

Project Update: October 2011

Crossing the Caribbean recently completed its first autumn migration in the Darién of Colombia and the results are already highlighting the area's key importance to migratory birds. Representing a bottleneck between Central and South America, we hypothesised that migrants would concentrate in this region. What we did not predict, however, was that just two researchers could count over 400,000 birds migrating overhead and capture a further 1674 migrants in mist-nets in 2 months. The main species migrating by day were swallows, with up to 25,000 passing daily, and raptors, including 90,000 broad-winged hawks and 85,000 turkey vultures. In the forest, 37 migratory species were recorded, including several of conservation concern. The challenge now is to determine more precisely which habitats and zones of the Darién are most important and develop strategies to ensure their preservation, such as the promotion of eco-tourism to observe this natural phenomenon.

