

2019

PELEE ISLAND BIRD OBSERVATORY



Year-end Report

By Sachi Schott, Kathy Parker
and Suzanne Friemann

General Information

Pelee Island Bird Observatory (PIBO)

Address: 585 South Shore Road, Pelee Island, Ontario, Canada N0R 1M0
Phone: 519-724-2829
Email: info@pibo.ca
Website: www.pibo.ca
Facebook: [PeleeIslandBirdObservatory](https://www.facebook.com/PeleeIslandBirdObservatory)
Twitter: [PeleeIslandBird](https://twitter.com/PeleeIslandBird)
Instagram: [@peleebird](https://www.instagram.com/peleebird)

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 – Margaret Atwood (Honorary Chair), Matthew Gibson (Co-chair), John Gruetzner (Co-chair), Donna Hayes, Wayne Grady, and Penny Kavanaugh.

Advisors to the Board – Philip Slayton

Executive Director – Suzanne Friemann

Field Supervisor and Bander-in-Charge – Sumiko Onishi

Education Coordinator – Mary-Jo Rusu

Assistant Field Biologist – Sachi Schott

Assistant Field Biologist – Kathy Parker

Founder – Graeme Gibson the Younger

Founding Patrons – Margaret Atwood and Mysterious Starling Inc.

Cover photo: Turkey Vultures on Stewart Road, Pelee Island, Ontario. Photo by Sachi Schott.

Suggested citation: Schott, Sachi, Kathy Parker and Suzanne Friemann. 2019. Pelee Island Bird Observatory – 2019 Year-end Report. An unpublished report by the Pelee Island Bird Observatory for Ontario Parks/Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. 84 pp.

Executive Summary

Many hands contributed to PIBO's field work in 2019, and helped to keep PIBO's research programs running smoothly while PIBO's Field Supervisor was obliged to be absent from Pelee Island. A mix of new and old staff members and volunteers recorded 185 different species of birds migrating through or breeding on Pelee Island from the beginning of April to mid-November, and in total, 2568 individual birds were captured of 84 species during spring and fall migration.

Staffing shortages and persistently inclement weather complicated the spring season, but in spite of these challenges PIBO's banding station at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve (Ontario Parks – Ministry of Natural Resources) enjoyed a busy season. There were only ten days where the mist-nets could be opened for the full six-hour banding period, but thanks to a bustling few days in mid-May the season finished with an average of 0.79 birds/net hour captured (compared to 0.73 birds/net hour in 2018). A large part of the spring banding total was made up of Red-breasted Nuthatches, whose fall eruption in 2018 appeared to continue over the spring as the birds returned to their breeding grounds up north.

PIBO's banding station was generously staffed in the fall, when an additional Assistant Field Biologist with extensive birding experience was hired. However, more hands at the banding station did not translate to more birds being captured and the fall season was unusually quiet, with only one day when more than one hundred birds were captured. Taken as a whole, the season saw 0.54 birds/net hour captured. A spell of bad weather at the end of October and the beginning of November led to the banding station being closed with unusual rapidity, and the fall banding season ended about a week earlier than it has in previous years.

Thanks to Nature Canada's Save our Swallows campaign, PIBO received and installed a new Purple Martin house. In exchange, PIBO's field staff agreed to monitor and report on the nesting success of the Purple Martins that use the box. Nest checks were carried out every five days once egg laying had begun, and the majority of the nests enjoyed a good breeding season, with an estimated 104 young Purple Martins fledging from the houses. PIBO also continued its Species at Risk monitoring activities in 2019, but found no signs of Prothonotary Warbler or Yellow-breasted Chat breeding activity on Pelee Island.

Throughout the year, PIBO engaged in various social and educational events. PIBO's field staff were invited to speak to several tour groups that visited the island, including one from Quebec. After connecting with them via online video in 2018, it was a pleasure to welcome students from Gore Hill Public School to Pelee Island, where they were able to assist with PIBO's Purple Martin nest check. PIBO's Summer Student Melanie Denommé ran a booth at the Pelee Island Quarry Market in June and July, handing out brochures about keeping wild birds safe from cats and windows, and answering visitors' questions about PIBO and local birds. Pelee Island as a whole was enlivened by a visit from the crew of the CBC television show 'Still Standing', who filmed PIBO's first Public Owling Night of 2019. And PIBO's bird banding station at Fish Point continued to welcome visitors during both the spring and fall migration seasons.

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

Table of Contents

General Information	1
Executive Summary.....	2
Tables and Figures	5
Introduction	6
Section One – Research	7
Songbird migration monitoring.....	7
2019 Spring Migration Summary	10
2019 Fall Migration Summary	17
2019 Migration Monitoring Summary	22
Most Common Species Banded	26
2019 Migration Trends.....	27
Red-breasted Nuthatches	27
Notable Band Encounters	28
2019 Rare Birds.....	29
Species at Risk.....	29
2019 Northern Saw-whet Owl banding	31
2019 Breeding Bird Point Counts	33
Alvar (Nature Conservancy of Canada)	35
Wilds of Pelee (Nature Conservancy of Canada)	37
Red Cedar Savannah North (Nature Conservancy of Canada).....	39
Von W (Nature Conservancy of Canada)	41
Red Cedar Savannah South (Pelee Island Winery).....	43
Marsh Monitoring Program (Birds).....	45
Marsh Monitoring Program (Amphibians).....	46
Marsh Monitoring Program (Vegetation)	47
Prothonotary Warbler nest box monitoring	48
2019 Purple Martin Monitoring Program	52
Monarch butterfly counts	57
Dragonfly counts.....	59
Data requests.....	60
Canadian Migration Monitoring Network membership renewal & habitat monitoring protocol	61
Section Two – Education and Outreach.....	62

Introduction	62
School Groups & Visitors	62
Dan & Environmental Leadership Program (London District High School)	62
Groupes Voyages	63
Road Scholar group	63
Paint Creek Garden Club	63
Gore Hill Public School	63
Other Pelee Island groups	64
Pelee Island Farmers' Market	64
Additional On-island Outreach	65
Pelee Island Grapevine – Baby Birds.....	65
PIBO Picnic	66
Spring Song Bird Race	66
Public owling nights	69
Section Three – Other News	70
2019 Windsor Fundraiser.....	70
2019 Toronto Fundraiser	71
Music and Migration.....	72
Green Drinks.....	73
Update on Fundraising Initiatives.....	73
Birds of Pelee Island Checklist	74
PIBO Brochure.....	74
Heritage Center exhibit.....	76
Media Mentions - CBC's 'Still Standing.....	77
Field House & Banding Station Maintenance.....	78
Bird Rescues	80
2019 Staff & Volunteers.....	81
In Memoriam: Graeme Gibson the Elder.....	83
Acknowledgements.....	84

Tables and Figures

Table 1 – 2019 Migration Monitoring.....	p. 9
Table 2 – Migration Monitoring (Spring).....	p. 15
Table 3 – Daily Coverage Code.....	p. 16
Table 4 – Migration Monitoring (Fall)	p. 20
Table 5 – Combined spring and fall migration monitoring in 2019.....	p. 22
Table 6 – Birds captured at Fish Point in 2019.....	p. 23
Table 7 – List of species and forms recorded at Fish Point in 2019.....	pp. 24 & 25
Table 8 – Top ten species captured at Fish Point in 2019.....	p. 26
Table 9 – Yellow-breasted Chat surveys.....	p. 30
Table 10 – Northern Saw-whet Owl banding.....	p. 31
Table 11 – 2019 Breeding Bird Point Counts.....	p. 33
Table 12 – Number of point count sites where species were recorded at least once during 80 five-minute point count surveys.....	p. 34
Table 13 – Alvar point count results.....	p. 35
Table 14 – Alvar point count results (2019 and 2008)	p. 36
Table 15 – Wilds of Pelee point count results.....	p. 37
Table 16 – Wilds of Pelee point count results (2019 and 2008).....	p. 38
Table 17 – Red Cedar Savannah North point count results.....	p. 39
Table 18 – Red Cedar Savannah North point count results (2019, 2008 and 2006)	p. 40
Table 19 – Von W point count results.....	p. 41
Table 20 – Von W point count results (2019 and 2008).....	p. 42
Table 21 – Red Cedar Savannah South point count results.....	p. 43
Table 22 – Red Cedar Savannah South point count results (2019, 2008 and 2006).....	p. 44
Table 23 – Marsh Monitoring Program (birds).....	p. 45
Table 24 – Marsh Monitoring Program (amphibians).....	p. 46
Table 25 – Marsh Monitoring Program (plants).....	p. 47
Table 26 – Prothonotary Warbler nest box monitoring.....	p. 48
Table 27 – 2019 Prothonotary Warbler nest box contents.....	p. 49
Table 28 – UTM coordinates of Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes at Fish Point.....	p. 50
Table 29 – 2019 summary of results from PIBO's Purple Martin houses.....	p. 53
Table 30 – 2019 Purple Martin monitoring program.....	p. 55
Table 31 – Monarch butterfly counts at Fish Point in 2019.....	p. 58
Table 32 – Dragonfly counts at Fish Point in 2019.....	p. 59
Table 33 – 2019 Spring Song Bird Race teams and totals.....	p. 66
Table 34 – 2019 Spring Song Bird Race species list.....	pp. 67 & 68
Figure 1 – A Sharp-shinned Hawk recaptured by PIBO was originally banded in Gilford, Ontario.....	p. 28
Figure 2 – Placement of owling nets at PIBO's field house on Stone Road in 2019.....	p. 32
Figure 3 – Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes at Fish Point.....	p. 51

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 2019 research season including details about PIBO's spring and fall migration monitoring program, summer breeding bird point counts, monarch butterfly counts, and Purple Martin nest checks. The results of each research program are summarized in tables presented throughout the section and further tables and figures are used to illustrate noteworthy results and observations, including the details of the two Purple Martins from Ohio, USA that PIBO captured in 2019. 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 2019. 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 and PIBO's other educational activities, please see PIBO's 2019 Education Program Summary Report by education coordinator Mary-Jo Rusu.

Section Three highlights other developments at PIBO in 2019, including media mentions, improvements to the field cottage, and a description of the temporary exhibit on band encounters and band recoveries that was added to the PIBO exhibit at the Pelee Island Heritage Centre.



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

Section One – Research

Songbird migration monitoring

Situated in the western half of Lake Erie, Ontario, Pelee Island is the most southerly inhabited landmass in Canada (Lat.-Long: 41° 45' 00" N - 82° 41' 00" W) and the largest island in the Pelee Island Archipelago. It lies between Leamington, Ontario on the north shore of Lake Erie (approx. 26 km away) and Sandusky, Ohio on the south shore (36 km).



Spring storm on Fish Point, Pelee Island. Photo by Sachi Schott.

Ecologically, Pelee Island is comprised of a limestone base that supports a variety of different habitats including temperate deciduous woodlands; freshwater marsh; costal dune systems; and abandoned or fallow farmland. The island is also home to large areas of alvar-savannah, a vegetation community of global significance, and contains a number of provincially and nationally rare and endangered plants. It is located at the junction of two pathways used by migratory species (the Atlantic and Mississippi flyways), and is a convenient 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 the Canadian partners of Birdlife International: the Canadian Nature Federation (CNF) and Bird Studies Canada (BSC). Not only is Pelee Island an important stop-over site for migrating birds, but it also hosts significant bird communities that breed on the island in the summer.¹

¹ Information about the geography, geology, and ornithological importance of Pelee Island is from 'Migration Monitoring Pilot Study Pelee Island – 2002 business plan (Draft)' by Graeme Gibson, January 2002.

Migration monitoring is a standardized program which generates a 'snapshot' of bird activity in a given area through the counting and capture of migrant birds. Repeated daily and annually, it has been proven to be an effective way to identify and study the long-term population changes of North American songbirds. Accurate knowledge of population status is vital to species conservation, and since many songbirds 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.

PIBO's migration monitoring work takes place within the Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve (Ontario Parks – Ministry of Natural Resources). Located at the southern tip of Pelee Island, Fish Point is a natural concentration point for migrant songbirds. It is approximately 110 hectares, and the main part of the 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 census route is approximately 2.2 kilometers in length and covers a broad range of habitats, including mature southern deciduous forest, 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. The daily field procedures (which are constant effort, taking place seven days a week during the spring and fall migration seasons) include:

- 1) Six hours of visual field observations by staff and volunteers within the 'count' area at Fish Point, beginning one half-hour before sunrise;
- 2) Six hours of standardised mist-netting, beginning one half-hour before sunrise; and
- 3) A 90-minute walking census of the official census route at Fish Point, beginning one hour after sunrise.

Both the visual observations of birds in the field (collected on census and in the netting area) and the data collected from mist-netting operations are entered into a daily log sheet, along with additional field observations. Based on these totals, Daily Totals (DTs) are derived for each bird species recorded at Fish Point in a given day. This information is then entered into the computer in the format specified by the CMMN. Copies of the Daily Log and DT data are submitted to BSC for analysis in conjunction with the CMMN, and bird banding records are delivered to the Bird Banding Office, Canadian Wildlife Service, Ottawa. By closely following a highly standardized protocol each day in the migration season, PIBO's field staff can build an accurate picture of Pelee Island's bird population from day to day, season to season, and year to year.²

* * *

² 'Migration Monitoring Study Protocol & Field Manual Version 1.1' by the Pelee Island Bird Observatory, December 2008.



Blue-winged Warbler banded by PIBO in 2019. Photo by Sachi Schott.

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 8th and August 5th to November 10th, 2019 for a total of 164 coverage days. Eleven participants helped to record 185 species at Fish Point during PIBO's standard count period. 2568 birds of 84 species were handled over 4172 net-hours, for an average catch rate of 0.61 birds/net-hour.

