

Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Weekly Update June 5-9, 2021

As spring migration tapered off, activity in our nets and around the lab also quieted down as resident birds settled down into their breeding territories and migrants left us behind for their preferred grounds. Most of our catches were resident Least and Traill's Flycatchers, American Robins, Warbling Vireos and the odd straggling Mourning Warbler.

But as spring migration tapered off, we also prepared ourselves for the upcoming Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) season, a specialized monitoring protocol where we had to prepare three different stations for sporadic netting and banding. The last few days of migration monitoring had us in a frenzy of mowing and brush clearing as we worked to clear net lanes that had remained unused for 1.5 years thanks to disruption to last year's banding operations. The MAPS season will be starting on June 10th, and will have us monitoring the survivorship and productivity of local breeding birds.

In the last few days of migration, we also began to notice that the forest has suffered an infestation of leaf-roller caterpillars. These tiny caterpillars roll themselves up inside a leaf with a small amount of silk to form a makeshift shelter, which they then eat from the inside out. In some places trees are so covered that we needed to move our banding bench to stop it from getting covered in caterpillar frass.

The food source offered by these caterpillars seems to have attracted a very unexpected guest: a roving flock of yellow-headed blackbirds, typically an open marshland species, started foraging around the lab. Thanks to that, we caught our first yellow-headed blackbirds in years, which was a source of great excitement for the staff. They're not exactly a rare bird, but because their habitat preferences are so radically different from what you'll find around the lab, they're almost never caught.

With the end of spring migration and the advent of summer, we expect to finally catch up on a number of small site maintenance tasks... providing we find the time amidst MAPS banding and a frenzy of Tree Swallow nestling banding. Such is field life.



An unexpected catch: yellow-headed blackbirds are found very rarely in the area around the lab, as it isn't their preferred habitat.



Last but not Least: the final catch of the spring season was not one of the Least Flycatchers we were accustomed to seeing, but the very similar Traill's! Jon was very excited about this catch, as he's been sitting on that pun for three years.

Species	Banded	Repeat¹	Return²	Foreign³	Other⁴	Total
American Robin	5	3				8
Mourning Warbler	3					3
Warbling Vireo	2					2
Least Flycatcher	9	9			3	21
Traill's Flycatcher	4					4
White-throated Sparrow	1					1
Ruby-throated Hummingbird					1	1
Yellow Warbler	1					1
Clay-coloured Sparrow	1					1
Red-winged Blackbird	2	1				3
Yellow-headed Blackbird	5					5
TOTALS	33	13	0	0	4	50

300.75 net-hours

16.625 captures/100 net-hours

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).