

Migration Summary September 1st-14th, 2020

As September began, we started seeing lots of Cedar Waxwings, Common Grackles, and warblers flying over. (Looking up at those birds every summer, I was wondering about waxwings, how did they so quickly finish their breeding season after arriving relatively later than other species?) At the pond, about fifty Wood Ducks started gathering for the roost before they take off.

On September 3rd there were some birds chipping from somewhere nearby, but I couldn't find any birds flying around which I think was because there were raptors around. Soon an accipiter flew out from the trees and started chasing other birds. I recorded a total of 62 species, including 13 warbler species - many warblers were in the thicket of vegetation towards the south end. The brief north-west wind during the night brought autumn-like temperature (15C) in the morning of September 4th. In the trees under the beautiful blue sky, were lots of American Redstarts, and many swallows were soaring high up in the sky at the tip. I recorded a Swainson's Thrush as new for the season. It must be the right conditions for other migratory species because I saw a bat fly out in front of me along the trail.

The census became busy on September 5th with hundreds of warblers including quite a few Blackpolls Warblers although the light wasn't enough to identify many of the other species. A total of 53 species was recorded including ten Bald Eagles sitting at the tip and quite a few Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. The change of the season didn't give me enough time to look for my warmer fieldwork clothes as the morning temperature dropped to 11C on September 6th after a north wind all night. I observed Hundreds of warblers – lots of Blackpoll and Bay-breasted - and numerous Swainson's Thrush at the tip. But still, some Yellow Warblers and Baltimore Orioles were seen as well. A total of 60 species was recorded including a season first Gray-cheeked Thrush.

On September 7th there was a very intense thunderstorm overnight with constant lightning and rain, and the census was done between the storm which was predicted all day. Only eight warbler species were identified although I heard quite a few warblers calling high up in the gloomy forest. On the water, I saw more than a hundred American White Pelicans flying over with thousands of Double-crested Cormorants.

Around the following period, massive migratory bird mortality happened in New Mexico, which the researcher reported the cause as a severe weather event. Please see more information on the [PIBO Facebook page](#) if you are interested.

September 9th was very foggy with bad visibility (10km). Numerous Red-eyed Vireos had been seen for the previous few days. Two Merlins and an American Kestrel at the pond were showing their acrobatic flight with chasing each other. The tip was quiet except more than thirty American Goldfinches were feeding on the dry seeds. A highlight was finding an Olive-sided Flycatcher sitting on a dead tree branch, and another heard in the trees.

The north-east winds since the night of September 10th brought lots of migrants and stable flies(!) as well. Hundreds of Swainson's Thrushes and quite a few flycatchers were seen on September 11th. Raptors were very actively hunting around which changed other birds' behaviour to hopping from shrub to shrub quickly without making any sound which made my census hard. The wind shifted to the

south-east on September 12th although the numerous thrushes were still in the area. A couple of Northern Parulas, Wilson's Warblers, and lots of Magnolia and American Redstarts were seen as well, but not many as the day before. A total of 44 species was observed including a season first Northern Harrier. On September 13th quite a few Chimney Swifts flew over, and four Merlins and two Sharp-shinned Hawk were observed. A total of 13 warbler species was recorded - many of them were in a big tree that fell over in the wet area where they can feed and bath while hiding from the raptors. In the twilight, hundreds of American Robins started moving toward the south (non-standard observation).

On September 14th, a total of 53 species including many thrushes and 14 warblers were recorded. Virginia Rail, Blue-headed Vireo, Western Palm Warbler, and a Song Sparrow were observed as new for the season. I was surprised by three Connecticut Warblers that showed up from the bush along the pond – the one seen the day before was season first. There were still many House Wrens and a couple of Indigo Buntings, but some sparrows started showing up as well. Many blackbirds and robins moving through the area day before must take off during the night since I hardly see them in the morning.

According to our record from the previous year, the morning temperature used to stay around 20C during the same period. However, it had been very dry with a lower temperature for the first half of September this year. It is important to recognize that our count will be lower for 2020 since we didn't open the netting operation, but I am still looking forward to seeing some more Winter Wrens and Brown Creepers and some other species for the next half month.

The summary was written by Sumiko Onishi.
Northern Parula and Least Flycatcher by Sumiko Onishi.