Table 1 - 2019 Migration Monitoring			
Observers	Sachi Schott, Eric Orosz, Shane Abernathy, Melanie Denommé, Peter Coe, Dawn Miles, Sumiko Onishi, Rob Tymstra		
# of Coverage Days	164 (Apr 1 to Jun 8, Aug 5 to Nov 10)		
Birds captured*	2568	Species captured*	84
Net hours	4172	Birds/net hour	0.61
*combines banding, retrap and capture data			

2019 Spring Migration Summary

The following description of the spring migration is derived from migration summaries written by Assistant Field Biologist Sachi Schott. They were shared with PIBO's followers on the PIBO website (www.pibo.ca) and Facebook page.

//

The Pelee Island Bird Observatory began its 2019 migration monitoring season on April 1st. Though the sun was shining there was still a thin layer of snow and frost on the ground and the tree branches along the shore were coated with ice, forming an unexpected background for a **Belted Kingfisher** and an **Eastern Bluebird**.

The weather was warmer on April 3rd, which seemed to spur bird activity, and by April 7th, Fish Point was alive with birds. Over a hundred **Slate-coloured Juncos** were out rifling through the leaf litter on either side of the path, and on the west beach flocks of **Field Sparrows** were feeding in the sand alongside a small number of **Song Sparrows** and **Fox Sparrows**. In the forest, the trees were filled with **Golden-crowned Kinglets** flitting from branch to branch. Rain in the afternoon and overnight put a bit of a damper on bird activity, but there were still large flocks of **Field Sparrows** and **Mourning Doves** out on the west beach on April 8th.

On the lake, hundreds of **Scaup**, **Common Goldeneye**, and **Red-breasted Mergansers** were counted in the first half of April, flying past the shore and gathered in large rafts as they rode the waves. The first **Double-crested Cormorant** of the season was recorded on April 3rd – the first of many to come! On April 7th, a **Common Loon** and a male **Common Merganser** were swimming close to the shore on the west beach, and their black and white plumage made a striking contrast with the blue-grey water.

In Fox Pond, **Mallards**, **Blue-winged Teal**, and **Ring-necked Ducks** were seen almost every morning, and the whistling of **Wood Ducks** was frequently heard as they took off from the trees along the path. Pairs of **Canada Geese** began to make themselves at home in among the vegetation, and one was even seen crouched down over the beginnings of a nest on April 10th.

On April 11th, a strong east wind made it hard to stay on the observation deck at Fox Pond for long enough to count the **Canada Geese** and **Gadwalls**. Waves were washing over the south beach, but the west side was calm, and groups of **Red-winged Blackbirds** rose from the trees to make sorties out over the water. More blackbirds, including some **Common Grackles** and **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, were reverse migrating on April 12th, flying south across the lake. Most turned back once they were a little ways out, but one group continued flying until they were out of sight.

The first warbler species of the spring, a **Myrtle Warbler**, was sighted on April 13th, and a **Hermit Thrush** was seen on April 14th, making it the first *Catharus* thrush species for the season. In spite of the rain and the chilly temperature, April 14th also found a flight of 70 **Tree Swallows** perched in the branches and on the sand along the west beach. Another large flock of Tree Swallows was seen resting in the phragmites at Fox Pond on April 15th, and more were observed flying past the tip of Fish Point, sculling hard against the wind, accompanied by a few **Barn Swallows** and **Bank Swallows**.

The mist-nets at PIBO's banding station were opened for the first time on April 15th, for just a few hours. No birds were captured, and banding and census continued to be slow during the last two weeks in April. Although the wind occasionally shifted to the south, which would be expected to push migrating birds further north, rain and cold temperatures may have slowed things down. Indeed, as Pelee Island continued to be inundated by rain during what was to be an unusually cold and wet spring, conditions in and around the netting area became more and more challenging. The standing water that covered the trail reached depths of up to a foot in some places, and the roots and submerged branches made it difficult to find safe footing.



Sustained spring rain created challenging conditions in PIBO's netting area. Photo by Sachi Schott.

Still, as the banding station staff waded through the mud and the muck to check their mist-nets, they began to see signs that the spring season was properly underway. **Carolina Wrens**, with their piercing 'tea-kettle!' song were audible each morning, with up to four males heard around the banding station. One in particular took a shine to the station itself, and had to be gently but firmly discouraged from building a nest inside the chute that PIBO's banders use to release banded birds. The first **House Wrens** of the season were heard on April 23rd and immediately became engaged in fierce and energetic vocal contests, as at least two males set up territories within the netting area.

The **House Wrens** were not the only bird species at Fish Point to be feeling their oats. One male **American Robin** chased another straight into one mist net, and another net contained two male **Yellow-shafted Flickers**, looking very shame-faced (or so we imagined). The **Canada Geese** in Fox Pond were mostly paired off, and were vehement in driving off attempted intruders. At the banding station, numerous **Tree Swallows** were busy house-hunting, investigating old woodpecker holes and other natural cavities as they looked for a good place to build their nests. And on April 22nd, two **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were seen with their heads close together, murmuring sweet nothings – at least, until the female pecked the male hard on the head, and flew off. The course of true love, et cetera!

Pelee Island experienced several days of unsettled weather in the end of April, one consequence of which was daily sightings of hundreds of swallows of various species at Fish Point. Thunderstorms and rainy weather seem to drive these species down to ground-level, perhaps in pursuit of the flying insects they feed on, and from April 28th to 30th large flocks of them were seen in Fox Pond and on the west beach. **Tree Swallows**, **Barn Swallows**, and **Bank Swallows** were all counted in large numbers, though which species was the most common varied from day to day. Dozens of them would sweep back and forth above the waters of the lake before suddenly deciding *en masse* to settle down and perch on the phragmites in Fox Pond or on some spindly piece of driftwood on the beach, chattering to one another and jostling their near neighbours, before another whim would seize them and they would fly off once again. **Purple Martins**, a larger cousin of the swallows, were seen on census only rarely, but by the end of April they had become a well-established sight on the many Purple Martin houses that dot Pelee Island. The first **Chimney Swift** of the season (another aerial insectivore) was seen above Fox Pond on April 30th.

Pickings of warblers were slim in April, with only **Myrtle Warblers** and **Western Palm Warblers** being seen with any consistency – plus a rather early sighting of a single **Black-and-white Warbler** on April 19th. On April 30th, though, the three-part song of a **Northern Waterthrush** was heard in the netting area first thing in the morning; and then, later on in the day, the season's first **Nashville Warbler** was seen in a flock of **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, along with a **Black-throated Green Warbler**. Meager though the diversity of this little group was, it was the first time that anything close to a mixed flock of warblers had been seen that spring – a promise for the month to come, which was fulfilled as the first half of May brought with it PIBO's best and busiest spring migration days to date! Warbler species arrived on Pelee Island in abundance, and the week leading up to the annual Springsong weekend on May 11th and 12th was absolutely spectacular, with incredible migration activity observed by PIBO and by visiting birders.

Right from the start, May 1st brought a handsome male **Blue-winged Warbler** that was singing in the netting area first thing in the morning, and which was captured soon afterwards. Large groups of **White-throated Sparrows** moved through the undergrowth, and flights of **Swallows** (mostly Barn Swallows, with some Tree and Bank Swallows mixed in) were busy feeding and perching on the west beach of Fox Point, out of the way of the strong southeast wind. The groups of **Myrtle** and **Western Palm Warblers** that were moving through the trees next to the water had to be observed carefully, as now and then something out of the ordinary would show up: a **Magnolia Warbler**, or a **Nashville Warbler**, or even a striking black-and-orange **American Redstart**.



Magnolia Warbler. Photo by Sachi Schott.

From there migration accelerated, and the following week and a half brought a continuous flood of migratory birds that were being seen on Pelee Island for the first time this spring. The warblers were a highlight, with fourteen different species seen on May 7th, a particularly busy day. Cold, overcast, rainy, and windy weather kept birds down low, foraging close to the ground, which created an abundance of good bird-watching opportunities. In the netting area, PIBO's field staff were gifted with excellent views of **Northern Parulas**, **Chestnut-sided Warblers**, **Blackburnian Warblers** and **Bay-breasted Warblers** that were all feeding among the fallen branches and flourishing waterleaf that lined the sides of the net lanes. On sunnier, calmer days, most warblers were seen travelling through the trees in the company of **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**. Other birds grew more common as well, and the first **Scarlet Tanagers** and **Baltimore Orioles** seen on May 2nd grew to have plenty of company, while **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** frequently stopped by to examine the colourful flagging tape tied to the mist-nets.

Among the colourful and varied warblers and vireos that returned to Pelee Island for the first time in May, there was one year-round resident that unfailingly drew the attention of every birder: the humble **Red-breasted Nuthatch**. For more information on this species and its migration in 2019, please see [Section One – 2019 Migration Trends](#).

The busiest day in the banding lab was May 9th, when 139 birds were banded. From there, bird activity began to slow. Species diversity remained decently high, but the birds that were seen were not as abundant as before. The number of birds recaptured by PIBO experienced an uptick on May 14th and 15th, as birds that had been banded from May 9th to 13th, and which had evidently decided to remain on the island to rest and feed, ended up in the mist-nets for a return visit.

The high water levels in the lake considerably reduced the amount of shore at Fish Point, leaving less habitat for shorebirds, but PIBO still enjoyed a few good sightings. A **Ruddy Turnstone** was out turning over stones on May 1st, and the highlight was a pair of **Willetts**, seen sharing the tip with two **Forster's Terns** on May 2nd. Two **Common Goldeneye** were still out on the lake on May 6th.

Catharus thrushes are an interesting species to observe during the migration season, because their dates of arrival correlate with how far they have to travel. PIBO observed many **Swainson's Thrushes** and **Veerys**, both in the netting area and on census, on May 16th and May 18th, and on May 19th, the first **Grey-cheeked Thrush** was captured, heralding the beginning of the end of spring. One **Swainson's Thrush** was seen almost every day on census up until May 30th, and four were counted on May 29th, but there were none at Fish Point on the last day of the month. **Blackpoll Warblers** are another late-arriving, long-distance migrants, and they too grew more common as the month progressed, with their high, insect-like 'tsit-tsit-tsit-tsit' song sifting down from the treetops at Fish Point, until they were replaced by the more musically-gifted **Indigo Buntings**. The **Red-eyed Vireo** was another songster who became more numerous, and their tireless singing was frequently heard in the trees around the net lanes and along the trail at Fish Point. **Warbling Vireos** and **Philadelphia Vireos** were also heard more frequently, and never more so than on May 22nd, when every tree seemed to have a vireo in it.

The drizzling rain that so often punctuated the daily census compounded the difficulty of identifying the different, but visually similar, species of *Empidonax* flycatchers. Fortunately both the **Alder Flycatchers** and **Least Flycatchers** were frequently in the mood to sing, which made things much simpler: the 'Reebeco!' of the Alder Flycatcher being very different from the short, sharp 'Che-bek!' of the Least Flycatcher. A handful of **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** were captured and banded. **Eastern Wood Pewees**, **Great Crested Flycatchers**, and **Eastern Kingbirds** were seen and heard almost every day, enjoying the bounty of flying insects that finally hatched and metamorphosed thanks to the warm weather!

On the west beach of Fish Point, a **Semipalmated Plover** and a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** were seen feeding together on May 23rd, and a **Killdeer** was occasionally heard calling from the sandy area beyond Fox Pond. And on May 19th, a flock of ten **Whimbrels** flew by to check out the scene at the tip of Fish Point, but, finding it crowded with **Red-breasted Mergansers** and **Bonaparte's Gulls**, turned around and flew north along the island. One more **Whimbrel** was seen on May 24th, possibly wondering where everyone else had gone!

By May 25th, the daily census at Fish Point was beginning to grow predictable. With many birds on their breeding territories, busy building nests or feeding young, it became easy to predict which birds would be seen and heard where. But May still had some surprises in store. First a **Black-crowned Night-heron** was spotted in Fox Pond on both May 29th and May 30th, quietly fishing from a small clump of vegetation in the middle of the water; and then on May 31st a female **Prothonotary Warbler** was seen on census.

June 1st was the last day of banding for the spring season. A female **Indigo Bunting** was a pleasant break from the usual run of **Yellow Warblers** and **Red-winged Blackbirds**, but as only six birds were captured in total and four of them were retraps, it was time to close nets for the summer.

The weather remained unseasonably cool for the following week, right up to the end of census. The west beach was frequently subject to strong winds, making it even more difficult to scrape up a decent species total each morning. A few reliable local birds helped: an **American Crow** was frequently seen on the west beach, often being mobbed by **Eastern Kingbirds** or **Red-winged Blackbirds**, and the **House Wrens**, **Eastern Wood Peewees**, and **Indigo Buntings** (among others) were fixtures on their respective breeding territories. **American White Pelicans** began to be seen with greater frequency and in greater numbers, both standing out at the tip of Fish Point and swimming out on the lake, culminating in a total of fourteen counted on June 5th. Several families of **Canada Geese** made use of Fox Pond to shelter their precocious young, escorting them back and forth from the protected beach to the open waters of the lake.

As predictable as the census became, there was still the occasional surprise. A **Blue-winged Teal** was swimming in Fox Pond on June 3rd – an unexpected sighting, as it had been several weeks since one was last observed on census. June 3rd also turned up a late-migrating **Veery**, who obligingly hopped about on the path and posed so that PIBO's field staff could be confident in their identification. The **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was seen again in Fox Pond on June 4th, standing in among the phragmites next to a **Great Blue Heron**, which showed off the difference in their sizes admirably! On June 7th, a **Song Sparrow**, **Chipping Sparrow**, and a **Warbling Vireo** helped push the daily species total up past thirty birds for the first time since June 1st.

