



**Beaverhill Bird Observatory  
BirdSmart Report 2025/26**

**Emelie Dykstra**

The Beaverhill Bird Observatory’s education season was a great success once again! Staff and volunteers provided environmental education to students and adults all across Alberta, enriching connections with nature and conservation. In total, BirdSmart completed 299 presentations, reaching 6,758 students and 2,695 adults.



Assistant Biologist Jon and Nina the Burrowing Owl at a private presentation

In a year when educators faced unexpected time restraints following the teachers’ strike in October, our presentation numbers were only slightly lower than previous years. Compared to the 2024-2025 season, which saw 326 presentations, the 2025-2026 education season was lower in presentation numbers, but not in the number of schools reached. This year, BirdSmart visited 135 schools and organizations, compared to the 123 last year. 75 of the organizations were new to BirdSmart, consisting of teachers, private bookings, senior’s homes, and after-school groups.

82% of this year’s presentations were in schools, with BirdSmart’s curriculum-linked presentations, which supplement the science curriculum for grades K-12 (Figure 1). Other organizations included girl guides, care homes, nature clubs, nature shops, and private meet and greets. There were aesthetic changes to the suite of presentations this year to increase visual engagement and interest. Only minor changes to the order of content were made, to aid in clarity and flow of the presentations.

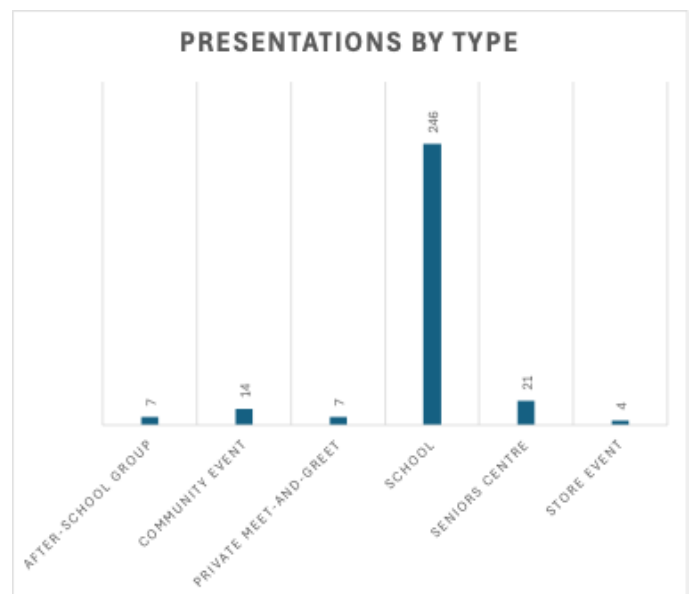


Figure 1. Numbers of presentations by presentation types

Three presentations were given in French this year, thanks to the help of volunteers Jordyn, Kalia, and Camille. While they're not often booked, French-speaking volunteers allow BirdSmart to give presentations to French immersion classrooms in a way that aligns with their typical education style. BirdSmart hopes to grow its French presentation numbers in future years.



Biologist Willow and Tansi the Great-horned Owl in a classroom presentation

BirdSmart continues to expand its audience across Alberta, completing 31% of presentations outside of the Greater Edmonton Area. Presenters and ambassador birds travelled to Wainwright, Wabasca, Drayton Valley, Daysland, Lac la Biche, Mini Thni and other communities in Alberta to give presentations.

Generous grants from the Beaver County and Battle River Community Foundation allowed BirdSmart to reach schools local to the BBO at no cost to schools. In Battle River alone, BirdSmart was able to provide 22 presentations free of cost (Figure 2). BirdSmart also joined the Community Marketplace this year, offering one free presentation per month to schools that lacked the resources to book presentations. BirdSmart gave six presentations through Community Marketplace, reaching new schools and students.

