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ÉDUCATION-RECHERCHE



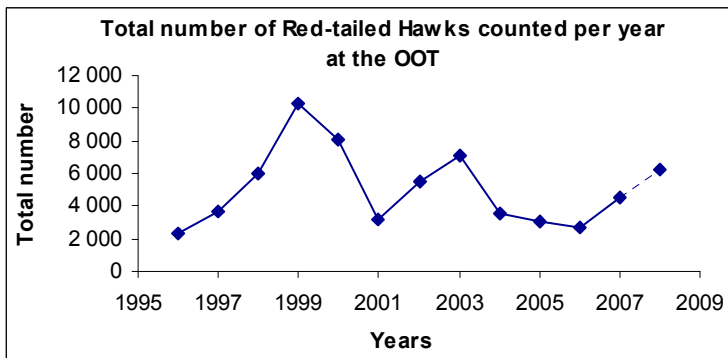
A month for the birds...

Across the planet, BirdLife International, whose mission is the conservation of birds and their habitats, is busy organizing events for the month-long fourth World Bird Festival, which is currently taking place. The theme this year is migratory birds and their flyways, and the members of the team at the *Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac* (OOT) can celebrate in style: they have recorded an amazing 124,709 migratory birds of 111 species since the 1st of October!

The last two weeks have been particularly rich in raptors. During the 92 hours of observation, a total of 5,425 birds of prey were counted as they passed over the Dunes of Tadoussac, bringing the season's total to 16,346. If October is World Bird Festival for BirdLife International, it has been Red-tailed Hawk Festival for the OOT. Since the 1st of October, 5,789 individuals have been observed and 3,754 of these were counted during the last two weeks. These numbers suggest that this species is well on the way to having its best season since 2003 (see graph), when 7,066 Red-tailed Hawks were recorded. The Red-tailed Hawk, which feeds on a wide range of prey items (e.g., snakes, birds, and small to medium sized mammals), does not seem to have been negatively affected by this year's low abundance of Red-backed Voles in the boreal forest. Note that the Boreal Owl, which has a dietary preference for the latter species, and which largely remains in the north when voles are abundant, is undertaking a huge invasion south this year.



Another member of the genus *Buteo*, the Rough-legged Hawk, has also been present in good numbers at the OOT this year. To date 348 individuals have been recorded, which is close to last year's total of 356; however,



as the migration peak for this species is not yet over, this figure is likely to be exceeded. Bald and Golden Eagles are also showing a similar pattern and, according to the data obtained up until the 23rd of October, both species seem to have had a good breeding season. This is particular so for the Bald Eagle: of the 140 individuals observed so far, 67 (47%) have been current year birds.

Apart from raptors, over the last two weeks the OOT's official counters have also had the pleasure of witnessing further huge passages

of members of the Fringillidae. The most impressive movements occurred on the 22nd and 23rd of October, when 22,000 Common Redpolls flew south-west over Tadoussac. On the 23rd of October, during the 8th hour of observations alone, an amazing 4,647 individuals were counted, which is equivalent to 77 birds per minute!



A Common Redpoll banded at Tadoussac
© Antonin Bérard

The groups observed ranged from 10 to 300 individual, and Bohemian Waxwings, White-winged Crossbills, Pine Grosbeaks and American Robins occasionally accompanied them – all in all, a breathtaking sight.

Priority non-raptor species for the OOT		
Species	Weeks 8 and 9 10 th to 23 rd Oct.	Total 2008
White-winged Crossbill	3 660	7 796
Common Redpoll	23 129	23 129
Pine Siskin	9 299	30 386
Pine Grosbeak	40	40
Purple Finch	110	392
Evening Grosbeak	36	82
Cedar Waxwing	204	3 882
Bohemian Waxwing	207	207
American Three-toed Woodpecker	13	14
Black-backed Woodpecker	111	180
Black-capped Chickadee	99	266
Boreal Chickadee	2 836	3 808
Rusty Blackbird	8	382
Horned Lark	137	1 575
American Pipit	38	1 241
American Robin	1 029	1 498

Official counters: Samuel Belleau and Samuel Denault

The movement of Pine Siskins and Boreal Chickadees that we have been reporting for several weeks now, has been continuing; however, the numbers have dropped over the last few days. Out in the St. Lawrence Estuary, the first large groups of Long-tailed Ducks and a few Iceland Gulls hail the approach of winter.

Banding Station Over the last 14 days, the team at the OOT succeeded in banding 358 Pine Siskins, 10 Common Redpolls, five Purple Finches and three White-winged Crossbills. The species-specific banding program for boreal passerines will continue up until the 6th of November. With regards to the Owl Banding Program, 151 Boreal Owls have been banded so far, and we can already confirm that the 2008 invasion will be the second largest recorded at the OOT after that observed in 2004, when 213 individuals were banded.

Number of owls banded		
Species	Weeks 8 and 8 10 th to 23 th Oct.	Total 2008
Northern Saw-whet Owl	10	113
Boreal Owl	26	151

Banders : Antonin Bérard and Mathieu Tremblay

Keep your eyes open and enjoy the migration!

If you would like to help ensure the future of our work, you can make a contribution to the Friends of the OOT Fund. All the necessary details can be found on our Internet site (<http://www.explos-nature.qc.ca/oot/contribuer.php>). Thank you in advance!

Editorial team: Pascal Côté (author, pascalcote@explo-nature.qc.ca) and Andrew P. Coughlan (translator, English version).

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