

2017 YEAR-END REPORT

Pelee Island Bird Observatory



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Pelee Island Bird Observatory

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General Information

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The Pelee Island Bird Observatory was established in 2003 and incorporated as a non-profit charitable organization in 2006. PIBO's mandate includes a commitment to long-term avian migration monitoring research on Pelee Island; long-term studies of Pelee Island's breeding bird communities, including national and provincial Species at Risk; serving as an educational centre for the public, school groups and the local community; and promoting the importance of Pelee Island's unique natural heritage.

PIBO Board – Graeme Gibson the Elder (Chair); Matthew Gibson; Margaret Atwood; Wayne Grady; Donna Hayes; Penny Kavanagh; John Gruetzner

Advisors to the Board – Philip Slayton

Executive Director – Suzanne Friemann

Field Supervisor and Bander-in-Charge – Sumiko Onishi

Education Coordinator – Sarah Keating

Science Officer – Patrick Kramer

Assistant Field Biologist – Sachi Schott

Founder – G. Gibson the Younger

Founding Patrons – Margaret Atwood and Mysterious Starling Inc.

Cover photo: Turkey Vultures on North Shore Road, Pelee Island. Photo by Sachi Schott

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Executive Summary

In 2017, the Pelee Island Bird Observatory (PIBO) celebrated its quinquennial anniversary with additional staff, a renovated field house, and a continued commitment to conducting ornithological research and education programs in Windsor-Essex County. Seven staff members and volunteers completed PIBO's usual suite of research programs, including migration monitoring at the Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve; breeding bird surveys at two properties on Brown's Road; marsh monitoring surveys for birds and amphibians; monarch butterfly counts; and Northern Saw-Whet Owl banding. On the mainland, PIBO's outstanding Education Coordinator Sarah Keating once again reached hundreds of students in Windsor-Essex County through her education programming, and also put in countless hours doing public outreach at a variety of conservation-related community events. Online, staff members kept the public informed and engaged through PIBO's social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and posted updates on the progress of their research on PIBO's website.

2017 marked the completion of PIBO's fifteenth year of migration monitoring, following the standardized protocol set by the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN). The spring migration season was enlivened by the capture of some unusual birds, including two Kentucky Warblers and a Brewster's Warbler. The fall season was the busiest in recent memory, with large numbers of warblers, thrushes and kinglets captured, and several mornings ended with banding totals of over 100 birds.

Donations raised through PIBO's Indiegogo fundraising campaigns enabled some much-needed repairs to be completed at PIBO's field house on Pelee Island, which provides housing for field staff during the spring, summer and fall. The joists under the kitchen and entryway were replaced prior to installing a new floor, and a new, energy-efficient refrigerator was purchased and put in place, ready to be used in 2018. While much work remains to be done, these improvements have contributed significantly to the comfort of PIBO's field researchers. 2017 also saw the launch of another PIBO Indiegogo campaign, to replace the failing septic system at the PIBO field house. This campaign is still ongoing, and through it PIBO hopes to raise \$10,000 to cover approximately half of the costs of purchasing and installing such a system.

The work accomplished this year was made possible thanks to the critical help of many organizations and individuals (please see Acknowledgements section). Their support continues to allow PIBO to pursue programs that benefit North American Neotropical migrants, national and provincial Species at Risk, and Carolinian nesting birds with limited breeding ranges in Canada.



American White Pelicans at Fish Point. Photo by Sumiko Onishi.

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*PIBO staff members Sachi Schott (left) and Sumiko Onishi (right) in the Pelee Island Canada Day Parade.
Photo by Graeme C. Gibson.*

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Introduction

This report is presented in three sections: 1) Research, 2) Education and Outreach, and 3) Additional News.

Section One presents the results of the 2017 research season including details about PIBO's spring and fall migration monitoring program, summer breeding bird surveys, monarch butterfly counts and other projects. The results of each project are summarized in tables presented throughout the section, and further tables and graphs are used to illustrate noteworthy results and observations. This section also includes a summarized version of the spring and fall bi-monthly migration updates that are posted on PIBO's website.

Section Two is a report on some of PIBO's education and community outreach programs in 2017. Details include information about visitors to the Fish Point banding station, PIBO's public owling nights and the annual PIBO picnic. For information about in-class presentations at local mainland schools, online video conferences, and PIBO's other educational activities, please see PIBO's 2017 Education Program Summary Report by Sarah Keating.

Section Three highlights other developments at PIBO in 2017, including fundraising efforts, the opening of the PIBO exhibit at the Pelee Island Heritage Center, and the hiring of PIBO's first-ever Science Officers.



Male and female Wood Duck at Fish Point. Photo by Sumiko Onishi.

Section One – Research

Songbird migration monitoring

Migration monitoring is a standardized program which generates a ‘snapshot’ of bird activity in a given area through a combination of capture data and observation. When it is repeated daily and annually it can detect changes in the population trends of migrating songbirds and further the understanding of bird migration ecology. Accurate knowledge of population status is vital to species conservation and since many song birds summer and winter in remote and inaccessible areas it is important to survey these species during the migration season when they are easier to observe.

In Canada, migration studies are overseen by the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN). The CMMN is made up of more than twenty-five permanent sites established across the country that generate daily migration counts for a wide range of species. Monitoring stations like PIBO are committed to collecting standardized data that contributes to the collective understanding of the changes taking place in populations of migratory birds; to documenting migration at the station itself; and to other bird-related studies.

Pelee Island, Essex County, Ontario is situated in the western part of Lake Erie, and is the most southerly-inhabited landmass in Canada. It is located at the junction of two pathways used by migratory species (the Atlantic and Mississippi flyways), and is an ideal location from which to monitor bird species as they migrate through the Western Lake Erie Basin. On the island, both Fish Point and Lighthouse Point have been designated Important Bird Areas (IBAs) by Birdlife International. IBAs are sites that have been determined to be of significance nationally and internationally, and that are exceptionally important for birds. PIBO's migration monitoring work takes place at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve, which comprises the southern tip of Pelee Island. The main part of Fish Point is a sand spit covered with woodland. The official count area and census route for PIBO extends from the tip of the point to approximately two hundred meters north of the nature reserve parking lot. The route covers a broad range of habitats, including deciduous woodlands, wetland, and open beach. The mist netting portion of PIBO's operations is conducted in an area north of the parking lot that is accessible by a footpath leading in from the road. Ten mist nets have been established within the forest there, in an area that is often flooded in the spring.

* * *

PIBO's spring and fall migration coverage at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve (Ontario Parks – Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources) ran from April 1st to June 11th and August 1st to November 15th, 2017, for a total of 179 coverage days. 7 participants helped to record 185 species at Fish Point during PIBO's standard count period. 3367 birds of 83 species were banded over 3727 net-hours, for an average catch rate of 0.90 birds/net-hour.

Spring migration summary

The Pelee Island Bird Observatory (PIBO) began its migration monitoring program on April 1st, 2017. The morning was cool and overcast, and was notable mainly for the large number of waterfowl in Fox Pond: 60 birds were seen of 10 species, including Canada Geese, Wood Ducks, Buffleheads, Common Goldeneye, Northern Shovelers and two American Coots. Red-Winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles were very much in evidence, especially around Fox Pond, and their rasping, creaking calls could be heard all along the point. American Robins and Northern Cardinals were also common.

Stormy weather and strong north-west winds on April 6th and 7th led to fewer songbird sightings, though the Tree Swallows were invigorated by the high winds and were seen in large numbers flying over the lake. Bonaparte's Gulls were also very active. The ducks stuck mostly to Fox Pond, where the waters were calm, and a Ruddy Duck and Ring-Necked Duck seen on April 6th were new for the season.

More songbirds appeared as the weather calmed down and temperatures increased. The first Myrtle Warblers and Ruby-Crowned Kinglets were seen on April 8th, along with the first Belted Kingfisher, which was fishing in Fox Pond. Slate-Coloured Juncos were frequently seen in flocks feeding along the beach, occasionally accompanied by Swamp Sparrows, Field Sparrows, American Tree Sparrows and Chipping Sparrows. The warmer weather also caused the local insects to become more active, to the benefit of the birds: a small flock of Golden-Crowned Kinglets was observed feeding on a hatch of midges at the edge of Fox Pond, and the numbers of Tree Swallows seen flying over the trees increased. The ducks took advantage of the gentler winds to move out onto the lake – hundreds of Red-Breasted Mergansers were counted swimming and flying over the lake on the 10th, and a large raft of Scaup species had assembled off the east side of the tip on April 11th.

The first notable sighting of the year was of a shrike that was seen on census on April 13th at the end of Fish Point. Unfortunately it was a very wary bird and remained at a distance, making it difficult to say for certain if it was a Northern Shrike or an endangered Loggerhead Shrike, but the balance of probability seems to indicate that it was a Loggerhead. The field markings that were visible (a wide eye band and the absence of a white eye ring) were typical of a Loggerhead, and as Northern Shrikes migrate much earlier, they would typically have already passed through southern Ontario by the end of March. PIBO staff returned later in the day to try and get a closer look at the bird, but it had moved on.

Very few raptor species were seen in the first few weeks of May: Bald Eagles were seen the most consistently, and Cooper's Hawks had been observed on a couple different occasions as well. A Merlin flew over Fish Point on April 5th. On most afternoons, large kettles of migrating Turkey Vultures could be seen riding the thermals over the island, often accompanied by Red-Tailed Hawks. A Broad-Winged Hawk was observed by two visiting Bird Studies Canada employees. Overall, species counts remained fairly consistent over the first two weeks of the migration season, with between 31 and 40 species being seen each morning.

As the month progressed, the weather grew warmer and new greenery began to appear. Many trees around the netting area began to bud and a few leaves were already beginning to show themselves. Fox Pond became crowded with water lilies, leaving little room for ducks. The open waters of the lake provided a stage for the mating displays of the Red-Breasted Mergansers who formed flotillas off the beach. Almost every day brought an addition or two to the list of species observed by PIBO in 2017. A Spotted Sandpiper seen on the west beach of Fish Point on April 19th was the first shorebird recorded this spring. Sanderling, Sora and Black-Bellied Plovers arrived on April 28th, but the overall shorebird

numbers remained low. The south winds on April 27th brought in a total of thirteen species that were new for the season, including such colourful characters as Baltimore Orioles, Scarlet Tanagers and Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks.

The nesting efforts being made by some early-breeding birds began to accelerate: a female American Robin was already sitting on a nest in the trees by Fox Pond by the end of April, and the European Starlings, Red-Winged Blackbirds and others were seen carrying nesting material. A precocious family of Canada Geese was seen stepping cautiously along the beach at Fish Point on April 23rd, and at least one pair of Canada Geese began sitting on their nest in Fox Pond.



PIBO banding station at Fish Point. Photo by Sachi Schott.

After dealing with some unanticipated net repairs, all ten of PIBO's mist nets were set up and ready to go by the 19th, but banding had to be postponed when thunderstorms and scudding rain marred the morning of April 20th. The unsettled weather did have the effect of blowing some new species onto the island, including the first Eastern Bluebird of the year. Banding began in earnest on April 22nd. The numbers of birds banded each morning was low, and generally included some combination of Blue Jays, Red-Winged Blackbirds, Hermit Thrushes and Downy Woodpeckers.

From April 22nd onwards, new warbler species began trickling through Fish Point. The first Western Palm Warblers, Nashville Warblers, Black-and-White Warblers, and Yellow Warblers were seen and heard around Fish Point, the first salvos in what would soon become a full chorus of warbler species. And on April 30th, the banding operations were given a shot of colour by the capture of the first Cape May, Black-Throated Green and Myrtle Warblers of the season, all of them males.

On April 23rd, a Sandhill Crane flew over the netting area, and a Grasshopper Sparrow was seen on census on April 26th. The first American White Pelicans of the year were seen on April 29th, standing out on the tip of Fish Point amid the much smaller gulls and terns as they preened. Three more were seen on census the following day, the first of many that would be seen in the spring and fall to come.

The overcast and unsettled weather from the end of April continued into the beginning of May, severely curtailing PIBO's mist netting efforts. The wind, meanwhile, came from every direction but south, creating challenging conditions for migratory songbirds. The arrival of warbler species such as the Magnolia and Chestnut-Sided Warbler was delayed compared to previous years, and other species lingered on the island for longer than they would normally. For example, it was assumed that the Golden-Crowned Kinglets had all moved north to their breeding grounds by the end of April, but one was banded on May 6th and others were sighted periodically right up until May 8th. The unsettled weather may also have been responsible for bringing in the two Kentucky Warblers PIBO banded this spring, one on May 7th and the second on May 10th.

With the low numbers of warbler species observed during our official count period, we worried that the birders visiting Pelee Island for the Spring Song weekend would be disappointed: but, during the preceding week, the skies cleared, the mornings grew warmer, and birds appeared in abundance. Despite a late start, 72 birds were banded on May 11th, the busiest banding day to date. It was also the day that PIBO banded a Brewster's Warbler, an unusual species for the island. 73 species were observed as part of PIBO's migration monitoring, compared to 65 the day before - an auspicious increase that made PIBO's Field Supervisor Sumiko Onishi decide to begin her Birdathon that morning. She ended her 24-hour birding marathon at 7:20 a.m. on May 12th - just in time for her to go on the daily census - and saw a total of 98 species.

