



The WILLET

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The Beaverhill Bird Observatory opens 1st May- with Covid restrictions limiting events and public visits.

The finishing work on the new bird banding and visitor center continues, which will be opening for staff beginning May 1st. Thanks to the donations from many of you, this huge improvement in operations will result in a larger, warmer building for staff and visitors to enjoy. While the solar system will not be up in time due to delays in obtaining materials, the staff will begin research this spring with limited electrical power. They will also have strict Covid protocols in place, and at this time, due to the ongoing pandemic, visitors will not be allowed inside the building. We hope with ongoing vaccinations and continued social distancing this could potential change and we look forward to inviting you one day into the new building that you helped fund!

The BBO will not be running our annual Big Birding Breakfast this year, though our internship program will be operational with 8 post-secondary students assisting us with our long-term wildlife monitoring programs. We are still waiting to make a decision about the Young Ornithologist Workshop that usually runs in August.

BBO wishes to acknowledge MacLellan Carpentry and John Scott, for pushing ahead through the winter to have the building complete enough for spring banding.



Epps Signs Donate a New Sign for the BBO



BBO's chair, Geoff Holroyd, holds the new sign donated by Rona and Loverna Epps of Epps Memorials and Cedar Signs, located in Beaver County, depicting our new logo. BBO board member Alyssa Bohart designed this updated logo which transferred well to the cedar sign. We thank Epps for their generous donation!

Other generous donors: A second generous donation in memory of Mary Hughes Weir allowed BBO to add to our Endowment Fund, which was matched again by the Edmonton Community Foundation. Every contribution toward this fund helps build toward the long term security of BBO. Consider different ways you can support the BBO, whether through volunteering, donations or including the BBO within your will.

Some of our other generous funders and volunteers that contributed the success of the BBO over the last year include: Environment and Climate Change Canada who replaced some of our worn out mist nets; Alberta Conservation Association provided funds for operations and staff; Nancy Buchko, Barrister and Solicitor, Tofield provided free legal services regarding our lease renewal; Carol and Pat Nolan donated a large water holding container which will ensure adequate collection of rain water from the new metal roof on our center; Edmonton Community Foundation Grant funded some of the interior finishing; Carole and Gary Dodd are funding our internships; Phil and Helen Trefry continue to house and feed the education birds; and John and Rose Scott continue to oversee the building completion, documenting the work, securing needed materials and tracking expenses.

BirdSmart Education Program

This winter our BirdSmart education program continued to educate students and the public across central Alberta throughout the pandemic. In fact, due to being fully digital, we were able to expand our outreach and present to schools across the entire province, including our first presentations up in Fort McMurray, and even presented to some schools in Ontario! With fully digital interactive webinars, we joined students whether they were learning from home or in the classroom. Along with Rickie the Northern Saw-Whet Owl and Maple the Peregrine Falcon, by the end of April our

staff and feathered ambassadors, will have given 61 presentations this winter to 1,060 students and 275 adults about the importance of birds, conservation and how to reduce our impacts on climate change.



BirdBytes Episodes

Assistant Biologist, Shane Abernathy, has been filming some entertaining and informative Bird-Bytes episodes. These short 1 minute videos featuring our education birds teaches viewers about bird biology and natural history. Check out videos about chickadee mobbing behavior, owl biology, birds of prey nictitating membrane / 3rd eyelid and more by visiting [BBO's YouTube Channel](#) today!

BBO's Annual General Meeting - Thursday April 22, 2021 at 7pm MDT

Interested in hearing about all the work and research BBO was able to complete during the first year of the pandemic in 2020? Register [HERE](#) to attend our AGM! We look forward to seeing you then!

Enjoy a FREE Lifetime Nature Alberta Membership!

Nature Alberta is offering BBO Members a FREE lifetime membership! Nature Alberta connects and supports clubs like ours across the province. When you join Nature Alberta as a member, you add another voice in support of the active appreciation and conservation of Alberta's natural environment.

[Nature Alberta](#) provides a central place for clubs from all over the province to promote their events. They also create educational materials like species checklists and guides to supporting nature in

both urban and rural areas, available for free on their website. They run outreach programs such as Nature Kids to promote first-hand nature experiences and inspire the next generation of naturalists. Their quarterly Nature Alberta Magazine is filled with informative articles and beautiful photography. [You can check it out for free online or subscribe](#) to receive your own print copies. Members also get 10% off books in their [online store](#).

