

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Update September 26 – Oct 10, 2009



American Tree Sparrow

American Tree Sparrows. There were some other great captures, the only Golden-crowned Kinglet of the year, as well as some late Hermit Thrushes.

The first snow arrived out at the lab on October 8th, which was also the first day I saw a Rough-legged Hawk in the area, cruising above the lab in some pretty high winds. There has also been a Pileated Woodpecker hanging around the lab, and I held my breath as I watched it fly near my open nets. It never flew in though. That's okay, I can appreciate a cool bird without having to band it... I guess. Only one Pileated has been caught and banded at BBO since 1999, Lisa and Robin caught a young one last year.



Hermit Thrush caught on Oct 5th

I have had a number of visitors out to the lab, one day a group of students from the U of A (Hedwig, Ben, and Anna) came out with the hope of doing some songbird banding. Unfortunately the weather didn't cooperate and they had to make do with a bird-less demonstration. Steaks and



Golden-crowned Kinglet

Saw-whets was held on October 2nd and 3rd, and a group of volunteers stayed out to help with songbird banding during the day, including Isaac Calon, Keegan, Paxten, and James Sheppard. It was nice to have the extra hands because that turned out to be a busy day, with two big flocks of Juncos that hit the nets in quick succession. Barb and Jim Beck also managed to make it out to cover Saw-whet Owl banding one night, and brought me supper as well, thanks guys!

Since the mornings have been so cool and I wasn't able to open the nets, I've been staying up a bit later and helping out with the owls. It's been great fun hanging out with Lisa and visitors, and staying up paid off big time the night we caught a Long-eared Owl in the Saw-whet nets! Back to you Lisa..... **Katie Calon**

Table 1. Results from Fall Migration Monitoring, Sept 26 – Oct 10, 2009.

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Foreign ³	Other ⁴	Total
American Tree Sparrow	12	0	0	0	3	15
Black-capped Chickadee	0	7	0	0	0	7
Downy Woodpecker	1	2	0	0	0	3
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hairy Woodpecker	0	1	0	0	0	1
Hermit Thrush	2	0	0	0	1	3
Lincoln's Sparrow	1	0	0	0	1	2
Myrtle Warbler	99	4	0	0	5	108
Slate-coloured Junco	69	5	0	0	5	79
White-breasted Nuthatch	1	1	0	0	0	2
White-crowned Sparrow	1	1	0	0	0	2
Total	189	21	0	0	15	225

Net Hours: 413.5 NH

Capture Rate: 54.4 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).

Thanks Katie, so the Saw-whet Owls have finally begun to move. We captured 47 Saw-whet Owls and one Long-eared Owl. Nets were set on 10 nights, and only two of those nights had no owls captured. We had our BIG night on October 7 when 22 owls were captured. Our lucky volunteer Geoff Holroyd once again has bragging rites for capturing the most owls in a single night for this year (so far).



We also had a really interesting band re-encounter. On October 7, I received an e-mail late at night from Bob Gehlert who is running saw-whet migration at his acreage near Lindbrook (as a subpermittee of the BBO). He had captured a banded saw-whet owl and wanted to know if I

know where it was from. The next morning Geoff stopped by to drop the owl gear off and also told me of a banded saw-whet he had captured. When I later looked at the band numbers I realized that the same owl had been captured at both stations. So this little saw-whet traveled 16.5 km east in four hours. We also found that the owl was originally banded at Nisbet Forest (near Prince Albert SK) in September, 2008 (a site run by volunteer Harold Fisher).



The greatest little owls around,
Northern Saw-whet Owls!

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory celebrated another successful Steaks and Saw-whets event. This year the event was held October 2 and 3, 2009, and marked our 7th year of running the program. It was fairly cold at night so we had to make sure there would be lots of warm beverages to keep people warm. We invested in two 5 gallon thermoses for hot water and coffee this year.

The Friday had been beautiful, sunny and warm for the time of year. People began arriving around 6 p.m. and we had some snacks out to tie everyone over until the steaks and chicken were ready. Our volunteers put steaks and chicken on the Bar-B-Q, the potatoes and corn cob were ready, and all the fixings were put out. At 8 p.m. the mist nets went up and the call of the Northern Saw-whet Owl was played on a CD player. Chuck Priestley gave a short presentation about the bird observatory and the owl work and then Katie led the first group of people to check the nets. Incredibly, we caught an owl the very first net check. And the owls kept coming, five of them through the evening.

Unfortunately, Saturday's weather did not cooperate. We set the nets, but chances were slim for catching owls due to the on and off very light drizzle and the windy conditions. The wind reduces the distance that the sound of the CD call will travel, which is important for attracting owls to the nets. We were shut out on night two for Saw-whet Owls, but were happy to report that a Burrowing Owl made an appearance. We very much enjoyed hosting the event, and had many great conversations about birds and birding with many people that were in attendance.

We would like to thank all the volunteers that helped make the event a success. On site were Isaac Calon, Al DeGroot, Matt Hanneman, Chuck Priestley, James, Keegan, and Paxton Sheppard, Margaret Takats, and Josef Takats. Barb Beck provided her famous owl cupcakes (I never did get one), and Bryn Spence made the signs and T-shirts. Thanks to Katie Calon, our bander-in-charge for switching days off to help with the weekend. And a big thanks to Amy Trefry and Jason Stuka for providing babysitting for me to work at the lab for the event. Thanks to Alberta Conservation Association and Federation of Alberta Naturalists for supporting our event. ---*Lisa Priestley*

