

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update October 11 – 25th, 2009



The last Downy Woodpecker of '09

Well, despite songbird banding being officially over, I ended up having the time and good weather to band twice. I opened all 13 songbird nets on the 16th and the 23rd. It was fairly fruitful banding considering the time of year, with 29 total birds captured. Most common species was the American Tree Sparrow, followed by the Slate-coloured Juncos. I also captured a Downy Woodpecker, a Hairy Woodpecker, and two Black-capped Chickadees. Pretty typical species for late fall in Alberta! Nicole Linfoot (LSLBO Assistant Bander) joined me for one day, lamenting on how she missed birds and how Lesser Slave Lake had also had a slow fall for birds. Nice to have the company, and always

great to have experienced help... so I can put them to work! Many thanks to Nicole for helping me pack up the songbird nets at the end of the day.

What I have really been working on lately is the Saw-whet Owl monitoring, so it has been a complete schedule change from early mornings to late nights. In this two week period I captured a total of 41 owls. My biggest day was 14, not too shabby! Not as impressive as Geoff's 22... though I didn't stay up from sundown till sunup banding, I just did the usual 6 hour stint. Regardless, it made for a fairly busy night, and I was glad to have company to carry back some of the owls and help me remember which nets they came from. Thanks to Lisa and Todd Mahon, Kathy St. Laurent and Alan Marsh for helping me out that day! The same evening, Bob Gehlert by Lindbrook had an 18 owl night, so there were a bunch of them on the move that evening.

On October 16th we had a visit from the University of Alberta Wildlife Society. This group comes out annually, but I think it was a record breaking year, there were 50 people! Chuck came out to give me a hand with the group so we could provide them with snacks, hot water, and coffee. Just to see if it could be done, we squeezed everyone into the lab at one point so that we could take a photo, who knew the lab could hold so many?! We had a bit of a hard time catching an owl for them though, we had to wait until 11:30 for the first one, and unfortunately some of the group had already departed by then. Those that stuck it out were rewarded with photo ops with a Saw-whet, a bird many of them had never seen before. Chuck and I managed to catch one more at the end of the evening.



The Wildlife Society Crew! And Annie of course.

With the cooler temperatures at night I have been making quick work of the woodpile. I find it a little difficult to regulate the temperature in the lab sometimes, it seems I either have it cookin' hot in there, or I forget to feed the fire often enough and it gets a bit too chilly. I had some excitement one night when lighting the fire. Filling the stove with paper and topping it with some smaller pieces of wood, I lit a match and passed it through the damper on the front of the stove. As I often do, I blew on the lit paper to help it along, what was different this time is that the fire WHOOSHED out through the damper, right in my face! I wasn't hurt, just plenty startled and now I have way less hair on my face, shorter eye-lashes, and unplanned layers where my hair stuck out from under my toque. Thankfully my eyebrows made it though, so I don't look too funny. Heads up to those lighting fires in the stove, not a great idea to blow into the damper!

As I pack up my things and sign off for another season at BBO, I can't help but be thankful to all those who made it possible for me to spend the banding season in the Beaverhill Natural Area instead of the city. The very hard working board of directors, all the volunteers that help BBO obtain funding to run its many programs, and especially to Chuck and Lisa Priestley, who are always just a phone call or a quick visit away to make sure I have everything I need at the lab. Best to all, and have a great winter! Good luck to Lisa in the last week of Saw-whet monitoring!



Isaac was a little suspicious of this owl...



Our last Saw-whet of 2009, good luck Lisa!

Table 1. Results from Songbird Banding, Oct 11 – Oct 25, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Foreign ³	Other ⁴	Total
American Tree Sparrow	15	0	0	0	0	15
Black-capped Chickadee	1	1	0	0	0	2
Downy Woodpecker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hairy Woodpecker	0	1	0	0	0	1
Slate-coloured Junco	7	3	0	0	0	10
Total	24	5	0	0	0	29