2021 Beaverhill Bird Observatory Staff- Introducing Jana Teefy:

Sara Pearce Meijerink continues to work as Head Biologist with Shane Abernethy, our Assistant Biologist. Sara and Shane worked all winter on grant applications and reporting, data analysis and our BirdSmart Education program, which operated digitally due to Covid. Jon Van Arragon, our Summer Student from last year, will be rejoining BBO once more this summer. Our newest staff member whom we are excited to join our team this year is Jana Teefy (right). Here is her introduction!



“Hello fellow birders! My name is Jana Teefy, and I am very excited to join the BBO team this summer. You will most likely see me around the site assisting with the migration monitoring, doing bird surveys, or even snapping a photo or two. I am looking forward to the break from my schooling at Lakeland College, where I am enrolled in the Environmental Sciences Wildlife and Fisheries program. When I am not learning and sharing my knowledge of birds, I can be found hiking, camping, and experiencing all that our beautiful province has to offer. I am looking forward to sharpening my identification skills and working alongside fellow bird lovers this summer. Please come say hi if you see me while you are out enjoying the beauty of Beaverhill Lake. Your fellow bird-nerd, Jana.”

Join us for Birdathon 2021!

The BBO would like to invite you to join us remotely for the Great Canadian Birdathon this year! The Great Canadian Birdathon is a national birding event organized by Birds Canada that raises awareness of bird watching and funds for bird conservation.

Spend a day with your household, either watching birds out your backyard, going for a walk in the river valley looking for birds, or going on a road trip to see as many species of birds as possible! Ask your friends and family members to sponsor your birdathon to help raise money for bird conservation. They can either donate a set amount through the website, or for extra incentive, see if they will donate a \$1 per bird species you spot!

As a bonus, when you join our team, you will also get a cool Birdathon T-shirt! This year's shirt features the Thick-billed Longspur! (Image right).



Simply visit [The Great Canadian Birdathon 2021 website](#), under Teams search for **Beaverhill Bobolinks** and then **join our team!** Your friends and family can either donate directly to the team, or to the team through you as a participant!

BBO's staff will be doing their birdathon on **May 24th** and we invite you to spend the holiday remotely birding with us. At the end of the day, email your species list to our biologist (biologist@beaverhillbirds.com) and we will compile everyone's list and share the results to our membership!



Not available on May 24th? That's not a problem! You can do your birdathon any day of the year. As long as you go out for some fresh air, enjoy birding, and hopefully raise some funds to help out our feathery friends, that's all that matters!

So consider joining the Beaverhill Bobolinks remotely this year and together, let's have a fun day of birding and help raise money for bird conservation!!

Photo (left) of last year's Beaverhill Bobolink Team birding together at a distance!

You can also sponsor the [Beaverhill Birders](#), which is our chair and vice-chair, Geoff and Helen who saw 114 species last year! Join a either team and help support our birds!

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Remembers Jim Beck (1941-2021)

By Lisa Takats Priestley



The birding community lost one of our great teachers and friends. Jim Beck passed away in March, 2021. Jim and Barb Beck (pictured left) were an institution in Christmas Birds Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys, owl surveys, and bird identification courses. When Jim and Barb couldn't find suitable local recordings of birds for study, they recorded and produced CDs of some 250 bird species for classrooms of students and many birders.

Jim came to volunteer at the Beaverhill Bird Observatory in 1997 and received his banding permit soon after. He joined the board of directors and served from 2007 to 2015. He held a banding permit for songbirds and raptors and volunteered many days and nights. He was the first to raise his hand when volunteers were needed to train new staff each season. Many hours were spent on various construction and improvement projects. He helped dig postholes for a parking lot, put in fencing, and helped build the kiosk at the Natural Area entrance. When the lab needed new roofing, he was up there in the hot summer sun working with other volunteers. The new kitchen in the old lab was also constructed with his help. Being a forester, he was also keen to help with fire smarting around the lab, and he also cleared many trails for visitors to walk along.

Steaks and Saw-whets Supper events were attended by hundreds of people over the years, and he was out volunteering on barbeques, chatting with visitors, selling prize tickets, and he and Barb always provided the yummy chocolate owl shaped cupcakes which were a big hit with kids and adults alike.

