

Thunder Cape News

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by John Woodcock

Spring migration monitoring began May 1 2008 and ran continuously until June 11. This was the 4 busiest (banding) season of 16 spring seasons at the Cape with 3,812 birds banded of 90 species/forms (above average). Three species accounted for 38% of the birds banded: Chipping Sparrow 20%, Myrtle Warbler 11%, Blue Jay 7%. Daily banding totals were moderately low in early-May averaging 42 birds banded per day. May 11 to the 15 were busy days with about 175 birds banded per day. An average of 90 birds per day were banded May 16 to the 24. During the last week of May an average of 170 birds per day were banded. There were 12 days when over 100 birds were banded. The peak species date was May 26, when 65 species were documented. The highest Estimated Total occurred on June 7, attributable in part to over 700 Cedar Waxwing observed that day.

The weather in May was cooler than average with no scarcity of rain, frost, and a little snow. A large number of warblers arrived May 25 and were detained for a few days due to cold, wet weather. On the



cold, rainy days of May 26 - 27), following a day of rain May 25, four species of warbler were observed feeding at a hummingbird feeder. A few dead birds were found the morning of May 26,



malnourished and presumably hypothermic. For 3 days slices of orange and banana were put out on the railings of the deck near the hummingbird feeder upon which Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Northern Parula, Scarlet Tanager and Baltimore Oriole were observed feeding. Some of the

Tennessee Warblers continued to come to the hummingbird feeder for an additional week. Fair weather prevailed most of June. Higher than average numbers of vireos, blue jays, nuthatch, flycatchers, cedar waxwings, some warblers, and goldfinch were banded.

The first Ruby-throated Hummingbird of the season was observed on May 13.

The first Monarch Butterfly of the season was sighted on June 5.

Eight volunteers contributed a total of 202 volunteer days. Our volunteers came from Thunder Bay, Kenora, and Ottawa.



Scarlet Tanager eating orange

WATERFOWL

Twenty-six **Red-throated Loon** were observed this season. The last of the season was observed on June 8. An average of 43 **Common Loon** were observed daily until May 12, between 5 and 10 were observed most days thereafter, peak numbers were observed on May 4. A few **Horned Grebe** were observed daily the first half of May. The last was observed on May 14, peak

numbers were observed on May 3. **Red-necked Grebe** were observed daily the first 3 weeks of May and peak numbers seen on May 4. An average of 25 **Double-crested Cormorant** were observed daily throughout May and an average of 38 per day were observed in June. Only a few skeins of **Canada Geese** were observed, all in the second week of June. **Red-breasted Merganser** and **Common Merganser** were observed most days, averaging 10 to 20 per day. Peak numbers were seen early through mid-May. Smaller numbers of **Common Goldeneye**, **Long-tailed Duck** and **Bufflehead** were observed most days until the third week of May. The last **Long-tailed Duck** of the season was observed on May 26. Only 4 **Great Blue Heron** were observed this season and 27 **Turkey Vulture**, down from last year. Very few shorebirds were observed this season though **Killdeer** were more common than usual. More **Ring-billed Gulls** than **Herring Gulls** were observed daily this season, the reverse of the norm previous years. The reduction in **Herring Gulls** may be in part attributable to a pair of **Bald Eagles** that have established a successful nest in a tree on nearby Hare Island 2.5 km away. Only one **Herring Gull** nest was found on the island June 3 this year. In previous years between 100 and 150 nests were found.

RAPTORS

Raptor sightings were sporadic this spring. Small numbers of **Bald Eagle** were observed weekly. One or 2 **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were observed most days during the first 3 weeks of May, average numbers were banded. The first of the season was observed on May 4 and the last on June 5. A few **Broad-winged Hawk** were observed the third week of May. A few **American Kestrel** were observed the first half of May. A pair of **Merlin** were

present throughout the season, likely local breeders. Few **Peregrine Falcon** were observed.

WOODPECKERS

Eight species of woodpecker were banded, including the first spring banding of a **Three-toed Woodpecker** and the second spring bandings of a **Black-backed Woodpecker** and a **Red-bellied Woodpecker**. Two **Hairy Woodpeckers** were banded, only 2 others were banded, both in 2004. **Yellow-shafted Flicker** were common throughout the first half of May with peak numbers seen on May 4 (same as last year).

A **White-winged Dove** was banded this spring, the second ever banded at TCBO, the first was in the fall 1995.

