**End of Season**

The spring 2015 of bird migration monitoring ended with a bang on June

10th at Cabot Head. More precisely, with thunder, lightning, intense

rain, and gale-force wind! At dawn, a strong and warm south wind was

blowing, precluding the nets to be open. There was just enough time to

squeeze the census in before the first drops of rain started to fall.

Then, it was pouring.

And so ended the spring season. After 53 days of consecutive

monitoring, a total of 153 species of birds were detected, the lowest

ever. On average, about 164 species are detected each spring, with the

highest total being 174 in 2002 and the previous lowest record of 154

in 2008. Despite the low total, there were a few days with high

diversity during the spring, like on May 17th, with 72 species, May

7th with 71, and May 15th with 68.

The banding total is, by far, the lowest ever for the spring, with

only 876 birds of 61 species banded. From 2002 to 2014, the spring

average is 1540 birds, with a high of 2622 birds banded in 2002 and a

low of 1161 birds in 2008. During the 2015 spring season, there were 9

days without any nets opened due to inclement weather, not an unusual

number for the season. All nets were up and running for the full 6

hours for more than half the spring monitoring period. For most of the

remaining time, only one or a few nets were left unfurled due to

strong wind or sometimes the days were cut short, again due to

inclement weather. Overall, coverage was good to excellent, so the low

numbers of banded birds can not be explained by less mist-net hours.

Weather always is a strong force in driving migration; I will look

into it more closely soon.

The 3 top species in terms of banding numbers are: American Redstart,

with 124 birds banded; Slate-coloured Junco, with 87; and Ruby-crowned

Kinglet, with 56. There were a total of 113 recaptures of 59

individuals of 18 species (some birds are recaptured more than once).

Again, American Redstarts are the most often recaptured, with a total

of 29 individuals, due mostly to a strong and abundant local

population.

I thoroughly enjoyed the spring season, despite low diversity and

numbers. Cabot Head is definitively a magic place, with an abundance

of wildlife and spectacular scenery. For example, recently, on an

afternoon hike, at the base of Boulder Bluff, in a small wet meadow, I

came across a family of cranes. Two adults were guiding two small,

russet-downy baby cranes in a foraging lesson. I observed one adult

catching something in its beak (a snail?) and lowering it to one

young. I couldn’t see exactly if it dropped it to the ground for the

young to pick up or transfer from beak to beak, but it was

definitively a way to show the young one what is good to eat! I was

elated to watch such a beautiful moment.

Now is the time to crunch some numbers and write the report, so stay

tune for more stats and comparisons with other years…

Stéphane