June 8th was the last day of census, and therefore the last day of spring migration monitoring. A strong east wind kept things cool, and on the west beach **Herring Gulls** and **Tree Swallows** swooped and soared on the strong air currents. Overall, the census was typical of what had been seen and heard for the past couple of weeks, but at Fox Pond large flocks of blackbirds (mostly **Red-winged Blackbirds**, with a few **Common Grackles**) made it look and feel more like fall! It was a taste of what was to come when migration monitoring resumed in August.

//

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 8th, 2019 for a total of 66 coverage days (there was no coverage on April 4th, 5th or 6th). 8 participants helped to record 166 species at Fish Point during PIBO's standard count period. 934 birds of 65 species were handled over 1175.50 net-hours, for an average catch rate of 0.79 birds/net-hour.

Table 2 - Migration Monitoring (Spring)			
Observers	Sachi Schott, Eric Orosz, Shane Abernathy, Melanie Denommé, Peter Coe, Dawn Miles, Sumiko Onishi, & Rob Tymstra		
# of Coverage Days	66 (Apr 1 to Jun 8; no coverage April 4, 5 or 6)		
Birds captured*	934	Species captured*	65
Net hours	1175.50	Birds/net hour	0.79
Notes	Unusually high number of Red-breasted Nuthatches observed and captured		
*combines banding, retrap and capture data			



White-eyed Vireo. Photo by Sachi Schott.

PIBO's spring coverage was greatly reduced in 2019 owing to both the unusually wet weather, and a lack of trained staff. In total, there were fifteen days when the migration monitoring program was affected by rain (nets closed early, opened late, or not opened at all), and the extremely wet conditions in and around the netting area occasionally made it unfeasible for all ten nets to be opened – wading through deep water slowed PIBO's field staff down considerably, and for the safety of the birds the most distant nets were left closed if it looked as if it was likely to rain later in the morning.

For much of the spring season PIBO was left with only one staff member capable of both conducting the daily census and supervising banding operations at the banding station. While PIBO's spring volunteers and Summer Student were helpful and enthusiastic, most lacked the necessary bird identification skills and banding experience. This required the banding station to be shut down for several hours each morning while the Assistant Field Biologist left to conduct the daily census. The volunteer or Summer Student sometimes accompanied the Assistant Field Biologist on census, and sometimes remained behind to conduct visual observations at the banding station, depending on their level of experience. In total, there were only ten days this spring when PIBO enjoyed full coverage at the Fish Point banding station (Coverage Code 5 or above – please see Table 3).

Fortunately, the days with full coverage largely overlapped with the busiest days of spring migration! PIBO would like to extend their most sincere thanks and gratitude to Peter Coe and Dawn Miles for volunteering at extremely short notice: their excellent birding skills and extensive banding experience (as well as their unflagging patience and good humour) made them invaluable at the station as PIBO captured dozens of spring warblers and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Rob Tymstra also assisted as a temporary staff member, conducting the daily census; and Eric Orosz, a long-time visitor and volunteer to PIBO's banding station, provided essential assistance, jumping in without hesitation to band and extract birds with a confidence and a professionalism that made a material difference to the smooth running of the banding station. The spring season would have been significantly more difficult without these hard-working birders and banders!

Table 3 - Daily Coverage Code

Code	Description
0	No coverage at the station
1	Standard Observations for all or part of the six-hour count period
2	Daily Census completed
3	Daily Census completed with Standard Observations and/or Mist-netting during all or part of the count period
4	Daily Census completed, Standard Observations and Mist-netting during all or part of the count period, with at least two experienced birders/banders
5	Daily Census completed, Standard Observations and Mist-netting during the entire six-hour count period, with at least two experienced birders/banders
6	Same as above but with at least three experienced birders operating the station

2019 Fall Migration Summary

The following description of the fall migration is derived from the migration summaries available on the PIBO website (www.pibo.ca) and Facebook page. All but one of the migration summaries from this fall were written by PIBO's Assistant Field Biologist Kathy Parker.

//

PIBO's fall season had a late start this year, beginning on August 5th. The census turned up a number of young birds, from a family of **Wood Ducks** scrambling for cover in Fox Pond to a young, dark-headed **Turkey Vulture** out on the west beach, plus juvenile **Northern Cardinals**, **House Wrens**, and **Baltimore Orioles** all following their hard-working parents from branch to branch. One particularly loud young bird turned out to be a **Brown-headed Cowbird**, demanding attention from its **Red-eyed Vireo** foster parent!

After an overnight thunderstorm the wind shifted around to the north, bringing in the first **Northern Waterthrush** of the fall on August 7th. **Yellow Warblers**, a local breeding species, were present from the start, and over the next few days they were joined by the occasional **Black-and-white Warbler** and the season's first **American Redstart** on August 9th. The first **Warbling Vireo** was seen on August 8th, and more appeared each day alongside the Red-eyed Vireos, all gathering together as they prepared to tackle their long flight south. Several flycatcher species were also added to PIBO's fall list, as '**Trail's**' **Flycatchers**, **Least Flycatchers** and **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** joined the locally-breeding **Eastern Wood-pewees** and **Eastern Phoebe**s.

The water levels in Lake Erie appeared to be very slightly lower than they were in spring, enough so that the sandbar past the tip of Fish Point rose to the surface once again. It was crowded with **Double-crested Cormorants** and various gulls, plus the occasional **American White Pelican**. More **Bonaparte's Gulls**, **Ring-billed Gulls**, **Herring Gulls**, and **Great Black-backed Gulls** were often seen standing on the beach at the end of the point, along with a few **Common Terns** looking comically miniscule next to their larger near-relatives. A few **Killdeer** and **Spotted Sandpiper** were seen running ahead of the waves on the west beach, as well as a single **Solitary Sandpiper**.

PIBO's mist nets were opened for the first time this season on August 16th and the banding season began slowly, with only twelve birds banded in the first week. **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** were the most common bird banded in the early days of the season. On August 25th a **Blue-winged Warbler** was found in one of the nets – very few of this species are banded at PIBO in the fall, and this was the only one captured or observed this fall. On August 27th, PIBO's banders were surprised to find two young **Eastern Screech Owls** on the morning's first net check.

The warblers, thrushes and flycatchers began to show up in the nets over the next few days. **Swainson's Thrushes** and colourful warblers were banded daily. **Canada**, **Chestnut-sided**, **Black-throated Blue**, **Black and White** and **Blackburnian Warblers**, **Northern Waterthrushes**, and **American Redstarts** all kept the banders busy at the banding station.

During the daily 90-minute census up to forty-four **American White Pelicans** were counted flying in small groups, and up to 6275 **Double-Crested Cormorants**. Forty-six **Great Black-backed Gulls** took over the very tip of Fish Point. A resident **Green Heron** was seen daily at Fox Pond.

Up to four **Bald Eagles** were seen daily, most of them immature. Other raptors observed include **Red-tailed Hawks**, **Cooper's Hawks**, and a **Great Horned Owl**.

Purple Martins and **Barn Swallows** gathered in large numbers on August 26th and after that date only a few stragglers were left on the island. A large flock over five hundred pre-migratory restless **Common Grackles** swarmed the woods at the banding lab on August 28th. Twenty were captured and banded.



Common Grackle being banded. Photo by Hannah Mittelstaedt.

As September began, the days grew shorter and dawn came later and later every morning. The cheerful song of the **Carolina Wren** was still heard outside the banding station, but the **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** no longer serenaded PIBO's banders all morning long, although it was still seen skulking in the woods nearby.

Swainson's Thrushes were the most commonly banded birds in the first half of September, with **Magnolia Warblers** in second place and **American Redstarts** in third place. The first big day of banding this fall was September 6th when 83 birds were banded! On September 7th a **Golden-winged Warbler** was banded, and on September 11th an elusive **Connecticut Warbler** was captured.

Shorebirds began to move through Fish Point. **Sanderlings** and a **Ruddy Turnstone** were counted on the census and on September 14th a **Whimbrel** was at the tip of Fish Point. **Double-crested Cormorants** gathered in the lake and over 10,000 were seen on several censuses. Flying among the cormorants were **American White Pelicans**.

Hawks also began to move. Numbers of **Merlins** and **Sharp-shinned Hawks** as well as a few **Ospreys** were seen flying off the tip towards the islands to the south of Pelee Island. September 16th saw the arrival of 28 **Sharp-shinned Hawks** and more than 100 **Monarch Butterflies** fluttering around the tip of Fish Point, getting ready for their respective journeys south. Then the winds changed to the south and it grew very quiet at the banding station from September 17th to 24th. Some days only saw two or four birds captured in the six hours that PIBO's ten mist-nets were open. PIBO's daily censuses no longer recorded the huge numbers of **Double-crested Cormorants** or **American White Pelicans** that were observed earlier in the month.

On September 24th a change of wind direction brought some **Myrtle Warblers**. As these birds do not travel as far south to overwinter as some of their fellow warblers, they are able to linger for longer on their breeding grounds and they are one of the later migrants to arrive on Pelee Island in the fall. **White-throated Sparrows** began to show up, and **Killdeers** replaced **Sanderlings** at the tip of Fish Point. On September 27th there was an invasion of **Winter Wrens** moving across the fallen logs on the forest floor like mice. 68 were counted on census.

Yellow-shafted Flickers arrived on the night of September 28th and thirty were observed in two adjacent trees the next morning. **Sharp-shinned Hawks** spent the morning noisily chasing them around the Fox Pond area. Other firsts in the last few days of September included: **Hermit Thrush**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, and **American Pipits** wagging their tails on the west beach.

The first half of October felt more like summer than autumn. The weather continued to be warm and the leaves on the trees were still green, with just a touch of colour in the woods from the crimson Virginia Creepers.

It was quiet but steady at the banding station with the influx of the birds of fall: **Winter Wrens**, **White-throated Sparrows**, **Golden and Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, and **Hermit Thrushes**. An average of fourteen birds were banded per day (as few as three and as many as twenty-six) during this period. On the night of October 15th the winds changed around to the north, and kept PIBO's banders busy banding fifty-three birds of eight species!

The first **Philadelphia Vireo** of the season showed up on October 1st, as well as a **Blue-headed Vireo**. A few late-migrating warblers were banded – **Myrtle**, **Magnolia**, **Nashville**, **Tennessee**, **Black-throated Blue Warblers** and **American Redstarts**. There was an enormous group of mostly **Common Grackles**, along with **European Starlings**, **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, **Rusty Blackbirds** and **Red-winged Blackbirds** that often visited the Fish Point area. More than 500 birds were counted in this impressive flock. **Rusty Blackbirds**, sounding like squeaky gate hinges, were heard in the wet area near Fox Pond.

On Lake Erie, the first of the season **Red-necked Grebe** was seen on October 10th and two **Horned Grebes** were floating on the lake on October 15th. **American White Pelicans** were still occasionally seen on the morning census.

On October 16th it was very windy and a **jaeger** (closely related to gulls) was seen on the daily census. It was likely a Parasitic Jaeger, but was too far out in Lake Erie for a positive identification.

When the winds dropped it brought a busy banding day, with 93 individuals of thirteen species banded on October 18th. Five sparrows showed up that were new for the season: **Eastern White-Crowned**, **Fox Song**, and **Lincoln's Sparrow** and **Dark-eyed Junco**. An **American Woodcock** was also seen.

October 19th was the biggest day of the fall season with 101 birds banded at the banding station and an **Eastern Screech Owl** banded in the evening during the first Public Owling Night. After all that excitement, things were quiet at the banding station and on October 23rd no birds were captured.

By October 28th many of the leaves had fallen, as well as branches and a big tree over the path at Fish Point. The first **Red-breasted Nuthatch** of the season was seen on census as well as a **Clay-coloured Sparrow**. A vocal **Greater Yellowlegs** flew over the banding station. **Swainson's Thrushes** were replaced by **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** in the mist-nets, along with **Hermit Thrushes** and **Golden-crowned Kinglets**.

After a balmy September and October, fall weather set in on Hallowe'en. Due to strong winds and rain, the mist-nets could not be opened after October 30th, necessitating an early end to the banding season. The daily census continued for the first ten days of November.

Fox Pond was busy with dabbling ducks – **Mallards**, **Gadwall**, and **Green-winged Teal**, as well as **Hooded Mergansers**, **Buffleheads**, **Ring-necked Ducks**, and **Wood Ducks**. A large flock of sixty-eight **Canada Geese** and a pair of **American Coots** were also there. An enormous mixed flock of more than 1000 blackbirds was often seen in the trees around Fox Pond, comprised of **European Starlings**, **Common Grackles**, **Red-winged Blackbirds**, **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, and **Rusty Blackbirds**.

Scattered on Lake Erie, **Common Loons**, **Horned Grebes**, **Red-necked Grebes**, **Red-breasted Mergansers**, **Common Goldeneyes**, and **White-winged Scoters** were observed. A very late flock of up to 54 **Tree Swallows** was seen by many observers. These swallows were recorded up to November 7th on the daily census. A **Golden Eagle** – the first and only one of the season - was seen on November 3rd.

A cold north wind on November 9th formed beautiful ice sculptures on the vegetation that the waves washed over on the west shore. In the sun light the leaves shone silver. For the first time during the fall census, not one gull was seen. On November 8th only a single **Herring Gull** was identified. The last census took place on November 10th.