Large flocks of Blue Jays, seen frequently from May 9th to May 18th, were an unusual sight (fall, not spring, is usually the time of year when jays gather together in large groups), and eventually their numbers dropped back down to the more usual ones and twos. On May 17th the most numerous species of bird was the Cedar Waxwing, with over a hundred seen on census and in the netting area, flying by in flocks of thirty to forty birds at a time. Again, this push of birds lasted for a few days and then tapered off down to more sporadic sightings.

Steady south winds from May 16th to 18th brought more warbler species into the area, including Bay-Breasted Warblers, Blackpoll Warblers, the first Mourning Warbler of the spring and the first Hooded Warbler banded this season, increasing the daily species totals. The weather changed abruptly on the 19th when the wind shifted to the north and the temperature plunged down to 11 degrees Celsius from 21 degrees Celsius the day before. The number of bird species remained high, possibly because the change in the wind direction discouraged them from migrating. 18 species of warbler were observed, but in small numbers. Many flycatcher species were around, including Eastern Kingbirds, Eastern Wood-Pewees and a Willow Flycatcher, identified by its distinctive call. On May 20th, the overcast skies and strong winds forced the birds to stay down low in the trees, at a good height to be caught in the mist nets. 51 birds were banded of 24 species, the most numerous of which was the Swainson's Thrush. American Redstarts were also common.

Shorebird species appeared periodically on census, with Black-bellied Plovers and Spotted Sandpipers putting in an occasional appearance. The first Ruddy Turnstone of the season was seen on May 21st, and three Red Knots were out foraging at the end of the tip on May 26th, looking very small amid all the Herring Gulls. Outside of the standard migration monitoring efforts, PIBO's summer student Alice

Pintaric went birding at Fish Point on May 17th and saw many shorebirds, including forty Black-bellied Plovers and ten Whimbrels, as well as Ruddy Turnstones, Dunlin and Short-billed Dowitchers.

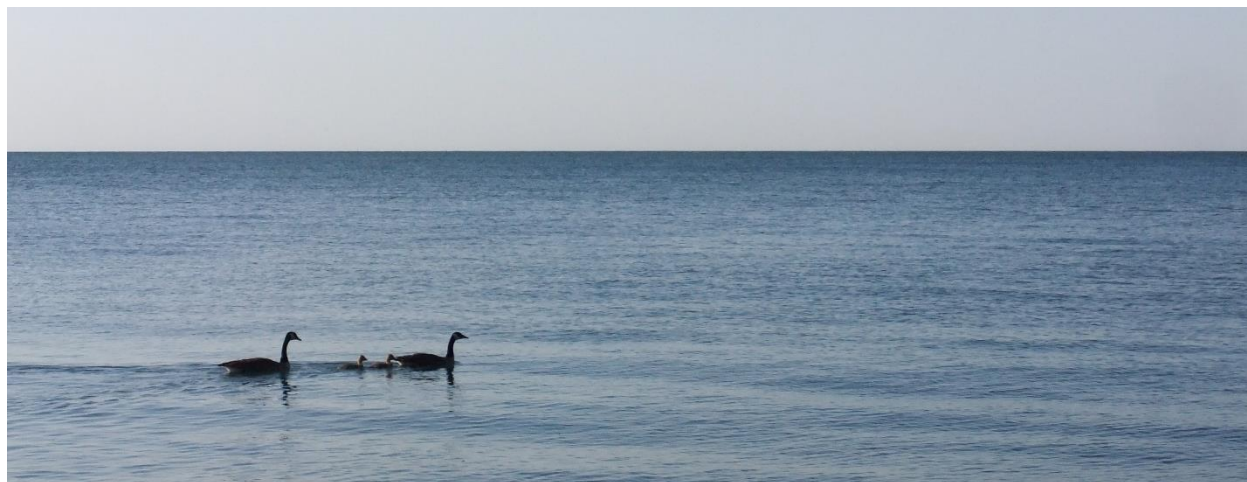
The warm temperatures on May 23rd had the unpleasant side-effect of spurring the development of the many mosquitoes that typically inhabit Fish Point. They enjoyed feeding on PIBO staff while being fed on in turn by some of the birds in the area – two Common Grackles in particular were observed eating the insects out of some spider webs high up in a dead tree. The season's first Connecticut Warbler was banded on the 23rd and was still singing in the area on May 24th. On census, a Least Bittern was heard calling in Fox Pond. It was not observed on the 25th, which was also rainy, but was heard again on the 27th.

In the netting area, each morning's bird banding grew quieter and quieter, until a nadir was reached of zero birds banded on May 30th. It was a sign that it was time to close up the nets for the spring. PIBO's last day of banding was on May 31st.

In spite of the lack of migrants, the spring still had a few surprises in store for PIBO. The census continued from June 1st to 11th. A few migrants were seen at the beginning of the month, including a Veery that was heard singing on June 6th and a few small flocks of Least Sandpipers and Sanderlings. One last unusual bird turned up as well – on June 3rd, a Lark Sparrow was seen by the west beach. This striking sparrow is a frequent vagrant in Ontario, with five or six showing up each year. As well, an Acadian Flycatcher was heard singing at the beginning of the trail on June 3rd.

From June 7th onwards almost all the birds that were seen and heard were birds on their breeding territories. Many Red-winged Blackbird nests, made of woven grasses, could be seen in among the phragmites at the edges of Fox Pond, and the adult birds were busy ferrying beaks full of fish flies, gleaned from the trees nearby, back to their hungry nestlings.

At least one pair of Canada Geese nested in Fox Pond this year. Other family groups, and groups of unpaired adults, were seen on the beaches and at the tip of the point. One large blended family was seen paddling in Mosquito Bay on June 11th. The pair of adults in question were escorting a total of twenty-two goslings, of various sizes.



Family of Canada Geese at Fish Point. Photo by Sachi Schott.

As the census continued, Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, Herring Gulls, Ring-billed Gulls, Great Black-backed Gulls, and American White Pelicans were also seen almost daily. The number of American White Pelicans reached a peak on June 10th, when 30 were counted out at the tip of Fish Point.

* * *

In total, PIBO's spring migration coverage at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve (Ontario Parks – Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources) ran from April 1st to June 11th, 2017, for a total of 72 coverage days. Five participants helped to record 163 species at Fish Point during PIBO's standard count period. 658 birds of 61 species were banded over 1326.692 net-hours, for an average catch rate of 0.496 birds/net-hour.

Table 1 - Migration Monitoring (Spring)			
Observers	Sumiko Onishi, Sachi Schott, Alice Pintaric, Carolyn Zanchetta, Graeme C. Gibson		
# of Coverage Days	72		
Birds captured*	658	Species captured*	61
Net hours	1326.692	Birds/net hour	0.496
Notes	Two Kentucky Warblers banded; Brewster's Warbler banded; Tree Swallow banded; Lark Sparrow observed; Shrike sp. observed.		
*combines banding, retrap and capture data			

Fall migration summary

After enjoying a summer vacation in July, PIBO returned to the routine of migration monitoring on August 1st, 2017. The first census of the fall was a calm, quiet day, marked with sightings of local breeding birds such as Indigo Buntings and Yellow Warblers. Families of Mallards and Wood Ducks still inhabited Fox Pond, though by now this year's young were as big as their parents. The American White Pelicans were a fixture around Fish Point right from the beginning of August, with as many as fifty nine being seen in a single morning. On the west beach, a few Spotted Sandpipers, Least Sandpipers and Killdeer were the only shorebirds that were seen.

The atmosphere at Fish Point was noticeably quieter than it had been on the last day of the spring census in June. The riotous flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds in full breeding array were gone and the air was still and quiet except for the hum of insects, broken occasionally by a Carolina Wren or a Red-eyed Vireo. Already, though, a few small flocks of blackbirds were seen, along with groups of Chimney Swifts and Purple Martins testing the air as they waited for a good wind to give them their first strong push on migration.

Mist netting began on August 17th and captured the first bird of the fall, a hatch-year Red-eyed Vireo. The following few days of banding were quiet, owing in part to contrary winds and inclement weather. A few season's firsts showed up, including some Blackburnian Warblers and American Redstarts, but the fall migration didn't really get underway until August 23rd, when northwest winds brought in a total of seven warbler species. That number increased steadily until August 25th, when it reached a high of 16 species of warblers and seven flycatcher species. Wilson's Warbler, Myrtle Warbler, Black-throated

Green Warbler and Nashville Warbler were all new for the season, and the banding totals reached a high of 33 birds. The following day was also quite active, but then the winds shifted around to the east and then the south and fewer birds were seen.

One exception to this trend of decreasing activity was the number of Purple Martins. In spite of the south winds, Sumiko Onishi counted 143 of them flying over Fish Point on August 28th, and 247 on August 29th. They appeared to be migrating (flying in a straight line rather than circling as they would have done had they been feeding). They were not the only aerial insectivore on the move in August: fifty Barn Swallows were counted over Fox Pond on the 22nd, and a Common Nighthawk showed up on August 25th, perched discreetly on a tree branch overhanging one of the net lanes at the banding station.



Common Nighthawk. Photo by Sumiko Onishi.

The presence of pin-feathered fledglings indicated that at least some of Fish Point's local nesting birds successfully raised young this year. Three Red-bellied Woodpeckers were seen on August 18th, including one grey, scruffy-looking young-of-the-year bird. Five fledgling Carolina Wrens and four young belligerent, very smelly Eastern Screech Owls were all banded in August. Three of the owls were captured together on the first net run of the morning of August 25th, and probably belonged to the same nest. Adult Screech Owls had been heard calling near the banding station in the spring, and it seems likely that at least one pair had a nested in or near Fish Point. A family group of Indigo Buntings was still present on Fish Point on August 21st, with two adult birds escorting one fledgling.

As September began, unusually consistent north and northerly winds helped to push large numbers of birds through Pelee Island and into PIBO's mist-nets, with over 100 birds being banded on both September 2nd and 3rd and over 90 being banded on September 6th. The banding totals didn't drop below 50 birds until September 12th, and the daily number of species observed remained fairly stable, ranging between a low of 54 and a high of 62 species each day.

During the early days of September the warblers were in ascendance, making up the majority of the birds banded and observed. Many Cape May Warblers were seen during September 1st and 2nd, although only one was banded. Overall, Magnolia Warblers and American Restarts were the warbler species that

were the most numerous, though Bay-breasted and Blackpoll Warblers became more common from September 5th onwards. Twelve Tennessee Warblers were banded on September 3rd. The first Common Yellowthroat was seen on September 5th and 3 were banded on September 10th, which was an unusually high daily total for that particular species. The first Mourning Warbler was seen on September 6th. The first Northern Parula for the season was banded on September 8th. The first Blue-winged Warbler and Western Palm Warbler appeared on September 9th.

From September 5th onwards, the *Catharus* thrushes that make up the majority of PIBO's banding in the fall began to appear in large numbers. The first Grey-cheeked Thrushes of the season turned up on that day, and more were banded every day subsequently. Gradually, Swainson's Thrushes began to rival the Magnolia Warblers and the American Redstarts as the most numerous species banded, eventually outstripping them. Wood Thrushes were also common.

In spite of the large numbers of birds being handled each day, almost none of the birds that were banded remained around the netting area to be recaptured on subsequent days. After 128 birds were banded on September 2nd, one single Magnolia Warbler with a band was glimpsed briefly the next day, but the only birds that were recaptured were the family of young Carolina Wrens that had been banded in August. The only migrants that were recaptured were four warblers banded on September 5th and 6th who remained on the island long enough to be recaptured on the 8th, and two thrushes that stayed on the island for two days each.

By the time September 15th rolled around, the pace of the banding had decelerated to the point where only 20 birds were captured, most of them thrushes. After that, bird migration all but ground to a halt for the following two weeks. From September 16th to 30th, PIBO's daily banding total never rose above 25 birds, and the large, mixed flocks of warblers that had made up the bulk of the banding totals previously were no longer to be seen. While Black-throated Blue Warblers continued to be observed and captured almost every day, many more warbler species were seen only infrequently or not at all.

One reason for this decline in the number of birds captured was the sustained south winds, which created difficult conditions for bird migration. Another reason was the large number of hawks around, especially Sharp-shinned Hawks. For several mornings in late September four or five of them were in the habit of hanging out in the trees above the netting area, ready to snatch unwary migrants. Many Accipiter species (Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks) were seen migrating on September 22nd. The following day was also a good one for hawk migration, with Sharp-shinned Hawks, Northern Harriers, Bald Eagles, an Osprey and a Peregrine Falcon seen on census. The first Red-tailed Hawk of the season was seen flying over the netting area on September 20th.

In place of the warblers that had kept us busy during the first fortnight in September, sparrow species became more common in the latter half of the month. White-throated Sparrows and Eastern White-crowned Sparrows were seen for the first time this fall on September 28th, as were Slate-coloured Juncos. Woodpecker species were also seen frequently: the trees above the banding station resounded with the cries of Yellow-shafted Flickers and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and the drumming of Downy Woodpeckers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. The majority of the birds that were captured and banded continued to be *Catharus* thrushes, mostly Swainson's Thrushes. The first Hermit Thrush was captured on September 26th.

Two fledgling birds were observed on census during this time period, the first being an unidentified sparrow (possibly a Song Sparrow) that was seen being fed by a parent. The second was a young

Northern Cardinal being fed by the adult male. Both of these are unusually late dates for fledglings to be seen: even for resident birds that do not have to prepare for migration, this year's young should have been fending for themselves by this time of the year. Either the adult birds began nesting very late in the year, or they were able to squeeze in a third brood thanks to the atypical weather Pelee Island experienced in 2017.