Jim is lovingly remembered by Barb (wife of 59 years), his children Bob (Chenelle) and Jim (Holly), and his grandchildren Cathryn, Calvin, and Paige. His memory and influence on forestry, wildlife, and the arts will live on. The family requests that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the James Beck prize in Forest Management at the University of Alberta at <http://uabgive.ca/Beck>

The best tribute to this larger-than-life man, is sharing some of the BBO's staff, directors, and students' memories of Jim. Thanks to all who contributed these kind words below.

“I remember Jim having a larger-than-life personality, and I remember how humble he and Barb were about learning from us youngsters when they joined us to get their banding hours in so they could get their permits.” – **Karen Garvin** (staff 1997)

“My fondest memory of the Becks is their sunrise surprise arrivals to the BBO. There was no phone to call to alert us that the Becks would be joining us, just the unmistakable distant hum of their approaching enormous truck! It, much like they themselves, was heard before it was seen. They always brought home baking, a feast, and enough joy, enthusiasm and sense of purpose to re-invigorate a field weary bander such as myself. Jim was relentless with net checks and Barb would band and record data. They were a genuine help, and it extended past banding hours to helping with repairs and staying for a visit. How I remember Jim: loud, smiling, laughing out loud, listening, getting to the point, giving... and loving Barb.” – **Christine Hornung** (staff 1998)

“I will forever be grateful for Jim Beck. The selfless work that him and Barb did to record birds of Alberta and share their love and knowledge with others has influenced and enriched my life immeasurably. The world has been opened up to me and I delight daily in being able to identify birds, their calls and even butterflies that cross my path. They have given me, my family, and students and incredible gift. I was always so grateful for Jim and his mentorship and his willingness to share resources, encouragement and kindness. He was a true teacher. The last time I spoke with Jim, I had asked about Barb—they were partners in everything! I was amazed and inspired by the way Jim was supporting Barb in their later years. The Becks are leaders and exemplars in their love and understanding not only of nature and the world around us, but in their love for each other. Thank you for your mentorship and example!” – **Crystal Rausch** (staff 2004)

“I have lots of happy memories of catching butterflies with Jim and Barb, seeing them roll up in their great big Suburban with nets at the ready.” – **Katie Calon** (staff 2010/2011)

“I met Jim back in the fall 2012 when I was a volunteer and learning how to band birds/owls for the first time out at the BBO. He was a friendly fellow, kind and patient with a new birder. That fall he along with his wife Barb, and other BBO volunteers, helped teach me how to band owls. Little did he or I know how much that fall season would impact and shape the rest of my life. I am forever thankful for his generosity in sharing his knowledge and passion of birds with others and for the fun laughs we shared together in between net checks.” – **Sara Pearce-Meijerink** (Volunteer/Staff 2012 to present)

“I remember working with Jim out at the old lab on many occasions. He was always great company with good conversations and great sense of humour. He also knew which end of the hammer was the useful end. I will all miss him as I’m sure we all will.” – **Al DeGroot** (Director -1994-2015)

“Lisa's Xmas parties were fun events that friends, BBO board members and staff all looked forward to, albeit Lisa volunteered her parents' house to hold the event. Barb and Jim were habitual attendees, with Jim often showing up with a Santa hat, ready to preside over the highlight of the evening, "Secret Santa". Gregarious, loud and funny, Jim was well known for his predilections of 'stealing' presents, often to the chagrin of Barb as he ended up with a less desirable item than the one they already had. On a personal note, Margaret, in her role as the Secretary of BBO, found Jim a valuable sounding board to bounce ideas off. When she needed a second signature on last minute cheques, Jim was always ready and signed the cheques with characteristic good cheer.” – **Margaret (Director) and Josef (Volunteer) Takats** (2001-2014)

“When visiting friends and volunteering at the BBO I heard the rumbling, slow-advance of the Beck's in their 'land-yacht'. Once docked, the energetic Beck's would seemingly explode from the vehicle, this time on mute so-as to not startle the birds, and greeted (and be equally enthusiastically greeted by) their beloved banders, showering them with supplies and then proceeding to catch up, in their rapid-fire way, on the goings-on of the station. The loss of Jim, part of the passionate 'Team Beck', will be felt far and wide.” – **Steve Glendinning** (Volunteer 1997/1998)