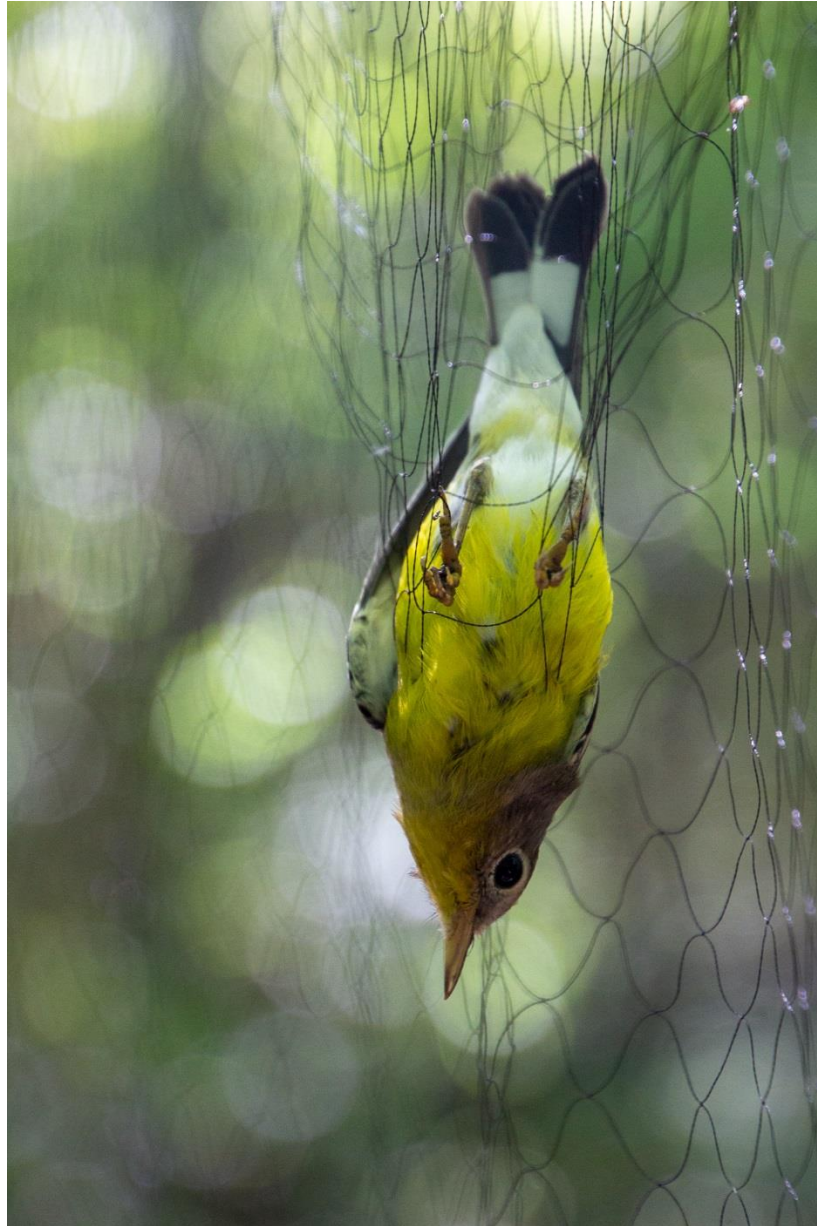
//

In total, PIBO's fall migration coverage at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve (Ontario Parks – Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources) ran from August 5th to November 10th, 2019 for a total of 98 coverage days. Five participants helped to record 149 species at Fish Point during PIBO's standard count period. 1634 birds of 68 species were handled over 2996.23 net-hours, for an average catch rate of 0.54 birds/net-hour.

Table 4 - Migration Monitoring (Fall)

Observers	Sachi Schott, Kathy Parker, Sumiko Onishi, Hannah Mittelstaedt & Kyle Parkinson		
# of Coverage Days	98 (Aug 5 to Nov 10)		
Birds captured*	1634	Species captured*	68
Net hours	2996.23	Birds/net hour	0.54
Notes	Sharp-shinned Hawk foreign encounter (from Gilford, ON); Jaeger sp. seen on census; White-winged Scoter seen on census		
*combines banding, retrap and capture data			

The fall banding season ended uncommonly early this year. The last day of banding was on October 30th, where in other years banding has continued at least until November 4th. This was due in part to a spate of rain and strong winds that began on October 31st and that prevented any bird banding from taking place for several days: by the time the weather had improved and the winds had died down, it was decided that nets should be closed and taken down before conditions took a turn for the worse once again. In total, PIBO had 17 days this fall where rain prevented the banders from keeping the mist-nets open for the full six-hour standardized observation period.



A Magnolia Warbler waits to be extracted. Photo by Hannah Mittelstaedt.

2019 Migration Monitoring Summary

Overall, the results from the 2019 migration monitoring season fall within the expected range, and do not differ markedly from previous years. The most notable exception is the fall netting period, which ended much earlier than usual due to a period of rain and strong winds at the beginning of November. Partly as a result of this, and also because there were several days at the start of both the spring and the fall period when there were no staff available to conduct the daily census, the number of coverage days was lower than usual in 2019.

Table 5 - Combined spring and fall migration monitoring in 2019									
Description	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Spring coverage	Apr 1 – Jun 8**	Apr 1 – Jun 10	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 5 – Nov 10	Aug 1 – Nov 10	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	164	173	179	179	176	178	173	174	173
Spring netting period	Apr 15 – Jun 1	Apr 20 – May 31	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 16 – Oct 30	Aug 17 – Nov 8	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	121	126	127	125	129	146	142	123	119
Birds captured*	2568	2943	3367	2584	2493	2461	2519	3772	2404
Net hours	4172	4006	3727	4131	3652	4497	4209	4300	3356
Bird/net hour	0.61	0.74	0.90	0.62	0.68	0.59	0.60	0.88	0.72
Species banded	84	79	80	77	76	70	82	81	78
Recaptures	96	123	101	95	63	106	104	130	103
Species recaptured	24	21	27	19	13	17	19	25	24
Species recorded	185	190	185	193	194	197	200	201	203
*combines banding, recapture, and capture data									
** no coverage April 4, 5 or 6									

Table 6 - Birds captured at Fish Point in 2019			
Species	Captured*	Species	Captured*
Sharp-shinned Hawk	21	Nashville Warbler	38
Cooper's Hawk		Yellow Warbler	68
Red-shouldered Hawk		Chestnut-sided Warbler	28
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1	Magnolia Warbler	193
Black-billed Cuckoo		Cape May Warbler	3
Northern Saw-whet Owl		Black-throated Blue Warbler	57
Eastern Screech-owl	3	Blackburnian Warbler	16
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	27	Yellow-rumped Warbler	46
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1	Black-throated Green Warbler	6
Downy Woodpecker	26	Western Palm Warbler	6
Yellow-shafted Flicker	8	Bay-breasted Warbler	19
Eastern Wood-pewee	17	Blackpoll Warbler	9
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	36	Black-and-white Warbler	74
Acadian Flycatcher		American Redstart	143
'Traill's' Flycatcher	5	Ovenbird	96
Least Flycatcher	28	Northern Waterthrush	16
<i>Empidonax sp.</i>		Connecticut Warbler	1
Eastern Phoebe	1	Mourning Warbler	9
Great Crested Flycatcher	2	Prothonotary Warbler	
Red-eyed Vireo	46	Common Yellowthroat	32
Warbling Vireo	1	Wilson's Warbler	12
Philadelphia Vireo	3	Canada Warbler	22
White-eyed Vireo	1	Scarlet Tanager	1
Blue-headed Vireo	25	Northern Cardinal	17
Blue Jay	1	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1
Black-capped Chickadee	12	Indigo Bunting	5
White-breasted Nuthatch	1	Eastern Towhee	1
Red-breasted Nuthatch	108	Chipping Sparrow	1
Brown Creeper	32	Field Sparrow	1
Carolina Wren	10	White-throated Sparrow	177
House Wren	39	Eastern White-crowned Sparrow	2
Winter Wren	37	Fox Sparrow	2
Marsh Wren	2	Song Sparrow	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	84	Lincoln's Sparrow	8
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	151	Swamp Sparrow	19
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	2	Slate-colored Junco	9
Eastern Bluebird		Brown-headed Cowbird	4
American Robin	11	Red-winged Blackbird	61
Wood Thrush	21	Rusty Blackbird	2
Veery	53	Common Grackle	31
Swainson's Thrush	243	Baltimore Oriole	15
Gray-cheeked Thrush	44	Purple Finch	
Hermit Thrush	145	American Goldfinch	7
Gray Catbird	20		
Brown Thrasher	2		
Cedar Waxwing	2		
Northern Parula	4	Total Captured	2568
Orange-crowned Warbler	5	Species & forms	84
Tennessee Warbler	11	Net hrs.	4172
Blue-winged Warbler	6	Birds/net-hour	0.61
Golden-winged Warbler	1	Birds/net-hour	0.61
*includes birds banded, recaptured, and captured			

TABLE 7 - LIST OF SPECIES AND FORMS RECORDED AT FISH POINT IN 2019

Common Loon	Whimbrel
Horned Grebe	Ruddy Turnstone
Red-necked Grebe	Sanderling
Pied-billed Grebe	Semipalmated Sandpiper
American White Pelican	American Woodcock
Double-crested Cormorant	Jaeger sp.
Great Blue Heron	Bonaparte's Gull
Great Egret	Ring-billed Gull
Turkey Vulture	Herring Gull
Green Heron	Great Black-backed Gull
Black-crowned Night-heron	Lesser Black-backed Gull
Canada Goose	Caspian Tern
Wood Duck	Common Tern
Mallard	Forester's Tern
Gadwall	Mourning Dove
American Widgeon	Rock Dove
Blue-winged Teal	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Ring-necked Duck	Black-billed Cuckoo
Greater Scaup	Great Horned Owl
White-winged Scoter	Northern Saw-whet Owl
Bufflehead	Eastern Screech Owl
Common Goldeneye	Whip-poor-will
Hooded Merganser	Common Nighthawk
Common Merganser	Chimney Swift
Red-breasted Merganser	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Osprey	Belted Kingfisher
Bald Eagle	Red-headed Woodpecker
Golden Eagle	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Northern Harrier	Downy Woodpecker
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Cooper's Hawk	Yellow-shafted Flicker
Red-tailed Hawk	Olive-sided Flycatcher
American Kestrel	Eastern Wood-Pewee
Merlin	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
Peregrine Falcon	Willow Flycatcher
Wild Turkey	Alder Flycatcher
Sora	"Traill's" Flycatcher
American Coot	Least Flycatcher
Common Moorhen	Eastern Phoebe
Sandhill Crane	Great Crested Flycatcher
Semipalmated Plover	Eastern Kingbird
Killdeer	Red-eyed Vireo
Greater Yellowlegs	Warbling Vireo
Solitary Sandpiper	Philadelphia Vireo
Spotted Sandpiper	White-eyed Vireo
Willet	Yellow-throated Vireo

Blue-headed Vireo
 Blue Jay
 American Crow
 Horned Lark
 Purple Martin
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow
 Bank Swallow
 Tree Swallow
 Cliff Swallow
 Barn Swallow
 Black-capped Chickadee
 Red-breasted Nuthatch
 White-breasted Nuthatch
 Brown Creeper
 Carolina Wren
 House Wren
 Winter Wren
 Marsh Wren
 Golden-crowned Kinglet
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
 Eastern Bluebird
 American Robin
 Wood Thrush
 Veery
 Swainson's Thrush
 Gray-cheeked Thrush
 Hermit Thrush
 Gray Catbird
 Northern Mockingbird
 Brown Thrasher
 European Starling
 American Pipit
 Cedar Waxwing
 Northern Parula
 Orange-crowned Warbler
 Tennessee Warbler
 Blue-winged Warbler
 Golden-winged Warbler
 Nashville Warbler
 Yellow Warbler
 Chestnut-sided Warbler
 Magnolia Warbler
 Cape May Warbler
 Black-throated Blue Warbler
 Blackburnian Warbler
 Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Black-throated Green Warbler

Western Palm Warbler
 Pine Warbler
 Bay-breasted Warbler
 Blackpoll Warbler
 Prothonotary Warbler
 Black-and-white Warbler
 American Redstart
 Ovenbird
 Northern Waterthrush
 Connecticut Warbler
 Mourning Warbler
 Common Yellowthroat
 Wilson's Warbler
 Canada Warbler
 Hooded Warbler
 Summer Tanager
 Scarlet Tanager
 Northern Cardinal
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak
 Indigo Bunting
 Eastern Towhee
 American Tree Sparrow
 Field Sparrow
 Chipping Sparrow
 Clay-coloured Sparrow
 Savannah Sparrow
 Vesper Sparrow
 White-throated Sparrow
 White-crowned Sparrow
 Fox Sparrow
 Song Sparrow
 Lincoln's Sparrow
 Swamp Sparrow
 Dark-eyed Junco
 Brown-headed Cowbird
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Rusty Blackbird
 Common Grackle
 Baltimore Oriole
 Orchard Oriole
 Purple Finch
 House Finch
 Pine Siskin
 American Goldfinch
 House Sparrow

Total: 185 species and forms

Most Common Species Banded

The top ten species captured at Fish Point in 2019 showed very little variation from the previous year. Seven of the top ten species remained the same, with Swainson's Thrush retaining the top spot. The three species that broke into the top ten this year were Ovenbird (which was a Top Ten species in 2017), Black-and-white Warbler, and Red-breasted Nuthatch.

