

Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Weekly Update September 21st – September 27th

As the days shorten and the temperature drops, we have started seeing more and more undeniable signs that the fall migration season is nearly over. Songbird numbers are dropping off, and the endless tide of Myrtle Warblers is starting to give way to the final migrants of the fall season: Slate-Coloured Juncos and American Tree Sparrows. While this week's highlights weren't as spectacular as the Pileated Woodpecker from last week, we were nonetheless quite excited to catch two LeConte's Sparrows, which while not particularly uncommon are rarely caught in our nets just by virtue of location. Similarly exciting was a White Breasted Nuthatch caught in the migration nets: while also not uncommon, they are non-migratory and are also rarely caught.



One of the LeConte's Sparrows banded this week. This grassland bird is common on the lakebed, and far less so near our nets.

With declining migratory songbird captures, however, comes an increase in owl numbers as we approach peak migration. With that increase, we finally began hosting our first Owl Nights of the season, welcoming visitors to our owl monitoring program. The first night brought us off to an auspicious start... with a surprise thunderstorm that forced net closure 15 minutes after opening and deluged the clearing for nearly three hours. The second night, however, was very successful, and our visitors got a close-up look to several wild owls that we captured and banded.



Owls are still adorable.

But as we say goodbye to migrating birds, we also say a heartfelt goodbye to a fixture of the BBO: the Throne, an outhouse that has served staff and visitors for years, has been replaced. No more will visitors to our outhouse enjoy a unique open air experience. Instead they will enjoy the cold confines of domesticity, four solid walls blocking them off from the surrounding forest and leaving them alone to contemplate life. With the Palace complete, the BBO Throne awaits decommissioning, its long years of service over.

We look forward to continuing to welcome visitors to site throughout October, and hopefully will have a number of owls to show them. Last year was a disappointing low for owl captures, but that means this year is due for a rebound.

Table 1. Standard Migration Monitoring Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Foreign ³	Other ⁴	Total
Downy Woodpecker	4	3				7
Hairy Woodpecker	2	1				3
Black-Capped Chickadee	7	16				23
Myrtle Warbler	20					20
Slate-Coloured Junco	10				1	11
White-Throated Sparrow	1					1
White-Breasted Nuthatch	1					1
TOTALS	45	20	0	0	1	66

396 net-hours

16.7 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).

Table 2. Experimental Nets Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat ¹	Return ²	Foreign ³	Other ⁴	Total
Downy Woodpecker		1				1
Black-Capped Chickadee	8	6			1	15
Wilson's Warbler	1					1
Orange-Crowned Warbler	1					1
Ovenbird	1					1
Myrtle Warbler	10					10
American Tree Sparrow	7					7
Clay-Coloured Sparrow	1					1
White-Crowned Sparrow	1					1
LeConte's Sparrow	2					2
Slate-Coloured Junco	9	1				10
White-Throated Sparrow	1					1
TOTALS	42	8	0	0	1	51

89 net-hours

57.3 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).

Table 3. Owl Monitoring Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat¹	Return²	Foreign³	Other⁴	Total
Northern Saw-whet Owl	43					43
Long-eared Owl	1					1
TOTALS	44	0	0	0	0	44

99 playback hours

44.4 captures/100 playback 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).