

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update: October 10 to 16, 2005

Well, the late fall is bringing cooler temperatures to the Natural Area. Below 0°C temperatures are not unusual (notice the outside temperature of -2.4°C at 8:30 a.m.), hence songbird banding has finished for the year. It is strange to walk around and not see the nets up in their lanes. Also, the trees are all bare of their leaves, making the forest seem very open. But, all good things must come to an end, even if it is only for 6 months.



There are HUGE numbers of Tundra Swans this year, along with the Snow Geese, White-fronted Geese, and Canada Geese, they are making a lot of noise near Lister Lake and as they fly over to go to feed in the remnant water left in Beaverhill Lake.

The Tundra Swans we are seeing breed on the west coast of Alaska and winter on the Pacific Slope, mainly in California. Twice a year, Tundra Swans migrate 6 000 km between these areas. Last year the Beaverhill Lake was completely dry at the south end, so we did not have the large numbers we are seeing this year. At night you can hear the Geese and Swans making a huge raucous on occasion, presumably caused by the coyotes making an appearance along the lakeshore.

The Slate-colored Juncos and American Tree Swallows continue to stick around, along with our resident Black-capped Chickadees and the lone White-breasted Nuthatch. A Bald Eagle lazily flew over while I took down the nets the other day, and I saw my first Rough-legged Hawk along Rowan's Route, a sure sign that winter is on its way. I won't worry too much until I see that first Snowy Owl.



The saw-whets continue to come through in reasonable numbers. We captured 29 owls this past week, which brings our total to 114. I think we will come close to the numbers we captured in 2002 and 2003, but will not reach our total of 309 from last year. Now I'm hoping for those elusive Boreal Owls to come for a visit.

I can't believe I only have two weeks left at the lab. I'm going to miss walking the trails, excitedly guessing what species of songbird or how many owls will be in the nets. Thanks to Martina Frey, Cory Olsen, and Chuck Priestley who continue to brave the cold nights to help with the work.

Lisa Priestley, Beaverhill Bird Observatory

