



# the WILLET

*Beaverhill Bird Observatory*

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## ANOTHER SEASON!

James Sheppard



© Peter Stahl

Springtime in Alberta! What better place is there to enjoy wildlife, moose, elk, bighorn sheep, wolves, bears and an amazing supply of birds? There are over 340 species that migrate through or nest right here in Alberta! What is it that causes so many of us to enjoy following these creatures? For me it has been a gradual process. I have always enjoyed being

amongst nature, attempting to classify its flora and fauna. Have I always been correct with my classifications? Who cares, that's half the fun. That's why I try to associate myself with the experts whenever I get the opportunity. You can too at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory with the Big Birding Breakfast on May 28<sup>th</sup>, or the

Baillie Birdathon in May and so many more opportunities

coming up throughout the year. Come and visit sometime, with all of those 340 species, we're bound to see a few!



© Peter Stahl



Paul Sumrell  
Spring 2006

## SPRING HAS SPRUNG AT BEAVERHILL LAKE

Lisa Priestley

A nice drive around the south end of Beaverhill Lake on April 13 gave a good indication that spring has definitely sprung. I headed out at 6:30 p.m. for my usual drive up Rowan's Route from Tofield. Even before I left our house in Tofield, I observed the Crows completing their nest in the neighbours yard. The Magpies have built up a number of new nests along the roadside and the Starlings have grouped into large flocks. Robins were a common sighting throughout the drive. Two Harriers greeted me as I drove out of town towards Francis Point. Three pairs of bluebirds were nearby Elson's bluebird boxes (<http://www.beaverhillbirds.com/bbosongbirdelsontrail.htm>), this will be a good year for nest banding I hope.

As I neared Amisk Creek I flushed up a dozen Canada Geese. Then as I scanned the water I saw my first Greater and Lesser Scaups of the year. Only a few more weeks and the Greater Scaups will be heading further north, so it was nice to see them while they are here. The wind was warm so I opened the window to let the spring airflow through the car, and a Western Meadowlark sung its sweet song. A Red-winged Blackbird flew across the road and landed in a tree as I turned the car around to head to Kallal Pond.



Kallal Pond is now full of water and there were large rafts of ducks and gulls. As I neared the pond I saw the familiar flapping flight of a Short-eared Owl. I wondered how many more I would see. Canvasback, Redhead, Green-winged Teal, Common Goldeneye, more scaups, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls were all feeding voraciously. And then, it happened, as I scanned the multitudes of ducks a bright crimson color filled my binoculars, my favorite of all the waterfowl, a Cinnamon Teal!! I was just turning the car around when I noticed a stick nest.



With only binoculars with me I could only see that something was sitting on the nest. Andrew, a friend from university, came to the rescue with a scope and we identified it as a Great Horned Owl young. Then, on towards Francis Point. I checked out the other stick nest I knew of, none having any birds on them. I scanned the edge of trees along the lake and was about to turn down towards Francis Point, I heard a snort, and then a low wailing sounds began..... what was that, ah, my 11 week

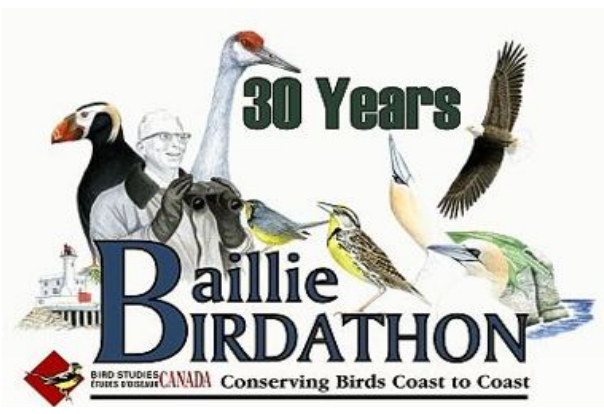
old son Sam in the back seat decided it was supper time. So a quick view down towards Francis Point and I observed at least 5 Short-eared Owls flying around. Well, better get home, but I'll be back tomorrow. Maybe I will see you out at the 'lake' soon.

The banding station opens officially on May and the Spring Nature Festival is being held just before. There is no doubt 'Spring has definitely Sprung' at Beaverhill Lake.



