



## Majestic raptors

Since the end of October, the intensity of human and avian activity at Tadoussac has considerably declined. As the village prepares for winter, visitors to the *Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac* (OOT) have been less numerous, and migrating raptors have also been scarce. In fact, since the 26<sup>th</sup> of October, the two official observers have only recorded 179 raptors. For the period from the 26<sup>th</sup> of October to the 14<sup>th</sup> of November, the highest daily total was 53 birds of prey. However, some of the birds seen provided spectacular displays as they passed above the field station. Many of the individuals in question were large raptors and 40% were either Bald Eagles (53 individuals) or Golden Eagles (18 individuals).

The number of migrating individuals of these two species seems to confirm an increase in the size of their populations on the Québec-Labrador peninsula. With regards to Bald Eagles, 170 birds have been observed since the start of the season, which makes 2009 the sixth year since 2000 that over 160 individuals have been counted. By comparison, between 1993 and 1999, no yearly total exceeded 150. At the moment, the percentage of young stands at 40%; this is slightly lower than the percentage noted over the last three years, which has fluctuated between 47 and 48%. Concerning Golden Eagles, 50 individuals have been observed so far, of which 62% have been juveniles. In all probability, the last ten days of visual counts this year will bring this number above the yearly mean for this species of 54 individuals.



*A Golden Eagle photographed on the 1st of November above the Dunes of Tadoussac* © Samuel Denault

Concerning other raptor species, the most exciting observation was made by Samuel Denault on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November, when he was lucky enough to record a Gyrfalcon flying through the field station at very low altitude. This was the first observation of this species during the monitoring period in two years. Since the start of the visual counts in 1993, only 10 Gyrfalcons have been counted, and three of these were observed in 2007.

### Passerines and aquatic species

During the last two weeks, good movements of boreal passerines have continued to be observed at the OOT. In total, 2,894 Bohemian Waxwings were counted, bringing the season's total to over 3,600 individuals. This is already the second highest yearly total after 2008, when 7,643 individuals were observed. Approximately 3,000 Pine Grosbeaks were also recorded over the last two weeks. Although this is a large number of birds, movement of this species have been relatively weak compared to certain other years. In fact, the yearly mean for Pine Grosbeaks at the OOT between 1996 and 2008 has been 6,208 individuals, and the record number, which was set in 1999, stands at 14,276 individuals.

Interestingly, since the end of October, the observers at the OOT have witnessed a northeastwardly movement of Common Redpolls. Almost all of the individuals recorded between the 26<sup>th</sup> of October and the 14<sup>th</sup> of November (over 3,000) were seen moving in this direction. The Common Redpoll's favourite food during winter is birch seed, and it is likely that the individuals observed were looking for zones with a good seed crop of white birch.

The end of October usually coincides with the arrival of several species that winter in the Saint Lawrence estuary. Among these is the Long-tailed Duck, and over the last couple of weeks the first large groups have been noted, including one comprising 1,500 individuals on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, 107 Iceland Gulls were also observed from the Dunes. With regards to rare species, a King Eider was present on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November.

#### Monitoring in the Godbout – Pointe-des-Monts area and a pelagic bird survey

The visual counts conducted mainly at Pointe-des-Monts ended on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November. This census allowed the confirmation of the fact that some migrating species, including certain raptors such as the Bald Eagle, seem to try to cross the estuary at this point. Good numbers of alcids were also counted over the last couple of weeks. For example, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 1,056 Razorbills were observed, accompanied by 12 Thick-billed Murres and nine Dovekies. The OOT has also been conducting a survey of pelagic birds in the Saint Lawrence estuary and the Gulf of Saint Lawrence for Environment Canada. This study was done by Olivier Barden between the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October and the 16<sup>th</sup> of November. Highlights of the survey include the observation of a good number of Dovekies offshore of the River Romaine on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November, the constant presence of Northern Fulmars, and the presence of a surprising number of Atlantic Puffins in the Gulf.

#### Banding Station

The 2009 diurnal banding program ended on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November. Of the program's target species, a total of 24 Evening Grosbeaks, 86 Bohemian Waxwings, 111 Pine Grosbeaks and 305 Pine Siskins were banded. The season's nocturnal banding program ended on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October. However, during the last week of activities owls were rather scarce, with only five Northern Saw-whet Owls and one Boreal Owl being banded.

Priority non-raptor species for the OOT		
Species	Weeks 10 to 11	
	26 <sup>th</sup> Oct. to 14 <sup>th</sup> Nov.	
		Total 2009
White-winged Crossbill	560	733
Common Redpoll	3 383	3 441
Pine Siskin	1 064	1 548
Pine Grosbeak	2 933	3 169
Purple Finch	276	804
Evening Grosbeak	419	565
Cedar Waxwing	11	2 084
Bohemian Waxwing	2 894	3 629
American Three-toed Woodpecker	7	41
Black-backed Woodpecker	22	204
Black-capped Chickadee	135	525
Boreal Chickadee	65	170
Rusty Blackbird	2	149
Horned Lark	0	979
American Pipit	2	2 099
American Robin	310	1 659

Number of owls banded		
Species	Weeks 10 to 11	
	26 <sup>th</sup> Oct. to 14 <sup>th</sup> Nov.	
		Total 2009
Northern Saw-whet Owl	5	88
Boreal Owl	1	10

Banders : Mathieu Tremblay and Geneviève Perreault

On that note, the team at the OOT wishes you some great late fall eagle watching.

Keep your eyes open and enjoy the migration!

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Our operations for the 2009 season are assured through the support provided by Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service and Science Horizons Youth Internship Program, the *Parc national du Saguenay*, the *ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune*, the Saguenay - St. Lawrence Marine Park, the *Fondation de la Faune du Québec*, Bird Protection Quebec, the *Centre de la conservation de la faune ailée*, *Municipalité de Tadoussac*, *CLD de la Haute-Côte-Nord*, Bird Study Canada's Baillie Birdathon, *Explos-Nature's Fonds de développement OOT* and the Friends of the OOT Fund.