PASSERINES

All the flycatchers arrived on May 25 - 26 this year. Above average numbers of **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** were banded this season. Record high numbers of **Trail's Flycatcher** and **Least Flycatcher** were banded this season, for the second year in a row. Record high numbers of **Red-eyed Vireo** were banded this season. The first birds of the season were observed on May 25, a little later than last year. Above average numbers of **Philadelphia Vireo** and record high numbers of **Blue-headed Vireo** were also banded. The first **Blue-headed Vireo** of the season was observed on May 11 and the first **Philadelphia Vireo** was banded on May 15.

The number of **Blue Jay** banded this season was the 2nd highest on record, exceeded only by the 2007 total. No Blue Jay were encountered before May 16 (the first arrival last year was May 7) but they were abundant thereafter. Peak numbers

were observed in June. The first **Tree Swallow** of the season was observed on May 3. A large flock of 144 were observed migrating on May 18.



White-winged Dove

Small numbers of **Black-capped Chickadee** were observed most days in May. Record high numbers of **Red-breasted Nuthatch** were banded this season, peak numbers were seen in mid-May. Average numbers of **Brown Creeper** were banded. Average numbers of **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** were banded but only one **Golden-crowned Kinglet** was banded this season. The first **Eastern Bluebird** of the season was observed on May 9 and the last on June 11. Only 3 **Hermit Thrush** were banded this season, the first on May 1 and the last on May 11. The first **Swainson's Thrush** of the season was observed on May 15. Average numbers of **Swainson's Thrush** were banded this season. Average numbers of **Veery** were banded this season, the first on May 23 (same date as last year). **Cedar Waxwing** were abundant this season with the second highest spring banding total ever. The first were observed on May 25 with flocks present to the end of the

season. Peak numbers were observed June 7 to 9 (same dates as last year). Small numbers of **Scarlet Tanager** were observed the last week in May. The first of the season was observed on May 25. Average numbers of **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** were banded. The first of the season was observed on May 13 and the last on June 8. Average numbers of **Indigo Bunting** were banded this season. The first birds were observed on May 25.



Lark Sparrow

WARBLERS

The first **Orange-crowned Warbler** of the season was observed on May 7 and the last on May 27. The first **Tennessee Warbler** was observed on May 23. Well above average numbers of **Nashville Warbler** were banded this season with peak numbers observed on May 26. The first **Northern Parula** of the season was observed on May 14 and the last on June 3. The first **Yellow Warbler** of the season was observed on May 20 and the last on June 8. Record high numbers were banded. The first **Chestnut-sided Warbler** of the season was observed on May 13 and the last on June 10. Above average numbers were banded. The first **Magnolia Warbler** were observed on May 9, record high numbers were banded. The first **Cape May Warbler** of the season was observed on May 9, average

numbers were banded. The first **Black-throated Blue Warbler** of the season was observed on May 14 and the last on June 2. Average numbers were banded this spring. **Myrtle Warblers** were abundant this season with record high numbers banded, peak numbers were observed May 14 and 15. The first **Black-throated Green Warbler** of the season were observed on May 6. Peak numbers were observed on May 24. The first **Blackburnian Warbler** of the season was observed on May 14 and the last on June 8. Average numbers were banded. On May 1 the first **Western Palm Warbler** were observed and banded. Peak numbers were observed on May 11. The last of the season was banded on May 30. The first **Bay-breasted Warbler** of the season was observed on May 17 and the last on May 26. The first **Blackpoll Warbler** was observed on May 15. Record high numbers were banded this season. The first **Black and White Warbler** of the season was observed on May 6. Above average numbers were banded. The first **Ovenbird** of the season was observed May 10. Average numbers were banded. The first **Northern Waterthrush** were observed on May 9 and the last of the season was banded on May 31. The first **Common Yellowthroat** of the season was observed and banded on May 10 and the last on June 8. The first **Wilson's Warbler** of the season was observed on May 13 and the last on June 5. Below average numbers were banded this season. The first **Canada Warbler** of the season was observed on May 25. Above average numbers were banded.

SPARROWS

Chipping Sparrow were abundant throughout the migration monitoring period. Peak numbers were banded and observed on May 13. This spring's

banding total of 773 birds was the highest total on record. The first **Clay-colored Sparrow** of the season was observed on May 9 and the last on June 10. Record high numbers were banded. The first **Savannah Sparrow** of the season was observed on May 5 and the last on June 5. Peak numbers were observed on May 14. Record high numbers were banded this spring. Peak numbers of **Song Sparrow** observed in the middle of May. **Lincoln's Sparrow** were first observed on May 7, numbers peaked on May 26. **Swamp Sparrow** first appeared on May 1. **White-throated Sparrow** were present through most of the season with greater numbers seen in the first half of May. The first **White-crowned Sparrow** of the season was banded on May 8. Peak numbers of both Gambel's and Eastern White-crowned Sparrow occurred during the third week of May. Average numbers of **Slate-colored Juncos** were documented this season. One **Grasshopper Sparrow** was observed May 3. A **Lark Sparrow** was banded on May 13 and another on May 24. A **LeConte's Sparrow** was banded on May 7.

