



American Redstart at Selma, Hants, Aug 3. Photo by Cliff Sandeson

latest was a female-type at Ogden Pond, *Ant*, Nov 10 (KJM, ph.). Lucinda Zawadzki mist-netted and banded an adult male SCARLET TANAGER on BPI Sept 28. A small wave of this species seemed to have been carried into the province mid-October, with observations of singles during the next week at Cape Forchu, *Yar* (EOL, ph.); BPI (Lucinda Zawadzki, ph.); and in *Halifax* at Hartlen Pt. (DAC, ph.) and Crystal Crescent Bch. PP. (Harry Scarth). An influx was also noted during the same period at St. Pierre et Miquelon and on the south and east coasts of the Avalon Peninsula in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The first two BLUE GROSBEAKS for the report period appeared in *Halifax* at Three Fathom Hbr. Sep 13 and Cow Bay Sep 14 (DAC, ph.). Between Sep 26 and Oct 30, five more were reported from BPI, CSI, Chebogue Pt., Halifax, and Ben Eoin, *CB*. Observations of INDIGO BUNTING occurred well after the passage of Hurricane *Dorian*. A first-year female caught in mist nests on BPI Sep 20 was fitted with a radio receiver and recorded again the next day. About a dozen were observed from 11 locations between the third week of September and the first week of November. A PAINTED BUNTING, likely a first-year, was present at South Head, *CB*, Sep 22-23 (CAM, ALM, ph.). DICKCISSELS were found in seven widespread counties and over most of the report period. The first observation was at the Liscombe Lodge, *Guys*, Aug 9 (Devin Johnstone), and by the first week of November about 25 others had been seen.

The Earliest Fall Warblers

By John Kearney

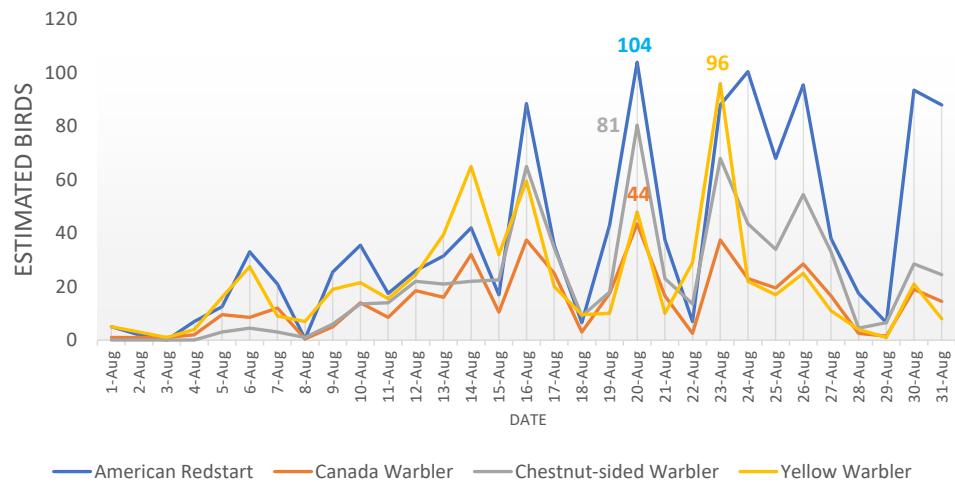
We often think of our earliest fall migrants being the shorebirds that arrive in July from their breeding grounds on the tundra of Canada's north. But some warblers that breed in Nova Scotia begin their migration in July and have largely left the province by the end of August. All of these warblers are neotropical migrants, which means that they spend the winter in tropical regions of Central and South America and the Caribbean.

For several years, I have set up acoustic monitoring stations to document the nocturnal movements of these birds in July

and August. Nocturnal acoustic monitoring is the use of "autonomous recording units," which use a microphone to detect and then record the night flight calls of migratory birds. Since one bird may give more than one call while flying past, it is necessary to estimate the specific number of birds in a recording. For more information on nocturnal migration monitoring in general and for details on data for fall 2018, see *NS Birds*, vol. 61, no. 1, pp. 25-28.

Based on this monitoring, I have identified four species of warblers whose peak migration occurs in August, with their numbers being much smaller and rapidly declining in early September. These earliest fall warblers are the Yellow Warbler, Canada Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, and American Redstart. The recording units do pick up other songbirds

Average Estimated Birds in Nocturnal Migration by Date In August
Beaver River, Yarmouth County, 2018-2019





A late Yellow Warbler at Three Fathom Hbr, Hfx, Oct 5. Photo by Aaron Marshall

moving at night in late July and August, such as the Yellow-rumped Warbler, one of the latest migrating warblers, but these birds are making what is known as landscape movements in

search of new foraging areas. They are not yet migrating out of the province.

The chart on the previous page shows the average nightly abundance of the four earliest warbler species recorded at Beaver River, Yarmouth, in August 2018 and 2019. The numbers of each species are estimates derived from the total number of flight calls that are more than one minute apart.

The earliest migrant is the Yellow Warbler, which starts to migrate in mid-July. Its migration intensifies rapidly in August, with the average peak on Aug 23, with an average of 96 estimated birds. Its numbers quickly fall off afterward. The species continues south along a broad front, traveling from Florida and the coast of the Gulf of Mexico to arrive in its winter habitat in Central America, Colombia, and Venezuela from mid-September to mid-October.

The Canada Warbler is not far behind the Yellow Warbler in starting its autumn migration. What is unique about the Canada Warbler is that it is one of the latest warblers to arrive in the spring. It appears in late May and the first week of June and is on its way south again by the end of July. Its average peak is Aug 20, with an average of 44 estimated birds. There is good evidence that the Canada Warbler departs Nova Scotia by crossing the lower Bay of Fundy and the Gulf of Maine. This flight appears to be its only water passage on its way through the USA, Mexico, and Central

America to its wintering areas in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, where it arrives as early as the end of September and into mid-October.

The Chestnut-sided Warbler starts to migrate soon after or during its moult from its bright spring colours to its lime-green winter plumage. It also has an average peak on Aug 20, with an average of 81 estimated birds. This species crosses the Gulf of Mexico to fly directly to its wintering grounds in Central America. It arrives there from late September to mid-October.

The American Redstart is one of our most abundant breeding birds and is also the most abundant August warbler, its distinctive night flight call filling the recordings for that month. Its average peak is also Aug 20, with an average of 102 estimated birds, but it declines much more slowly than the other early fall warblers and has more spillover into September. The American Redstart's southward journey is also more drawn out than the other early fall warblers, with it arriving at its winter home as late as early November. Its wintering grounds are the most extensive of these four warbler species and include Florida, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, Colombia, and Venezuela.

This August, step outside your door around 10 pm or later to listen for these warblers passing overhead on their remarkable journey. ■



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