

Thunder Cape News

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by John Woodcock

SPRING SYNOPSIS

Thunder Cape Bird Observatory's 20th season of spring migration monitoring began May 1 and ran continuously until June 11. The 2011 spring banding season was a little slower than average with respect to the number of birds banded (2,166) but was exceptional with the number of species banded (96) equalling the previous high encountered in 2004. Mean values for the previous 19 years were 2,585 banded of 79 species. The most abundant species banded was Chipping Sparrow with 260 banded, far below the previous 19-year mean of 422.

We banded an average of 46 birds per day throughout the migration monitoring period. There were 4 days when over 100 birds were banded. Above average numbers of Sharp-shinned Hawk, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Blue Jay and Cedar Waxwing were banded. Below average numbers of Nashville Warbler and Chipping Sparrow were banded. Two species of bird were banded this season that had not been banded



previously at Thunder Cape in the spring: American Pipit and Yellow-breasted Chat. Five species were banded for only the second time at TCBO in the spring: Sora, Killdeer, Blue Grosbeak, Brewer's Blackbird and Orchard Oriole.



Field Sparrow

Fair weather prevailed throughout most of the spring with perhaps a little more precipitation than last year. There were 9 days with rain, 2 days with snow, and 7 foggy days. The peak species date was May 31, when 63 species were documented. The highest ET occurred on

June 3, attributable to 5,500 Cedar Waxwing observed that day.

Five volunteers contributed 109 volunteer days.



Chris Sukha bands a Yellow-breasted Chat

WATERFOWL

The number of waterfowl observed this season was a little higher than what was experienced last year. This may be attributable to a later spring with inland lakes becoming ice-free later than last year.

Only 21 **Red-throated Loon** were observed this season, much lower than usual with a maximum of 4 observed on any given day. The last of the season was observed on June 7. **Common Loon** were observed daily, on average 9 per day (same as last year), with highest numbers (46) observed on May 2. **Horned Grebe** were observed on 7 days in early May. The last was observed on May 11. A total

of 156 **Red-necked Grebe** were observed this season, the last on May 27. This total is considerably higher than last year when they may have moved through earlier in the season. An average of 19 **Double-crested Cormorant** were observed daily throughout the migration monitoring period, down from 38/day last year. Migrating flocks of **Canada Geese** were observed only between May 29 and June 9, likely non-breeders looking for quiet locations in which to moult. Over 1,000 were observed on June 2. Small numbers of **Greater Scaup** were observed the first week of May, with the maximum of 209 observed on May 1. A few **White-winged Scoters** were observed at irregular intervals throughout mid-May and early June. Small numbers of **Long-tailed Ducks** were observed most days in the first 3 weeks of May with the last of the season observed on May 27 (10 days later than last year). A few **Bufflehead, Wigeon, Mallard & Teal** were observed migrating the first week of May. Small numbers of **Common Goldeneye** were also seen sporadically throughout May. An average of 7 **Common Merganser** (same as last year) and 15 **Red-breasted Merganser** (down from last year) were observed daily throughout the migration monitoring period. Peak numbers were observed on May 18 and May 28 respectively. Only 2 **Great Blue Heron** and 26 **Turkey Vulture** were observed this season, both totals considerable lower than last year.

RAPTORS

Bald Eagle were observed most days, many of the observations were likely of the birds nesting on nearby Hare Island (2.5km NW of TCBO). Small numbers of **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were observed between May 6 and May 25; 18 were banded this season, double last year's total.

The last of the season was observed on June 8, and peak numbers (16) were seen on May 12. Very few **Broad-winged Hawk** (9) were observed this season. Only 3 **American Kestrel** were seen this season. A pair of **Merlin** was present throughout the season, likely local breeders. The few **Peregrine Falcon** observed were also likely local territorial birds.

The first **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** of the season was observed on May 15, the same date as last year.