October began sedately, with relatively few birds banded. The temperatures were warm and the winds were mostly from the south, retarding migration. This began to change on October 8th, when the first large flocks of kinglets arrived at the end of what was otherwise a quiet morning. In the end, out of 25 birds banded, thirteen were Golden-crowned Kinglets. North winds began overnight and continued into the next morning, when Golden-crowned Kinglets again made up the bulk of the birds banded and observed. The morning was not as busy as expected, considering the favourable winds, but some of the thrushes that were captured were carrying large amounts of fat, indicating that they were prepared to begin a long flight south.



Male Golden-crowned Kinglet. Photo by Sumiko Onishi.

The winds was from the north again on October 10th – and 164 birds were banded, the highest daily banding total this year. Fifty of them were Golden-crowned Kinglets, followed by 34 White-throated Sparrows and 25 Hermit Thrushes. It was a very busy morning, but with the assistance of PIBO's Science Officer Pat Kramer, all the birds were extracted, banded and released safely. It rained on October 11th, and then the excitement continued on October 12th, when 160 birds were banded in spite of a late start due to inclement weather. Once again, the most numerous species was the Golden-crowned Kinglet, followed this time by Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and White-throated Sparrows. The following day was Friday, October 13th, and true to its nature, it was a trying day – 147 birds were banded, most of them after 11 a.m., and owing to a temporary staffing shortage some nets had to be closed early to prevent the banding station from being overwhelmed. Still, it was a successful morning, with 58 Golden-crowned Kinglets banded in total. October 14th was much quieter, with a more reasonable 37 birds banded and fewer kinglets and thrushes in the area. Many White-throated Sparrows were seen, but only two were captured. Nets were not opened on October 15th due to gale-force winds and scattered showers.

Large flocks of migrating Blue Jays were common in the first week of October, with many hundreds being counted on census and in the netting area. There was a constant stream of them moving down Fish Point and out over the lake on October 2nd, in flocks of twenty to fifty birds. Six of them were captured first thing in the morning on October 10th, and did their best to extract their pound of flesh using their sharp claws and powerful beaks before being banded and released. After that ordeal, it was a relief when it began to rain and nets could be closed for the morning. Blackbird species were also seen in large numbers, in mixed flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and Brown-headed Cowbirds. A very large flock of two hundred European Starlings was seen on census on October 6th, generating an impressive amount of noise as they flew overhead.

The warm temperatures and unsettled weather delayed migration for some birds, and brought a few surprises in the shapes of warbler species who would normally have been well on their way south by the end of September. Black-throated Blue Warblers were the most consistent, with one or two being seen every morning, but Black-throated Green Warblers were also observed, and an American Redstart was banded as late as October 12th. A Northern Parula was seen on October 2nd and one was captured on October 10th. The dominant warbler species in the month of October are generally Myrtle Warblers and Western Palm Warblers, and they began to be seen and captured more frequently from October 6th onwards. Overall, diversity was higher than usual for the late fall. The total number of species seen each day was generally between forty and fifty, and reached a high of 63 species on October 10th.

A morning of north winds on October 16th brought 121 birds into PIBO's mist-nets. Most of them were the ubiquitous Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Golden-crowned Kinglets, but Hermit Thrushes and Myrtle Warblers also continued to be common. By the following day the wind had shifted to the southwest and the morning was quiet: only fifteen birds of five species were banded. October 18th was distinguished by strong south winds and even fewer species of birds, though large flocks of American Robins began to appear on census and in the netting area. Subsequent days were also quiet, with a few small groups of kinglets captured here and there each morning. Large flocks of blackbird species, including Red-winged Blackbirds, European Starlings, and Common Grackles, were seen frequently flying high overhead. Woodpecker species were also a constant in the netting area, with Downy Woodpeckers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Yellow-shafted Flickers, and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers all being seen on most days.

October generally marks the end of songbird migration, and the daily total of birds seen on census and in the netting area from October 16th to 31st was generally around 20 to 35 species, a decrease from the forty to fifty species seen in the first half of the month. Nevertheless, the season still held a few surprises. The morning of October 26th began quietly, but by 10:30 a.m. bird activity had reached a crescendo at the banding station. Golden-crowned Kinglets, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and White-throated Sparrows were captured in abundance, with 161 birds of 18 species banded in total. The total number of species seen that morning reached 64 (as opposed to 34 the day before). It was also the day that brought the highest diversity of sparrow species. As seed-eaters, sparrows are some of the last birds to migrate, and October 26th was the first day when Field Sparrows and Fox Sparrows were seen by PIBO this fall. Nine sparrow species were observed in total, including Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, and Slate-coloured Junco. Eleven Song Sparrows were banded, which is one of the highest numbers of this species that PIBO has ever banded in a single day. A Marsh Wren was also captured, and was the first one seen or heard this fall.

The temperature dropped noticeably on October 28th and from then on high winds, grey skies, and the occasional rain squall made it feel considerably more like fall. 78 birds were banded on October 29th, 56

of which were Golden-crowned Kinglets. Three already-banded kinglets were recaptured, all of whom had been banded on October 26th and had evidently decided to stay on the island for a few days. The last few days in October were uneventful, and the nets were frequently closed early due to rain and strong winds. No birds at all were captured on October 31st – a quiet end to the month, but not to the fall banding program, which continued for ten days in November. Though the busiest days of the season were behind us, 79 birds were banded on November 4th, most of them Golden-crowned Kinglets, with some American Tree Sparrows and Slate-coloured Juncos thrown in for variety. The number of Ruby-crowned Kinglets seen and heard dwindled continually, but Golden-crowned Kinglets were present right up until the last day of banding. It is very rare to capture any warblers at all in November, so we were surprised to find an Orange-crowned Warbler in the nets on November 7th. The last birds captured, on November 9th, were a Slate-coloured Junco that had been banded on November 1st and a Northern Cardinal. Nets were opened briefly on November 10th and collected a good number of leaves but no birds before being closed and taken down for good.

The first few days of November were still busy with migrating songbirds who had not yet left Pelee Island. Large flocks of American Robins, Eastern Bluebirds and American Goldfinches were seen continually passing over the banding station, along with large flocks of mixed blackbird species: Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, European Starlings, and even some endangered Rusty Blackbirds, which were especially numerous on November 8th. Groups of Yellow-shafted Flickers were common as well, and made for a striking sight whenever they flew, showing off their flashing yellow primary feathers and bright white rumps. Sharp-shinned Hawks were seen frequently on November 1st and 2nd, and on the 3rd ten of them were seen, along with six Red-tailed Hawks and a Northern Goshawk, the largest of the Accipiter species. Turkey Vultures were also seen on November 2nd, surfing along the high winds on the west beach, but cleared out soon afterwards.

As always, November was the month for waterfowl. The tip of Fish Point was denuded of Double-crested Cormorants and American White Pelicans, and instead began to host Canada Geese, along with a small number of gulls. The first Common Goldeneye of the season were seen on census November 9th, and the first Scaup (whether Lesser or Greater was impossible to say) appeared the next day. These duck species, together with Buffleheads, made up the bulk of the birds seen on census from then on, often forming large rafts far out on the lake. Thousands of them were seen along the south shore on November 12th, and four Black Scoters were spotted on the water in front of the PIBO field house. Fox Pond, too, hosted its share of migrating waterfowl: the water level was unusually high this fall, and as the water had not yet frozen over it became a hospitable retreat for Mallards, Wood Ducks, and Ring-necked Ducks. A flock of Hooded Mergansers even sheltered in it on November 9th. Large flocks of Red-breasted Mergansers were seen on census in the early days of November, but only one was seen on November 15th.

* * *

In total, PIBO's fall migration coverage at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve (Ontario Parks – Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources) ran from August 1st to November 15th, 2017, for a total of 107 coverage days. Five participants helped to record 163 species at Fish Point during PIBO's standard count period. 2709 birds of 70 species were banded over 2400.75 net-hours, for an average catch rate of 1.1284 birds/net-hour.

Table 2 - Migration Monitoring (Fall)			
Observers	Sumiko Onishi, Sachi Schott, Pat Kramer, Graeme C. Gibson, Marie Tanoue		
# of Coverage Days	107		
Birds captured*	2709	Species captured*	70
Net hours	2400.750	Birds/net hour	1.1284
Notes	An unusually busy fall; many days with over 100 birds banded		
*combines banding, retrap and capture data			

2017 migration summary

Overall, PIBO's migration coverage in 2017 was good. The number of coverage days compares favourably with previous years, but the number of net hours was lower than it was in 2016 due to prolonged periods of bad weather in the spring, when it occasionally rained for up to three mornings in a row. In spite of the reduced number of net hours, the unusually large number of birds captured in the fall made for the highest capture rate (expressed as birds/net hour) since 2004. The number of species banded was slightly higher than it has been for the past three years and more species were recaptured than usual. However, the total number of species that were recorded overall (including birds seen and heard on census and in the netting area) was lower than usual. The fall migration was delayed owing to the long bouts of unseasonably warm weather that we enjoyed, and some waterfowl species and other migrants still had not been seen by the time PIBO's migration monitoring program closed its doors on November 15th.

Table 3 - Combined spring and fall migration monitoring in 2017							
Description	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Spring coverage	Apr 1 – Jun 11	Apr 1 - Jun 10	Apr 2 – Jun 9	Apr 1 – Jun 10	Apr 1 – Jun 6	Apr 4 – Jun 10	Apr 4 – Jun 8
Fall coverage	Aug 1 – Nov 15	Aug 1 – Nov 15	Aug 1 – Nov 15	Aug 1 – Nov 15	Aug 1 – Nov 15	Aug 1 – Nov 15	Aug 1 – Nov 15
Coverage days	179	179	176	178	173	174	173
Spring netting period	Apr 21 – May 31	Apr 15 – Jun 2	Apr 20 – Jun 3	Apr 18 – Jun 2	Apr 13 – Jun 15	Apr 13 – Jun 15	Apr 12 – May 31
Fall netting period	Aug 17 – Nov 10	Aug 17 – Nov 4	Aug 15 – Nov 8	Aug 10 – Nov 8	Aug 15 – Nov 8	Aug 13 – Nov 8	Aug 11 – Nov 15
Netting days	127	125	129	146	142	123	119
Birds banded*	3367	2584	2493	2461	2519	3772	2404
Net hours	3727	4131	3652	4497	4209	4300	3356
Bird/net hour	0.90	0.62	0.68	0.59	0.60	0.88	0.72
Species banded	80	77	76	70	82	81	78
Recaptures	101	95	63	106	104	130	103
Species recaptured	27	19	13	17	19	25	24
Species recorded	185	193	194	197	200	201	203
*combines banding, recapture, and capture data							

Table 4 - Birds captured at Fish Point in 2017

Species	Captured*	Species	Captured*
Sharp-shinned Hawk	8	Cape May Warbler	6
Eastern Screech-owl	7	Black-throated Blue Warbler	91
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	14	Blackburnian Warbler	12
Downy Woodpecker	22	Yellow-rumped Warbler	72
Yellow-shafted Flicker	4	Black-throated Green Warbler	13
Eastern Wood-pewee	4	Western Palm Warbler	1
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	41	Bay-breasted Warbler	24
'Traill's' Flycatcher	13	Blackpoll Warbler	22
Least Flycatcher	5	Black-and-white Warbler	52
Eastern Phoebe	2	American Redstart	223
Great-crested Flycatcher	1	Ovenbird	145
Red-eyed Vireo	37	Northern Waterthrush	28
Philadelphia Vireo	5	Connecticut Warbler	1
Blue-headed Vireo	24	Mourning Warbler	11
Blue Jay	29	Common Yellowthroat	26
Tree Swallow	1	Wilson's Warbler	10
Black-capped Chickadee	25	Canada Warbler	29
White-breasted Nuthatch	1	Hooded Warbler	1
Red-breasted Nuthatch	6	Kentucky Warbler	2
Brown Creeper	44	Scarlet Tanager	1
Carolina Wren	14	Northern Cardinal	8
House Wren	35	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2
Winter Wren	41	Indigo Bunting	11
Marsh Wren	1	Eastern Towhee	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	555	Chipping Sparrow	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	197	Field Sparrow	2
American Robin	11	American Tree Sparrow	3
Wood Thrush	28	Eastern White-crowned Sparrow	1
Veery	57	White-throated Sparrow	178
Swainson's Thrush	316	Fox Sparrow	1
Gray-cheeked Thrush	110	Song Sparrow	15
Hermit Thrush	161	Lincoln's Sparrow	10
Gray Catbird	23	Swamp Sparrow	12
Brown Thrasher	1	Slate-coloured Junco	22
Cedar Waxwing	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	10
Northern Parula	3	Red-winged Blackbird	46
Orange-crowned Warbler	9	Common Grackle	15
Tennessee Warbler	31	Baltimore Oriole	14
Blue-winged Warbler	5	American Goldfinch	5
Brewster's Warbler	1		
Nashville Warbler	33		
Yellow Warbler	80	Total captured	3367
Chestnut-sided Warbler	20	Species & forms	83
Magnolia Warbler	213	Net hrs.	3727.442
		Birds/net-hour	0.9033
*includes birds banded, recaptured, and captured and released without being banded			

Table 5 – Top ten species captured at Fish Point in 2017			
Species	Spring	Fall	Total
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	548	549
Swainson's Thrush	31	283	314
American Redstart	15	207	222
Magnolia Warbler	20	191	211
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	21	173	194
White-throated Sparrow	23	155	178
Hermit Thrush	14	143	157
Ovenbird	55	86	141
Grey-cheeked Thrush	4	104	108
Black-throated Blue Warbler	12	79	91

For the first time since 2009 the Golden-crowned Kinglet was the top species banded during PIBO's 2017 migration season. Indeed, this species showed a dramatic increase in numbers over previous years, and was an important contributing factor to PIBO's increased capture rate this year. The only time PIBO has captured more Golden-crowned Kinglets was in 2004, when 766 were banded over the spring and fall season. In 2017, almost all the Golden-crowned Kinglets were banded in the fall – only one was captured in the spring. Ruby-crowned Kinglets also saw a modest increase in numbers. 197 were banded, the highest total since 2009.

