

Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Weekly Report Oct 1, 2020 – Oct 7, 2020

With October comes an exciting time of year: it is now peak migration season for Northern Saw-Whet Owls, and the beginning of this year's Boreal Owl monitoring program! With temperatures plunging, we have also finally seen an uptick in our Saw-Whet Owl capture rate. While we are still well below the seasonal average, we have started hitting double-digit nightly captures more frequently, with a high of 15 Saw-Whets captured in a single night. We also caught our third Long-Eared Owl of the season, which was a welcome treat.



An unusual wing moult pattern on a Northern Saw-Whet Owl, lit by an ultraviolet light. Newly replaced feathers fluoresce a bright pink under UV, allowing banders to more easily distinguish between new and old feathers. Note the significant asymmetry in feather replacement between the right (above) and left (below) wing.

During the week, BBO staff and volunteers held a workbee to give our nightly owl visitors an alternate route to the banding station. The trail we usually send visitors along was blocked by significant beaver activity, including a metre-deep trench running directly across the trail! As a result, we simply sent visitors further along the road. However, rapidly deteriorating road conditions had us re-evaluate this decision, and after a day of hard work, we have flagged a new trail that safely skirts the beaver trench and leads directly to the observatory.

As for daytime migration, the Snow Geese that flew past in the thousands just days before are showing signs of tapering off after an incredible peak of 7,000 in a single day. As the fall daytime migration draws to a close, the morning census has become quieter and quieter. The majority of what is seen now are either straggling waterfowl, or birds that will likely overwinter in the area.

As temperatures fall, BBO staff are gradually bundling up more and more, but while we may shiver through the evenings, we welcome the cold. Colder nights push owls to migrate, and the true peak of their migration is yet to come. As usual, thanks to the various volunteers who have come out over the past week to help keep things running smoothly, and thank you to all our visitors.

Species	Banded	Repeat¹	Return²	Foreign³	Other⁴	Total
Northern Saw-whet Owl (M)	38			2		40
Northern Saw-whet Owl (F)	5			1		6
Long-Eared Owl	1					1
Boreal Owl*	3				1	4
TOTALS	47	0	0	3	1	51

NSWO (M) Playback Hours: 49

1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO

Capture rate: 81.6 birds/100 playback hours

2 Banded at the BBO >90 days prior to recapture (e.g. in a previous year).

NSWO (F) Playback Hours: 49

3 Banded at a location other than the BBO

Capture rate: 12.2 birds/100 playback hours

4 Caught in a mist-net but not banded (e.g. escaped net).

LEOW Playback Hours: 34

*All captures in the Boreal Owl net were NSWO

Capture rate: 2.9 birds/100 playback hours

BOOW Playback Hours: 42

Capture Rate: 9.5 birds/100 playback hours