WOODPECKERS

Migrating **Yellow-shafted Flicker** were observed most days during the first 2 weeks of May. Above average numbers (26) were banded this season. **Pileated Woodpecker** were observed most days with a six-day absence in mid-May. A few **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** were observed the first week of May. Typical of the spring, very few other woodpeckers were observed or banded, though a record number (3) of **Red-bellied Woodpecker** were observed.

PASSERINES

The first **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** of the season was banded on May 23. Average numbers (10) were banded. The first **Trail's Flycatcher** was also banded on May 23. Above average numbers (27) were banded. The first **Least Flycatcher** of the season was banded on May 22. Slightly above average numbers (15) were banded.

The first **Red-eyed Vireo** of the season were banded and observed on May 22. Average numbers (21) were banded this season. The first **Blue-headed Vireo** of the season was banded on May 6 and the

first **Philadelphia Vireo** was observed on May 29. Average numbers were banded.

Above average numbers (232) of **Blue Jay** were banded this season. The first birds of the season were observed on May 16, the same date as last year. Peak numbers were observed June 2 when 277 were observed. The first **Tree Swallow** of the season was observed on May 2, also the day when peak numbers (26) were observed.



Calvin Knorr admires a Killdeer

Black-capped Chickadee were again scarce this spring; only 1 was banded. Average numbers (14) of **Red-breasted Nuthatch** were banded this season. Above average numbers (22) of **Brown Creeper** were banded this season, most of them encountered in the first half of May. Average numbers of **Ruby-crowned** and **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were banded. The last **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** of the season was observed on May 24. **Eastern Bluebird** were regularly observed between May 23 and the end of the season. Record high numbers (14) were banded. Above average numbers (13) of **Hermit Thrush** were banded this season, the first on April 27 and the last on June 9. The first **Swainson's Thrush** of the season

was banded on May 17. Above average numbers (49) were banded this season. Average numbers of **Veery** were banded this season, the first on May 20. **Cedar Waxwing** numbers were much higher than in the previous 2 years. Migrating flocks were present continuously after May 27. Peak numbers (5,577) were observed on June 3. Well above average numbers (105) were banded.

Very few **Scarlet Tanager** were observed this season. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** were commonly present from May 21 to June 5, peak numbers (8) were seen on May 24. Below average numbers (13) were banded. Slightly above average numbers (10) of **Indigo Bunting** were banded this season. The first birds were observed on May 31, about 2 weeks later than last year.



Killdeer

WARBLERS

The first **Orange-crowned Warbler** of the season was observed on May 21, about 3 weeks later than last year. The last was observed on May 24. Below average numbers (4) were banded. The first **Tennessee Warbler** was observed on May 14. Well below average numbers (8) were banded. The first **Nashville Warbler** of the season was banded on May 8. Banding

totals (30) were well below average. The first **Northern Parula** of the season was observed on May 5 and the last on June 11. Four were banded. The first **Yellow Warbler** of the season was observed on May 9 and the last on June 9. Banding totals (18) were a little higher than average. The first **Chestnut-sided Warbler** of the season was observed and banded on May 22 and the last was banded on June 6. Banding totals were about 60% lower than average. The first **Magnolia Warbler** of the season was banded on May 13; the next bird of this species was not encountered until May 19. Average numbers (62) were banded. The first **Cape May Warbler** of the season was also banded on May 13, well below average numbers were banded. There was a 5-day hiatus before the next Cape May was encountered. The first **Black-throated Blue Warbler** of the season was banded on May 17 and the last on June 6. Average numbers were banded. **Myrtle Warblers** were most abundant during the first 10 days of May with peak numbers observed and banded (46) on May 9. Below average numbers (143) were banded this season. The first **Black-throated Green Warbler** of the season were observed on May 2 and the first was banded May 8. Peak numbers were observed at the end of May. Above average numbers were banded. The first **Blackburnian Warbler** of the season was banded on May 9 and the last on June 11. Banding totals were lower than average. The first **Western Palm Warbler** were observed on May 4. The last of the season was observed on May 29. Average numbers were banded. The first **Bay-breasted Warbler** of the season was banded on May 22 and the last on May 31. Below average numbers were banded. The first **Blackpoll Warbler** of the season was banded on May 23 and the last on May 31. Average numbers were banded. The first

Black and White Warbler of the season was observed on May 5 and the last on June 10. Slightly below average numbers were banded. The first **American Redstart** of the season were banded on May 19. Peak numbers (71) were seen on May 31. Below average numbers were banded. The first **Ovenbird** of the season was banded May 9. Below average numbers were banded.