“I spent many nights with Jim in search of owls, first with Christmas Bird Counts, then during my Masters thesis. Jim and Barb's discovery of many overwintering Saw-whets lead to many discussions as to whether Saw-whet Owls migrate in Alberta. He encouraged Christine and I to set up a few nets in the fall of 1997 and we caught our first Saw-whet Owl. From there Chuck, Rich, and I established the first long-term Saw-whet monitoring program in Alberta which expanded to five stations in Alberta and many in Saskatchewan! What a legacy Jim left behind.” – **Lisa Takats Priestley** (Volunteer/Director/Executive Director 1996-2015)

“For any kind of BBO function, it would be very strange not to see the Becks (who came as a package) attend.... They were like the Uncle and Aunt that would consistently show up to support you. If they weren't there, it would feel like the gathering was not complete. Both Jim and Barb treated me like I was one of the BBO family from the start which I really appreciated. I will remember Jim mostly for his dry wit....always starting a conversation/statement with a furrowed brow (looking extremely serious) and they finishing with either a huge smile or laugh.”
- **Jeff Adamyk** (Staff, 1999)

“Jim and Barb Beck were inspirational in their energy and willingness to help. From owl banding to construction to bird song recordings, their contributions were appreciated and will be remembered for years. I miss their big smiles, greetings and participation in numerous projects” - **Geoff Holroyd** (Volunteer/Board Member/Chair 1984 to present)

Jim Beck volunteers with Al DeGroot (photo right) to drill post holes. Volunteers have always provided the backbone to BBO and Jim was there for BBO, whether it was physical work, helping at events, banding or volunteering at the Casinos.



Note from Editor Helen Trefry: Please feel free to contact me for any stories from your visits to BBO and or any errors/omissions.

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Wondering How You Can Help The BBO?

If you are interested in donating toward the completion of the building we are now raising funds for a shortfall in the solar installation and interior finishing. While we will be using the old furnishings from the previous banding station, we have additional needs with the new building. All donations receive a tax receipt.

Here is what we hope to achieve this year with your help!

- 1) We are so close to completing our funding goal to be able to purchase the solar panels and batteries needed to power and light up the new education and research centre. We are short \$10,000 of this \$37,000 project.
- 2) We are hoping to install energy efficient blackening blinds on all our windows in the new building. This will help keep the building cool in the summer, warm in the autumn and winter, and will help prevent window strikes. Estimated cost \$2,000
- 3) We are going to build a new outhouse! The one we have is showing its age and we will not be able to use it for much longer. The new outhouse will have two stalls, be more accessible, and will have a proper holding tank that can be pumped. Estimated cost \$5,000
- 4) A new building deserves a new banding bench that is more ergonomic for our staff to use, and provides better viewing opportunities for the public to enjoy while watching birds being banded up close and personal! Estimated cost \$1,000
- 5) Decent condition dark leather couch. If you or someone you know is looking to get rid of an old leather couch, consider donating it to the BBO. We are looking for dark leather, as it is easy to clean, doesn't show the dirt, is cool in the summer and warm in the brisk autumn evenings.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory (BBO) extends a massive thank you to our many funders who supported our projects and conservation efforts in 2020-2021. We could not have accomplished so much if it was not for you! Thank you to:

Alberta Climate Change Awareness Fund
Alberta Conservation Association
Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Commission
Birds Canada's Great Canadian Birdathon
Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund
Beaver County
CanadaHelps Partner Giving
Canada Summer Jobs
Carson Integrated
Claystone Waste
Clean Harbors' Community Enhancement Grant
Edmonton Community Foundation
ECO Canada Co-op
Epps Memorial and Cedar Signs
FlipGive
Fortis Alberta,
Hauser Home Hardware – Camrose
Moonshine Café – Tofield
Nature Canada's Charles Labatiuk Nature Endowment Fund
NAIT Biological Science Students
PayPal Giving Fund
Spencer Environmental Management Services
TD Friends of Environment
WildBird General Store, and personal donations.



We give a special thank you to the generous donations made in memory of Mary Hughes Weir.
THANK YOU!!

Global Big Day! - Saturday, May 8, 2021

Join thousands of people around the world birding on May 8th! You can participate for as little as 10 minutes or make a whole day of birding. Just be sure to report/submit your checklists of bird observation to eBird, either online or on the free mobile app. Last year, more than 50,000 people from 175 countries participated in this Global Big Day! More information visit [eBird's Website](https://ebird.org).