

Migration Summary April 1-15, 2020

PIBO's 2020 field season was tossed about by the rapid change in responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. It started with cancelling some of our fundraising events in the early spring and reimagining others to an online format. See more here: [Online PIBO/PIHC gala](#). We advised all planned volunteers and seasonal staff to stay at home. I was prepared to do the census and the netting alone as much as possible remembering my time spent at PIBO during the early years. However, our fieldwork was deemed non-essential work by the provincial state of emergency so we decided to do just the census/observations for now based on the advice from Birds Canada.

Our 2020 spring census started at Fish Point on April 1st. The high standing water extended the pond to the surrounding area along the trail and the submerged shrubs and trees were filled with lively sounds of **Red-winged Blackbirds**, **Common Grackles** and **European Starlings**. The seasons' first walk with the sounds of birds and nature always gives me a sensation of waking up from a long winter. A loud **Pied-billed Grebe's** song echoed, and the quacks and whistles of other ducks with the sounds of splashing water came from Fox pond. Fourteen **Ring-necked Ducks**, a **Hooded Merganser** and nine different species were observed.

Under the sun a couple of **Eastern Phoebes** hopping around the branches to catch flying insects and some **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were also seen high up in the canopy, but the number of migrants was still low except for blackbirds. The trail has been changing year after year with the debris and flooded inland water which brought different species of flora to the area. I found two **Eastern Meadowlarks** showing their bright yellow bellies flying over me at the tip. Many **Song Sparrows** and some **Dark-eyed Juncos** were feeding on the ground along the beach. The lake had been very calm with a gentle breeze and mostly clear skies for the first week of April although most of the shoreline had a still wintery appearance and was not accessible due to the high water. The season's first **Great Blue Herons** and **Bonaparte's Gulls** flying over the lake was observed on April 2nd.

Yellow-rumped Warblers were the season's first warbler, and a couple of **Savannah Sparrows** were recorded on April 3rd. It was a beautiful blue sky, and the wind shifted to a gentle south-east breeze on April 4th. A **Belted Kingfisher** with his clattering rattle was busy flying around the pond, and a few **American Goldfinches** were seen, but it was quiet overall.

The first significant arrival of migratory birds was observed on the morning of April 5th. It looked like there were many sparrows and woodpeckers around from the start. I could hear the call of **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** and see them chasing each other around and around on the tree trunk. I counted eight of them along the trail and quite a few **Yellow-shafted Flickers** as well. Seven sparrow species including **Eastern Towhees**, **Chipping, Fox**, many **American Tree Sparrows** and numerous **Dark-eyed Juncos** and a couple of **Hermit Thrushes** were recorded along the west beach.

From April 5th to 6th, the weather got chilly and rainy with some intense thunder during the night of 7th. It was very foggy for the morning of April 8th, but there were some new arrivals. Soon after I stepped into the trees, I saw the season's first **Pine Warbler** singing and hopping around in the canopy. Another season first, **Swamp Sparrow** was seen at the damp ground between both the east and west beach. On April 9th there were quite a few **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** singing around and many **Dark-eyed Juncos** on the beach.

The strong north wind was almost a gale on April 10th, and the temperature stayed chilly for the next several days. However, as the trees started sprouting and midges began buzzing around the branches more **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were flying around the insects each morning. Dutchman's Breeches started blooming and the Trillium were budding indicating spring is here.

The number of **Tree Swallows** flying over the pond and the lake increased day by day. There were a couple of **Barn Swallows** in the group. **Purple Martins** were also observed on the standard observation. The weather had been variable from April 11th to 14th. Several gulls including the season's first **Great Black-backed Gulls** were resting at the diminished sandbar in the chilly wind. April 12th and 13th had mild temperatures with a south wind and some rain. The pond was a bit lively with seven female **Hooded Mergansers**. A very severe west windstorm developed on the 13th, and the waves remained quite strong for the next few mornings. Many Brown Creepers were observed along the trail, and two **Common Loons** were flying over. On April 15th there was some sleet remaining on the ground from the overnight precipitation. Raptors were hanging around the area for hunting. A **Red-tailed Hawk** had its prey, and a **Turkey Vulture** was waiting for the leftovers near the entrance. Two young **Bald Eagles** came out from the pond and were grabbing a large fish. A hundred blackbirds flew out to the pond from under the trees chased by a **Cooper's Hawk**. All the other birds were quite alarmed during the census walk because of the raptors. This summary concludes the migration activity up until April 15th, the highlight for the period was a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** at our feeder!

The summary was written by Sumiko Onishi. Photos of Yellow-headed Blackbird and Dark-eyed Junco by Sumiko Onishi 2020.

