

Biweekly Summary

August 15 to 31 2024

By Sumiko Onishi

During the third week of August, strong north winds sent many migratory species to the island. Forecasted rain, however often strayed off course, and the ground started drying up. The surface of the ground was dry and cracked, and we hardly heard any mosquitoes buzzing in the netting area. After a week of pleasant autumn-like weather the, wind shifted to the south, and a heat warning was issued for the last week of August. The dried vegetation started turning yellow and yielding its leaves to the strong, warm wind.

On August 15 two juvenile Black-crowned Night herons were seen. These birds were likely the young of a local breeding pair we'd seen at Lighthouse Point. From August 16 to 18, numerous swallows were migrating. On the census of the 16th, several hundred Purple martins kept flying up into the sky, and quite a few other swallow species, including Barn, Tree, Bank, Northern Rough-winged and Cliff (non-standard observation), were observed as well.

On August 19 the wind again shifted to the north, and we saw our season's first Red-breasted Nuthatch. Also, a few warblers were high up in the canopy around the netting area. As the north wind became stronger, we banded many birds from the 20th to the 23rd.

On August 20, we heard thrushes calling before sunrise. After a round of netting for the first two hours, veeries, flycatchers and warblers started flying into the nets. A total of 33 birds was banded that day, including 3 Empidonax flycatcher species and 9 warbler species.

The next day quite a few Bay-breasted and Magnolia warblers and American redstarts were seen in the netting area. We banded a total of 31 species, including a dozen Tennessee warblers, a few Chestnut-sided warblers, a male and female Mourning warbler, and a Canada warbler. The morning temperature turned to 14 degrees C on the 22nd, and the netting kept us busy with extraction and banding from 8 to 10 a.m. A dozen of Bay-breasted warblers were banded, and we heard a number of Red-eyed

vireos. We banded 63 birds that day.

From August 23 to 25, the wind shifted to the south again. As the morning temperatures went up, the netting area became quieter day by day. We banded only a few birds each morning. Numerous veeries and Red-eyed vireos were around, and an Acadian flycatcher was observed, but there was less diversity of warblers in both the census and netting areas.

After a week of the heat wave, it rained on the evening of the 27th and the temperature and humidity stayed high on the 28th. On August 29, a gentle north wind overnight brought some migrants, although many warblers flew over the area and the netting stayed quiet. A highlight was an Acadian flycatcher, and we recorded a group of 30 sanderlings on the census.

Late in the morning of August 30th warblers started hopping around under the sunlight filtering down through the trees. A total of 46 birds were banded, including 8 warbler species – Magnolia, Tennessee, Chestnut-sided, Cape May, Nashville, Bay-breasted, Black-and-white, and an American redstart. A bobolink was recorded as new for the season. We expected the warblers from the previous day to remain in the area on the 31st. The census was busy, and a total of 57 species was recorded. Some bobolinks flew over, and a flock of warblers landed in the vegetation near the tip of Fish Point. In contrast, the netting area remained mostly quiet, except for some flight calls from thrushes and bobolinks early in the morning.

The dryness and the high, dense canopy cover in the netting area will make a difference in the number of birds we capture for this season. We banded 327 birds including 69 veeries by the end of August, and banding an Acadian flycatcher was our first fall season record.



Red-breasted Nuthatch



Blackburnian Warbler