



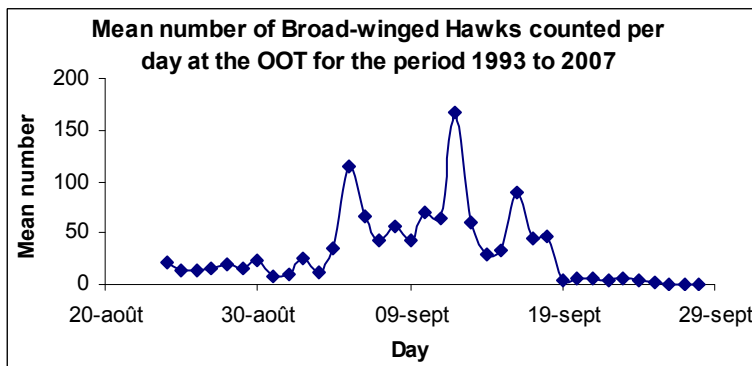
A rendezvous with Broad-winged Hawks

On the 9 September, a trough of low pressure passed over eastern Québec and by 10 a.m. the rain had set in over Tadoussac. The team from the *Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac* (OOT) took advantage of the bad weather and started working on the data collected since 24 August. A quick glance at the weather forecast set hopes high for the following day: the sky was supposed to clear overnight and the conditions looked as though they were going to be ideal for the passage of migrating raptors. The following morning, the OOT's official counters were out at the field station by 7 a.m. It was a chilly 9 °C, with scattered clouds and a 20 km/h northwesterly wind; the timing and the conditions were right for an important passage of Broad-winged Hawk.



A Broad-winged Hawk passes over the field station
© Samuel Denault

The Broad-winged Hawk nests primarily in deciduous and mixed forest, and generally starts its migration south in mid-August. Although this is not one of the OOT's high priority species, when the weather conditions are favourable, large number pass over the field station. In the Tadoussac Region, the most favourable period for observing good numbers of Broad-winged Hawks is between the 5 and 16 September (see graph below). Past data collected by the OOT show that the peak in numbers for this species occurs about a week earlier than the peak observed at Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania (between the 10 and 20 September). Migrating Broad-winged Hawks can group together to form vast migrating groups known as kettles. While kettles of several tens of thousands of individuals are sometimes seen in Texas, Mexico and Central America, in Tadoussac it is rare to see groups that exceed several tens of individuals.



That is the theory; the question was, were we going to observe kettle formation on the 10 September? The answer was a resounding yes; the show started at around 9 a.m., and between 10 and 11 a.m. alone, 236 Broad-winged Hawks were counted. These were joined by 111 Sharp-shinned Hawks. And the day was just beginning...

At 5 p.m., after an exhausting ten hours of observations, the team left the site. The total raptor count for the day was 1,793 individuals, the ninth highest in the history

of the OOT. The number included 869 Broad-winged Hawks and 122 Ospreys. The Broad-winged Hawks certainly made the rendezvous, and a total of 1,120 individuals have been counted since the start of the season. This number greatly exceeds the combined total for 2006 and 2007, where only 435 and 425 individuals were counted during the whole season, respectively.

Visual Counts Other than raptors, the official observers also noted the passage of several other species, particularly out in the St. Lawrence Estuary. For example, large groups of Laridae have been recorded, including a group of 6,500 Black-legged Kittiwakes on the 30 August. Two Sandhill Cranes were seen on the 31 August. With regards to passerines, after the large passage of White-winged Crossbills during the first week, the Dunes have become rather quiet. Only a few species have been observed and the numbers have generally been low, with the exception of the Cedar Waxwing (see table)

Banding Station The banding station began its activities on the 6 September. This rather drizzly day marked the start of the OOT's 13th Northern Saw-whet and Boreal Owls banding season. This year, the nocturnal program is in the capable hands of Mathieu Tremblay and Antonin Bénard. Once again, on Mondays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays up until the 13 October, the team of wardens from the *Parc National du Saguenay* will be presenting the interpretation activity *Laissez-vous charmer par les nyctales*. As in previous years, it is always possible to adopt one of the banded owls. This is a unique opportunity, which helps to ensure the perenity of this important long-term research program.

The 14 Boreal Owls banded between the 6 and 11 September, suggest that the four-year cyclic peak in abundance of this species will be respected.

The diurnal activities of the banding station started at daybreak on the 9 September. This year, Olivier Barden will be continuing the pilot study that the OOT established in 2007, which focuses on the species-specific capture and banding of a number of members of the Fringillidae, and several other typical boreal species. Last year, this program allowed the banding of 90 Rusty Blackbirds and over 200 Pine Grosbeaks. No birds have yet been caught; however, the number of migrating individuals has been quite low.

Priority non-raptor species for the OOT		
Species	Weeks 1 to 3 24 Aug. to 11 Sept.	Total 2008
White-winged Crossbill	2109	2109
Common Redpoll	0	0
Pine Siskin	71	71
Pine Grosbeak	0	0
Purple Finch	143	143
Evening Grosbeak	19	19
Cedar Waxwing	1983	1983
Bohemian Waxwing	0	0
American Three-toed	0	0
Woodpecker		
Black-backed	5	5
Woodpecker		
Black-capped	38	38
Chickadee		
Boreal Chickadee	10	10
Rusty Blackbird	32	32
Horned Lark	42	42
American Pipit	205	205
American Robin	66	66

Number of owls banded		
Species	Week 3 (starting the 6 sept.)	Total 2008
Northern Saw-whet Owl	9	9
Boreal Owl	14	14

Banders : Antonin Bénard and Mathieu Tremblay

On that rather quiet note, we wish you an enjoyable end to the summer and we hope to have the pleasure of seeing you in Tadoussac this autumn. Keep your eyes open and enjoy the migration!

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