

St. Andrews Bird Banding Station 450-0670

New Brunswick, Canada

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Where did all the birds go? No major migration of songbirds passed through the St. Andrews Bird Banding Station's net area in 2009; there was barely a trickle. The total of 472 birds banded and 19.4 b/100nh was by far the lowest recorded since daily fall monitoring began in 2001. The nets were open for 2437 hours, which is lower than usual, but there were days in September when no birds could be found around the nets. Never before has the station experienced daily catches this low. The following table illustrates some of the slowest days when all 14 nets were open.

Lowest Catch Days in 2009				
Date	Birds Banded HMa*	Birds Banded HMb*	Total Banded	Birds/100nh
2 Sep	3	0	32	7.3
11 Sep	2	1	3	6.3
16 Sep	1	0	1	4.1
28 Sep	1	0	1	4.1

* Net Lane Designation

Last year there were birds in the woods at the beginning of November. This year the woods were silent. The 46 species captured is low for diversity and no new species were banded. The best day in September was the 4th, with 24 birds of 10 species banded; and in October the 9th was the best day with 29 birds of 10 species. These would have been considered average days a few years ago.

The number of many long-distance migrants—warblers, vireos and flycatchers—was down. Only Northern Waterthrush, Yellow Palm, and Canada Warbler numbers were captured in numbers close to the nine-year average. This is heartening news about the Canada Warbler which has been recognized as *threatened* by the National Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.

Notable in their absence were finches. American Goldfinch numbers were the lowest since monitoring started, with only 10 banded or 0.41 b/100nh. Purple Finch numbers were also below average and this species may still be recovering from a disease outbreak in 2007/2008.

Thrushes provided some of the few positive results with the number of Swainson's and Hermit Thrush above average.

After a major movement of Black-capped Chickadee in 2007 and less expected movement in 2008, large numbers were not expected in 2009. This proved to be the case, with only 16 banded or 0.66 b/100nh.

The most commonly banded species was White-throated Sparrow (53 banded), but this is a third of what it was two years ago. New additions to the top ten list are Swainson's Thrush and Swamp Sparrow. The 27 Swainson's Thrush is the highest number since 2001 and may be a result of the increasing amount of tree cover near the net lanes. There were few highlights, but a Northern Saw-whet Owl on the first morning round brightened the day on 1 Oct. An Eastern Phoebe on 24 Sep was the first fall record in many years.

The 2009 results pose many questions! Where did the migrants go? Did the cool, wet summer conditions allow birds to stay farther inland instead of coming to the coast? Are the results a sign that bird populations are declining rapidly? Or is 2009 an anomaly? It was a struggle to maintain enthusiasm for the project on the many dull banding days; yet, in the end, the results shows the importance and value of yearly monitoring and long-term data collection projects. We are all curious to see what happens next year!

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