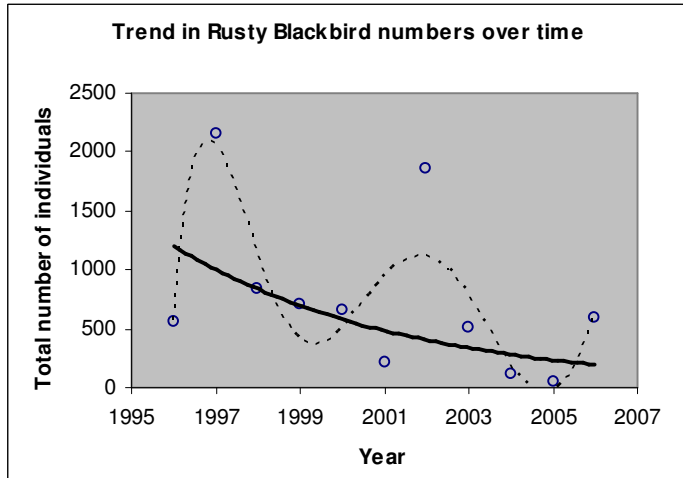




Ups and downs of the Rusty Blackbird

Most species of grackles and blackbirds within the Icteridae are highly versatile and many are able to benefit from anthropogenic changes to the environment, even to the extent of increasing their distribution range. However, the Rusty Blackbird is a notable exception. During the summer, this species is found close to wetlands within the boreal forest, far from inhabited areas. Data from the Breeding Bird Survey suggest an important decrease in Rusty Blackbird numbers over the last 30 years and this species has recently been declared to be of special concern in Canada (COSEWIC, April 2006).



Possible causes for the reduction in numbers include the loss, to agriculture, of many temporarily flooded areas on the Rusty Blackbird's wintering grounds in the southeastern United States. Also, intense efforts were made during the 60s and 70s to control grackle and blackbird numbers, as these species were considered important agricultural pests. Within its breeding area in the boreal forest, this species could be affected by habitat alterations linked to global climate change and to intensive forestry. The data for

this species from the *Observatoire d'oiseaux de Tadoussac* (OOT) show an important annual fluctuation in the number of individuals recorded, which suggests that this species could be cyclic. Although counts for this year have not yet finished, numbers are up on the all-time low recorded in 2005, and long-term trends suggest that 2007 could see a peak in numbers. If this hypothesis is confirmed, the Rusty Blackbird could be more vulnerable than we think, especially during troughs in the population cycle. Last week, during the 4th North American Ornithological Conference in Veracruz (Mexico), the OOT's results surprised several people, including members of the International Rusty Blackbird Technical Working Group.

BANDING STATION The passerine banding program for the 2006 season finished on the 11 October. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the 16 volunteers for their valuable help in extracting birds from the mist nets. Their presence greatly contributed to the smooth running of the station. In all, 1,768 birds were captured between the 12 September and the 11 October. While last year the Black-capped Chickadee was the most frequently caught species (accounting for more than 37% of individuals, many of which were dispersing juveniles), this year it was the turn of the Yellow-rumped Warbler. With regards to woodpeckers, the number of Black-backed and American Three-toed Woodpeckers caught has considerably increased over the last two weeks, bringing the season's total to 115. With regards to owls, 71 Northern Saw-whet Owls have been caught; however, so far, we have had no Boreal Owls. Most of

Number of owls and woodpeckers banded		
Species	Weeks 6 and 7	Total 2006
Northern Saw-whet Owl	71	99
Boreal Owl	0	0
American Three-toed Woodpecker	48	67
Black-backed Woodpecker	41	49

Top-five banded passerine species	
Weeks 6 and 7	Total 2006
Yellow-rumped Warbler (199)	Yellow-rumped Warbler (531)
Dark-eyed Junco (134)	Ruby-crowned Kinglet (223)
Ruby-crowned Kinglet (127)	Dark-eyed Junco (170)
White-throated Sparrow (79)	White-throated Sparrow (145)
Nashville warbler (34)	Golden-crowned Kinglet (75)

Banders : Christophe Buidin and Yann Rochepault

the visitors who took part in the activity *Laissez-vous envoûter par le charme des nyctales* were lucky enough to be able to witness the banding of at least one Northern Saw-whet Owl.

INTERPRETATION ACTIVITIES Although the Woodpecker banding program will run until the 22 October and the Owl banding up until the 31 October, please note that the visitor centre is now closed and the interpretation activities have finished for another year. Thanks to our activities, many holidaymakers were able to learn about some of the different bird species migrating along the valley of the Saint Lawrence. In addition, we were host to a number of college and university groups, who came to learn more about the scientific research carried out by the team at the OOT. We would like to thank Eric Lehman, Stéphanie Gagnon and the wardens from the *Parc national du Saguenay*, who were responsible for presenting our different activities.



Nicole Dugré, one of our volunteers, charmed by a Northern Saw-whet Owl that she adopted and christened Roberto. Thank you to everyone who adopted an owl, your donations will help further the OOT's work. © Eric Lehman

Raptor counts		
Species	Weeks 6 et 7 28 sept. to 11 oct.	Total 2006
Osprey	190	727
Bald Eagle	23	65
Northern Harrier	42	199
Sharp-shinned Hawk	986	2557
Goshawk	25	58
Broad-winged Hawk	0	439
Red-tailed Hawk	1383	1723
Rough-legged Hawk	79	85
Golden Eagle	7	10
American Kestrel	247	698
Merlin	35	119
Peregrine Falcon	22	63
Gyrfalcon	1	1
Turkey Vulture	20	53
Unidentified raptor	8	26
TOTAL	3067	6820

Top-five migrating passerines	
Weeks 6 and 7	Total 2006
Pine Siskin (7173)	Cedar Waxwing (10 377)
White-winged crossbill (5199)	Pine Siskin (8832)
Yellow-rumped Warbler (1933)	White-winged crossbill (6344)
Cedar Waxwing (1613)	Yellow-rumped Warbler (4198)
Horned Lark (750)	American Pipit (2998)

Official counters : Samuel Belleau and Samuel Denault

VISUAL COUNTS With the drop in temperature at Tadoussac, the species composition of the migratory birds passing through Tadoussac has markedly changed. This week, the migration of Rough-legged Hawks really took off; this is a sure sign that we have reached the middle of our monitoring season. The Golden Eagles have also started their migration: six individuals (four juveniles and two adults) have been recorded at the OOT over the last few days. The 5 October saw an exceptional high count of 1,409 raptors, for the most part Red-tailed and Sharp-shinned Hawks. Although this is still a long way off the single-day record set on the 19 October 1995, when 2,603 raptors were counted, the 5 October will certainly be one of the best days of the 2006 season. The 2 October saw a first for the OOT: Samuel Denault recorded a House Wren, a species rarely seen in this part of the country. Finally, the passerine migration has been marked by an increasing amount of boreal species, with large passages of White-winged Crossbills and Pine Siskins being observed.

Keep your eyes open and enjoy the migration!

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