Table 8 – Top ten species captured* at Fish Point in 2019			
Species	Captured	Birds/net-hour	2018 ranking
Swainson's Thrush	243	0.058	1
Magnolia Warbler	193	0.046	4
White-throated Sparrow	177	0.042	6
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	151	0.036	3
Hermit Thrush	145	0.035	5
American Redstart	143	0.034	8
Red-breasted Nuthatch	108	0.026	19
Ovenbird	96	0.023	11
Golden-crowned Kinglet	84	0.020	2
Black-and-white Warbler	74	0.018	20
Veery	53 (14 th)	0.013	7
Red-winged Blackbird	61 (12 th)	0.015	9
Gray-cheeked Thrush	44 (17 th)	0.011	10
*includes standard banding, recapture, and capture data			



*Assistant Field Biologists Sachi Schott (left) and Kathy Parker (right) release a Swainson's Thrush.
Photo by Hannah Mittelstaedt.*

2019 Migration Trends

Red-breasted Nuthatches

The spring season is not typically a time when PIBO observes many Red-breasted Nuthatches. Only a single individual was recorded in the spring of 2018, and in 2012 and 2013 none were observed during the spring migration monitoring season at all. However, the irruption of Red-breasted Nuthatches that occurred last fall (caused by a failed black spruce crop farther north³) appeared to lead to a dramatic increase in the number of Red-breasted Nuthatches passing through Pelee Island on their way back to their breeding grounds this spring. Dozens were seen, with the highest numbers corresponding to those days when migration was at its peak. On May 8th PIBO banded eighty birds, 32 of which were Red-breasted Nuthatches! They were so numerous that two even flew in through the open door of the banding station as PIBO's field staff were closing up for the morning. A handful of recently banded Red-breasted Nuthatches were recaptured over the following few days, showing that at least some of them had remained on the island temporarily. All had low fat scores, and some allowed observers to approach to within a few inches of them as they remain laser-focused on their search for food. In total, 108 Red-breasted Nuthatches were captured during PIBO's spring season: by comparison, only 33 Red-breasted Nuthatches were captured in the fall of 2018 during their irruption.

From the extreme highs of the fall of 2018 and the spring of 2019, the fall of 2019 saw Red-breasted Nuthatches plunge to a new low. No Red-breasted Nuthatches at all were captured during the fall migration monitoring season, and they were not even seen until September 30th. Prior to this, the latest first arrival date for Red-breasted Nuthatches in the fall was September 5th, in 2013. They remained uncommon right through to the end of the fall season on November 10th, and were only observed on two days: September 30th (Daily Total: 6) and October 28th (Daily Total: 1). This is by far the smallest number of Red-breasted Nuthatches ever observed by PIBO. The only fall that is at all comparable is 2015, when a total of eleven Red-breasted Nuthatches were observed over nine days.



A Red-breasted Nuthatch in PIBO's banding station. Photo by Sachi Schott.

2018's fall irruption was caused by large numbers of nuthatches moving farther south than their habitual range in search of food. The abundance of them seen this spring may therefore have been these same Red-breasted Nuthatches returning north to their breeding grounds. Considering the poor condition PIBO observe many of these birds to be in, it seems that their usual food sources could not sustain them through the spring and summer, and that therefore the comparatively small population of Red-breasted Nuthatches that were left faced reduced competition and did not need to travel as far south as they had in the fall of 2018. However, this is only speculation. As the 2019 banding totals come in from other banding stations further north and south, a more accurate picture of recent fluxuations in the Red-breasted Nuthatch population will emerge.

³ Jean Iron, 'Winter Finch Forecast 2018-2019' (<http://jeaniron.ca/2018/wff18.htm>, accessed January 6th, 2019).

Notable Band Encounters

PIBO had several band encounters in 2019, including some with birds that were originally banded elsewhere in North America. As part of 2019's Purple Martin monitoring program, PIBO had two foreign encounters with adult **Purple Martins** that were originally banded in Ohio, USA in 2018: for more information on these encounters, please see [Section One – Purple Martin Monitoring](#).

In addition, a hatch-year female **Sharp-shinned Hawk** recaptured by PIBO on October 18th, 2019 was found to have been originally banded near Gilford, Ontario (on Lake Simcoe) not quite one month previously, on September 25th, 2019. She had therefore travelled approximately 425 kilometers southwest in twenty-three days, averaging 18.5 km a day. As Sharp-shinned Hawks have been known to travel over 90 km in a single day, this is hardly a speed record, but it is still an impressive distance for a young bird to travel on its first migration.



Figure 1 - A Sharp-shinned Hawk recaptured by PIBO was originally banded in Gilford, Ontario.

At very nearly the same time as the Sharp-shinned Hawk above was approaching the banding station in Gilford, another **Sharp-shinned Hawk** had just been released from PIBO with a brand-new bird band, on September 21st, 2019. This was another hatch-year female, and almost exactly a month later PIBO received a request for information from the Bird Banding Laboratory – the hawk had been recaptured in Ohio on October 22nd, 2019. The records for this species in the Canadian Atlas of Bird Banding (Environment Canada, 2009) show that a disproportionate number of encounter records involve female birds in their first year: why this should be so is uncertain, but it is also the case that most recovery records are of female Sharp-shinned Hawks, which seems to indicate that they spend more time in human-occupied areas (making them more vulnerable to human causes of mortality).

//

The following birds recaptured by PIBO were not foreign encounters, but were of interest for other reasons:

A female **Red-winged Blackbird** that was recaptured on May 15th, 2019, was discovered to have been originally banded by PIBO on April 17th, 2014. She was therefore six years old – still far from the longevity record for this species of 15 years, but well past the average lifespan of two years. She had been recaptured once before, on May 20th, 2017.

A **Red-eyed Vireo**, first banded by PIBO on May 20th, 2017, was recaptured exactly two years later, on May 20th, 2019.

On May 15th, 2019, PIBO recaptured a male **Yellow Warbler** that had originally been banded on May 8th, 2018. After a winter spent in Central or South America, he had survived another long migration, and made it back to what may be his original breeding grounds once again.

2019 Rare Birds

Long-time birder and occasional PIBO employee Rob Tymstra forwarded a report of a **magpie** of unknown species that was sighted on Pelee Island on May 5th, 2019.

The 2019 Spring Song weekend was enriched by reports of a **Cattle Egret**, **Canvasback**, and **White-winged Dove**, all of which were seen by many of the visiting birders on the island. The White-winged Dove was a particularly notable sighting, as it was a first for Pelee Island.

A **Mute Swan**, first seen during the Spring Song weekend in Lake Henry at Lighthouse Point (Ontario Parks – MNR) was still present on October 20th, 2019.

PIBO's Assistant Field Biologist Kathy Parker spotted a **jaeger sp.** on census October 16th, 2019, during a spell of exactly the kind of cold, windy, and unpleasant weather that these types of birds prefer. This was the first jaeger sp. recorded by PIBO.

Species at Risk

The following section describes a few of the avian Species at Risk observed by PIBO on Pelee Island in 2019. A full report of all of the Species at Risk recorded by PIBO will be compiled and sent to the Natural Heritage Information Center, with information on the date and location of each observation.

//

American White Pelicans once again returned to Lake Erie, beginning on April 22nd, 2019. Small numbers were observed repeatedly on census throughout the spring and fall, with the largest number (48 birds) seen on September 10th. The last day on which they were recorded by PIBO was September 12th, 2019.

Least Bitterns were heard during the Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP) bird surveys on June 18th and June 30th, 2019 in Lake Henry. Two pairs of birds were detected counter-singing at four of the survey points during the first survey, representing at least four individual birds, and two Least Bitterns were heard during the second survey. For more information on the MMP bird surveys, please see [Section One – Marsh Monitoring Program \(Birds\)](#).

A **Black-crowned Night-heron** was observed on census in Fox Pond on May 29th and 30th and June 4th, 2019.

Bald Eagles were observed frequently on census and flying over the netting area, and PIBO received reports of at least three nests on Pelee Island in 2019.

One **Golden Eagle** was observed on census November 3rd, 2019. This is not a common species on Pelee Island, but one is generally recorded by PIBO each year, in late October or early November.

Whimbrels were seen twice on census in the spring of 2019, resting at the tip of Fish Point: a group of 9 birds on May 19th, and one on May 24th, 2019.

One **White-eyed Vireo** of unknown age and unknown sex was banded by PIBO on April 5th, 2019.

2019 was the first year of PIBO's **Purple Martin** monitoring program. Adults and nestlings in the Purple Martin houses next to the PIBO field house on Stone Road were regularly observed during the spring and summer. For more information on the results of this monitoring program, please see [Section One – Purple Martin Monitoring](#).

One **Golden-winged Warbler** was observed in the netting area on May 9th, 2019, and a hatch-year female was banded on September 8th.

One female **Prothonotary Warbler** was seen during the daily census at Fish Point on May 31st. There is no evidence that Prothonotary Warblers bred on Pelee Island in 2019. For more information on the results of PIBO's Prothonotary Warbler nest box monitoring, please see [Section One – Prothonotary Warbler nest box monitoring](#).

PIBO's field staff conducted call-back surveys for **Yellow-breasted Chats** along Stone Road and Brown's Road in May, June and July. A portable speaker was used to play Yellow-breasted Chat songs and calls at intervals in the hopes of eliciting a response. No Yellow-breasted Chats were heard by PIBO in 2019.

Table 9 - Yellow-breasted Chat surveys			
Observers	Sachi Schott & Melanie Denommé	Hours	16
# of Surveys	10 (Stone Road May 28, June 4, 16 & 22, July 3, 4, 11 & 18; Brown's Road South June 14 & 21)		
Notes	Yellow-billed Cuckoos common around Brown's Road; Yellow-shafted Flicker and Black-capped Chickadees responded to tape along Stone Road		

Rusty Blackbirds were observed on census in the early spring and late fall, and two females were banded by PIBO in April, 2019.



Rusty Blackbird. Photo by Sumiko Onishi.

2019 Northern Saw-whet Owl banding

2019 was a low point for PIBO's Northern Saw-whet Owl banding. Although the five Northern Saw-whet Owl nets at the PIBO field house on Stone Road were opened more frequently compared to in 2018 (when only four nights were suitable for owling), only five Northern Saw-whet Owls and three Eastern Screech Owls were captured. All were unbanded birds; no owls were recaptured.

As they did in 2018, night-time temperatures stayed warm late into the fall season, and once they dropped rain and high winds rolled in, discouraging both migrating owls and PIBO's would-be owl banders. The only night that could be considered a success was October 25th, when four Northern Saw-whet Owls and one Eastern Screech Owl were captured. Still, this was a far cry from 2018's busiest night of owl banding, which captured fourteen Northern Saw-whet Owls and one Eastern Screech Owl on November 3rd. In fact, October 15th, 18th, 19th and 25th were the only nights when owls were captured in 2019; the other four owling nights saw no birds captured at all.

Table 10 - Northern Saw-whet Owl banding			
Observers	Sachi Schott, Kathy Parker, Hannah Mittelstaedt, Sumiko Onishi		
# of coverage days	8 (Oct 15, 18, 19, 20, 25 & 27; Nov 01 & 03)		
NSWO banded	5	EASO banded	3
NSWO retraps	0	EASO retraps	0
Net hours	83.625	Birds/net hour	0.096
Notes	Eastern Screech Owl heard on Oct 18 th , 20 th & 27 th ; Great Horned Owl heard on Oct 18 th & 27 th ; Northern Saw-whet Owl heard on Oct 18 th		

PIBO's field staff moved out of the PIBO field house on November 4th, and as the forecast predicted strong south and a chance of precipitation, owl banding was not continued past this date.



Assistant Field Biologists Sachi Schott (left) and Kathy Parker (right) band one of the few Northern Saw-whet Owls captured in 2019. Photo by Hannah Mittelstaedt.

