

Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Weekly Update October 12th – October 18th

While the fall migration season officially ends on October 20th, staff have noticed it unofficially ends over a week earlier than that. Nothing makes that more evident than our starkly reduced capture effort; we have passed a threshold of temperature that makes it too cold to open nets for most of the morning, and the lack of leaves means that by the time it's warm enough, the wind prevents opening for the rest of the day. However, owls are far hardier and can tolerate much lower temperatures, allowing us to focus our entire efforts on them.

Speaking of which, this week marked the first owl banding livestream, which, despite some initial tech issues, could be considered a great success! 250 unique viewers stopped by and viewed owl banding from the comfort of their home. If you missed the livestream, not to worry: an archived version of the stream can be found. Although an experiment, livestreams like this one are one of the opportunities afforded by the new lab building.

October 15th also marked the start of our Boreal Owl monitoring program. These more uncommon owls are much later migrants, and our capture rate for them typically hovers around zero. However, it's sometimes *not* zero, meaning it's all but guaranteed. However optimistic it is, we hope to capture some amount of them later into the season, when they start moving a little more reliably.

We also got a second foreign recapture: this one was originally banded at Lesser Slave Lake in 2019! While not quite as spectacular as September's visitor from Pennsylvania, this owl's more modest 600 km recovery distance still represents an important data point. Foreign recaptures like that one are the most valuable data we can get in understanding our birds' migratory movements.



Foreign recaptures like this owl are an essential data point in understanding the still-mysterious migratory movements of Saw-Whets.



The bicoloured bill of the American Tree Sparrow is a sign of the end. These are the last songbirds to migrate from the boreal forest and usually among the last captured in a season.

Table 1. Standard Migration Monitoring Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat¹	Return²	Foreign³	Other⁴	Total
Downy Woodpecker	1	2				3
Hairy Woodpecker		1				1
Black-Capped Chickadee	1	8				9
American Tree Sparrow	4					4
Brown Creeper	2	1				3
TOTALS	8	12				20

101 net-hours

1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO

19.8 captures/100 net-hours

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).

Table 3. Owl Monitoring Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat¹	Return²	Foreign³	Other⁴	Total
Northern Saw-whet Owl	42	3		1		45
Long-eared Owl	1					1
TOTALS	43	3	0	1	0	46

124.5 playback hours

1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO

36.9 captures/100 playback hours

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).