Wilson's Warbler

The first **Northern Waterthrush** was banded on May 8 and the last of the season was banded on June 2. Slightly above average numbers were banded this season. The first **Common Yellowthroat** of the season was banded on May 23 and the last was observed on June 10. Above average numbers were banded. The first **Wilson's Warbler** of the season was banded on May 22 and the last on June 6. Average numbers were banded this season. The first **Canada Warbler** of the season was observed on May 22 and the last on June 7. Slightly above average numbers were banded.

SPARROWS

American Tree Sparrow were observed between April 27 and May 9. Exceptionally high numbers were banded (32). **Chipping Sparrow** were first observed and banded on May 5 (about a

week later than last year). Peak numbers were banded (44) on May 9. Well below average numbers were banded. The first **Clay-colored Sparrow** of the season was observed on May 6 and the last was banded on June 5 (within a day of the same dates last year). Slightly below average numbers were banded. The first **Savannah Sparrow** of the season was banded on April 30 and the last on June 6. Above average numbers were banded this spring. **Song Sparrows** were present at the Cape when we arrived on April 25 and territorial, singing males were present to the end of the season. Above average numbers were banded (32). **Lincoln's Sparrow** were first banded and observed on May 9 (earlier than last year). Above average numbers were banded (16) this season. **Swamp Sparrow** first appeared on May 1. Average numbers were banded. The first **White-throated Sparrow** of the season was banded on May 2. Peak numbers were banded (8) on May 8. Average numbers were banded. The first **Eastern White-crowned Sparrow** of the season was banded on May 8 and the last on May 27. Above average numbers were banded. The first **Gambell's White-crowned Sparrow** of the season was banded on May 3 and the last on May 19. Above average numbers were banded. **Slate-colored Juncos** were first observed on April 26 and the last on May 9. Peak numbers (212) were observed on April 27. Average numbers (106) were banded.

Other PASSERINES

Red-winged Blackbird and **Common Grackle** were present throughout the migration monitoring period with peak numbers observed during the first 2 weeks of May. Average numbers were banded this season. Peak numbers **Brown-headed Cowbird** were observed during the first week of May. The first **Baltimore Oriole**

of the season was observed on May 21 (a week later than last year) and the last on May June 7.

The first **Purple Finch** of the season were observed on April 27 and the last on May 29. Well above average numbers (80) were banded. **Pine Siskin** were present throughout the season. Higher numbers were observed (101) on May 10 and on June 3 (103). **American Goldfinch** were first observed on May 19 (much later than last year). Slightly above average numbers were banded (37).



Bobolink

SPRING HIGHLIGHTS

First time ever banded at the Cape in the spring:

American Pipit (2) May 23

Yellow-breasted Chat (1) June 4

Unusual Species banded:

Sora (1) May 8

Killdeer (1) May 5

Red-bellied Woodpecker (1) May 10

Northern Mockingbird (2) June 5,8

Field Sparrow (1) May 9

Blue Grosbeak (1) June 1

Brewer's Blackbird (1) May 23

Orchard Oriole (1) May 31

Common Redpoll (5) April 27 & 28: this was only the fourth spring that redpolls have been captured

Highest totals ever banded at the Cape in the spring:

Eastern Bluebird (14) the previous high was 7 occurring in 2006 & 2007

Other Highlights (* indicates banded):