Other PASSERINES

Small flocks of **Red-winged Blackbird** and **Common Grackle** were present throughout the migration monitoring period. Peak numbers were observed in mid-May. Peak numbers **Brown-headed Cowbird** were observed during the first week of May. The first **Baltimore Oriole** of the season was observed on May 25, the last on May 29.

Small numbers of **Evening Grosbeak** were observed throughout May and June. Well above average numbers of **Purple Finch** were encountered this season, the banding total was the second highest on record. Small numbers of **Pine Siskin** were observed throughout the season.

American Goldfinch were common after the middle of May; record high numbers were banded. Peak numbers of Goldfinch were observed on May 30.

SPRING HIGHLIGHTS

First ever banded in the spring:

White-winged Dove (1) May 27

Three-toed Woodpecker (1) May 17

Unusual Species banded:

Red-bellied Woodpecker June 3, 1 other banded spring 2004

White-breasted Nuthatch May 1, 14, 29

Prairie Warbler May 29, 1 other spring banding 2006

LeConte's Sparrow May 7

Field Sparrow May 12, 2 other spring bandings 1995 and 1997

Lark Sparrow May 13 and 24

Vesper Sparrow May 14

Oregon Junco May 18

Highest spring banding totals:

Ring-billed Gull (20)

Black-backed Woodpecker (1)

Hairy Woodpecker (2)

Blue-headed Vireo (12)

Red-eyed Vireo (63)

Traill's Flycatcher (41)

Least Flycatcher (18)

Olive-sided Flycatcher (8)

Red-breasted Nuthatch (45)

White-breasted Nuthatch (3)

Northern Parula (10)

Yellow Warbler (30)

Myrtle Warbler (438)

Blackpoll Warbler (16)

Scarlet Tanager (4)

Lark Sparrow (2)

Clay-colored Sparrow (24)

Savannah Sparrow (98)

Red-winged Blackbird (37)

American Goldfinch (129)

Other Highlights:

Glaucous Gull: 1 May 15

Bonaparte's Gull: 1 May 23

Sora: 1 observed June 1

American Woodcock: 1 June 3

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 1 June 8

Western Kingbird: 1 May 26 - 27

Grasshopper Sparrow: 1 May 3

Lark Sparrow: 1 June 2

Western Tanager: 1 May 5

Summer Tanager: 1 May 28

Yellow-headed Blackbird: 1 May 29

Red-throated Loon: 26, up from 17 in 2007

Table 1. The 20 most abundant bird species banded in spring 2008, with comparative totals from previous years.

Rank 2008	Species (overall spring ranking 1992 to 2007)	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
1	Chipping Sparrow (1)	770	561	299	473	698	159	436	306	242
2	Myrtle Warbler (5)	436	144	205	184	249	62	255	78	33
3	Blue Jay (4)	266	395	188	105	233	36	290	35	23
4	Nashville Warbler (8)	140	167	39	75	161	20	129	16	27
5	American Goldfinch (24)	124	32	69	49	39	18	48	25	15
6	Tennessee Warbler (10)	116	38	3	2	36	2	12	3	0
7a	American Redstart (7)	114	133	92	21	72	104	103	80	71
7b	Purple Finch (18)	114	4	27	69	29	6	40	76	4
8	Cedar Waxwing (22)	113	210	12	9	24	4	9	64	2
9	Pine Siskin (2)	99	27	7	1041	30	11	138	580	13
10	Savannah Sparrow (14)	98	63	33	56	89	37	43	26	39
11	Western Palm Warbler (13)	93	65	104	58	133	31	50	29	22
12	White-throated Sparrow (12)	91	77	75	80	85	47	142	16	44
13	Cape May Warbler (9)	73	61	12	16	45	9	27	5	8
14	Slate-colored Junco (3)	63	2	13	14	109	105	1172	11	0
15	Red-eyed Vireo (33)	61	34	3	12	38	10	15	13	9
16	Magnolia Warbler (11)	54	118	42	28	76	37	73	26	33
17	Red-breasted Nuthatch (39)	45	44	1	9	23	3	27	4	0
18	Black-and-White Warbler (19)	41	66	29	24	65	27	25	13	20
19a	Ruby-crowned Kinglet (20)	39	58	54	16	62	55	17	6	26
19b	Trail's Flycatcher (31)	39	36	18	8	24	9	5	7	15

Table 2. Spring totals of individuals and species/forms banded (1995-2008).

