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## Atlantic Flyway Review: Region II (North Central) Fall 2010 McGill Bird Observatory

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excitement (how different from passerine banding!) The owls were enjoyed by 46 visitors. Data from owl banding is not included in the fall banding report above. Questions about the effect of evening owl banding on the nearby morning passerine banding remain unresolved.

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McGill Bird Observatory (MBO) in Montreal is a full member of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network, and the only station in Quebec to conduct standardized spring and fall migration banding programs. MBO is operated by the Migration Research Foundation (MRF), a non-profit organization dedicated to the study of wildlife movements, especially as they relate to population monitoring and conservation.

In 2010, MBO operated its sixth full Fall Migration Monitoring Program, covering the usual 13-week period from 1 Aug through 30 Oct. A one-hour census trail was walked daily, and nets were open for five hours beginning at sunrise, except when limited by inclement weather; only four days of banding were completely lost to rain, snow, or wind, and the record total of 6,061 net hours reflected the generally good weather throughout the season. Typically, all 16 nets were operated daily, except for one set of four sometimes closed due to wind, and occasional closures of others due to unusually high capture rates. All nets are 12-m Spidertech passerine nets, on standard 3-m poles. Photos are taken of each net lane annually to monitor (and allow mitigation of) habitat changes over time. This fall, bander-in-charge duties were handled primarily by Simon Duval, with some help from Marcel Gahbauer, Gay Gruner, and Lance Laviolette.

This year's total of 6,808 birds banded was a record—more than double last year's total of 3,390 and well above the previous high of 5,101 set in 2008. The rate of 112 birds banded/100 net hours was also a new record high by a large margin. Repeats (884) and returns (44) were both above average but not record high this year.

To a large extent, this year's totals are due to an exceptional movement of Yellow-rumped Warblers, including 2,359 banded, out of over 6,000 individuals observed. This fits the six-year pattern we have observed at MBO, with far more of them banded in "even" years (average 1,538) compared to "odd" years (average 110), despite comparable effort across years. Of note, several AHY females and at least one AHY male were still replacing secondaries in early October, something we have not observed in previous years. Perhaps some pairs had an extra brood this summer, accounting not only for the late molt but also for the unusual abundance of HY birds?

Aside from Yellow-rumped Warblers, we had record high banding counts for 23 other species, including 11 more warblers, most notably American Redstart (149), Tennessee Warbler (114), Common Yellowthroat (100), Western Palm Warbler (62), Northern Waterthrush (53), Black-and-white Warbler (39), Canada Warbler (35), and Chestnut-sided Warbler (33). Among other species, the most significant records were Slate-colored Junco (509, 40% above last year's record count), and Black-capped Chickadee (440, nearly double the record of 222 set in our first full fall season). We also banded our first Pine Warbler ever, increasing our count of species banded to 106.

Our peak period spanned weeks 8-10 of our 13-week season, with over 1,000 birds banded in each of those three weeks, including a record high 1,279 in week 8 (19-25 Sep), and largely coinciding with the peak of Yellow-rumped Warbler migration. However, as reported in our weekly reports (archived at <http://www.migrationresearch.org/mbo/log.html>), we had record high counts in seven out of 13 weeks, reflecting that it was a great fall for a variety of species.

Overall, our top 10 species for fall 2010 included three sparrows and four warblers, plus Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Black-capped Chickadee, and American Robin. Half of these species have been consistently in our fall top 10 every year (Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Magnolia Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, and Song Sparrow). A cumulative list of all species banded at MBO is updated after every season at [www.migrationresearch.org/mbo/banded.html](http://www.migrationresearch.org/mbo/banded.html)

Our busiest day this fall was 25 Sep, with 315 birds banded, also a new record. Not surprisingly, Yellow-rumped Warblers dominated with 81% of the total that day; next in line was Nashville Warbler with 5%. Whereas last year we banded more than 100 birds in a day just six times, this year there were 25 such days, mostly between 19 Sep and 14 Oct (a period during which the 100 bird threshold was missed just five times, all but once due to weather greatly limiting net hours). We averaged 273 bands/100 net hours during that period, thanks largely to terrific support from the entire volunteer crew, including lots of help from our banders-in-training who quickly became experts in Yellow-rumped Warblers and Slate-colored Juncos in particular!

While many species were unusually abundant this fall, the count of 74 species we banded was just below our previous range of 75 to 78, and the 140 species observed during the season was below our five-year average of 142. The highest count of species observed in a single day was 55 on 3 Oct, much later than usual. Red-bellied Woodpecker and Common Tern were observed for the first time, bringing the cumulative site list to 202 species.

Although not included in our Fall Migration Monitoring Program totals, we also operated our Northern Saw-whet Owl program for the fourth time, with a record count of 122 banded, plus two foreign recoveries and two Eastern Screech-Owls. Kristen Keyes and Bob Barnhurst were the key banders for this program, assisted by Simon and Marcel.

As always, other research activities and education programs were integrated with the banding program. We provided ongoing training to more than 60 volunteers this fall and collected a few hundred more photos to augment the ever-growing MBO Photo ID Library (<http://www.migrationresearch.org/mbo/idlibrary.html>), which as usual will be updated for many species over the course of the winter. Most significantly, this fall we published our first five-year report (available from <http://www.migrationresearch.org/mbo.html>), a 146-page document providing a detailed account of all activities at MBO to date.



Northern Saw-whet Owl  
by George West