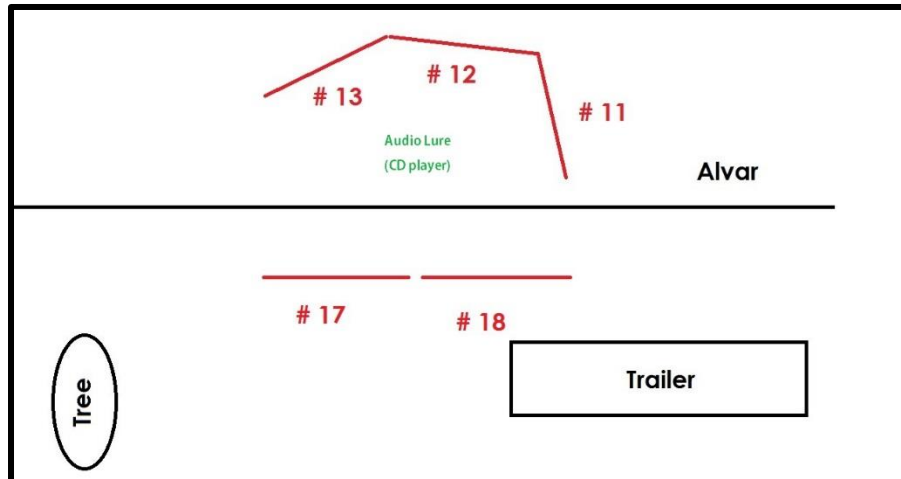
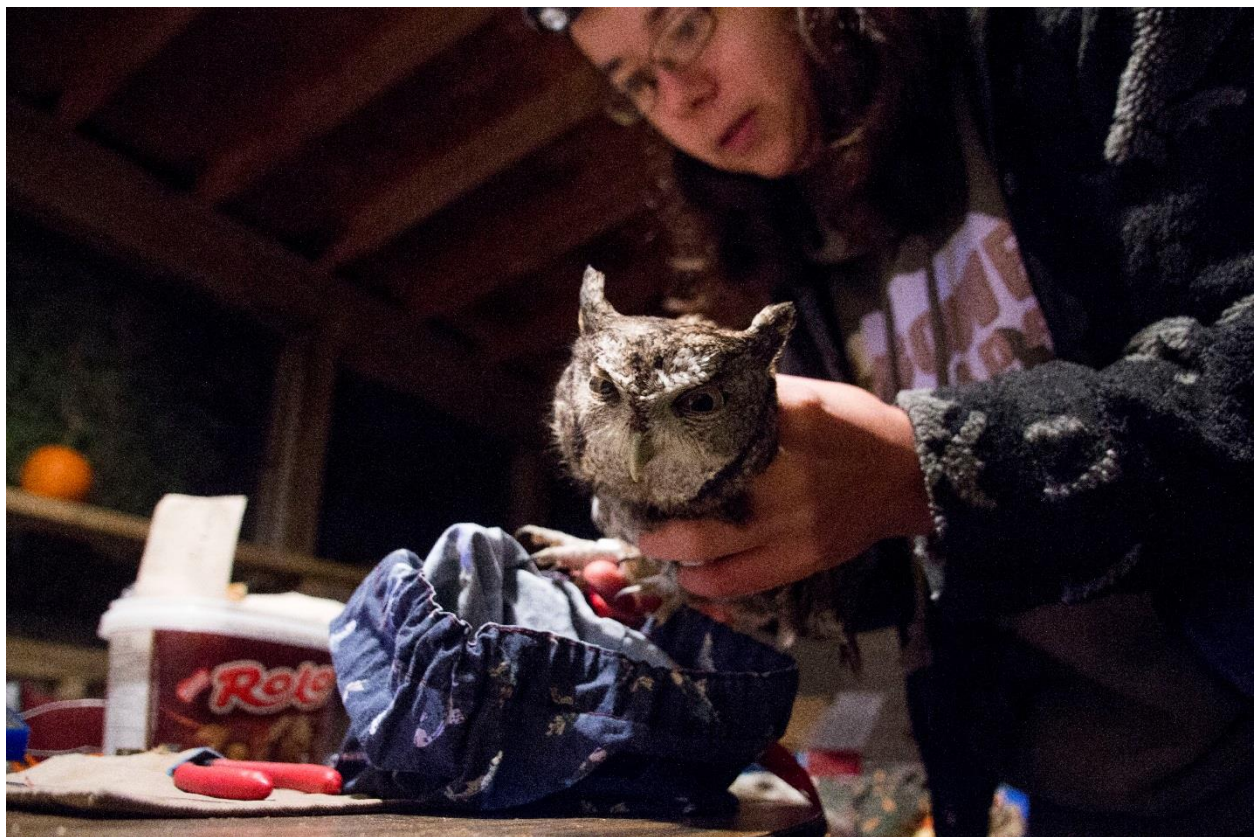


Figure 2 - Placement of owling nets at PIBO's field house on Stone Road in 2019.

For information on PIBO's Public Owling Nights in 2019, please see [Section Two – Public Owling Nights](#).



An Eastern Screech Owl submits to being banded by Assistant Field Biologist Sachi Schott.
Photo by Hannah Mittelstaedt.

2019 Breeding Bird Point Counts

Introduction

In 2006, PIBO launched the Breeding Birds of Pelee Island project, a long-term population monitoring scheme with the goal of generating data on the current status of breeding bird communities on Pelee Island, and of establishing permanent survey sites for ongoing research. The population monitoring consisted of two parts: breeding bird censuses, and breeding bird point counts. While breeding bird censuses produce detailed data about the composition of breeding communities within study areas of uniform habitat, point count surveys generate a snapshot of breeding bird abundance, distribution, and diversity across a broad range of distinct landscapes. Together, these surveys can create an inventory of the nesting bird communities at key conservation properties, which can be used as a template for future research designed to track changes in the avifaunal communities on Pelee Island resulting from multiple influences ranging from natural succession to climate change. In addition, the project's survey plots have been established on property that is being subjected to a wide range of habitat conservation initiatives run by organizations such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA), Ontario Nature (ON), and the Pelee Island Winery. PIBO's long-term monitoring will therefore enable landowners to evaluate the actual changes that take place at their conservation sites⁴.

After completing a second round of breeding bird censuses in 2018, PIBO began the work of re-surveying the breeding bird point count sites in 2019, beginning with five plots along Stone Road and East West Road. 80 five-minute point counts were conducted over twenty-seven hours, during which time PIBO staff detected 35 bird species that can be considered as confirmed, probable, or possible nesters on Pelee Island in 2019.

Table 11 - 2019 Breeding Bird Point Counts

Observers	Sachi Schott & Melanie Denommé		
# of point counts	80	Hours	27
Sites	5 (Alvar, Red Cedar Savannah North, Red Cedar Savannah South, Von W, Wilds of Pelee)		
Dates	First visits June 9, 11, 12 & 14; Second visits June 23, 25, 26 & 28		
Notes	35 species detected		

Methods

Beginning in 2006, PIBO set up and surveyed 120 point count sites on Pelee Island. These point counts are grouped together in plots according to location and property owner: for this reason, the point counts within a given plot may be located in different types of habitat.

Most of PIBO's point count sites were sampled twice between 2007 and 2011. The five plots sampled this year had been surveyed only once before, in 2008. Results from an additional 2006 survey when the plots were first established were available for some of the plots. Neither the 2008 nor the 2006 survey results were presented in PIBO's report 'Breeding Bird Surveys on Pelee Island, Essex County, Ontario: 2009-2011' (Graeme C. Gibson, Pelee Island Bird Observatory, 2012). They are included here for the purpose of comparison.

⁴ 'Breeding Bird Surveys on Pelee Island, Essex County, Ontario: 2009-2011' by Graeme C. Gibson (Pelee Island Bird Observatory, 2012).

The five sites sampled in 2019 were Alvar (Stone Road; NCC), Red Cedar Savannah North (East West Road; NCC), Red Cedar Savannah South (East West Road; Pelee Island Winery), Von W (East West Road; NCC), and Wilds of Pelee (Curry Road; NCC).

Each 'sample' consisted of two visits in a single year, one in early June and another in late June. The visits were scheduled at least two weeks apart, and took place on days of good weather, with no rain, little wind, and good visibility. The surveys began at sunrise or later and ended before bird activity diminished for the day. The precise timing of the surveys was left to the discretion of the surveyor.

The first visits took place from June 9th and 14th and the second visits from June 23rd and 28th.

Results

Breeding evidence was recorded in 2019 for 35 bird species listed in this document as confirmed, probable, or possible nesters, including three Species at Risk. Of this total, twelve neotropical migrant species and 23 year-round residents or temperate migrants were detected. Based on 80 five-minute point count surveys, the five most abundant breeding species were (in order of abundance): Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow Warbler, Northern Cardinal, American Robin, and Tree Swallow.

The results of PIBO's research efforts in 2019 have been shared with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Pelee Island Winery. Information on Species at Risk detected during these point count surveys was shared with the Natural History Information Center (NHIC) with the permission of NCC and the Pelee Island Winery. PIBO would like to thank NCC and the Pelee Island Winery for generously granting permission for these point counts to be surveyed on their property.

Table 12 - Number of point count sites where species were recorded at least once during 80 five-minute surveys			
Species	# Sites	Species	# Sites
Red-winged Blackbird	35	Downy Woodpecker	5
Yellow Warbler	32	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	5
Northern Cardinal	31	American Goldfinch	4
American Robin	26	(Woodpecker sp.)	3
Tree Swallow	24	Northern Flicker	3
Indigo Bunting	21	Chipping Sparrow	3
House Wren	20	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	2
Brown-headed Cowbird	18	Warbling Vireo	2
Carolina Wren	14	Blue Jay	2
Mourning Dove	12	Gray Catbird	2
Red-eyed Vireo	12	Great Blue Heron	1
Common Grackle	12	Green Heron	1
Baltimore Oriole	11	Eastern Bluebird	1
Black-capped Chickadee	10	Acadian Flycatcher*	1
Cedar Waxwing	10	Wood Thrush*	1
(Cuckoo sp.)	9	Field Sparrow	1
Eastern Wood-pewee*	9	Song Sparrow	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	7	Orchard Oriole	1
Great Crested Flycatcher	6	Total # of species	35
* Species at Risk in Ontario			

Alvar (Nature Conservancy of Canada)

The Alvar point counts are located in the Stone Road Alvar (Stone Road, Pelee Island ON) on property owned by NCC. Two of the points are along Stone Road itself, and the rest are accessed by entering the alvar. This site can be characterized as an alvar woodland. While most of the points are located in habitat dominated by dogwoods and grasses, a few of the westernmost points are located in more mature forest along the edges of soybean fields.

Table 13 - Alvar point count results Stone Road Alvar NCC										2019
Species	AL 01	AL 02	AL 03	AL 04	AL 05	AL 06	AL 07	AL 08	AL 10	AL 12
Great Blue Heron						F				
Mourning Dove	F	FS	S	S	S					
(Cuckoo sp.)			S			S				
Red-Bellied Woodpecker								S		S
Downy Woodpecker									S	
Northern Flicker		F								
Great Crested Flycatcher		FS								
Red-eyed Vireo								FS	F	
Blue Jay									S	
Tree Swallow	FS	FS	F			S		F		F
Black-capped Chickadee		F								
Carolina Wren						S		S		
House Wren	F					F		S	S	
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher			F							S
American Robin	F					S			FS	
Gray Catbird					S					F
Cedar Waxwing	S					F				
Yellow Warbler	S	FS	FS	FS	FS	FS	FS	FS	FS	FS
Northern Cardinal	FS		F	S	F	FS				F
Indigo Bunting						S				
Red-winged Blackbird	FS	FS	FS	FS	FS	FS	FS	FS	FS	FS
Common Grackle		S						S		
Brown-headed Cowbird			S					S		
Baltimore Oriole			S					FS		F
American Goldfinch							S			
Total species – 1st visit	6	7	5	2	3	6	2	5	4	6
Total species – 2nd visit	5	6	6	4	4	8	3	9	6	4
Total species – combined visits	8	8	9	4	5	11	3	10	7	8
F – detected during first 5-minute point count										
S – detected during second 5-minute point count										

Table 14 - Alvar point count results (2019 and 2008) Stone Road NCC			
Species	2019	2008	2006
Great Blue Heron	X		N/A
Ring-necked Pheasant		X	N/A
Mourning Dove	X	X	N/A
Black-billed Cuckoo		X	N/A
Yellow-billed Cuckoo		X	N/A
(Cuckoo sp.)	X		N/A
Red-Bellied Woodpecker	X	X	N/A
Downy Woodpecker	X		N/A
Northern Flicker	X		N/A
Eastern Wood-pewee		X	N/A
Acadian Flycatcher		X	N/A
Great Crested Flycatcher	X		N/A
Red-eyed Vireo	X	X	N/A
Blue Jay	X	X	N/A
Purple Martin		X	N/A
Tree Swallow	X	X	N/A
Black-capped Chickadee	X	X	N/A
Carolina Wren	X	X	N/A
House Wren	X	X	N/A
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	X		N/A
American Robin	X	X	N/A
Gray Catbird	X	X	N/A
European Starling		X	N/A
Cedar Waxwing	X	X	N/A
Yellow Warbler	X	X	N/A
Field Sparrow		X	N/A
Northern Cardinal	X	X	N/A
Indigo Bunting	X	X	N/A
Red-winged Blackbird	X	X	N/A
Common Grackle	X	X	N/A
Brown-headed Cowbird	X	X	N/A
Baltimore Oriole	X	X	N/A
American Goldfinch	X	X	N/A
Total number of species detected	25	27	N/A

Wilds of Pelee (Nature Conservancy of Canada)

The four point counts collected within the Wilds of Pelee site are located in the southwest portion of NCC's property in the Stone Road Alvar. These points are most easily accessed via a soybean field on South Shore Road, and are located in forest habitat. Two of the points are bordered on one side by the a deep ditch.

Table 15 - Wilds of Pelee point count results				2019
Stone Road Alvar NCC				
Species	WP01	WP02	WP03	WP04
Mourning Dove	S			
Red-bellied Woodpecker		S		S
Eastern Wood-pewee				F
Red-eyed Vireo	F			F
Black-capped Chickadee				F
Carolina Wren	F		S	
House Wren				S
American Robin	F			FS
Cedar Waxwing		FS		
Yellow Warbler	FS	FS	FS	
Northern Cardinal	F	FS	F	S
Indigo Bunting	S	S		
Red-winged Blackbird	FS	FS	FS	S
Brown-headed Cowbird				S
Baltimore Oriole			F	
Total species – 1st visit	6	4	4	4
Total species – 2nd visit	4	6	3	6
Total species – combined visits	8	6	5	9



Eastern Towhee nest – Wilds of Pelee. Photo by Sachi Schott.