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Individuals	1707	3951	1042	658	1118	947	1783	4486	1240	3761	2801	1905	3259	3812
Species	75	83	76	71	72	72	76	86	81	96	79	87	91	90

Recaptures

Where do TCBO banded birds go? Many of our Saw-whet Owls and Sharp-shinned Hawks have stopped for visits at Hawk Ridge in Duluth and Whitefish Point,

Michigan. A Tennessee Warbler has the distinction of the most distant encounter: in Panama. See Table 3.

Table 3. Thunder Cape recaptures.

Band #	When banded at TCBO	Species	When recovered	Where recovered
0972-38379	September 29, 2007	BLJA	October 22, 2007	Two Harbours, Minnesota
2330-28363	Apr. 25 2007	BRCR	Apr. 20 2007	McHenry, Illinois
0967-13403	Oct. 2 2007	CACG	Dec. 2007	Katy, Texas
8051-98299	June 10, 2006	GTTO	January 2, 2007	Mountain Lake, Minnesota
2530-24302	September 8, 2007	MYWA	April 30, 2008	Blacksburg, South Carolina
0924-46648	October 5, 2007	NSWO	April 27, 2008	Cedar Falls, Iowa
0924-46663	October 5, 2007	NSWO	October 13, 2007	Hawk Ridge, Duluth, Minnesota
0924-46716	October 5, 2007	NSWO	October 13, 2007	Stevens Point, Wisconsin
0924-46521	October 1, 2007	NSWO	April 19, 2008	Whitefish Point, Michigan
1343-69064	Oct. 17 2002	NSWO	Mar. 24 2007	Whitefish Point, Michigan
0924-46171	Oct. 4 2006	NSWO	May 19 2007	Whitefish Point, Michigan
1493-23488	August 28, 2007	SSHA	September 1, 2007	Hawk Ridge, Duluth, Minnesota
1493-23517	September 19, 2007	SSHA	September 24, 2007	Hawk Ridge, Duluth, Minnesota
1373-15953	Sept. 8 2003	SSHA	Apr. 24 2007	Whitefish Point, Michigan
1343-69755	Aug. 19 2005	SSHA	Apr. 29 2007	Whitefish Point, Michigan
2420-36099	Sept. 12 2005	TEWA	Oct. 28 2006	Chiriqui, Panama
2350-66035	Aug. 6 2004	YWAR	Jun.27 2007	Current River, Ontario



Eric Matheson with Pileated Woodpecker

DONATIONS NEEDED

We need donations for repairs to the cabin kitchen and sauna building. Make your cheque payable to Thunder Bay Field Naturalists and mark the donation for "Thunder Cape Bird Observatory". A charitable donations receipt valid for tax purposes will be provided for all donations.

GORDON AND ELIZABETH MCLAREN MEMORIAL HARE ISLAND NATURE RESERVE

Hare Island is a small island (4.5 acres) just west of Thunder Cape Bird Observatory in Lake Superior. The Thunder Bay Field Naturalists took possession of the island on February 20th, 2008. Most of the money to buy the island came from family and friends of Gordon and Elizabeth McLaren, after whom the reserve is named, and the rest came from TBFN Nature Reserves donations. Gordon McLaren was one of the original founding members of TBFN back in 1933. The couple were both active in the club for many years and were bird watchers, hikers and generally loved the outdoors.

Hare Island is clearly visible from the Thunder Cape Bird Observatory. This island was up for sale as a potential cottage location and there was some concern that the increased boat traffic and disturbance might have a negative impact on the bird monitoring conditions at Thunder Cape. In addition, the island has cave nesting Barn Swallows which the Observatory staff monitor every year and some nesting Herring Gulls and Yellow Warblers. The Thunder Bay Field Naturalists are fortunate to have been able to turn it into a nature reserve.



Hare Island

ABOUT THE CAPE



Thunder Cape Bird Observatory is a joint project of the Thunder Bay Field Naturalists, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources – Wildlife Assessment Program (OMNR - WAP), and Bird Studies Canada working in partnership with Sleeping Giant Provincial Park, and then Canadian Coast Guard. Core funding for the migration monitoring at Thunder Cape is provided by OMNR – WAP, to contribute to its assessment of bird population trends in Ontario.

Thunder Cape News is published twice yearly by the Thunder Cape Bird Observatory Committee (a subcommittee of the Thunder Bay Field Naturalists).

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