

# Thunder Cape News

Volume 17 (1)  
February 2010

by John Woodcock

## FALL SYNOPSIS

Fall migration monitoring began on August 1 and ran continuously until October 26. This was the third slowest (banding) season of 19 fall seasons at the Cape with only 3,383 birds banded of 91 species/forms, well below means of previous years of 5,183 and 95 respectively. There were only 3 days when over 100 birds were banded. The peak species date was Sept. 5 when 56 species were documented. The highest daily count occurred on Sept. 10, largely due to 1,373 observations of Cedar Waxwing.



American Pipit



Warm, summer weather prevailed in August with little rain until near the end of the month. Banding during the first half of the August was fairly busy with good numbers of warblers. For the remainder of the season the number of captures of almost all species was much lower than average.

Warm, dry weather continued through most of September switching, near the end of the month to colder and wetter weather than average.

## WATERFOWL

Three **Red-throated Loon** were observed on Aug. 12. An additional 30 birds were observed between Aug. 31 and Oct. 17. **Common Loon** were observed most days, with peak numbers (53) seen on Sept. 23. **Horned Grebe** were first observed on Aug. 13, with peak numbers (83) seen on Sept. 17 and the last on Oct. 24. **Red-necked Grebe** were observed most days, with peak numbers observed on Sept. 17 and the last observed on Oct. 24. Two **American White Pelican** were observed

on Sept. 25. **Double-crested Cormorant** were observed most days, with peak numbers (96) observed on Aug. 17, the numbers observed greatly declined after the first week of Sept. and the last of the season observed on Oct. 2. Highest numbers of **Canada Geese** were observed from Sept. 14 to 28. A few **American Wigeon** were observed between Sept. 3 and Oct. 10. **Mallard** were observed migrating from mid-September to mid-October. A few small flocks of **Blue-winged Teal** were seen between Aug. 31 and Oct. 16. Most of the **Greater Scaup** were observed migrating in late-September and early-October. Most of the **White-winged Scoter** this season were observed throughout October. A few **Black Scoter** and **Bufflehead** were observed in mid-October. **Common Merganser** and **Common Goldeneye** were observed almost daily throughout the migration monitoring period. Peak numbers of **Common Merganser** were seen on Oct. 14. Few **Red-breasted Merganser** were observed this season, peak numbers (29) were seen on Oct. 15.

## RAPTORS

**Turkey Vulture** were observed between Sept. 3 and Oct. 16, with peak numbers (42) seen on Sept. 29. Eleven **Osprey** were observed migrating between Sept. 3 and Sept. 24. **Bald Eagle** were observed most days. Highest numbers (28) were seen on Sept. 18. Peak numbers (145) of **Sharp-shinned Hawk** were observed on Sept. 5. The first of the season was observed on Aug. 3 and the first was banded Aug. 7. The last of the season was observed on October 23. Small numbers of **Broad-winged Hawk** were observed migrating between Aug. 15 and Sept. 30. Very few **Red-tailed Hawk** and **Rough-legged Hawk** were observed this season. Five **Golden Eagle** were observed

between Oct. 13 and Oct. 21. **American Kestrel** were regularly observed from late-August through mid-October with peak numbers (31) seen on Sept 4. The last of the season was seen on October 25. Small numbers of **Merlin** were observed most days. The last of the season was seen on October 27. Small numbers of **Peregrine Falcon** were also observed most days from Aug. 2 through October 14 when the last of the season was observed. The first **Northern Saw-whet Owl** of the regular season was banded on September 12; maximum numbers (71) were captured on the night of October 13. Above average numbers were banded this season.



Mike Jervois and Sharp-shinned Hawk

## WOODPECKERS

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** were rare this season with only 3 observed. Small numbers of **Downy Woodpecker** were observed in the latter half of August. They were common to abundant throughout Sept. and Oct. Peak numbers (166) were observed on Oct. 17. **Hairy Woodpecker** were absent in Aug., rare in Sept. but were common throughout Oct. Peak numbers were seen on Oct. 13. The first **Black-backed Woodpecker** of the season was observed on Sept. 8. Only 6 were observed in September but they were common between Oct. 9 and Oct. 27. Peak numbers

(23) were seen on Oct. 14. Very few **Yellow-shafted Flicker** were observed in Aug. and Sept. Only 33 were documented in Oct. **Pileated Woodpecker** were regularly observed in Sept. and Oct. Above average numbers were banded this season.