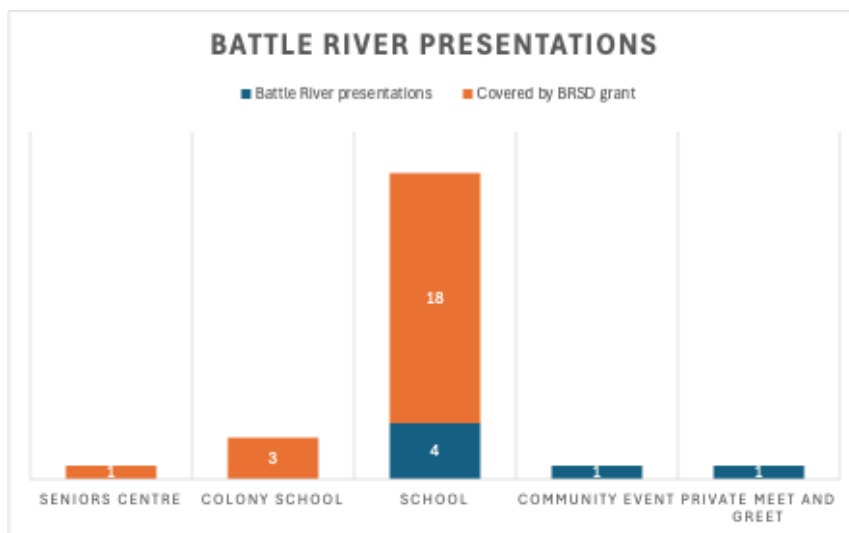


Figure 2. Presentations in Battle River, and covered by the Battle River Community Foundation grant

Presenters this year included Head Biologist Jana Teefy, Assistant Biologist Jon Van Arragon, and Field Biologists Emelie Dykstra and Willow Zilliox. Xavier Quantz volunteered at all nature shop events. Jordyn Vigen, Kalia Vigen, and Camille J Jodouin presented in French. Chair Geoff Holroyd gave 24 presentations, aided by Co-Chair Helen Trefry. Staff and volunteers were accompanied by education ambassador birds Nina the Burrowing Owl, Tansi the Great-horned Owl, Keith the Red-tailed Hawk, and Kali the Prairie Falcon.



BirdSmart education ambassador birds (from left to right): Nina the Burrowing Owl, Tansi the Great-horned Owl, Keith the Red-tailed Hawk, and Kali the Prairie Falcon

Following each presentation, organizations were sent a survey, where they could respond to any number of questions. The survey responses allowed participants to give feedback about the program, helping strengthen our curriculum links and program topics. The tremendous amount of positive feedback is always appreciated by staff, and the continued support of countless organizations helps BirdSmart continue to grow each year.

Survey respondents were asked to rate the quality of the topics provided, the strength of curriculum relevance, and pricing of the presentations. 92% of the 50 respondents rated the topic excellent, 85% of the 46 respondents rated curriculum relevance as excellent, and 88% of the 48 respondents rated the price as excellent (Figure 3).

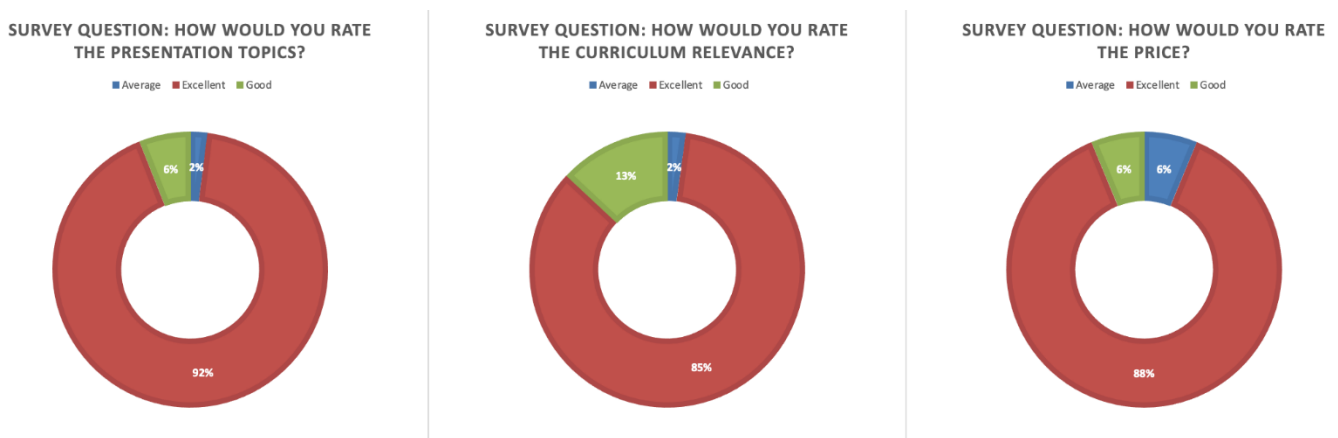


Figure 3. Survey questions rating topic, curriculum relevance, and price of the BirdSmart program from the 2025-2026 BirdSmart survey