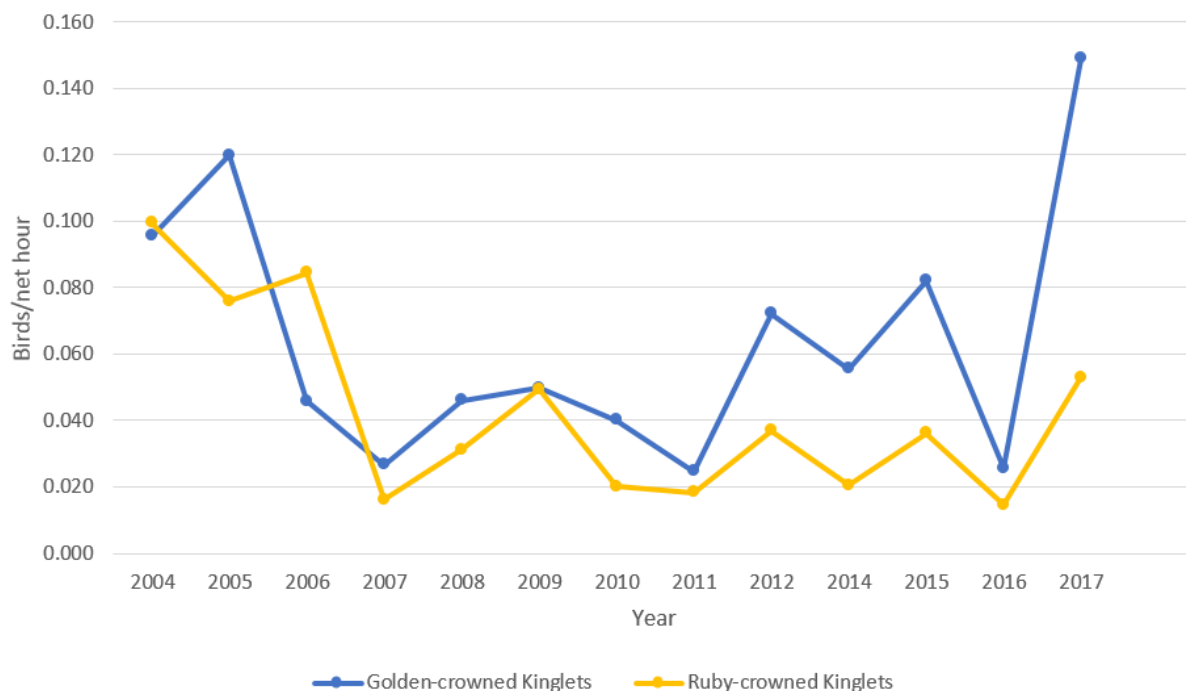


Figure 1. – Kinglet spp. captured per net hour from 2004 to 2014 (data not available for 2013)

From 2010 to 2016 Swainson's Thrushes have consistently outnumbered Golden-crowned Kinglets in PIBO's banding totals, sometimes by almost three hundred birds. 2005 and 2009 are the only other years where Golden-crowned Kinglets were more numerous. While the *Catharus* family of thrushes (Veery, Swainson's Thrush, Gray-cheeked Thrush, and Hermit Thrush) have always made up a large portion of PIBO's banding totals, there did not seem to be any more of them than usual in 2017, in spite of it being a busier season overall.

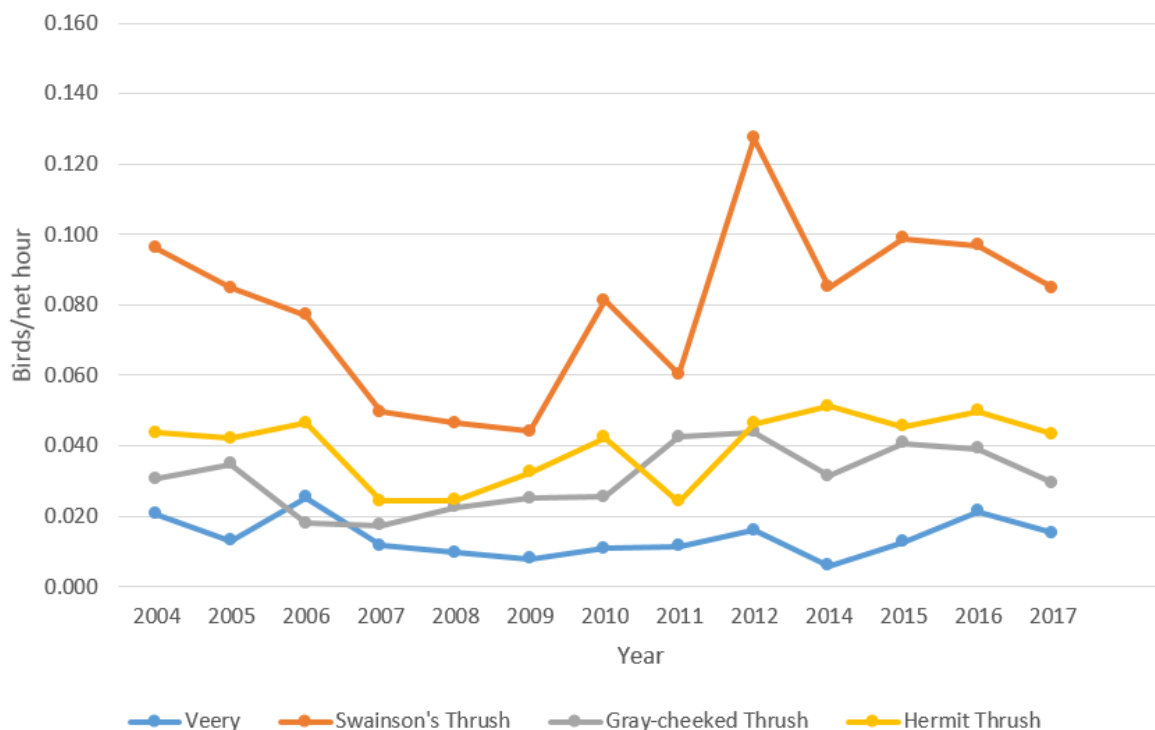


Figure 2. – *Catharus* spp. captured per net hour from 2004 to 2017 (data not available for 2013)

The rest of PIBO's Top Ten list of species banded in 2017 is broadly similar to that of previous years, although Black-throated Blue Warbler made it onto the list for the first time since 2008.



Male Black-throated Blue Warbler. Photo by Sumiko Onishi.

TABLE 6 - SPECIES AND FORMS RECORDED AT FISH POINT BY PIBO STAFF IN 2017** Indicates evidence of breeding activity on Pelee Island*

Common Loon	Ruddy Turnstone	Horned Lark
Horned Grebe	Red Knot	Purple Martin*
Pied-billed Grebe	Sanderling	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
American White Pelican	White-rumped Sandpiper	Bank Swallow
Double-crested Cormorant	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Tree Swallow*
Least Bittern	Least Sandpiper	Barn Swallow*
Great Blue Heron	Short-billed Dowitcher	Black-capped Chickadee*
Great Egret	American Woodcock*	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Green Heron	Bonaparte's Gull	White-breasted Nuthatch
Black-crowned Night-heron	Ring-billed Gull	Brown Creeper
Turkey Vulture	Herring Gull	Carolina Wren*
Tundra Swan	Great Black-backed Gull	House Wren*
Canada Goose*	Caspian Tern	Winter Wren
Wood Duck*	Common Tern	Marsh Wren
Mallard	Forester's Tern	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Gadwall	Mourning Dove*	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
American Widgeon	Yellow-billed Cuckoo*	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher*
Northern Shoveler	Black-billed Cuckoo*	Eastern Bluebird
Blue-winged Teal	Short-eared Owl	American Robin*
American Green-winged Teal	Great Horned Owl	Wood Thrush
Ring-necked Duck	Eastern Screech Owl*	Veery
Scaup spp.	Common Nighthawk	Swainson's Thrush
Bufflehead	Chimney Swift	Gray-cheeked Thrush
Common Goldeneye	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Hermit Thrush
Hooded Merganser	Belted Kingfisher	Gray Catbird*
Red-breasted Merganser	Red-headed Woodpecker	Brown Thrasher*
Ruddy Duck	Red-bellied Woodpecker*	European Starling
Osprey	Downy Woodpecker*	American Pipit
Bald Eagle*	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Cedar Waxwing
Northern Harrier	Yellow-shafted Flicker*	Northern Parula
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Orange-crowned Warbler
Cooper's Hawk	Eastern Wood-Pewee*	Tennessee Warbler
Northern Goshawk	Acadian Flycatcher	Blue-winged Warbler
Broad-winged Hawk	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Brewster's Warbler
Red-tailed Hawk	Willow Flycatcher	Nashville Warbler
American Kestrel	Alder Flycatcher	Yellow Warbler*
Merlin	"Traill's" Flycatcher	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Peregrine Falcon	Least Flycatcher	Magnolia Warbler
Ring-necked Pheasant*	Eastern Phoebe	Cape May Warbler
Wild Turkey*	Great Crested Flycatcher*	Black-throated Blue Warbler
American Coot	Eastern Kingbird*	Blackburnian Warbler
Sora	Shrike spp.	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Sandhill Crane	Red-eyed Vireo*	Black-throated Green Warbler
Black-bellied Plover	Warbling Vireo	Western Palm Warbler
Semipalmated Plover	Philadelphia Vireo	Pine Warbler
Killdeer	Yellow-throated Vireo	Bay-breasted Warbler
Greater Yellowlegs	Blue-headed Vireo	Blackpoll Warbler
Solitary Sandpiper	Blue Jay*	Black-and-white Warbler
Spotted Sandpiper	American Crow	

American Redstart
Ovenbird
Northern Waterthrush
Kentucky Warbler
Connecticut Warbler
Mourning Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Wilson's Warbler
Canada Warbler
Hooded Warbler
Scarlet Tanager
Northern Cardinal*
Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Indigo Bunting*
Eastern Towhee*
American Tree Sparrow
Field Sparrow*
Chipping Sparrow
Grasshopper Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Lark Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Fox Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow

Swamp Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Bobolink
Brown-headed Cowbird*
Red-winged Blackbird*
Rusty Blackbird
Common Grackle*
Baltimore Oriole*
Orchard Oriole*
Purple Finch
Pine Siskin
American Goldfinch*
House Sparrow



Male Myrtle Warbler. Photo by Sumiko Onishi.

Station maintenance

2017 was our first year with our new banding station, and PIBO would like to once again express our thanks and gratitude to John and Hanne Hettinga, and Alex, Karen and Masha Bustard. Thanks to their hard work, PIBO's field staff were able to remain safe, dry, and mosquito-free during the spring and fall migration season. Visitors frequently remarked on how large the new banding station appears – even though it has the same footprint as the old banding station, the higher ceiling and transparent roof make it feel much more spacious.

Owing to the annual spring flooding at Fish Point, which rots and weakens the bases of the trees, the trail into PIBO's netting area is frequently blocked by trees that have been blown over by high winds. These obstacles reduce the accessibility of our banding station and make it difficult for both staff and visitors to navigate the trails. This results in habitat destruction as visitors try to walk around them, and increases the ecological impact of the foot traffic in and out of the netting area. PIBO is, therefore, very grateful to Jim Wigle and the staff at the Ministry of Natural Resources – Ontario Parks, who took the time on April 28th and May 12th to chainsaw and remove the downed trees blocking the trail that were too large for PIBO staff to deal with. It made the morning commute into the station much easier, and improved access for visitors with mobility issues. For the moment, the trail has no large trees blocking it – until the next winter storm!

Notable band encounters

A female **Brown-headed Cowbird** recaptured on May 18th was found to have been first banded at PIBO by Sumiko Onishi on the 13th of April, 2011. The bird was originally aged as After Hatch Year, making it at least seven years old. It was captured again on May 20th. Several banded cowbirds were observed in the netting area this spring, and probably represented returns from previous years.

Unusual birds

KENTUCKY WARBLER



Kentucky Warbler. Photo by Alice Pintaric.

PIBO banded two Kentucky Warblers in the spring of 2017, the first on May 7th and the second on May 10th. These were the fifth and six Kentucky Warblers banded by PIBO in its fifteen years of operations. A Kentucky Warbler was also seen by Eric and Mike Oroz during the Spring Song Bird Race (May 12th to 13th) – possibly one of the ones we had banded.

