

Weekly Update April 1st to April 8th 2016

This has been an awesome first week back at BBO! This year is going to be a little different from those previous, as the unseasonably warm weather this year has given BBO the chance to open the lab a month early. Normally snow and cold weather would block access to the lab and prevent the safe netting of birds, however, by not opening until May 1st the BBO misses the spring migration of bird species such as Dark-eyed Juncos, American Tree Sparrows, and male Myrtle Warblers. By opening in April, BBO can record the movement of these species.

So far this trial month is paying off. The first week has included reasonably warm weather, and we have caught both American Tree Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos. Interestingly, we have also noticed flocks of up to 100 American Tree Sparrows flying overhead, and only viewed and caught small numbers near the ground. Perhaps the good weather was allowing these birds to fly straight to their destination rather than stop to refuel at BBO. Some days large migrating flocks of Canada, Snow, and White-fronted Geese have been seen, and at the end of the week, several hundred Tundra swans were seen migrating! The highlight for this week that was seen overhead was a pair of Great Blue Herons that flew right over the lab.

In terms of banding, species diversity has been pretty good for such an early start. Five different species have been caught so far, and we caught each one per day for the first five days of banding. Our first catch was a Black-capped Chickadee, followed by American Tree Sparrow, Downy Woodpecker, Dark-eyed Junco, and the highlight of the week... a Black-billed Magpie!



Black-billed Magpie! Meghan has wanted to band one since she started banding.

A variety of raptors have been sighted over the lake on our daily census. There are a few Short-eared Owls still hanging around, with a number of Rough-legged Hawks and Northern Harriers. We are just beginning to see our Red-tailed Hawks returning as well.

It was great to see a few hardy volunteers out already this season. Irene welcomed us to the lab on opening day, Steve organised and held a party for Kevin's birthday, and Jeremy came out to help us band and learned about some new birds! Thank you Geoff, Gemma, Helen, Al, Irene, and Steve for helping us set up the lab, and thank you also to our visitors, including John and Janice, and Connor and Emily for coming out to see us.

Species	Banded	Repeat¹	Return²	Foreign³	Other⁴	Total
Black-capped Chickadee	1	0	2	0	0	3
American Tree Sparrow	14	1	0	0	0	15
Downy Woodpecker	1	0	0	0	0	1
Dark-eyed Junco	10	0	0	0	0	10
Black-billed Magpie	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	27	1	2	0	0	30

1 Banded recently (within 90 days) at the BBO

2 Banded at the BBO > 90 days prior to capture (eg. in a previous year)

3 Banded at a location other than BBO

4 Caught in a mist net but not banded (eg. Escaped)

Net hours: 269.75 NH

Capture rate: 11.12 birds/100 net hours