Table 16 - Wilds of Pelee point count results (2019 and 2008) Stone Road Alvar NCC			
Species	2019	2008	2006
Ring-necked Pheasant		X	N/A
Wild Turkey		X	N/A
Mourning Dove	X	X	N/A
Black-billed Cuckoo		X	N/A
Yellow-billed Cuckoo		X	N/A
Red-bellied Woodpecker	X		N/A
Downy Woodpecker		X	N/A
Northern Flicker		X	N/A
Eastern Wood-pewee	X	X	N/A
Alder Flycatcher		X	N/A
Eastern Kingbird		X	N/A
Red-eyed Vireo	X		N/A
Blue Jay		X	N/A
Purple Martin		X	N/A
Tree Swallow		X	N/A
Barn Swallow		X	N/A
Black-capped Chickadee	X		N/A
Carolina Wren	X	X	N/A
House Wren	X	X	N/A
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher		X	N/A
American Robin	X	X	N/A
European Starling		X	N/A
Cedar Waxwing	X	X	N/A
Yellow Warbler	X	X	N/A
Northern Cardinal	X	X	N/A
Indigo Bunting	X	X	N/A
Red-winged Blackbird	X	X	N/A
Common Grackle		X	N/A
Brown-headed Cowbird	X	X	N/A
Baltimore Oriole	X	X	N/A
American Goldfinch		X	N/A
Total number of species	15	28	N/A

Red Cedar Savannah North (Nature Conservancy of Canada)

The Red Cedar Savannah North site is located within the Richard and Beryl Ivey Conservation Area on East-West Road, which is managed by NCC. This site is an alvar woodland, much of which is dominated by more mature trees.

Table 17 - Red Cedar Savannah North point count results Richard and Beryl Ivey Conservation Area NCC											2019
Species	RN01	RN02	RN03	RN04	RN05	RN06	RN07	RN08	RN09	RN10	RN11
Green Heron						F					
Mourning Dove		F	FS								F
(Cuckoo sp.)		F		F			F				F
Red-bellied Woodpecker				F		S					
Downy Woodpecker		S		F						S	
Northern Flicker							S				
Eastern Wood-pewee				F		FS	F				
Red-eyed Vireo	FS		FS	S			F				
Tree Swallow	F	FS	FS	F	F	FS	FS	F	S	F	FS
Black-capped Chickadee	S	F	F								
Carolina Wren	F					F		S	F		
House Wren	FS		F	S		FS	F			FS	FS
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	F									S	
American Robin	FS	FS	S	FS	F	F	S	F	F	FS	S
Cedar Waxwing		S	S								
Yellow Warbler		FS			FS		S	F			S
Chipping Sparrow	F		S								
Field Sparrow								S			
Song Sparrow											S
Northern Cardinal	FS	F	F		S	S	F	F		F	F
Indigo Bunting	F	FS			S	FS	FS	F	S	FS	F
Red-winged Blackbird		F	S		F	FS	F	FS	FS	F	FS
Common Grackle		FS			F						
Brown-headed Cowbird		S	F	F	FS			S	F		FS
Baltimore Oriole				F	F				F		FS
American Goldfinch				F							
Total species – 1st visit	9	10	7	9	7	8	8	6	5	6	9
Total species – 2nd visit	5	8	7	3	4	7	5	4	3	5	8
Total species – combined visits	9	13	11	11	9	10	11	9	7	8	12
F – detected during first 5-minute point count											
S – detected during second 5-minute point count											

Table 18 - Red Cedar Savannah North point count results (2019, 2008 and 2006) Richard and Beryl Ivey Conservation Area NCC			
Species	2019	2008	2006
Green Heron	X		
Cooper's Hawk			X
Ring-necked Pheasant			X
Wild Turkey			X
Killdeer			X
Mourning Dove	X	X	X
Black-billed Cuckoo		X	X
Yellow-billed Cuckoo		X	X
(Cuckoo sp.)	X		
Ruby-throated Hummingbird		X	
Red-bellied Woodpecker	X	X	X
Downy Woodpecker	X	X	X
Northern Flicker	X	X	X
Willow Flycatcher			X
Eastern Wood-pewee	X	X	X
Eastern Phoebe		X	
Great Crested Flycatcher		X	X
Eastern Kingbird		X	
Red-eyed Vireo	X	X	X
Blue Jay		X	X
American Crow		X	X
Purple Martin		X	X
Tree Swallow	X	X	X
Black-capped Chickadee	X	X	X
White-breasted Nuthatch			X
Carolina Wren	X	X	X
House Wren	X	X	X
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	X		
Eastern Bluebird			X
American Robin	X	X	X
Gray Catbird			X
Brown Thrasher		X	X
European Starling		X	X
Cedar Waxwing	X	X	X
Yellow Warbler	X	X	X
Common Yellowthroat			X
Chipping Sparrow	X		X
Field Sparrow	X	X	X
Song Sparrow	X	X	X
Northern Cardinal	X	X	X
Indigo Bunting	X	X	X
Red-winged Blackbird	X	X	X
Common Grackle	X	X	X
Brown-headed Cowbird	X	X	X
Orchard Oriole			X
Baltimore Oriole	X	X	X
House Finch		X	
American Goldfinch	X	X	X
Total number of species detected	26	34	41

Von W (Nature Conservancy of Canada)

The Von W site consists of two points located in the alvar woodland to the north of East-West Road. These points are very close to those of the Red Cedar Savannah North site, and both sites were surveyed on the same dates.

Table 19 - Von W point count results		2019
Richard and Beryl Ivey Conservation Area NCC		
Species	VW1	VW2
Northern Flicker		F
Eastern Wood-pewee	F	
Alder Flycatcher	F	
Red-eyed Vireo	F	
Blue Jay	S	
Tree Swallow		F
Black-capped Chickadee		F
Carolina Wren		F
House Wren	F	F
American Robin	F	S
Cedar Waxwing		F
Northern Cardinal	FS	F
Indigo Bunting		FS
Brown-headed Cowbird	S	
Orchard Oriole		S
Baltimore Oriole	S	
Total species – 1st visit	6	8
Total species – 2nd visit	4	3
Total species – combined visits	9	10



Breeding bird point counts. Photo by Sachi Schott.

Table 20 - Von W point count results (2019 and 2008)
Richard and Beryl Ivey Conservation Area
NCC

Species	2019	2008	2006
Ring-necked Pheasant		X	N/A
Downy Woodpecker		X	N/A
Northern Flicker	X		N/A
Eastern Wood-pewee	X	X	N/A
Alder Flycatcher	X		N/A
Red-eyed Vireo	X		N/A
Blue Jay	X	X	N/A
American Crow		X	N/A
Purple Martin		X	N/A
Tree Swallow	X		N/A
Black-capped Chickadee	X		N/A
Carolina Wren	X		N/A
House Wren	X	X	N/A
American Robin	X	X	N/A
Wood Thrush		X	N/A
European Starling		X	N/A
Cedar Waxwing	X		N/A
Northern Cardinal	X	X	N/A
Indigo Bunting	X	X	N/A
Common Grackle		X	N/A
Brown-headed Cowbird	X	X	N/A
Orchard Oriole	X		N/A
Baltimore Oriole	X	X	N/A
American Goldfinch		X	N/A
Total number of species detected	16	16	N/A



A distant Turkey Vulture on a Breeding Bird Point Count. Photo by Sachi Schott.

Red Cedar Savannah South (Pelee Island Winery)

The Red Cedar Savannah South is located on the south side of East-West Road, across from Red Cedar Savannah North. The property is owned and managed by the Pelee Island Winery, who maintain several walking trails for visitors.

Table 21 - Red Cedar Savannah South point count results													2019
Pelee Island Winery													
Species	RS 01	RS 02	RS 03	RS 04	RS 05	RS 06	RS 07	RS 08	RS 09	RS 10	RS 11	RS 12	RS 13
Mourning Dove	FS		F					F					
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	F								F				
(Cuckoo sp.)			F							S	FS		
(Woodpecker sp.)		S	F								S		
Red-bellied Woodpecker									F				
Downy Woodpecker										S			
Eastern Wood-pewee									S	S	S		
Great Crested Flycatcher						F			F	S	F	S	
Warbling Vireo				F	F								
Red-eyed Vireo	S									FS	F		
Tree Swallow	F	FS	FS	S	F	F						S	
Black-capped Chickadee			S					S			F	S	
Carolina Wren			S				F	F			S		F
House Wren	S					S			FS	FS	S		S
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher			F										
Eastern Bluebird					F								
American Robin	FS	FS	FS	FS		FS	FS	F			FS		FS
Wood Thrush									FS				
Cedar Waxwing	S			F								F	FS
Yellow Warbler	F	S	F	S	FS	FS	FS	FS	FS	S	S	F	FS
Chipping Sparrow			S										
Northern Cardinal		FS	FS	FS		S	FS	F	FS	F	FS	FS	
Indigo Bunting	S	FS	S	S	S	F	F						FS
Red-winged Blackbird	FS	FS	F	FS	FS	FS	FS	FS		F	F	FS	FS
Common Grackle	F	F		F	FS			F		S	F	S	
Brown-headed Cowbird	F	S				FS			S	FS		FS	S
Baltimore Oriole			S						FS		FS		
American Goldfinch											F	S	
Total species – 1st visit	8	6	8	6	6	7	6	7	8	5	10	5	6
Total species – 2nd visit	7	8	7	6	3	6	4	3	6	9	9	8	7
Total species – combined visits	12	14	13	9	7	9	6	8	10	11	15	10	8
F – detected during first 5-minute point count													
S – detected during second 5-minute point count													

Table 22 - Red Cedar Savannah South point count results (2019, 2008 and 2006)
Pelee Island Winery

Species	2019	2008	2006
Bald Eagle			X
Cooper's Hawk		X	
Red-tailed Hawk			X
Ring-necked Pheasant			X
Wild Turkey		X	
Killdeer		X	X
Spotted Sandpiper		X	
Mourning Dove	X	X	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	X	X	X
Black-billed Cuckoo			X
(Cuckoo sp.)			
Great Horned Owl			X
Chimney Swift		X	X
Ruby-throated Hummingbird		X	
(Woodpecker sp.)	X		
Red-bellied Woodpecker	X	X	X
Downy Woodpecker	X	X	X
Northern Flicker		X	X
Eastern Wood-pewee	X	X	X
Great Crested Flycatcher	X	X	X
Warbling Vireo	X	X	
Red-eyed Vireo	X	X	X
Blue Jay		X	X
American Crow		X	X
Purple Martin		X	X
Tree Swallow	X	X	X
Barn Swallow		X	
Black-capped Chickadee	X	X	
Carolina Wren	X	X	X
House Wren	X	X	X
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	X		
Eastern Bluebird	X		
American Robin	X	X	X
Wood Thrush	X	X	
Gray Catbird			X
Brown Thrasher		X	X
European Starling		X	
Cedar Waxwing	X	X	X
Yellow Warbler	X	X	X
Common Yellowthroat			X
Eastern Towhee		X	
Chipping Sparrow	X	X	X
Song Sparrow			X
Northern Cardinal	X	X	X
Indigo Bunting	X	X	X
Red-winged Blackbird	X	X	X
Common Grackle	X	X	X
Brown-headed Cowbird	X	X	X
Orchard Oriole		X	X
Baltimore Oriole	X	X	X
American Goldfinch	X	X	X
House Sparrow			X
Total number of species detected	27	39	37

Marsh Monitoring Program (Birds)

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 marshes⁵. On Pelee Island, the MMP surveys take place in Lake Henry, at Lighthouse Point Provincial Nature Reserve (Ontario Parks – Ministry of Natural Resources). Much of the site is overgrown with *Phragmites spp.*, with some cattail marsh and other semi-aquatic plant life.

Methods

Marsh bird routes are surveyed two 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 elicit a response from any birds that are nearby; and the last five minutes are a second 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 inside and outside of the station area.

In 2019, marsh bird surveys took place on June 18th and June 30th, 2019. 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

Least Bitterns were heard at four of the survey stations on June 18th, representing at least four individual birds. At two of the stations, two Least Bitterns could be heard at one time, counter-singing. The Least Bitterns heard at stations G and H were within the 100m survey area, but the others were more distant. On June 30th only two Least Bitterns were heard, at stations C and H.

Aside from these focal species the surveys recorded many of the usual marsh inhabitants, including Red-winged Blackbirds, some Green Herons, Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and an Osprey. Double-crested Cormorants were frequently seen flying overhead. Two Black-crowned Night Herons were flushed on the way to station B on June 30th. Both Tree Swallows and Barn Swallows were frequently seen hunting for flying insects over the water.

Table 23 - Marsh Monitoring Program (birds)			
Observers	Sachi Schott & Melanie Denommé	Hours	7
# of Surveys	2 (June 18 & June 30)		
Notes	Least Bitterns heard on June 18		

⁵ 'About the Marsh Monitoring Program' (<https://birdscanada.org/birdmon/mmp/about.jsp>, accessed November 28th, 2019).

Marsh Monitoring Program (Amphibians)

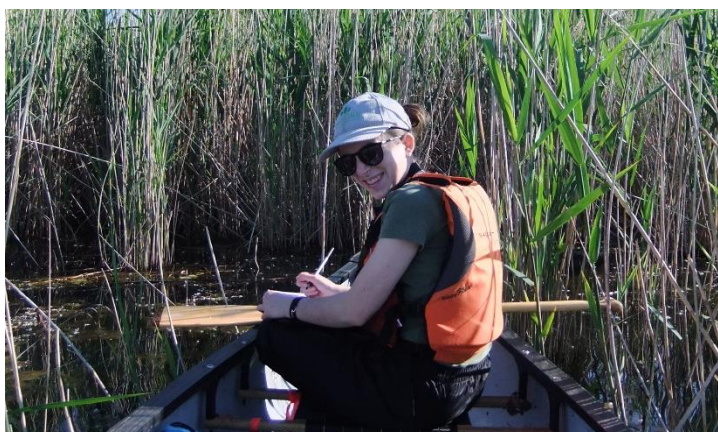
The MMP protocol also calls for three amphibian surveys to take place between April and July. As Pelee Island has a very limited and predictable number of frog species that does not include early spring species such as Spring Peepers and Cricket Frogs, PIBO usually only conducts the last two of those surveys. (In 2018, all three surveys were conducted, and the first survey in April recorded no frogs whatsoever). 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), 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

The unseasonably cold and rainy weather made it difficult to find a date for the second amphibian survey in the first half of May – the program’s protocol calls for overnight temperatures to be above 10 degrees Celsius, with no rain and little wind. PIBO got in just under the wire and conducted the survey on May 14th, the day before the deadline. The temperature was, at last, a very suitable 15 degrees Celsius, but no frogs were heard at all – even though after the final survey was complete, PIBO’s surveyors turned on their headlamps and found that the observation platform at Fox Pond was surrounded by (completely silent) Green Frogs! The following morning was warm and foggy, and many American Toads and some Bullfrogs were heard calling on census, for the first time that spring.