Like the Ovenbird, which it is similar to in size and body shape, the Kentucky Warbler is a secretive ground-forager that is more often heard than seen. On its wintering grounds in the tropics it sometimes accompanies swarms of army ants and feeds off the insects fleeing the swarm. It is an uncommon breeder in Ohio, Michigan and Pennsylvania, and is more common in the deep Carolinian forest to the south, in states like Kentucky and Tennessee. As a bird that lives in mature forests, the Kentucky Warbler is vulnerable to forest fragmentation as land is cleared for agricultural purposes. There are no Ontario breeding records for this bird to date, although a few who have overshot their breeding grounds are seen in southern Ontario every spring.

Table 7 - Kentucky Warblers banded at PIBO 2003-2017				
DATE	SEX	AGE	BANDER	NOTES
10 May 2006	Male	ASY	SNL	
14 May 2006	Male	SY	RFH	
31 August 2007	Male	HY	RD	Retrapped on 1 Sept 2007
15 May 2009	Female	SY	AP	
7 May 2017	Male	UNK	SS	
10 May 2017	Female	SY	ALP	

BREWSTER'S WARBLER



Brewster's Warbler. Photo by Alice Pintaric.

A Brewster's Warbler was observed by PIBO staff in the netting area on May 11th, 2017, and was captured and banded later that morning. This is the fourth Brewster's Warbler to be banded by PIBO: one was captured in 2005, and two in 2008.

'Brewster's Warbler' is the name given to the hybrids created by a cross between a Golden-Winged and a Blue-Winged Warbler. It has the black eye stripe and white wing bars of a Blue-Winged Warbler combined with the blue-grey back of a Golden-Winged Warbler, and a variable amount of yellow on the chest. These hybrids have become more common as the range of the Blue-Winged Warbler has expanded and overlapped with the range of the less common, more geographically restricted Golden-Winged Warbler. Both of the parent species are uncommon migrants in southern Ontario during the first few weeks of May and a few Brewster's Warblers are seen at Point Pelee every spring.

PRAIRIE WARBLER

A Prairie Warbler was seen on Pelee Island by Richard Pope on May 12th, 2017. This species is a migrant that is rarely seen in and around Point Pelee. Although its common name would seem to suggest that it prefers grassland habitats, it is actually named for the area where the ornithologist Alexander Wilson first found the species, near Bowling Green Kentucky, in 'prairie country'. The Prairie Warbler itself prefers shrubby habitats in which to build its nests, including Christmas tree stands. Southern Ontario represents the northern limit of its breeding range.

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER

By far the most exciting bird sighting to come out of the 2017 Spring Song weekend was the Kirtland's Warbler that was seen by Peter Coe and Dawn Miles at Sheridan Point at the south end of the island. The most significant breeding population of Kirtland's Warblers is in central Michigan. In Ontario, nests and singing males have been occasionally reported around the Bruce Peninsula and Petawawa, in areas of Jack Pines.

SHRIKE SP.

A shrike was seen on census on April 13th at the end of Fish Point. It is difficult to say for certain if it was a Northern Shrike or a Loggerhead Shrike, but the balance of probability seems to indicate that it was a Loggerhead, which is an endangered species in Ontario. For more information, please see Section One - Spring Migration Summary.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW

A Grasshopper Sparrow was seen on census by PIBO's Field Supervisor Sumiko Onishi on April 26th.

LARK SPARROW

Sumiko Onishi observed a Lark Sparrow at Fish Point while on census on June 3rd. It stood out because no sparrow species had been observed on census for over a week, and upon closer examination she was able to discern the black spot on its breast and the dark moustachial stripe that marked it as a Lark Sparrow.

Species at Risk

The following are notes on the birds observed by PIBO in 2017 that are endangered, threatened, or of special concern.

Prothonotary Warbler (*Endangered*)

- A male Prothonotary Warbler was heard singing near the nest boxes at Fish Point on June 24th and 26th. Considering the late date and the fact that it was not heard or seen with any frequency, it was assumed that no breeding activity had taken place on Pelee Island this year. However, when the nest boxes were cleaned out in November it was discovered that a Prothonotary Warbler had built a nest in one of them. The nest was clean and unused, so in spite of his best efforts it seems that this Prothonotary Warbler was not able to attract a mate.

Yellow-breasted Chat (*Endangered*)

- A male Yellow-breasted Chat was heard singing at the Finaly & Kestrel Stanley property (Nature Conservancy of Canada) on East-West Road on June 16th. It was not seen or heard again, and it is probable that no Yellow-breasted Chats nested on Pelee Island this year.

Acadian Flycatcher (*Endangered*)

- An Acadian Flycatcher was heard singing at the head of the Fish Point trail on census June 3rd.

Least Bittern (*Threatened*)

- A Least Bittern was heard in Lake Henry during the first Marsh Bird Survey on June 1st and one was seen and heard during the third Marsh Bird Survey on July 5th. For more information, please see Section Two, Marsh Monitoring Program – Marsh Bird Surveys.

Bald Eagle

- PIBO has received second-hand reports of at least three Bald Eagle nests on Pelee Island in 2017. The birds themselves were frequently seen on census and elsewhere on the island.

Red-headed Woodpecker (*Special Concern*)

- Red-headed Woodpeckers were observed frequently in the netting area at Fish Point and on census, especially in the early part of the spring. They were also seen almost daily along the South Shore Road, especially around Dick's Marina.

American White Pelican (*Threatened*)

- American White Pelicans continued to be a fixture on and around Pelee Island in 2017. PIBO's first sightings took place on April 29th, and they were seen frequently at the tip of Fish Point and flying over the island. A flock of thirty pelicans was seen on Fish Point on June 10th.

Table 8 - Species at Risk			
Observers	Sumiko Onishi, Alice Pintaric, Sachi Schott, Graeme C. Gibson	Hours*	14.5
Notes	No evidence of Prothonotary Warblers or Yellow-breasted Chats breeding on Pelee Island in 2017		
<i>*refers to time spent searching for SAR only – does not include Marsh Monitoring Program, daily census, or migration monitoring</i>			

Breeding Birds at Fish Point

While no formal breeding bird census was conducted at Fish Point this year, the daily census that is conducted as part of the migration monitoring program provides an opportunity to determine which species have territories on the point. Observations of singing males and young-of-the-year indicate that the following species have bred or attempted to breed on Fish Point in 2017:

Canada Goose
Eastern Wood Pewee
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
Red-eyed Vireo
Tree Swallow
Carolina Wren
House Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

American Robin
Yellow Warbler
Prothonotary Warbler
Northern Cardinal
Indigo Bunting
Red-winged Blackbird
Common Grackle
Baltimore Oriole

Interestingly, one male Carolina Wren with a territory at the head of the Fish Point trail had a band on his leg, and may be one of PIBO's past visitors.

In the netting area, Red-Bellied Woodpeckers, American Robins and Tree Swallows were seen engaging in mating behaviour. A family group of three Tree Swallows contested with a pair of Downy Woodpeckers over possession of a nest cavity for several weeks: by the end of the banding season, the Tree Swallows emerged victorious.



Tree Swallow and Purple Martin at the Bird House. Photo by Sachi Schott.

Breeding Bird Census

The Breeding Bird Census (BBC) is a habitat-based survey that collects data that is used to determine the number of males holding territories within a given study plot. By surveying the same plots repeatedly over a number of years, researchers can measure changes in the diversity, distribution and abundance of breeding birds¹. There are ten BBC plots on Pelee Island covering a range of habitats. Two plots are surveyed each year, and it takes five years to complete surveys on all ten plots. The first round of surveys was completed in 2010, and PIBO began the second round in 2014.

In 2017, surveys were completed at Brown's Road North (Florian Diamante Conservation Area - Nature Conservancy of Canada) and Brown's Road South (Florian Diamante Conservation Area - Nature Conservancy of Canada). Each plot was visited ten times from 27 May to 27 June for between 1.5 to 4 hours. Eight of the visits took place in the morning, beginning one half-hour before sunrise, and two took place in the evening. The evening surveys were timed to end one half-hour before sunset. All bird activity was noted and data for each species was transferred onto individual maps to allow for the definition of territorial boundaries. In total 72.5 hours were devoted to BBCs this year and 211 territories were documented belonging to 29 species.

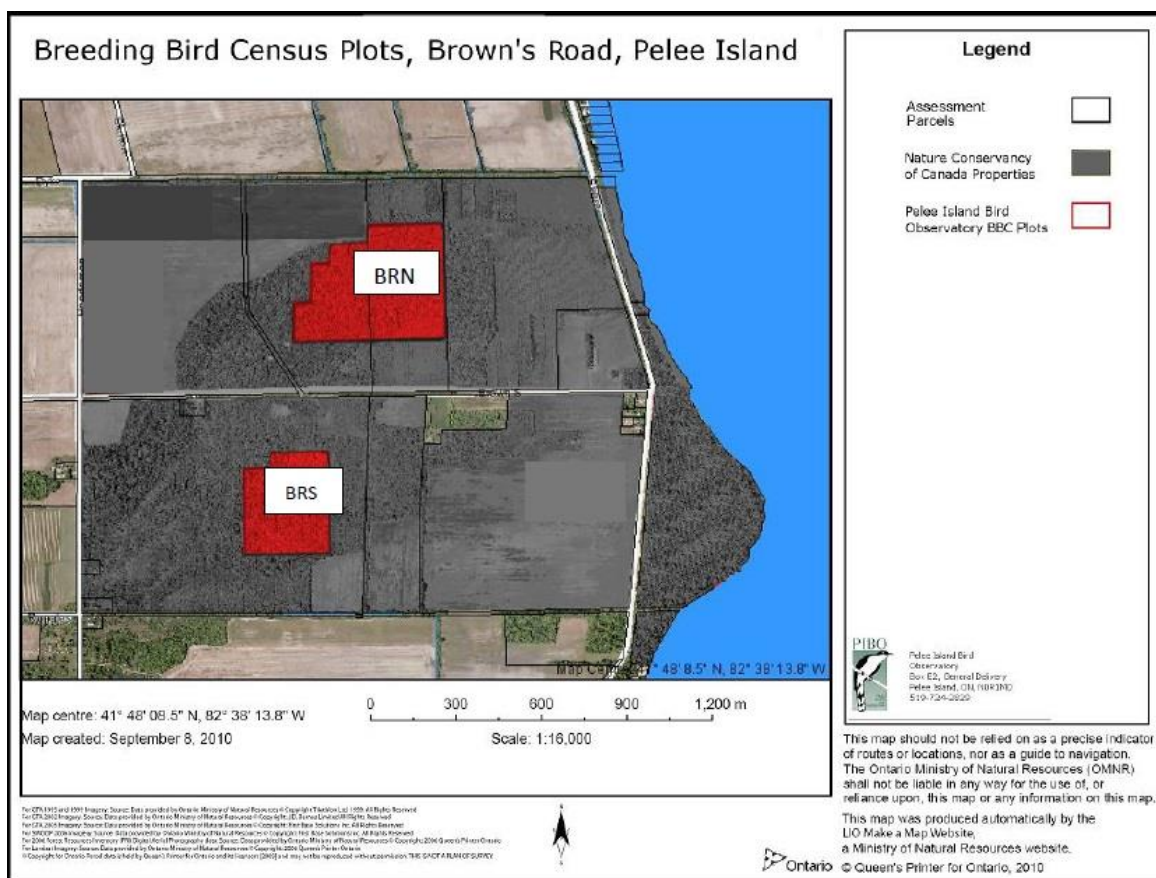


Figure 3. - Locations of Breeding Bird Census plots on Brown's Road, Pelee Island, Ontario. BBC01 (Brown's Road North) is designated 'BRN'; BBC02 (Brown's Road South) is designated 'BRS'.

¹ Gibson, Graeme C., Breeding Bird Surveys on Pelee Island: 2009-2011. Pelee Island Bird Observatory. An unpublished report for the USFW Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Program. 72 pp. (including appendices). 2011.

