total that day, we caught 26 Myrtle warblers, 14 Chipping sparrows, 3 Orange-crowned warblers, and 1 white-crowned sparrow, bringing us to a new record high of 44 birds. It was a definite treat which provided Jill and I some excellent experience for banding and processing the birds. A special thanks goes out to Jason Duxbury whose exceptional banding expertise carried us novice banders through such a busy day as well as to all of the others who have so generously volunteered many hours of their time to train Jill and I in the ways of bird banding...Chuck and Lisa Priestly, Matt Hanneman, and Christine Boulton we couldn't have don't it with out your excellent training.

Currently at the BBO, we are witnessing a metamorphoses as the trees gradually open their leaves. Yes day by day, it seems the intensity of green increases and with each added day the beauty and charm of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory also unfolds. It is truly a remarkable place. Just an hours drive outside of Edmonton, it is a refuge of peace and solitude from the hustle and bustle of daily life. With no running water or electricity and with ample bird and wildlife viewing opportunities, feeling surrounded by nature one can leave the demands of the day to day grind behind and become lost once again in life's simple pleasures and beauties.

A simple walk to the weir will prove a fruitful search for hundreds of waterfowl. Along the paths, you may stumble upon a small gathering of deer grazing near by, or spy a porcupine high in a tree. Mourning cloaks and Milberts Tortoiseshell butterflies will dance along your path, as you are serenaded by the melodious sounds of a variety of birds. Yes, life at the BBO is grand.

In the first ten days, we have banded 60 birds in total. The list of species being:

Black-capped Chickadees
Chipping Sparrows
Hermit Thrush
Myrtle Warblers
Orange-crowned warblers
Red-breasted nuthatch
Ruby-crowned kinglet
Slate-coloured junco
Song Sparrows
White-crowned Sparrow
White-throated Sparrows.

It has been a real delight, and as this report comes to you a little late, I can safely say that the next 10-day report will prove to have many new exciting species and happenings to tell of. So please, stay tuned and come on out to the BBO.

Cheers,
Crystal and Jill