**White-winged Crossbill**

#### **PASSERINES**

Thirteen **Olive-sided Flycatcher** were documented between Aug. 14 and Sept. 21. **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** were observed sporadically during August, none were seen in Sept. but one was banded on Oct. 2. Most of the **Trail's Flycatcher** were observed between Aug. 11 and Aug. 26. The last of the season was banded September 13. **Least Flycatchers** were observed only between Aug. 11 and Sept. 12. Below average numbers of *Empidonax* flycatchers were banded. The first **Eastern Kingbird** of the season was observed on Aug. 19 and the last was observed on Oct. 24. Small numbers of **Red-eyed Vireo** were observed between Aug. 2 and Oct. 22. Below average numbers were banded. No **Gray Jay** were observed this season. **Blue Jay** were uncommon until early September after which they were common until late-October. Peak numbers were observed on Sept. 3, 4 and 5 when 378, 336 and 338 were observed respectively. Slightly fewer than average were banded.

The few **American Crow** observed daily throughout August were likely local breeders and their offspring. Peak migration was seen at the end of Sept. and early Oct. **Common Raven** were common most days throughout the count period. **Horned Lark** were absent until Sept. 24, but seen regularly thereafter until Oct. 13. Peak numbers (26) were seen on Oct. 11. Below average numbers were banded this season. **Black-capped Chickadee** were uncommon until mid-Sept. but observed most days thereafter until the end of the season. Peak numbers (117) were observed on Oct. 14. Well below average numbers were banded. No **Boreal Chickadee** were observed this season. **Red-breasted Nuthatch** were common throughout the count period with highest numbers seen in Oct. Slightly below average numbers were banded. **Brown Creeper** were uncommon until mid-Oct. Above average numbers were banded. **Winter Wren** were scarce until Oct. when they were recorded most days. Above average numbers were banded. **Golden-crowned Kinglet** were uncommon until mid-September. Peak numbers (33) were seen on Oct. 15. Below average numbers were banded. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** were almost totally absent until mid-Oct. Below average numbers were banded. **Eastern Bluebird** were almost totally absent this year with only 3 observed, all during the second week of Oct. Small numbers of **Gray-cheeked Thrush** were banded during mid-Sept. **Swainson's Thrush** were seen regularly in August and September, peak numbers (26) were observed on Sept. 12 and the last of the season was observed on Oct. 6. Average numbers were banded. **Hermit Thrush** were observed sporadically between Aug. 3 and Sept. 20. Average numbers were banded. **American Robin** were scarce throughout the season. Migratory flocks



were observed on only 4 days, all during mid-Oct. The first **American Pipit** of the season was observed on Sept. 14 and the last on Oct. 26. They were fairly common throughout this period and above average numbers were banded. No **Bohemian Waxwings** were observed this season. **Cedar Waxwings** were common to abundant most days with peak numbers observed the second week of Sept. The last of the season was seen on Oct. 25. Below average numbers were banded.

## WARBLERS

**Tennessee Warbler** were sporadically observed in Aug. with peak numbers (76) occurring on Aug. 24. Small numbers were observed the first week of Sept. with very few encountered thereafter. The last was observed on Oct. 4. Below average numbers were banded. There were scattered observations of **Orange-crowned Warbler** from late Sept. to the last on Oct. 27. Below average numbers were banded. **Nashville Warbler** were common from early-Aug. to mid-Oct., with peak numbers (101) observed on Aug. 7 and the last observed on Oct. 23. Average numbers were banded. A few **Cape May Warbler** were sporadically observed during Aug. and Sept., with the last observation on Oct. 1. Well below average numbers were banded. **Yellow Warbler** were scarce the entire season. The last was observed on Sept. 30. Below average numbers were banded. **Black-throated Blue Warbler** were occasionally encountered in late-Aug., with a few observations in early-Sept. **Myrtle Warbler** were fairly common throughout the season. Peak numbers (140) were observed on Sept. 22. The last of the season was observed on Oct. 26. Slightly below average numbers were banded. **Magnolia Warbler** were sporadically common most days in Aug. and Sept.,

with peak numbers (25) observed on Aug. 23 and the last observed on Sept. 22. Below average numbers were banded.

**Chestnut-sided Warbler** observations were sporadic and scarce with the last seen on Sept. 21. **Bay-breasted Warbler** were almost totally absent this season with only 4 observations made. Well below average numbers were banded. The last was observed on Sept. 3.