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Want to have a *lot* of fun and help birds and nature at the same time? Do a Birdathon this May! It's challenging, exhilarating, and - beware - addictive! Birdathoners just can't help coming back for more, year after year!

More than 7,000 people from across Canada (and from several countries around the world) participate in and/or sponsor Birdathon in May of every year. During a 24-hour period in May, they attempt to find as many bird species as they can, sponsored at a flat rate, or on a per-

species basis. Birders can designate a favourite conservation organization to receive a portion of the funds they raise. Bird observatories can also be designated as recipients of fund raising.

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Baillie Birdathon, a special commemorative t-shirt was designed by Ron Ridout (Birdathon Coordinator for more than 10 years). While the Baillie Birdathon remains a critical source of funds for bird conservation, the event has always been about people appreciating birds. No one embodies this passion for birdwatching better than James L. Baillie (depicted above), the man for which the Baillie Birdathon was named. Jim Baillie willingly shared his love for birds with anyone showing interest, fueling curiosity and enthusiasm for birds throughout his lifetime with patience, warmth, and tremendous knowledge.

To find out more about Birdathon, download this year's Birdathon Participant kit or contact us at Bird Studies Canada at 1-888-448-BIRD(2473), e-mail [birdathon@bsc-eoc.org](mailto:birdathon@bsc-eoc.org). To participate, you can register online or print the [Registration Form](#) and fax (519-586-3532) or mail to:

Baillie Birdathon  
 Bird Studies Canada  
 P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, ON N0E 1M0



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 Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET/BOX/APT.# CITY/TOWN POSTAL CODE

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please choose the team you would like to pledge:

- \_\_\_ **Team 1 - The Birding Buddies** – Chuck, Lisa and Sam Priestley, Bryn and Juanita Spence
- \_\_\_ **Team 2 – The BBO Birders** (The BBO staff may know where the birds are!) – Alicia Kelly and Katie Cameron
- \_\_\_ **Team 3 – The Burrowing Owls** – Geoff Holroyd, Helen and Sarah Trefry, and Rick Skibstead

I would like to pledge the following PER BIRD SPECIES SEEN by a team:

\_\_\_ 10¢ \_\_\_ 25¢ \_\_\_ 50¢ \_\_\_ \$1.00 \_\_\_ Other (\$ \_\_\_\_\_)

OR

I would like to pledge a FLAT RATE of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(all donations over \$10 will receive a tax receipt from Bird Studies Canada)

Please return the form to: Beaverhill Bird Observatory, Box 1418, Edmonton, AB T5J 2N5 or phone (780) 918-4804 and let us know the above information.

# Beaverhill Bird Observatory

presents the



## BIG BIRDING BREAKFAST

Join us as we celebrate the birds of Beaverhill Lake. Learn about our various programs and see bird banding up close. Breakfast (crepes, bacon, fruits, juice, coffee, tea) provided.

**Date: May 28, 2006**

**Time: Nets go up at 4:45 a.m. and run till 10:45 a.m.  
(weather dependent)**

**Guided walks to weir throughout the day**

**Swallow nestbox banding in afternoon**

**Cost: \$ 10 (or buy a membership and it's free)**

**Contact: Lisa Priestley 918-4804 or e-mail:**

**[lisa@beaverhillbirds.com](mailto:lisa@beaverhillbirds.com) to register or for  
more information**

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### Sponsors:

Alberta Conservation Association, AB Sustainable Resource Development

[www.beaverhillbirds.com](http://www.beaverhillbirds.com)

## Word Search

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ALBERT	BAILLIE
BINOCULARS	BIRDATHON
BIRDING	BLUEBIRD
BREAKFAST	CANVASBACK
CREPES	EAGLE
FRANCIS	GOLDENEYE
HAWK	MAGPIE
MEMBERSHIP	MERLIN
NATURE	OSPREY
OWLS	SPRING
VOLUNTEER	WARBLER
WATERFOWL	WETLANDS
WILLET	



**Membership Information:**

**Memberships for the Beaverhill Bird Observatory Society:**

**\$10/yr for an individual, \$20/yr for a family, \$25/yr Supporting, \$25/yr Corporate, \$100/yr Sustaining, \$500 (one time) Life Time Membership**

**Cheques can be made to the Beaverhill Bird Observatory and sent to:**

**Po Box 1418, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J2N5**