Table 9 - BROWN'S ROAD NORTH		BBC01
Landowner: Nature Conservancy of Canada		
Location: Brown's Road		
Continuity: Last surveyed in 2010		
Habitat description: Alvar woodland; hackberry, white ash, blue ash, chinquapin oak, hawthorn, red oak, sugar maple; canopy 76%, 13-17 m high		
Size: 13.75 ha		
Year: 2017		
Weather: Mean start temperature 19.9 degrees Celcius		
Coverage: 37.75 hours over 10 visits		
Dates: 27 and 31 May, 03, 08, 10, 12, 15, 17, 22 and 27 June		
	Territories	
Species	2017	2010
Red-winged Blackbird	22	8
House Wren*	12	6
Yellow Warbler	8	3.5
Indigo Bunting	5	5
Red-eyed Vireo	4	1
Eastern Wood-pewee	3	4
Eastern Towhee	3	3
Great Crested Flycatcher*	3	2
Northern Cardinal	2	6
Common Grackle	2	5
Baltimore Oriole	2	1
American Robin	2	3
Black-capped Chickadee	1.5	2
Gray Catbird	1.5	2
American Woodcock	1	
Blue Jay	1	3
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	1	1
Tree Swallow	1	
Wild Turkey*	1	1
Downy Woodpecker	0.5	5
Red-bellied Woodpecker	0.5	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	0.5	2
Yellow-shafted Flicker	0.5	
Cedar Waxwing		1
Mourning Dove		1
Scarlet Tanager		1
Territories:	79	67.5
Per 40 hectares:	229.82	196
Species:	24	23
<i>*Adult birds observed with young</i>		

Table 10 - BROWN'S ROAD SOUTH		BBC02
Landowner: Nature Conservancy of Canada		
Location: Brown's Road		
Continuity: Last surveyed in 2010		
Habitat description: Alvar savannah/shrub thicket; hackberry, black walnut, chinquapin oak, white ash, red ash, hawthorn, red cedar, blue ash; canopy 53%, 8-12 m high		
Size: 10 ha		
Year: 2017		
Weather: Mean start temperature 20.6 degrees Celcius		
Coverage: 34.75 hours over 10 visits		
Dates: 27 and 30 May, 02, 05, 08, 11, 13, 15, 17, 21 June		
	Territories	
Species	2017	2010
Red-winged Blackbird	33.5	29.5
Yellow Warbler	32	11
Eastern Towhee	6	3
Northern Cardinal	5.5	6
Tree Swallow	5	
Indigo Bunting	5	3
Mourning Dove	4.5	6
Brown-headed Cowbird	4	7
Field Sparrow	4	6
American Robin	4	3
Common Grackle	3	7
Baltimore Oriole	3	5
Eastern Wood-pewee	3	2
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	3	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	3	
American Goldfinch	2.5	
Black-capped Chickadee	2.5	3
Blue Jay	2	2
Great-crested Flycatcher	1.5	2
Downy Woodpecker	1	4
American Woodcock	1	1
Black-billed Cuckoo	1	1
Orchard Oriole	1	1
Gray Catbird	0.5	1
Brown Thrasher	0.5	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo		4
Carolina Wren		2
Eastern Kingbird		1
Territories:	132	110.5
Per 40 hectares:	528	442
Species:	25	23

Marsh Monitoring Program – Marsh Bird Surveys

The Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP) is a long-term monitoring program coordinated by Bird Studies Canada to collect information about the presence and abundance of bird and amphibian species in marshes and wetlands throughout the Great Lakes basin. The data collected by the MMP is used to inform and guide conservation, restoration and management programs related to marshes. On Pelee Island, the MMP surveys take place in Lake Henry, at Lighthouse Point Provincial Nature Reserve. Much of the site is overgrown with *phragmite spp.*, with some cattail marsh and other semi-aquatic plant life.

Methods

Marsh bird routes are surveyed three times a year between May 20 and July 10, with each survey beginning four hours before sunset and being completed before dark. The survey dates are determined in part by the weather – there must be good visibility, warm temperatures of at least 16 degrees Celsius, no precipitation and little to no wind, and the surveys must take place at least ten days apart.

PIBO's marsh bird route consists of six stations, each of which is surveyed for fifteen minutes. The first five minutes are a passive (silent) observation period; the second five minutes are a call playback period, during which recordings of focal marsh bird species are played to try and elicit a response from nearby birds; and the last five minutes are another passive observation period. During the fifteen minute observation period, the surveyor records all the focal marsh bird species and secondary species that are seen or heard both inside and outside of the station area.

In 2017, the marsh bird surveys took place on June 1st, June 21st, and July 5th. A canoe was used to reach the six survey stations in Lake Henry, and call-back tapes were used to determine the presence and absence of marsh bird species of interest.

Results

Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, Eastern Kingbirds and American Robins were heard and seen at most stations, and Tree Swallows and Barn Swallows were frequently recorded as fly-overs. A Least Bittern was heard at Station F during the first survey on June 1st, 2017, and one was sighted briefly in between stations on July 5th, when it flew out from the phragmites. The same bird was heard calling at the next station, but from outside the station radius.

Table 11 - Marsh Monitoring Program (Marsh Bird Surveys)			
Observers	Sumiko Onishi, Alice Pintaric, Sachi Schott	Hours	9.5
# of Surveys	3 (01 June, 21 June, 05 July)		
Notes	Least Bittern heard June 1 st , seen and heard July 5 th		

Marsh Monitoring Program – Amphibian Surveys

The MMP protocol also calls for three amphibian surveys to take place between April and July. As Pelee Island has a very limited and predictable number of frog species, PIBO only conducts the last two of those surveys. Three of the survey stations on Pelee Island are located around Lake Henry in the Lighthouse Point Provincial Nature Reserve (Ontario Parks – Ministry of Natural Resources) at the north end of the island, and one is located at Fox Pond in the Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve (Ontario Parks – Ministry of Natural Resources). The surveys begin one half-hour after sunset, and last for three minutes, during which the surveyor records all the frogs that are heard within a 100-m radius of the station point.

Results

This year's surveys turned up the usual groups of Green Frogs, Bullfrogs and American Toads. Most stations had more than one of each species, but there were rarely enough frogs to count as a full 'chorus', with overlapping calls. Overall, the results were similar to those from previous years.

Table 12 - Marsh Monitoring Program (Amphibian Surveys)			
Observers	Sumiko Onishi, Carolyn Zanchetta, Sachi Schott, Alice Pintaric	Hours	2.25
# of Surveys	17 May and 21 June		
Notes	Green Frogs, Bullfrogs and American Toads		



Green Frog. Photo by Sachi Schott.

Monarch butterfly counts

For the 15th consecutive fall season PIBO conducted standardized monarch butterfly migration counts as part of the 90-minute census performed each morning by PIBO staff. The surveys occur along a 2.25 km path at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve.

2017 was a banner year for monarch butterflies on Pelee Island. 381 monarch butterflies were observed in total, an over three-fold increase from 2016's total of 101 monarchs. The highest single daily count was 84 monarchs, seen on September 19th, and there were six days in total that exceeded the highest daily count from 2016 of 14 monarchs. The last monarch of the year was seen on November 3rd, which is similar to previous years. Interestingly, and rather counter-intuitively, the largest numbers of monarchs were observed on mornings with strong winds, overcast skies and some precipitation.

Considering the monarch butterfly's status as an endangered species, this increase in numbers is a very encouraging sign. Hopefully these population gains will be sustained and continue to grow, buoyed in part by the conservation efforts being made by property owners who have planted milkweed and taken other steps to make their gardens and yards butterfly-friendly.

For more information on PIBO's efforts to create habitat for monarch butterflies, please see Section Three – On-line Fundraising.



Monarch butterflies on Pelee Island. Photo by Sumiko Onishi, 2014.

Table 13 - Monarch butterfly counts at Fish Point in 2017				
Date	August	September	October	November
1	3	3	3	0
2	1	1	1	0
3	0	1	1	2
4	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0
6	0	3	3	0
7	0	1	2	0
8	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	2	0
10	1	0	2	0
11	0	0	2	0
12	0	0	3	0
13	4	3	3	0
14	4	0	36	0
15	0	0	2	0
16	5	0	7	X
17	3	0	4	X
18	0	0	18	X
19	0	84	52	X
20	6	1	40	X
21	3	0	0	X
22	0	1	1	X
23	0	2	1	X
24	2	0	0	X
25	5	1	0	X
26	3	0	1	X
27	0	0	4	X
28	9	19	0	X
29	8	1	0	X
30	6	13	0	X
31	3	-	0	-
Total	66	134	188	2
381				
90-minute walking survey conducted at Fish Point, Pelee Island, from Aug 1 to Nov 15, 2017, beginning 1 hour after sunrise.				
X – survey not conducted.				

Dragonfly counts

Monarch butterflies are not the only migratory insect that PIBO counts. Common Green Darners are migratory dragonflies that are seen frequently on Pelee Island. Little is known about their migration, and PIBO has begun to keep track of the numbers of Green Darners seen during the 90-min census at Fish Point in the fall, in case this information will be of use to researchers in the future.

Table 14 - Dragonfly Counts at Fish Point in 2017				
Date	August	September	October	November
1	0	15	0	0
2	0	18	0	0
3	0	13	0	0
4	0	7	0	0
5	0	9	0	0
6	0	7	7	0
7	0	3	0	0
8	0	4	0	0
9	0	2	0	0
10	0	2	0	0
11	0	3	0	0
12	0	2	0	0
13	0	1	0	0
14	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0
16	0	0	0	X
17	0	0	0	X
18	0	0	0	X
19	0	40	0	X
20	0	0	0	X
21	0	0	0	X
22	0	0	0	X
23	0	0	0	X
24	0	0	0	X
25	0	0	0	X
26	0	0	0	X
27	60	0	0	X
28	30	0	0	X
29	25	0	0	X
30	15	0	0	X
31	8	X	0	X
Total	138	126	7	0
271				
90-minute walking survey conducted at Fish Point, Pelee Island, from Aug 1 st to Nov 15 th , 2017, beginning 1 hour after sunrise. X – survey not conducted.				

Northern Saw-Whet Owl banding

Five owling nets were set up on the PIBO property next to the Stone Road Alvar and were opened for eight nights in October and November. A standardized protocol was not followed and nets were opened at the discretion of PIBO staff. The PIBO field house was vacated for the season on November 10th and owl banding was not continued past that date.

While the owl banding coverage for 2017 was comparable to that of 2016 (when nets were opened for eight nights for a total of 102 net hours), the total number of birds banded was much lower. Twice as many Northern Saw-whet Owls were banded last year and five were recaptured, while no recaptures were encountered this year. Interestingly, the Northern Saw-whet Owls began migrating through the island earlier this fall: the first one was captured on October 25th, whereas no Saw-whets were captured until November 4th in 2016, possibly because of sustained south winds.

Table 15 - Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding			
Observers	Sumiko Onishi, Sachi Schott, Patrick Kramer, Graeme C. Gibson		
# of coverage days	8 (Oct 21, 25, 26 and 28; Nov 03, 06, 07 and 08)		
NSWO banded	14	EASO banded	2
NSWO retraps	0	EASO retraps	0
Net hours	119.065	Birds/net hour	0.1344
Notes	EASO heard calling Oct 21, 25 and Nov 07; GHOW observed Nov 08		



Northern Saw-whet Owl. Photo by Sumiko Onishi.

For more information on PIBO's Saw-whet Owl banding, please see Section Two - Public Owling Nights

Data requests



NatureCounts is a website managed by Bird Studies Canada to facilitate the collection, management, analysis, and sharing of natural inventory and monitoring data, with a focus on birds and other vertebrates. PIBO contributes data from several of its programs to the NatureCounts database, including CMMN Daily Estimated Totals, the Christmas Bird Count and its Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP). All contributing members of NatureCounts retain authority over the use of their data, and can withhold data at any time from any party or application.

PIBO received ten requests for data from researchers and research groups via the NatureCounts website in 2017. Some of these requests were denied owing to incomplete applications or because the data collected by PIBO would not be relevant to the proposed project. The following are the research projects to which PIBO has agreed to contribute data (usually in the form of Daily Estimated Totals):

Animals on the Move: Remotely based determination of key drivers influencing movements and habitat selection of highly mobile fauna through the ABoVE study domain – *Ruth Oliver, Columbia University*

Nature Canada's Purple Martin Project – *Megan MacIntosh, Nature Canada*

Masting and Avian Irruptions: Investigating the ecological connections between masting conifer trees and irruptive migrants – *William Hills, University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Phenological shifts due to climate change – *Ika Washington, York University*

Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*) Species Enhancement – *Courtney Dunn, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry*

Species enhancements for Barn Swallow, Bank Swallow, Wood Thrush, Eastern Meadowlark, and Bobolink – *Courtney Dunn, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry*

Yellow-breasted Chat critical habitat identification for upcoming recovery strategy – *Marie Archambault, Canadian Wildlife Service*

Section Two – Education and Outreach

Introduction

PIBO runs education programming both on Pelee Island and in Windsor-Essex County, Ontario. Owing to the organizational difficulties and possible liabilities involved in having students travel by boat to the island, the vast majority of PIBO's education activities take place on the mainland where PIBO offers free in-class programming to schools.

PIBO's Education Coordinator Sarah Keating develops and presents curriculum-relevant programming, featuring different hands-on activities for each grade level. She also travels to various environmental and conservation-related community events in the area to promote PIBO's education programs and educate people about its migration monitoring research. For more information on these activities and on PIBO's on-line school visits, please see PIBO's 2017 Education Program Summary Report by Sarah Keating.



Sarah Keating (left) with students from Pelee Island Public School installing nest boxes, and at the Open Streets event (right) in Windsor, Ontario.

On Pelee Island, PIBO hosted a small number of school groups who braved the mud and the mosquitoes to visit the banding station at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve. PIBO also held its annual picnic during the Spring Song weekend, held several public owling nights in the fall, and was featured in articles in print media and online (see Section Two – PIBO in the News).

Education programs on Pelee Island

The PIBO banding station at Fish Point was visited by several school groups this spring.

