

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update May 1-7, 2006

Welcome to another season at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory! I'm Allicia Kelly, the bander-in-charge this summer at the BBO, and Katie Cameron is the other new staff member for this season. I am currently a student in Environmental and Conservation Science at the University of Alberta and Katie has just graduated from the U of A with a BSc in Animal Biology. We are both looking forward to a summer of bird banding, life outside of the city and all the bird and wildlife encounters to come.

Spring Migration Monitoring began May 1, but a day of wet snow (!) on May 2 and a second day of rain reduced the hours we were able to set mist nets up this week. The migration is off to a slow start with just 9 birds caught so far. But many other signs of spring have arrived- the trees are budding and we are very excited to see a long-eared owl nesting in the natural area. The swallow grid is busy and a few nests have been started with blades of grass and the occasional feather. On our first day of checking boxes we watched a vicious battle between a bird inside a nest box and a second bird on the outside, with both birds tugging at the other's feathers and beak. The occupant of the box wasn't ousted, but he sure had to work for his place! We hope to band several of the swallows next week.



Foxtail barley seeds have overtaken the Observatory and seem to get into everything. On a positive note, these seeds are supporting higher vole populations which are keeping short-eared owls hunting over the fields. Numerous red-tailed hawks, northern harriers and the occasional rough-legged hawk are also enjoying the easy meals.

Birdwatchers have reported Say's Phoebes closer to Edmonton and we have seen a few out here as well. Sandpipers are starting to come through the area and an American Bittern is calling from Lister Lake. We've only seen a few flocks of snow geese overhead but we regularly hear flocks of migrating Sandhill Cranes.



Katie raking barley seeds from a net lane

There is plenty of other wildlife moving around too. A short-tailed weasel was evicted from the lab one morning and a porcupine kept us company for a day napping near one of the mist nets. We regularly see white-tailed deer, snowshoe hares and some early butterflies (Mourning Cloaks and Milbert's Tortoiseshells). Boreal chorus frogs and wood frogs are almost loud enough to drown out the sound of the Red-winged blackbirds in the evenings.

Lisa Priestley has been here all week helping us band birds and training us in the ways of the BBO. Thanks for getting up so early every morning! Thanks also to Sara Trefry who also came out for a day to help us out. We've had a few other visitors and are happy to show new and familiar people what we are doing. Come on out!



L-R: Katie, Allicia, and Lisa holding Sam

We encourage you to support the BBO by coming to the Big Birding Breakfast on May 28th. The cost is \$10 or free if you are a member of the BBO (or purchase a \$10 membership). Events include guided walks to the weir and swallow grid, bird banding demonstrations and a “spectacular” crepe breakfast. Nets will go up a half hour before sunrise (4.45 a.m.) and be up until noon; come out as early as you like! Contact Lisa Priestley at (780) 662-6398 for more information.

-Alicia Kelly and Katie Cameron

Table 1: Results from Spring Migration Monitoring May 1-7, 2006.

Species	Banded	Recapture	Other	Total
American Robin	2	0	0	2
Hermit Thrush	2	0	0	2
Myrtle Warbler	1	0	0	1
Savannah Sparrow	1	0	0	1
Slate-colored Junco	1	0	0	1
Song Sparrow	2	0	0	2
Total	9	0	0	9