25 Apr Eastern Phoebe *

25 Apr Vesper Sparrow*

28-29 Apr Oregon Junco (2) *

- 30 Apr Brown Thrasher*
- 1-2 May Hooded Merganser (7)
- 1-2 May Northern Shoveler (8)
- 2-May Gadwall (2)
- 8,11 May White-breasted Nuthatch 3
- 9 May Pine Warbler*
- 15 May Ruby-throated Hummingbird
(same arrival date as last year)
- 19 May Lark Bunting
- 23 May Caspian Tern (2)
- 24 May Connecticut Warbler
- 29 May Red-bellied Woodpecker
- 29 May Bobolink*
- 29 May Western Kingbird
- 5 June Sedge Wren
- 8 June Caspian Tern (2)
- 4-10 June Eastern Wood Pewee (7)

Table 1. Spring totals of individuals and species/forms banded (1997-2011), mean of 1992 through 2010.

Year	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	Means
Individuals	2166	1171	9016	3812	3259	1905	2801	3761	1240	4486	1783	947	1118	658	1042	2642
Species	96	76	91	90	91	87	79	96	81	86	76	72	72	71	76	79

Table 2. The 20 most abundant birds banded in spring 2011, with comparative totals from previous years.

Rank 2011	Species (overall spring ranking 1992 –2010)	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
1	Chipping Sparrow (2)	260	191	761	770	561	299	473	698	159	436	306
2	Blue Jay (4)	232	85	315	266	395	188	105	233	36	290	35
3	Myrtle Warbler (3)	143	55	706	436	144	205	184	249	62	255	78
4	Slate-colored Junco (5)	106	23	8	63	2	13	14	109	105	1172	11
5	Cedar Waxwing (17)	105	12	61	134	210	12	9	24	4	9	64
6	American Redstart (7)	91	77	79	114	133	92	21	72	104	103	80
7	Purple Finch (15)	80	0	108	114	4	27	69	27	6	40	76
8	Pine Siskin (1)	76	13	4777	109	27	7	1042	30	11	138	580
9	Western Palm Warbler (13)	64	18	144	93	65	104	58	133	31	50	29
10	Magnolia Warbler (11)	62	46	91	54	118	42	28	76	37	73	26
11b	White-throated Sparrow (12)	49	59	33	91	77	75	80	85	47	142	16
11a	Swainson's Thrush (20)	49	35	36	33	44	51	26	37	36	34	36
12	Savannah Sparrow (14)	45	14	50	98	63	33	56	89	37	43	26
13	American Goldfinch (16)	37	14	82	129	32	69	52	39	18	48	25
14	Ruby-crowned Kinglet (22)	35	17	28	39	58	54	16	62	55	17	6
15b	Song Sparrow (23)	32	20	23	27	36	19	27	31	33	40	14
15a	American Tree Sparrow (56)	32	3	2	6	0	0	1	13	5	33	1
16	Black-throated Green Warbler (24)	31	32	31	23	30	27	13	22	38	39	26
17	Nashville Warbler (6)	30	55	426	140	167	39	75	161	20	129	16
18	Canada Warbler (25)	28	18	36	37	40	19	10	23	17	17	15



Pat Burri and Hannah Woodcock on watch.



Rarities of Thunder Cape by Chris Sukha

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

John Woodcock has returned to Thunder Cape for his 10th year as Program Coordinator for spring and fall migration monitoring.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who contributed a total of 109 volunteer days to assist running programs this season:

- 1 month or more: Calvin Knorr, Patricia Burri
- 2 to 4 weeks: Mike Ward, Christopher Sukha
- 1 to 13 days: Hannah Woodcock

Our volunteers came from and Thunder Bay, North Bay & Switzerland

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources provided funding through a Community Fish and Wildlife Involvement Program grant and a Species at Risk Stewardship Fund grant.

A WORD OF THANKS

We thank Al Comeau and the Staff of Sleeping Giant Park, the TCBO Committee, Brian Moore, Maureen Woodcock, Allan and Sharon Gilbert for their support. To all these generous people, our thanks for donations and for helping with TCBO programs.

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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