**Dawn Chorus**

Greeted sometimes by the last vociferations of the Eastern

Whip-poor-will, we open the nets now at 5am, in the softening hues of

dawn. The diurnal birds have then just started to stir, but, very

soon, the air is filled with songs. It is the magical moment of the

dawn chorus, when birds reaffirm their claim through songs after a

night of silence. An apparent cacophony soon engulfs us as we proceed

through the net lanes, with, mostly, American Redstarts singing and

counter-singing and counter-counter-singing! A new day has begun.

There have been quite a few interesting sightings and captures during

the last week. We are seeing now big flocks of Canada Geese heading

north for their moult migration. Blue Jays are also seen in impressive

numbers, sometimes up to one hundred; judged by the few captured,

these are mostly young birds. On June 3rd, 4 species of flycatchers

were banded: Eastern Wood-pewee, Yellow-bellied, Traill’s, and Least

Flycatchers; the latter was a bit of a surprise, as it is not such a

late migrant, but the other species are definitively still migrating

in early June. On that day, other noteworthy captures were: a

Lincoln’s Sparrow and a Northern Waterthrush.

On June 4th, we captured a White-throated Sparrow with an enlarged

cloaca, an indication of breeding readiness in a male. A very unusual

indication of the breeding status of some of the birds we captured was

the few dried grass stems in the mist net next to a female

Black-throated Green Warbler: the “poor thing” was carrying some nest

material as she hit the net and dropped it there! There also was a

Hermit Thrush captured on June 5th with a brood patch, that is, a part

of the belly where feathers are shed and blood irrigation is

increased, to better incubate eggs. This species migrates in late

April-early May, but is also a breeder on the Bruce Peninsula. On that

day, we also recaptured a Palm Warbler, which was originally banded on

May 23rd. Both dates are quite late for a usually early migrant. Just

as with the White-crowned Sparrows, stragglers are always possible,

birds in poor conditions to finish the last part of the journey in a

timely manner.

June 6th was cold! A mere 4 degrees Celsius at dawn, it warmed up to

only 8C at noon! With a northwest wind blowing from the Bay, not much

was moving: in 6 hours of banding, only 2 new birds were banded and 3

were recaptured! However, we observed 5 species of swallows flying

above the Gargantua (the shipwreck in Wingfield Basin): Tree, Bank,

Northern Rough-winged, Cliff, and Barn Swallows! And 3 Myrtle

(Yellow-rumped) Warblers were observed on census.

More seasonal temperatures returned on June 7th, with a south wind

quickly increasing and shifting to east, harbinger of rain to come. We

could certainly detect more activity and movement. Flycatchers were

moving through, with 5 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and 4 Traill’s

Flycatchers banded. We also banded a Black-billed Cuckoo, a rare

occurrence! Mesh size is usually too small to hold this bird for long,

so we were lucky that this one stayed in the net. Lots of Eastern

Bluebirds (at least, 16 birds) were seen in the Pine Barrens: it has

been a very good year for sighting of this exquisite bird. The star of

the show in the Pine Barrens, though, was a Northern Mockingbird! Over

the Bay, with waterfowl migration mostly behind us, it was a surprise

to observe a small flock of 7 Common Goldeneyes.

The long-awaited rain came in long grey sheets of water for most of

the afternoon of Sunday. The depression is now leaving us, with wind

gradually shifting from west to northwest. Following a period of rain,

it could be relatively quiet, especially when banks of fog roll in.

So, this morning of June 8th was more memorable for the changing

display of clouds and lights than for bird activity. The flotilla of

up to 29 Common Mergansers rafting up in Wingfield Basin provided some

entertainment.

Stéphane