



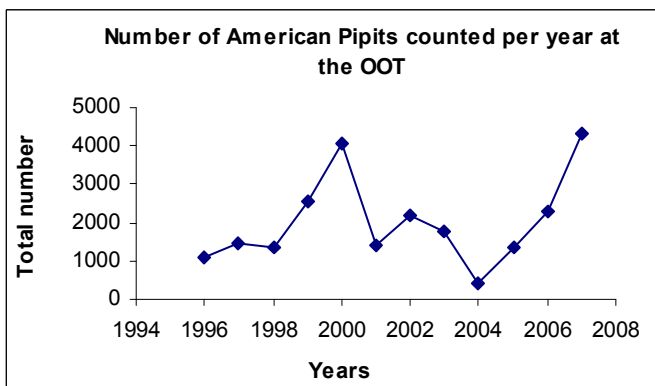
A closer look at American Pipits

Although the days are getting progressively cooler along the North Shore, this has not discouraged bird watchers from all over Québec from visiting the *Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac* (OOT). Their efforts have been rewarded with some spectacular aerial displays of migrating birds. Over the last few days, several flocks have made short stopovers on the Dunes; this has given the official counters, and other visitors to the Dunes, the occasion to admire the behaviour of one gregarious and particularly active species: the American Pipit. During its migration, this species stops to forage in open, sparsely vegetated habitat, and it can frequently be observed on dune systems, along rocky shorelines and around gravel pits. In the field, the constant tail bobbing and a repetitive movement of the head, help identify this relatively plain but elegant species.



Although less frequently observed in some of the more southern regions of Québec, the American Pipit is recorded in good numbers at the OOT. On average, more than 1,800 individuals of this species have been recorded each year since 1996 (see graph below), the year that passerines were first included in the visual counts. So far this fall, 1,068 American pipits have been counted. The OOT is actively seeking to learn more about this little-studied species, which nests in the tundra and on certain mountain summits in southern Quebec. We hope to be able to provide answers to questions concerning American Pipit productivity and the timing of the fall migration of juveniles and adults; however, this information cannot be obtained by visual counts alone.

Just as in 2007, the Banding Station has been supplying supplementary information about some of the species migrating through the study site. On the 13



September, the OOT started a species-specific banding program for the American Pipit, using a square arrangement of mist nets placed around a loudspeaker broadcasting calls of this species. The results to date have been very encouraging: of the 65 individuals caught and banded so far, 32 were juveniles, 29 adults and 4 were of unknown age. Last year was a record year for this species and it will be interesting to see whether the record will be broken this year.

Visual Counts The steady passage of raptors continues above the Dunes. Since the 24 August, 6,502 individuals have been recorded. Although this is slightly lower than the mean of 6,779 individuals recorded for the same period between 1993 and 2007, the 21 and 22 September were particularly good days, with 842 and 772 raptors being counted, respectively. So far this year, the Sharp-shinned Hawk has been the most abundant raptor species, accounting for 3,367 of the birds of prey observed. The species diversity for the season is continuing to increase. A notable addition over the last two weeks has been the Golden Eagle and three individuals have been recorded so far. The last two weeks have also been marked by good passages of Red-tailed Hawks (359 individuals).

Banding Station The nocturnal banding team is being kept well and truly on its toes this season. The important dispersion of Boreal Owls that our long-term dataset allowed us to predict for this year is in full swing. However, the number of birds that we have caught and banded is higher than expected: by the 25 September, 81 Boreal Owls had been banded. If this year's figure is compared with that of the record peak in 2004, it suggests that the number of birds dispersing from the boreal forest this year will be an even higher. In 2004, when a total of 231 Boreal Owls were banded, only 42 individuals had been banded at this point in the season – the figure for this year is 93% higher! For those of you who are interested, if this species exhibits the same migration phenology this year as it did in 2004, October should be a very exciting month and should provide some excellent opportunities to observe these magnificent birds.

Priority non-raptor species for the OOT		
Species	Weeks 4 and 5 12-25 Sept.	Total 2008
White-winged Crossbill	61	2170
Common Redpoll	0	0
Pine Siskin	1394	1465
Pine Grosbeak	0	0
Purple Finch	44	188
Evening Grosbeak	21	40
Cedar Waxwing	1138	3121
Bohemian Waxwing	2	2
American Three-toed Woodpecker	1	1
Black-backed Woodpecker	8	13
Black-capped Chickadee	61	99
Boreal Chickadee	355	365
Rusty Blackbird	102	134
Horned Lark	711	753
American Pipit	863	1068
American Robin	80	146

Official counters: Samuel Belleau and Samuel Denault

Number of owls banded		
Species	Week 4 and 5 (12-25 sept.)	Total 2008
Northern Saw-whet Owl	63	72
Boreal Owl	67	81

Banders : Antonin Bénard and Mathieu Tremblay

We hope to have the pleasure of seeing you in Tadoussac this fall.

Keep your eyes open and enjoy the migration!

Editorial team: Pascal Côté (author, pascalcote@explo-nature.qc.ca) and Andrew P. Coughlan (translator, English version).

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