- On May 3rd, eight students and two adults visited from **Queen Elizabeth Public School** in Windsor. Owing to the very bad condition of the trail into the netting area and the difficulty of outfitting students with appropriate footwear, PIBO staff brought a House Wren out to the road to show them, along with some banding equipment, and explained how the migration monitoring program works. The students were disappointed not to be able to walk into the netting area, but they were happy to have had the opportunity of seeing a bird. At least one of the visitors in the group had a prior connection to the island: their supervising teacher, Chad Bedal (ESL) is the nephew of Deb Crawford, the school bus driver on Pelee Island.
- Pelee Island hosted twenty students from the **Environmental Leadership Program** (run out of **Catholic Central High School** in London, Ontario and supervised by Dan Van Lieshout) from May 7th to 11th. The Environmental Leadership Program is a co-op program with a strong focus on the outdoors, and as well as visiting the banding station, the students also lent a hand around the PIBO field house during their stay on the island. This year they broke ground on a new wildflower garden that will be seeded with native plant seeds to attract birds and butterflies. On May 9th the students were visited at their campsite by PIBO staff, who spoke about their work and their educational backgrounds.
- On May 12th, PIBO was graced with a visit from the Primary Room of the **Pelee Island Public School**. PIBO's education coordinator, Sarah Keating, accompanied teacher Amanda Forbes, school bus driver Deb Crawford, and five intrepid students as they made the long and muddy trek out to the banding station. PIBO staff were pleased to be able to show them several Yellow Warblers, an Ovenbird, and a Red-Winged Blackbird, and to answer their questions about bird banding and bird migration. The students enjoyed seeing the birds up close, and later wrote about the visit in the Pelee Grapevine, the local community newspaper. In the afternoon, Sarah assisted them as they put up four bird houses in their school yard.



PIPS students at the banding station. Photo by Sumiko Onishi.

- Thirty students and four adults from **Gore Hill Public School** in Leamington, Ontario, visited Pelee Island on June 15th to take part in a bike tour organized by Explore Pelee. Although the spring migration season was over and PIBO's banding station was closed at that time, PIBO staff met the students at Fish Point to talk about the migration monitoring program. Gore Hill Public School is one of the schools that was visited by PIBO's education coordinator Sarah Keating this spring, and most of the students were familiar with migration monitoring from her presentation on birds and bird migration. Afterwards, Brenda and Sarah from Explore Pelee took the students on a walking tour of Fish Point.

PIBO picnic

PIBO hosted its annual community picnic on May 14th. An overcast morning cleared into a sunny afternoon, allowing approximately 70 guests to enjoy an outdoor lunch at the PIBO field house on Stone Road. Sausages were barbecued by Jeff Hasulo and Rob O'Dell, and vegan and gluten-free side dishes as well as desserts and beverages, were provided by PIBO's Executive Director, Suzanne Friemann. PIBO was pleased to welcome both old friends and new visitors to the island including Holly Hogan, a free-lance ornithologist who often works for the Canadian Wildlife Service, and her husband, the poet Michael Crummey. Martin and Cathy Parker attended with their tour group from the Ontario Field Ornithologists, who were delighted to have the chance to view PIBO's resident fox snake sunning itself in the window of the trailer. Over \$700 was collected in donations and from the sale of PIBO t-shirts and Sumiko Onishi's greeting cards.

Also taking place that weekend was the annual Spring Song Bird Race, which ran from 12 p.m. on Friday, May 12th to 12 p.m. on Saturday, May 13th. PIBO staff added up the checklists from each team to determine the winner and collated the results. In total 150 species were seen by nine teams (two of whom participated in the non-green Bird Race and seven of whom competed in the green Bird Race). The winning team, claiming the Botham Cup for the fourth year in the row, belonged to J + K Rolling and Kestrel and Jerry DeMarco. Notable sightings included a Summer Tanager and a Grasshopper Sparrow that were seen by several of the teams, and a Kentucky Warbler and a Harris's Sparrow reported by Eric and Mike Oroz.



PIBO community picnic. Photos by Suzanne Friemann.

Public owling nights

PIBO hosted three public owling nights in 2017, beginning on October 21st and continuing into the first week of November. The first night was especially well-attended, with approximately 27 visitors dropping by to enjoy mulled wine, hot apple cider, and light refreshments. An Eastern Screech Owl obliged us by putting in an appearance early on in the evening, and tolerated being banded, measured, and photographed with good grace. Unfortunately rain and high winds delayed the third public owling night, which was held on Monday, November 6th instead. This ended up being the most successful owling night to date, with five Northern Saw-whet Owls captured in total. Pelee Island resident Rob Tymstra photographed several of the owls, and has offered to make the photographs available to PIBO for promotional or fundraising purposes.



Northern Saw-whet Owl. Photo by Rob Tymstra.

While there is no charge to attend PIBO's public owling nights, visitors are invited to leave a donation if they are so inclined. In total, PIBO's owling visitors contributed \$94 in 2017.

Awards

PIBO's Education Coordinator Sarah Keating was awarded a "Pat on the Back Award" by the Windsor Essex County Environment Committee on June 1st in recognition of her outstanding work providing free in-class education programming.

The "Pat on the Back Award" is a \$500 grant given to small local organizations that foster sustainability in the Windsor-Essex community. The award was presented on June 1st at the Ojibway Nature Center. Applicants had to complete a written application and then present their projects in a 5-minute presentation to the judging panel, following which the judging panel selected the four successful candidates who were awarded the grant.

The other winners in 2017 were: John A. McWilliam Public School, for their shaded outdoor learning space; the Bloomfield House, for their community garden; and the Downtown Windsor Community Collaborative for their Spruce Up Spruce Park event.



PIBO's Education Coordinator Sarah Keating. Photo from Twitter.

PIBO in the News

The Pelee Island Bird Observatory made a cameo appearance in a blog post by Ontario Parks about bird migration and Important Bird Areas:

<http://www.ontarioparks.com/parksblog/ibas-of-ontario-parks-spring-migration-on-lake-erie/>

And PIBO's education coordinator Sarah Keating's work at Gore Hill Public School was featured in a local Leamington paper:

http://www.southpointsun.ca/images/sun_web_ap19_2017.pdf

PIBO's education programs, and the American White Pelican's range expansion into the Lake Erie Islands, were featured in an article by Sharon Hill in the Windsor Star on August 29th, 2017, accompanied by photographs taken by Sumiko Onishi:



<http://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/pelicans-popping-up-on-pelee-island-other-lake-erie-islands>

Section Three – Other News

Great Canadian Birdathon

2017 was the second year in which PIBO's Field Supervisor Sumiko Onishi participated in the Great Canadian Birdathon (formerly the Baillie Birdathon). Over 7,000 people across Canada participate in the birdathon each year, either by sponsoring a birder or by agreeing to devote one day in May exclusively to birding. The money raised goes to Bird Studies Canada (BSC), Canada's leading science-based bird conservation organization.

Sumiko spent twenty-four hours from May 11th to May 12th 2017 looking and listening for birds on Pelee Island. The following is taken from her post about her birdathon experience on the PIBO website (pibo.ca):



Male Indigo Bunting. Photo by Sumiko Onishi.

"On May 11th I did my Great Canadian Birdathon to support Bird Studies Canada and PIBO. This was my second Birdathon and I didn't have much of a strategy, and felt quite a lot of pressure to find lots of species – my usual job is counting common species. I usually ask advice from those with lots of experience, but this year I made the decision about which day to start and where to check for birds. Of course, I had great support from my co-workers, who were taking care of the banding station.

We hadn't seen many warblers and flycatchers up until May 10th, which made it hard to decide whether to do the birdathon before or after the weekend. On May 11th I recorded 57 species, including 14 warbler species and lots of flycatchers, on my census, and decided to keep recording for my birdathon. My co-workers at the banding station, however, were quite busy that morning, which made me hesitate

to leave the area just in case they got busier. After all they banded 72 birds while I looked for more birds. There were lots of Ovenbirds hanging around – we banded 17 altogether. When I found a bird, it was often an Ovenbird, which didn't help add new species! I didn't see any raptors either, even a Red-tailed Hawk and kestrel I had seen the day before. Strong east winds limited bird activity to the west side, along with my ability to catch the bird songs and calls. Ring-necked Pheasant, Chipping Sparrow, and House Finch were some of the species I couldn't find. I usually hear and see them from the car when I'm driving, but not that day. I still don't know how I missed a Downy Woodpecker and Yellow-shafted Flicker! Maybe I was focusing too much on looking for more species to hear them? Anyway, for the next time I learned it's better to have check list to confirm which species I haven't seen. I didn't see any rare birds, but whenever I started to give up a new species showed up. A Green Heron flew over me from behind, a Chimney Swift flew across above the canopy, and a big flock of Black-bellied Plovers showed up.

Thank you so much to everyone who sponsored my birdathon. Your support encouraged me a lot! I will do my best next year too!"

The 98 species Sumiko recorded on May 11th, 2017 were:

Common Loon	Eastern Phoebe	Cape May Warbler
Horned Grebe	Great Crested Flycatcher	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Double-crested Cormorant	Red-eyed Vireo	Blackburnian Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Warbling Vireo	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Great Egret	Blue-headed Vireo	Black-throated Green Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Blue Jay	Western Palm Warbler
Canada Goose	American Crow	Pine Warbler
Wood Duck	Horned Lark	Black-and-white Warbler
Mallard	Purple Martin	American Redstart
Red-breasted Merganser	N. Rough-winged Swallow	Ovenbird
Bald Eagle	Bank Swallow	Northern Waterthrush
Northern Harrier	Tree Swallow	Common Yellowthroat
Wild Turkey	Barn Swallow	Canada Warbler
Black-bellied Plover	Black-capped Chickadee	Scarlet Tanager
Killdeer	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Northern Cardinal
Lesser Yellowlegs	Carolina Wren	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Spotted Sandpiper	House Wren	Indigo Bunting
Ruddy Turnstone	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Eastern Towhee
Dunlin	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Field Sparrow
American Woodcock	Eastern Bluebird	White-throated Sparrow
Ring-billed Gull	American Robin	White-crowned Sparrow
Herring Gull	Wood Thrush	Song Sparrow
Great Black-backed Gull	Veery	Lincoln's Sparrow
Caspian Tern	Swainson's Thrush	Brown-headed Cowbird
Common Tern	Grey Catbird	Red-winged Blackbird
Mourning Dove	Brown Thrasher	Common Grackle
Black-billed Cuckoo	European Starling	Baltimore Oriole
Chimney Swift	Cedar Waxwing	American Goldfinch
Red-headed Woodpecker	Northern Parula	House Sparrow
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Nashville Warbler	Brewster's Warbler
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Yellow Warbler	Green Heron
"Trail's" Flycatcher	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Northern Mockingbird
Least Flycatcher	Magnolia Warbler	

Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup



Red Fox cub with plastic takeout container at Fish Point. Photo by Sachi Schott, 2014.

Among the natural attractions of Pelee Island, the beaches at Lighthouse Point and Fish Point stand out as popular areas for hikers, birders and photographers alike. But their picturesque locations, trailing out into Lake Erie at the north and south ends of the island respectively, mean that a considerable amount of litter washes up on their shores. Balloons and balloon ribbon are a ubiquitous sight, and plastic beach toys, various types of cans and bottles, fishing line and fishing buoys, and tampon applicators are all frequently found on all of Pelee Island's shores. This debris is not only unsightly, it also threatens the lives of wild birds and other animals. They may ingest it; become entangled in it; or be poisoned by the chemicals that plastics and polystyrenes emit as they break down. It is not uncommon for PIBO staff to see gulls flying by trailing lengths fishing line, sometimes with the lures still attached; and each November, when we clean out the Purple Martin boxes outside of the PIBO field house on Stone Road, we find nests that contain pieces of plastic, packing tape, and cigarette butts.

The Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup is a joint initiative by the World Wildlife Fund and the Vancouver Aquarium wherein businesses, community groups, schools, and concerned citizens work together to remove litter, especially plastic debris, from the shorelines and waterways in their area. Participants fill garbage bags, which are then collected and properly disposed of, and fill out a tally sheet on which they indicate the kind and quantity of debris collected. This year, the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup on Pelee Island took place on April 29th. PIBO's Field Supervisor Sumiko Onishi and Assistant Field Biologist Sachi Schott participated by picking up litter on the southern shoreline of the island, along South Shore Road. Together they filled two bags with garbage including foam insulation, rope, fishing line and a pair of plastic swim goggles, and two bags with glass and plastic recyclables. Other groups collected debris on Fish Point and in areas along the west and north shores. The bags full of litter that were carted off to waste collection depot on the island represent only a small fraction of what ends up in Lake Erie each year: but, by tidying up the beach and contributing data to the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, we hope to make a small but significant impact in the lives of Pelee Island's non-human residents.

Christmas Bird Count

PIBO assisted with the coordination of the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count in the Lake Erie Islands on December 17th, 2017. This year fifteen participants including islanders, visitors, and feeder watchers recorded 5054 birds of 61 species (a slight decrease from last year's count of 6231 birds). Northern Shrike, Eastern Phoebe, Western Palm Warbler, and Swamp Sparrow were all new for the count.

