

Beaverhill Bird Observatory

Weekly Update October 26th – November 1st

The end of fall migration season is always on the bittersweet side. On one hand, it means bidding farewell to the songbirds we all love. On the other, it's strangely liberating. No longer do we have to get up before sunrise, coffee in hand, blearily blinking at nets that still need opening. Instead we get to sleep in, get up whenever we feel and make a leisurely breakfast while slowly coming to the realization that it's already afternoon.

Being able to dedicate our entire efforts to owls means finally being able to catch up on the various data entry and administrative tasks that inevitably pile up when running two monitoring programs simultaneously. We also immediately forgot about all of them when by utter chance, we caught a Barred Owl.

It is difficult to overstate how much of a highlight this enormously charismatic owl is. For one, the colour contrast and subtleties of grey in their plumage are gorgeous. It also bears mentioning that we're not remotely in suitable Barred Owl habitat. Their preference is for forest much more mature than what we have around the lab. Muddying the issue further was the fact that it was an after-hatch-year bird, ruling out the likelihood of it being a dispersing juvenile.

What was an adult Barred Owl doing in the wrong habitat? There has never been a single Barred Owl recovery more than ten kilometers from where it was originally banded, and they have extremely high site fidelity. How long had it already been here? How long does it plan to stay? Its mere presence in the natural area raises so many questions.

This past week also saw the last owl visitors of the season. We bid a warm adieu to everyone who joined us in shivering outside and trying to spot flying squirrels. Thanks so much to everyone who supported us by buying tickets! Staff will continue monitoring for those last few Saw-Whet Owls that everyone loves so much in the meantime.



Table 3. Owl Monitoring Banding Totals

Species	Banded	Repeat¹	Return²	Foreign³	Other⁴	Total
Northern Saw-whet Owl	44			1		45
Barred Owl	1					1
TOTALS	45	0	0	1	0	46

157 playback hours

29.3 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).