

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update September 12 – 25, 2009

Well, there goes the second half of September; boy does summer ever go fast when you get to the end of this month. I lost a lot of net hours this round, mostly due to windy weather. As the leaves come down there is really hardly any shelter for the nets. There were a few neat captures during this round, in one net check I came across 11 Savannah Sparrows in net 12. They actually are not all that common in the nets, probably because the Savannah's like open habitat, and all the nets are located in either shrubby or treed areas. On September 23rd I caught the first American Tree Sparrow for fall 2009. This species is usually the last to migrate through the area, so it is a likely sign that songbirds migration is about to wrap up. Another exciting fall capture was the first White-breasted Nuthatch of the year; these neat birds are easily one of my favourites! Maybe because in the hand you can appreciate the giant hind toe (hallux) of this species, which no doubt helps them hang upside down on tree trunks as they forage about.



Sandhill Cranes migrating over the natural area

One evening as I was headed out to check the raptor traps on the swallow grid I witnessed a stunning migration event. Approximately 8000 Sandhill Cranes passed by overhead flying quite low. Each flock consisted of approximately 200 individuals, and as they passed I only had to wait a few seconds before I could hear, and eventually see, another on its way across the horizon. Needless to say I plunked myself down in the grass and watched until the sun went down and I could no longer see them. Some of the birds even settled nearby for a short while, letting me have a good look at

them before they continued on their way. It was truly an amazing thing to witness, the combination of so many stately birds flying by and the most beautiful sunset! I feel very lucky to have watched it all.

On September 19th BBO hosted a work-bee to continue the vegetation clearing for the alternate escape route for staff in case of a fire. A huge thank-you to Gerry, Geoff, Lisa, Chuck, Margaret, Josef, Al, Jonathan, Janos and Matt for all your hard work. Certainly hope I won't need to use the escape route, but I'll sleep better knowing it is clear for me!

I enjoyed the company of a group of home school students on one day, the banding was very slow, and we all thought we were only going to get the one Slate-coloured Junco I caught when they arrived. Well, we were wrong, and were surprised by 17 birds in the last net check! I was very glad for the extra hands to help bring all those bags back. Each kid got to release at least one bird and each of the adults too! It turned out to be a great banding day for visitors to witness.

The fox-tail barley has blown into the natural area in a big way, driving in along Accipiter Alley my little red truck can be completely covered. I'm glad I know the route and am able to keep going in a straight line, because I can't see at all! Hate to say it, but I wouldn't mind a bit of snow to pack it down... Well, I'll pass things on to Lisa to update the latest saw-whet owls results, see you next issue! ---*Cheers, Katie*

A short update to start off the saw-whet migration season. We have been very fortunate to have lots of volunteers, and only missed one night in the two weeks of banding. It has been a very slow start with only 21 saw-whet owls captured to date. I began monitoring on September 10, with no luck that night or the next. Geoff Holroyd and Gerry Beyersbergen covered the 12th and caught the first owl. Then I worked the 13th through the 18th again with no owls. I get a knock on my door early Sunday morning



Third saw-whet of 2009

with Geoff and Gerry bragging they caught another owl. Okay, this is getting frustrating. Finally on the 20th I caught my first two owls, and have caught one or more every night since. I was getting a little worried. Well, Steaks and Saw-whets is coming up Oct. 2 and 3, hope you can make it out.

---Cheers, Lisa

Table 1. Results from Fall Songbird Migration Monitoring, Sept 12 - 25, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Foreign ³	Other ⁴	Total
American Redstart	1	0	0	0	0	1
American Tree Sparrow	1	0	0	0	0	1
Black-capped Chickadee	5	12	0	0	0	17
Downy Woodpecker	2	0	0	0	0	2
Hairy Woodpecker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hermit Thrush	2	0	0	0	0	2
House Wren	1	0	0	0	0	1
Least Flycatcher	1	0	0	0	0	1
Lincoln's Sparrow	2	0	0	0	0	2
Myrtle Warbler	82	0	0	0	0	82
Orange-crowned Warbler	12	0	0	0	0	12
Ovenbird	1	0	0	0	0	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	3	0	0	0	0	3
Savannah Sparrow	11	0	0	0	1	12
Slate-coloured Junco	4	0	0	0	0	4
White-breasted Nuthatch	1	0	0	0	0	1
White-crowned Sparrow	6	1	0	0	2	9
Wilson's Warbler	2	0	0	0	0	2
Western Palm Warbler	3	0	0	0	0	3
White-throated Sparrow	11	1	0	0	5	17
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Yellow-shafted Flicker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	154	14	0	0	8	176

Net Hours: 411.00 NH

Capture Rate: 42.82 birds/ 100 NH

- 1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO.
- 2 Banded at the BBO > 90 days prior to recapture (e.g. in a previous year).
- 3 Banded at a location other than the BBO.
- 4 Caught in a mist-net but not banded (e.g. escaped net).

An amazing sunset and hundreds of Sandhill Cranes going by