Table 16 – 2017 Pelee Island Audubon Christmas Bird Count (December 17th, 2017)

Species	Total	Species	Total
Canada Goose	502	Northern Shrike	1
Tundra Swan	10	Blue Jay	49
Mallard	9	American Crow	2
Greater Scaup	13	Horned Lark	23
Lesser Scaup	8	Black-capped Chickadee	89
Bufflehead	259	White-breasted Nuthatch	10
Common Goldeneye	319	Brown Creeper	1
Red-breasted Merganser	890	Winter Wren	1
Common Merganser	10	Carolina Wren	18
Ring-necked Pheasant	22	Eastern Bluebird	14
Wild Turkey	303	American Robin	12
Pied-billed Grebe	1	European Starling	1043
Horned Grebe	1	Cedar Waxwing	77
Great Blue Heron	2	Snow Bunting	5
Bald Eagle	13	Western Palm Warbler	1
Northern Harrier	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler	3
Cooper's Hawk	2	American Tree Sparrow	140
Red-tailed Hawk	11	Song Sparrow	8
Rough-legged Hawk	2	White-throated Sparrow	34
Bonaparte's Gull	8	Dark-eyed Junco	103
Ring-billed Gull	60	Northern Cardinal	102
Herring Gull	76	Red-winged Blackbird	2
Great Black-backed Gull	5	Rusty Blackbird	2
Mourning Dove	8	Common Grackle	9
Eastern Screech-owl	3	Brown-headed Cowbird	52
Snowy Owl	1	House Finch	9
Great Horned Owl	3	American Goldfinch	16
Red-bellied Woodpecker	20	House Sparrow	165
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	(Waterfowl spp.)	354
Downy Woodpecker	44	(Scaup spp.)	59
Northern Flicker	35	(Gull spp.)	5
Eastern Phoebe	2		
		Individuals	5054
		Species	61

Heritage Center Exhibit

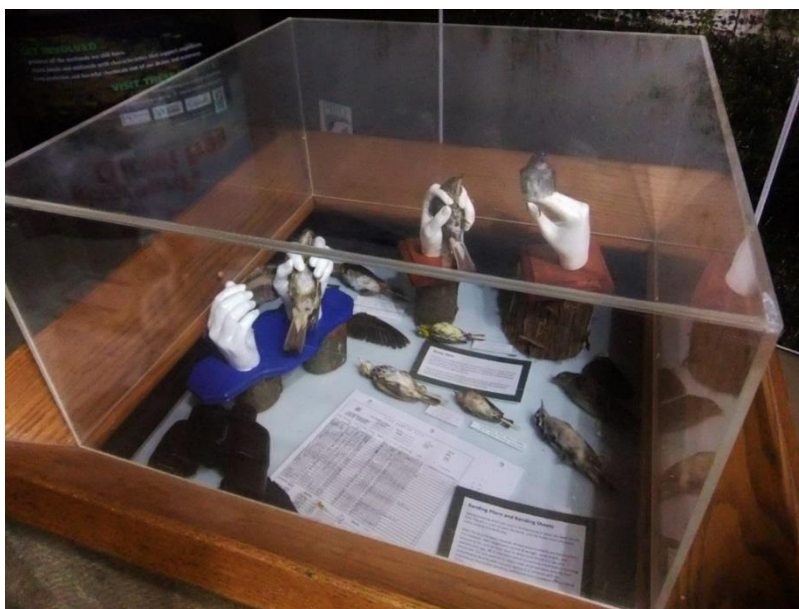
PIBO is very pleased to announce that the PIBO exhibit in the Pelee Island Heritage Center is now complete and open to the public. The information panels, which were the final item needed, were printed by Speedprint in Leamington and installed by Richard Galloway in time for the exhibit to be opened on Spring Song weekend.

The exhibit describes PIBO's migration monitoring and breeding bird projects and provides information on Pelee Island's avian species at risk. It also features a display on the Blanchard's Cricket Frog, which once lived on Pelee Island but is now extirpated. The information panels were written by Graeme C. Gibson; taxidermy specimens and bird skins were prepared by Sachi Schott.



PIBO's Heritage Center exhibit. Photos by Sachi Schott.

Funds were raised at this year's Spring Song dinner through the auctioning of several hand-crafted items donated by PIBO staff members Sumiko Onishi and Sachi Schott that will be put towards the purchasing of new display cases to improve the Heritage Center exhibit in the years to come.



One of the display cases in the PIBO exhibit. Photo by Sachi Schott.

Windsor fundraiser



Approximately 150 people attended the 2017 Windsor fundraiser, which took place on Wednesday May 10th, at the Beach Grove Golf and Country Club. The Newfoundland poet Michael Crummey was the guest of honour.



2017 PIBO fundraiser. Photo by Sarah Keating.

Toronto fundraiser

Michael Crummey was also the guest of honour at the PIBO fundraiser in Toronto. Approximately 50 people attended.

On-line fundraising

In 2017, PIBO ran two on-line fundraising campaigns through Generosity by Indiegogo, an offshoot of Indiegogo that is geared towards fundraising for personal and social causes.

The first, PIBO's 'Monarchs for Moms' fundraising campaign, raised \$808 to plant milkweed and native wildflowers on its McCormick Road property on Pelee Island. Surplus funds will be applied to PIBO's educational outreach program, which is provided for free to students in Windsor-Essex county. Through this program children are educated about the threats faced by monarch butterflies and songbirds on their migration journeys. The fundraiser was timed to coincide with Mothers' Day and was promoted with the tagline "Tell your mom you love her by saving a butterfly". By the end of the campaign, 16 backers had contributed in total.

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/monarchs-for-moms#/>

The second fundraising campaign was launched in November 2017, and is still ongoing. Its aim is to raise \$10,000 to partially cover the cost of purchasing and installing a new septic system at the PIBO field house (the remainder of the cost will be covered by grants). The current system is at least 30 years old and has partially corroded. Given the close proximity of the PIBO field house to Lake Erie and highly sensitive alvar habitat on Pelee Island, the possible leakage of sewage is a real concern. The money raised through the Indiegogo campaign will be used to install a new Waterloo Biofilter septic system, which is designed specifically for environmentally-sensitive lands. It filters waste through a two-stage system to ensure that the water that is produced is clean and contaminant-free.

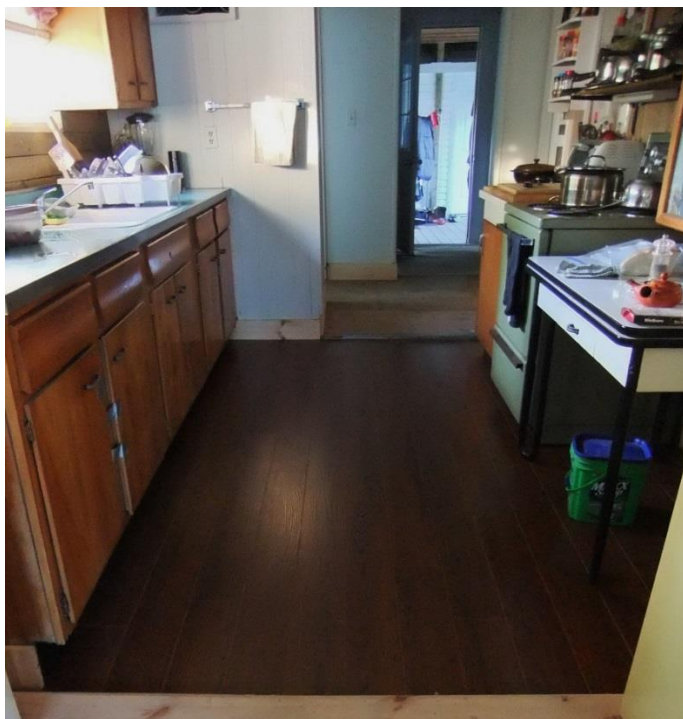
To help drum up donations various incentives have been donated by PIBO staff and board members, including greeting cards; 'Birds of Pelee Island' tea towels; a day-long bird tour with PIBO's Science Officer Pat Kramer; and the chance to attend a nature-themed writer's workshop at the Pelee Island Book House. As of December 13th, 29 incentives had been claimed and \$5,491 USD had been raised by 33 donors. The campaign will run until January 2018.

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-grass-is-too-green-over-the-septic-tank#/>

For information on the results of PIBO's past Indiegogo campaigns, please see Section Three – Field House Maintenance.

Field House Maintenance

In December 2016 PIBO launched a Generosity by Indiegogo campaign to raise funds to replace the floor in the PIBO field house, which had been in the process of slowly disintegrating for many years. \$1,365 USD was raised by 14 people in 29 days, providing some of the money needed for a new floor. Randy Gardner removed and replaced the rotted floor joists over the winter and laid down a new plywood floor. While this was a great improvement, the floor remained unfinished for several months until PIBO's education coordinator Sarah Keating stepped forward and generously donated a quantity of laminate floorboards, as well as the time and labour of her partner, Rob O'Dell, and her father, Mark Keating. After a morning of hard work on their part, the PIBO field house was graced with a new, beautiful kitchen floor. As well as looking great, the laminate floorboards make it much easier to keep the kitchen clean. The section of floor in front of the bathroom and in the entryway remain unfinished at the time of writing.



PIBO's new kitchen floor and UV water filtration system. Photos by Sachi Schott and Sumiko Onishi.

This spring also saw the installation of a UV water filter in the PIBO field house, which will provide potable tap water for PIBO staff in the coming years. Many thanks to Randy Gardner for installing the filter and doing much-needed maintenance work on the water tank and pump. The PIBO field house's water now comes from the Pelee Island township and is filtered through a two-stage process to make it safe to drink. 100% of the funds required for this project were crowdsourced through a fundraising campaign on Indiegogo.

The refrigerator at the PIBO field house was finally replaced in November, after many years of faithful service. While it still functioned, it had problems with build-ups of condensation and mould and could not have lasted much longer. It was removed by Jacques McCormick and Lyle Geauvreau, and replaced with a new energy-efficient Whirlpool model. The new refrigerator is considerably more quiet, and also larger, to accommodate the growing numbers of PIBO staff living at the field house. Jacques and Lyle have also begun examining the PIBO field house with an eye to repairing and replacing the evestroughs, which are in an extremely dilapidated condition.

In addition to the improvements carried out at the PIBO field house, new windows were installed at PIBO's rental cottage, the Bird House. The Bird House is a source of income for the bird observatory and provides accommodation for non-field staff and board members when they visit Pelee Island. The new windows will improve the cottage's energy efficiency and help to keep visitors warm and cozy when the wind is blowing in off the lake.

Partnerships

For the second year in a row, PIBO's Field Supervisor Sumiko Onishi generously donated three of her bird drawings to the Pelee Island Beautification Committee. These drawings were printed on coffee mugs that were sold to raise funds for the Committee. As a token of their gratitude, the Committee donated a portion of the funds raised to PIBO.



*Pelee Island Beautification Committee member Marilyn Pow and PIBO Field Supervisor Sumiko Onishi.
Photo by Gordon Pow.*



PIBO sponsored a "Writing Nature" workshop at the Pelee Island Book House, a writers' retreat that provides writers with the time and space to work on their manuscripts while receiving support and advice from a creative community. The workshop was run by author Wayne Grady and ran from Tuesday May 16th to Saturday May 20th, 2017. The retreat included accommodations, meals, group discussions, and an individual text critique by Mr. Grady. A portion of the proceeds from enrolment tuition were donated to PIBO.

PIBO will be sponsoring another "Writing Nature" workshop in May 2018.

www.peleeislandwriting.com/2018-Retreats.php

Staff news



PIBO staff, spring 2017. From left to right: Sarah Keating (Education Coordinator), Suzanne Friemann (Executive Director), Alice Pintaric (Summer Student), Carolyn Zanchetta (Science Officer – former), Sumiko Onishi (Field Supervisor), and Sachi Schott (Assistant Field Biologist). Photo by Jeff Hasulo.

PIBO's core staff members remained the same in 2017, but were joined by some new faces in both the spring and fall seasons.

Suzanne Friemann continues as Executive Director.

Sumiko Onishi once again headed the field team as PIBO's Field Supervisor.

Sachi Schott assisted with field operations as the Assistant Field Biologist.

Sarah Keating returned as PIBO's indefatigable Education Coordinator.

Carolyn Zanchetta was PIBO's first Science Officer from April 21st to May 26th. In the short time that she was with us she was invaluable in organizing fourteen years of migration monitoring data; in running essential errands on the mainland; and in many other ways materially contributing to the smooth running of PIBO's field house. Carolyn was also instrumental in conducting surveys and removing invasive species at the PIBO property at McCormick Road, which will be actively managed as a habitat for monarch butterflies and other species at risk. We were sorry to see her go, and wish her all the best with her new position at Environment Hamilton.

Alice Pintaric joined PIBO as a Summer Student from May 5th to June 29th, and assisted with all field operations, from banding and extracting birds as part of the migration monitoring program to handling the canoe during the marsh bird surveys. She proved herself to be an able and enthusiastic bird bander, and contributed greatly to the spring season. Alice is currently finishing up her Master's degree on Eastern Meadowlarks and Bobolinks with the University of Trent.



PIBO's Science Officer Patrick Kramer. Photo by Patrick Kramer.

Patrick Kramer replaced Carolyn Zanchetta as the Science Officer in September of this year. He was previously working for the Ministry of Natural Resources in Timmins, and completed his Ph.D. on the reproductive strategies of Purple Martins under Dr. Bridget Stutchbury at the University of York in Toronto. This fall, Patrick took over doing the daily census from Sumiko, and assisted at the banding station. He also applied for a variety of grants which, if successful, will give PIBO the opportunity to expand into areas of bat and amphibian research. Patrick will continue working part-time for PIBO over the winter and will return to his full-time position as Science Officer on Pelee Island in April, 2018.

Acknowledgements

The Pelee Island Bird Observatory would like to thank Ontario Parks for their continued permission to use Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve as our study site. We would also like to thank our major supporters:

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We would also like to thank Michael Crummey for being the guest of honour at PIBO's Windsor and Toronto fundraisers, and at the Pelee Island Heritage Center's Spring Song dinner.

A sincere thank you as well to our many individual donors, friends, supporters, Indiegogo contributors, partners, and PIBO's hard-working volunteers!