**Oregon Junco**

Almost all the **Blackpoll Warbler** were observed during Sept. Peak numbers (29) were observed on Sept. 10 and the last of the season was observed on Oct. 11. Below average numbers were banded. **Black and White Warbler** were fairly common in Aug. but were scarce in Sept. Peak numbers (28) were observed on Aug. 24 and the last of the season was seen on Sept. 17. Slightly below average numbers were banded. Most of the **Blackburnian Warbler** this season were encountered in Aug., with the last of the season was observed on Sept. 8. Below average numbers were banded. **Black-throated Green Warbler** were common during the first half of Aug. with peak numbers (36) seen on Aug. 7. A few birds were seen sporadically throughout Sept. with the last observation on Sept. 18. Average numbers were banded this fall. **Western Palm Warbler** were absent until the end of

August and were then common until mid-Oct. with the last of the season observed on Oct. 26. Peak numbers (130) were seen on Sept. 22. Below average numbers were banded this fall. Small numbers of **Ovenbird** were encountered irregularly from early-Aug. to mid-Sept. with the last of the season observed on Sept. 29. Slightly below average numbers were banded. **Northern Waterthrush** were encountered irregularly throughout Aug. but were regularly observed during the first 2 weeks of Sept. Peak numbers (32) were seen on Aug. 19 and the last of the season was observed on Sept. 22. Below average numbers were banded. **Mourning Warbler** were scarce throughout the season, well below average numbers were banded. Small numbers of **Common Yellowthroat** were observed only in Sept. Below average numbers were banded. **Wilson's Warbler** observations were restricted to the period between mid-Aug. to mid-Sept. Below average numbers were banded. **Canada Warbler** were observed regularly throughout Aug. and the last was observed on Sept. 6. Above average numbers were banded. **American Redstart** were common from early-Aug. to mid-Sept. with peak numbers (70) seen on Aug. 24 and the last of the season observed on Oct. 13. Below average numbers were banded.

## **SPARROWS**

**Chipping Sparrow** were common most days in August but were scarce thereafter. Peak numbers (147) were observed on Aug. 19 and the last of the season was observed on Oct. 26. Above average numbers were banded. **Savannah Sparrow** were common from early-Sept. to late-October, with peak numbers (25) observed on Oct. 17 and the last of the season observed on Oct. 27. Below average numbers were banded. **Song**

**Sparrow** were most common throughout August, sporadically encountered through most of Sept. with small numbers encountered most days in Oct. The last observation was on Oct. 25. Below average numbers were banded. Small numbers of **Lincoln's Sparrow** were observed between Sept. 5 and Oct. 17. Below average numbers were banded. **Swamp Sparrow** were scarce throughout the season with only 1 or, at most 2, encountered on scattered days between Aug. 7 and Oct. 20. Well below average numbers were banded. Small numbers of **White-throated Sparrow** were observed most days throughout the season. The last of the season was seen on Oct. 22. Slightly below average numbers were banded. Small numbers of **Slate-colored Junco** were encountered in Aug., Sept. and early Oct. Small flocks were seen most days during the latter half of Oct. Well below average numbers were banded. Small numbers of **White-crowned Sparrow** were encountered between Sept. 23 and Oct. 8. Well below average numbers were banded.

## **Other PASSERINES**

**Lapland Longspur** were first observed on Sept. 28, peak numbers (12) were seen on Oct. 4, and the last was observed on Oct. 27. Well below average numbers were banded. The first **Snow Bunting** of the season was observed on Oct. 22, peak numbers (148) were seen on Oct. 26. Average numbers were banded. Small numbers of **Red-winged Blackbird** were encountered regularly throughout Aug. and mid-Sept. and the last was observed on Oct. 17. Above average numbers were banded. **Common Grackle**, first observed on Aug. 26, were common throughout the remainder of the season. Peak numbers (144) were seen on Sept. 15. Slightly above average numbers were banded.

**Rusty Blackbird** were encountered occasionally during Sept. and on most days in Oct. with peak numbers (121) seen on Oct. 12. Very few **Pine Siskin** were observed throughout the entire count period. Small numbers of **American Goldfinch** were seen in Aug., thereafter they were seen fairly commonly passing over most days, with peak numbers (99) seen on Sept. 22. Below average numbers were banded.



**Snow Bunting**

### FALL HIGHLIGHTS

No new species were banded this fall. Highest totals banded at the Cape in the fall:

Merlin (3)  
Olive-sided Flycatcher (3)  
Brown-headed Cowbird (2)

Red-winged Blackbird (13)

