

Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Weekly Update Oct 22, 2020 – Oct 31, 2020

The night of the 31st was a night like many others. Nets opened at half an hour after sunset, visitors trickled in to take part in owl monitoring, and the full moon kept the trails bright. But at the same time, it was different from all the rest, because it was the last night of owl monitoring.

The signs were there that the season was ending. Daytime migration monitoring had already ended, and owl captures had slowed to a trickle. The cold snap from the previous week finally ended on the 26th, making life at the field station somewhat more tolerable now that it was no longer a constant struggle to keep our drinking water in a liquid state. With the rising temperatures came a very slight resurgence in owl captures, but the writing was already on the wall.



One of the last Northern Saw-Whets banded at Beaverhill Bird Observatory. While our staff will miss these fluffy cuties, our hands will not miss their talons.

Those last few days involved shuttling nonessential equipment and staff supplies off site. On the morning of November 1st, we shut the lab down for the winter and bid a fond farewell to the observatory. While living on-site was not without its challenges, especially with the in-progress construction of our new lab and education building, there is something special about that total immersion in a natural area.

The final season tally for owl captures came in at 212 Northern Saw-Whet, 4 Long-Eared, and one Great Horned Owl. Overall it was a far cry from our typical average yearly captures of 300-plus Saw-Whets, but signs point to a late and relatively poor breeding season, which is likely responsible for our low capture rates this year.

Now that the season is complete, we are gearing up for a winter of data analysis and education. Our BirdSmart educational program is preparing to offer presentations in a fully digital format, and we expect to very much have our hands full with it.

We will return to the observatory next spring, where we hope to fully resume banding operations. Until then, stay warm and enjoy the winter!

Species	Banded	Repeat¹	Return²	Foreign³	Other⁴	Total
Northern Saw-whet Owl (M)	19				1	20
Northern Saw-whet Owl (F)	1					1
Long-Eared Owl	0					0
Boreal Owl*	2					2
TOTALS	22	0	0	0	1	23

NSWO (M) Playback Hours: 61.5

1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO

Capture rate: 32.5 birds/100 playback hours

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

NSWO (F) Playback Hours: 61.5

3 Banded at a location other than the BBO

Capture rate: 1.62 birds/100 playback hours

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

LEOW Playback Hours: 50.5

*All captures in the Boreal Owl net were NSWO

Capture rate: 0 birds/100 playback hours

BOOW Playback Hours: 51

Capture Rate: 3.9 birds/100 playback hours