Respondents were also asked if they would recommend the program. 100% of respondents indicated they would recommend BirdSmart to others (Figure 2). When asked if they would participate again, 98% of respondents said that they would participate in a BirdSmart presentation again in the future (Figure 3).

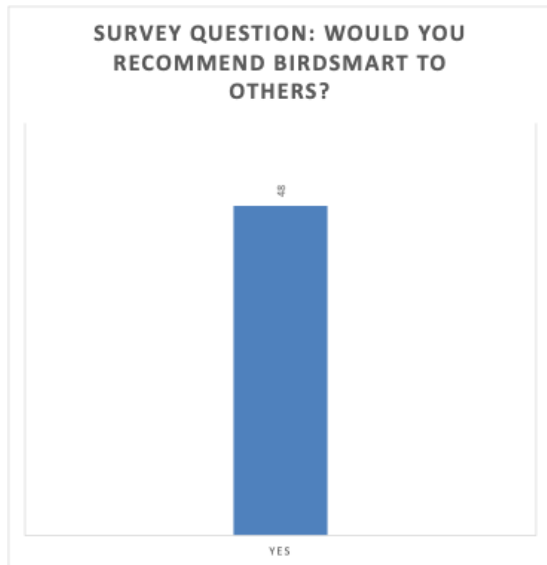


Figure 4. Survey questions asking if respondents would recommend the program to others from the 2025-2026 BirdSmart Survey

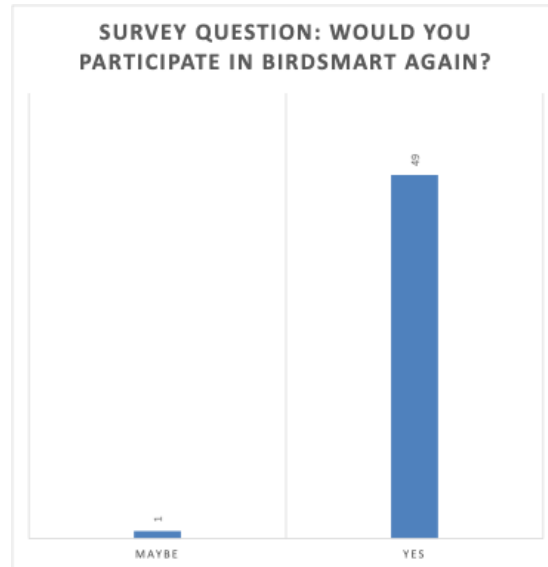


Figure 5. Survey questions asking if respondents would participate in the program again from the 2025-2026 BirdSmart Survey

Below are a few excerpts from BirdSmart survey responses for this year:

***“The children seemed to gain a new appreciation for the accessibility they have to nature, and cannot wait to get out to the BBO. The presenter was calm, engaging and provided so much information. Thank you.”***

- Private event

***“All of the teachers at my school were so happy with how our presentation went. The information was educational and interactive, and our presenter was so knowledgeable and good with kids.”***

- Millgrove School

***“[The presenter] interacted wonderfully with the audience and answered all their questions. We even got a hoot from Tansi. It was a great bonus for us to have the Battle River school division Grant. We loved having you at our school.”***

- Viking Colony School

## Acknowledgements

This education season was made possible by the hard work of staff presenters Jana Teefy, Jon Van Arragon, Emelie Dykstra, and Willow Zilliox, as well as exceptional volunteers Xavier Quantz, Jordyn Vigen, Kalia Vigen, and Camille Jodouin. Geoff Holroyd was a pivotal part of the program, presenting and supporting staff and volunteers. Helen and Phil Trefry housed our ambassador birds, and without them, the BirdSmart program would not be possible. Geoff Holroyd, Bill Paulsen, and Christie Campbell volunteered to transport our birds between the Trefry farm and the city, easing transitions throughout the winter.



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