### Other Highlights

Red-throated Loon – 33 between Aug. 12 and Oct. 17

American Bittern – Aug. 3

Redhead – 18 Oct. 8 and 2 on Oct. 11

Canvasback –Sept. 25

Harlequin Duck –Sept. 27

Sandhill Crane – 6 on Sept. 12 and 33 on Sept. 29

Black-bellied Plover –Oct. 3

Whimbrel – 2 on Aug. 21

American Woodcock –Oct. 26

Caspian Tern –Aug. 20 and 30

Parasitic Jaeger –Aug. 10 and Sept. 27

American White Pelican – 2 on Sept. 25

Cooper's Hawk – 7 between Aug. 30 and Sept. 7

Ruby-throated Hummingbird – the last of the season on Sept. 12

Northern Hawk Owl –Sept. 18 and Oct. 1

Long-eared Owl –banded on Oct. 23

Black-billed Cuckoo – banded on Sept. 5

Yellow-billed Cuckoo –Aug. 2 and 13

White-breasted Nuthatch –banded Oct. 21

House Wren –Oct. 12

Black-billed Magpie –Oct. 1

Western Kingbird –Sept. 15

Gray Catbird –banded on Sept. 7

Bobolink – Sept. 23

Oregon Junco –banded on Oct. 19

**Table 1. Fall totals of individuals and species/forms banded (1993-2009), mean of previous 18 years.**

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Mean
individuals	9185	3607	4879	2482	4063	2322	6844	4502	7124	5333	6817	4921	7819	3521	3383	5381
Species	101	85	92	89	101	89	93	92	101	92	97	94	112	100	91	95

**Table 2. The 20 most abundant birds banded in the fall 2009, with comparative totals from previous years.**

Rank 2009	Species (overall fall ranking 1991 –2008)	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
1	Northern Saw-whet Owl (3)	449	227	481	422	360	137	573	413	285
2	Nashville Warbler (8)	205	194	592	195	792	189	171	96	75
3	Myrtle Warbler (5)	185	181	371	258	466	184	343	161	81
4	Brown Creeper (15)	149	176	134	192	156	119	129	144	126
5	Swainson's Thrush (11)	148	73	363	97	153	116	273	60	61
6	Chipping Sparrow (14)	146	149	245	266	190	86	74	127	60
7	Downy Woodpecker (17)	141	31	100	41	14	63	150	114	59
8	American Redstart (6)	125	138	261	181	149	91	253	217	245
9	Golden-crowned Kinglet (10)	108	260	92	587	213	485	117	383	198
10	Sharp-shinned Hawk (7)	103	127	119	60	126	94	203	119	150
11	Western Palm Warbler (4)	100	215	388	218	304	133	380	195	168
12	Savannah Sparrow (12)	99	127	268	208	269	102	204	192	187
13	Red-breasted Nuthatch (13)	95	84	137	182	47	170	143	13	44
14	Tennessee Warbler (9)	85	51	215	164	625	148	397	199	52
15	Slate-colored Junco (2)	66	139	403	47	515	886	487	138	762
16	Black-capped Chickadee (1)	63	116	483	203	70	545	1143	106	2602
17	Black-throated Green Warbler (22)	62	52	89	26	109	59	68	61	77
18a	Snow Bunting (29)	53	3	21	100	6	16	164	174	33
18b	Black and White Warbler (25)	53	64	140	76	84	45	78	69	35
18c	Magnolia Warbler (17)	53	79	123	92	103	64	82	68	94

### STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

John Woodcock returned to Thunder Cape as Program Coordinator for spring and fall migration monitoring. John & Maureen are once again in Costa Rica this winter 'monitoring the survivorship of migratory songbirds' in Collaboration with The Institute for Bird Populations (<http://www.birpop.org/MoSI/MoSI.htm>). You can find pictures, stories & reports of their work in Costa Rica on Facebook under Save Our Songbirds.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who contributed a total of 340 volunteer days. Our volunteers came from Australia, Quebec, The Netherlands, Thorndale, Ont., & Thunder Bay

1 month or more: Laura de Senneville, Maureen Woodcock, Meghan Aylward, Silvan Laan & Stacey Carnochan  
2 to 4 weeks: Mike Jervois  
1 to 13 days: Brendan Boyd & Hannah Woodcock

### FACILITIES UPDATE AND MISCELLANEOUS WORK

Vegetation was trimmed as appropriate to maintain early succession 'appearing' habitat. The chicken wire on one wall of heligoland trap 2 was replaced. The floor and lower walls of the sauna were rebuilt with the help of Walter & Janet Kuch and Dale Shippham. Small sinks were installed in the 2 volunteer bedrooms. A campsite close to TCBO was developed along with an outhouse.



**Fall 2009 crew: Laura DeSenneville Silvan Laan John Woodcock and Stacey Carnochan**

#### A WORD OF THANKS

Al Comeau and the Staff of Sleeping Giant Park, Mel Aylward, Esther and Fred Paasolainen, Allan & Sharon Gilbert, Walter & Janet Kuch, Dale Shippam. To all these generous people, our thanks for helping with TCBO programs.

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.

#### DONORS

We thank the following donors:  
Rachel Bryan, Rob Foster, Janet Green Ben Harste and Anne Brook, Carol Hrycyszyn, David Hussell, Pamela Johnson, Brian Moore, Annette Van Niejenhuis.

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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#### ABOUT THE CAPE



Thunder Cape Bird Observatory (<http://www.tbfn.org/tcbotbfn.htm>) is a joint project of the Thunder Bay Field Naturalists, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources – Wildlife Assessment Program (OMNR - WAP), and Bird Studies Canada

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