The weather was also reluctant to cooperate for the third and final amphibian survey. PIBO’s surveyors attempted to head out on June 5th, but found that conditions were windier than was permissible under the program’s protocol. The following night, June 6th, had no wind, and Green Frogs and Bullfrogs were recorded at all four survey sites, and an American Toad was seen on the path at Lighthouse Point. Few individuals of each species were heard, with only one full chorus of Bullfrogs recorded at Fox Pond.

Table 24 - Marsh Monitoring Program (amphibians)			
Observers	Sachi Schott, Eric Orosz & Melanie Denommé	Hours	4
# of Surveys	2 (May 14 th & June 6 th)		
Notes	Bullfrogs and Green Frogs recorded		



*Summer Student Melanie Denommé conducting marsh bird surveys at Lake Henry.
Photo by Sachi Schott.*

Marsh Monitoring Program (Vegetation)

The third part of the MMP protocol involves conducting mandatory vegetation surveys at all six MMP bird survey points and the four MMP amphibian survey points. Estimates are made of the percent cover provide by different categories of vegetation and habitat, including herbaceous emergent vegetation, floating plants, exposed mud or rocks, trees, and shrubs. Human influence on the survey points, such as roads or footpaths, is also recorded.

The vegetation surveys for the MMP bird survey points were conducted on the evening of July 9th, 2019. The invasive reed species *Phragmites* was the dominant form of emergent vegetation at most survey points, as it has been in previous years. The vegetation surveys for the MMP amphibian survey points were completed on July 17th by PIBO's 2019 Summer Student Melanie Denommé.

Table 25 - Marsh Monitoring Program (vegetation)			
Observers	Melanie Denommé & Sachi Schott	Hours	3
# of Surveys	2 (July 9 th & July 17 th)		
Notes	<i>Phragmites</i> dominant in Lake Henry; many floating plants. Dragonflies and damselflies very active.		



Lake Henry. Photo by Sachi Schott.

Prothonotary Warbler nest box monitoring

PIBO monitors and maintains a series of twenty Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes at the Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources – Ontario Parks). The nest boxes are arranged roughly from the westernmost edge of PIBO's standard 'count' area at Fish Point to the western boundary of the nature reserve, following McCormick Road. Their distance from the road varies, but most are visible even in the summer when the vegetation is the thickest. Historically, these nest boxes have served as a breeding home not only for the occasional Prothonotary Warbler but also for House Wrens and Tree Swallows. Breeding activity was evident on the part of both of the latter two species in 2019, but no Prothonotary Warbler nesting activity was recorded (though one female was observed during the daily census at Fish Point on May 31st, near the end of the south portion of the trail).

PIBO has always spent time in the late spring and early summer observing the Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes from the road, looking and listening for any Prothonotary Warbler nesting activity. 2019 was the first year that an observation sheet was used to record observations of nesting activity by any avian species at the boxes. Approximately once a week PIBO's field staff walked from one end of the nest box area to the other and back along McCormick Road. Notes were taken on any bird species seen on or in each of the boxes, and helped PIBO's field staff to determine which nests belonged to which species of birds at the end of the season. The nest boxes were cleaned out on November 2nd and 8th, 2019.

Table 26 - Prothonotary Warbler nest box monitoring			
Observers	Sachi Schott, Eric Orosz, Melanie Denommé & Hannah Mittelstaedt	Hours	8.5
# of visits	13 (May 16, 24 & 28; June 1, 8, 16, 21 & 28; July 5, 12 & 19; Nov 2 & 8)		
Notes	House Wrens and Tree Swallows observed in and around boxes; no Prothonotary Warbler activity observed.		

In total, three House Wren nests and five Tree Swallow nests were discovered in the twenty nest boxes monitored by PIBO, along with two nests of unknown provenance. One of the House Wren nests and four of the Tree Swallow nests showed evidence of successful fledging. Curiously, four of the Tree Swallow nests contained a single undamaged egg (including one nest that was otherwise clean and therefore must have contained no other, viable eggs). Unviable eggs are usually removed by the adult birds once the other eggs have hatched, and it seems unusual that such a high proportion of the nests would still retain one.

Of the unidentified nests, one contained the skeletal remains of two nestlings, along with a very small amount of decayed nesting material. The lack of nesting material made it difficult to determine which species built the nest, but on balance the skeletons may have been those of Tree Swallow nestlings. A House Wren was observed entering the box on June 28th, but the nest box contained none of the thick sticks that House Wrens use to build their nests. Nor did it contain the deep layers of moss favoured by Prothonotary Warblers, and in the opinion of the observers, the skeletons were too large to have belonged to a warbler.

Table 27 - 2019 Prothonotary Warbler nest box contents

	GPS point	Description	Contents in previous years	Contents in 2019
1	Nest Box 01	Green (1 st gen.)	Empty in 2018	Empty
2	Nest Box 02	Green (1 st gen.)	Empty in 2018	Empty
3	Nest Box 03	Green (1 st gen.)	Contained PROW nest in 2017	Empty
4	Nest Box 04	Green (1 st gen.)	Contained unused PROW nest in 2018	Empty
5	Nest Box 04	Nest 'log'	Possible unused HOWR nest in 2018	Empty
6	Nest Box 05	New box (2 nd gen.)	Unused HOWR nest in 2018	Empty
7	Nest Box 05	Old box (1 st gen.)	Unidentified grass nest in 2018, not used	Unfinished nest of grass & small sticks
8	Nest Box 06	Nest 'log'	Contained dead nestling of unknown species in 2018	Used HOWR nest
9	Nest Box 07	New box (2 nd gen.)	Empty in 2018	Empty
10	Nest Box 07	Old box (1 st gen.)	Contained PROW nest in 2014	Used TRES nest with one egg
11	Nest Box 08	Nest 'log'	Possible PROW nest in 2018	2 dead nestlings of unknown species, very little nest material
12	Nest Box 09	New box (2 nd gen.)	Empty in 2018	Unused TRES nest with one egg
13	Nest Box 10	New box (2 nd gen.)	Empty in 2018	Used TRES nest with one egg
14	Nest Box 11	New box (2 nd gen.)	Unidentified grass nest in 2018, possibly predated	Used TRES nest lined with white feathers
15	Nest Box 11	Old nest 'log'	Defunct (no roof)	Defunct (no roof)
16	Nest Box 12	Nest 'log'	Empty in 2018	Empty
17	Nest Box 13	New box (2 nd gen.)	Empty in 2018	Empty
18	Nest Box 13	PVC pipe nest box	Defunct	Unused HOWR nest
19	Nest Box 14	New box (2 nd gen.)	Empty in 2018	Empty
20	Nest Box 15	New box (2 nd gen.)	Contained used grass nest in 2018	Used TRES nest with one egg
21	Nest Box 16	Nest 'log'	Empty in 2018	Unfinished, unused HOWR nest
AOU species codes: HOWR (House Wren), PROW (Prothonotary Warbler), TRES (Tree Swallow)				

In 2018, it was noticed that wooden ‘floor boards’ needed to be placed over the polystyrene inserts that have been used to decrease the depths of the new second-generation nest boxes, which are considerably deeper than the original boxes. Polystyrene foam was chosen as the material for the inserts because it is lightweight, easy to cut, available in a suitable thickness, and does not retain moisture or mold. However in the course of making their nests the nesting birds scratch up and shred a small amount of polystyrene, creating litter. To prevent this behaviour, Assistant Field Biologist Sachi Schott cut wooden ‘floors’ for each of the boxes out of pressboard over the winter. Unfortunately in April the water at Fish Point was already so high that the Prothonotary Warbler boxes were inaccessible even in hip waders, and the necessary modifications to the boxes could not be made until November.

There are currently three different types and ‘generations’ of Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes at Fish Point: the original nest boxes made by Dean Ware; newer, deeper nest boxes provided by John Krause; and the newest nest ‘logs’ donated by Jody Allair. For a more in-depth description of each of these types of nest boxes and a discussion of their history, please see the relevant section in PIBO’s 2018 Year-End Report (available at www.pibo.ca). The following table correlating the nest box numbers, GPS points, and UTM coordinates is provided for reference purposes.

Table 28 – UTM coordinates of Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes at Fish Point					
	GPS point	Former designation	Description	UTM 17 T*	
1	Nest Box 01	Nest Box A	Green (1 st gen.)	0360505	4621867
2	Nest Box 02	Nest Box B	Green (1 st gen.)	0360496	4621861
3	Nest Box 03	Nest Box C	Green (1 st gen.)	0360490	4621872
4	Nest Box 04	Nest Box 01	Green (1 st gen.)	0360348	4621986
5	Nest Box 04	Nest Box 01	Nest ‘log’	0360348	4621986
6	Nest Box 05	Nest Box 02	New box (2 nd gen.)	0360269	4622042
7	Nest Box 05	Nest Box 02	Old box (1 st gen.)	0360269	4622042
8	Nest Box 06	Nest Box 3Log	Nest ‘log’	0360273	4622065
9	Nest Box 07	Nest Box 03	New box (2 nd gen.)	0360246	4622041
10	Nest Box 07	Nest Box 03	Old box (1 st gen.)	0360246	4622041
11	Nest Box 08	Nest Box 4Log	Nest ‘log’	0360236	4622057
12	Nest Box 09	Nest Box 04	New box (2 nd gen.)	0360215	4622055
13	Nest Box 10	Nest Box 05	New box (2 nd gen.)	0360196	4622066
14	Nest Box 11	Nest Box 06	New box (2 nd gen.)	0360189	4622079
15	Nest Box 11	Nest Box 06	Old nest ‘log’	0360189	4622079
16	Nest Box 12	Nest Box 5Log	Nest ‘log’	0360167	4622070
17	Nest Box 13	Nest Box 07	New box (2 nd gen.)	0360152	4622073
18	Nest Box 13	Nest Box 07	PVC pipe nest box	0360152	4622073
19	Nest Box 14	Nest Box 08	New box (2 nd gen.)	0360137	4622072
20	Nest Box 15	Nest Box 09	New box (2 nd gen.)	0360126	4622067
21	Nest Box 16	Nest Box 10	Nest ‘log’	0360119	4622072
*please note, some GPS point names and UTM coordinates refer to more than one nest box					

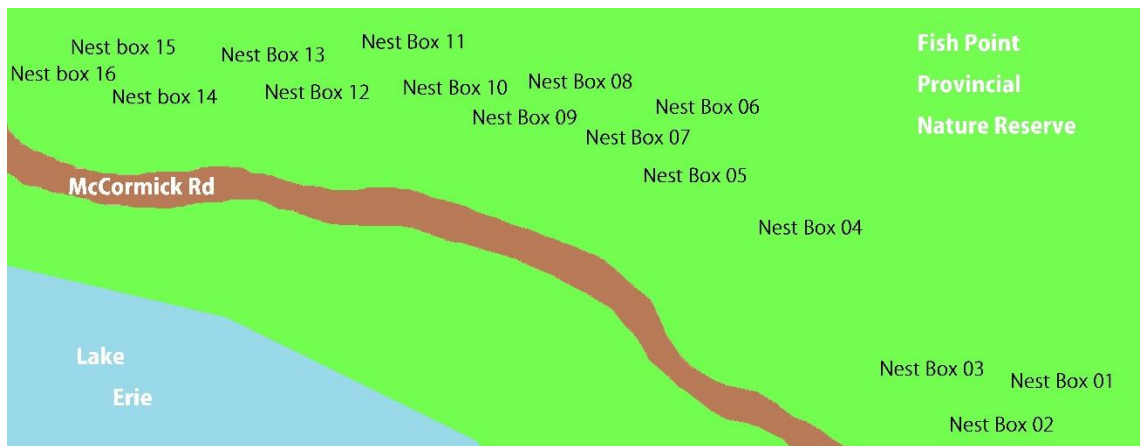


Figure 3 – Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes at Fish Point. Locations approximate.



Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes at Fish Point. Photo by Sachi Schott.

2019 Purple Martin Monitoring Program

PIBO's field cottage on the South Shore Road of Pelee Island, Ontario, has had Purple Martin houses since before PIBO occupied the site. The original boxes were highly decorative, hand-made aluminum boxes with room for forty-eight Purple Martin pairs. These boxes were charming, distinctive, and popular with the birds, but they were very heavy and difficult to put up and take down, and after over two decades of use were becoming dented and difficult to clean.

In 2018, PIBO installed the first of two new Purple Martin houses. This was a gourd rack, with eighteen vertical gourds. On April 7th, 2019, a second Purple Martin house provided by Nature Canda was installed at the cottage by Aaron Miller of Newark Sheds & Lawn Furniture in Norwich, Ontario and his team. This second house was a poly-wood Troyer 'T-14' Martin House, so-called because it has room for fourteen Purple Martin pairs. Both of the new boxes are installed on aluminum poles, with a metal cable and winch to raise and lower the boxes for cleaning and inspection. With two new Purple Martin houses, 2019 was the first time in many years that PIBO did not put up the original, aluminum Purple Martin houses. They were retired with regret, but installing them had become too difficult for PIBO's field staff.



PIBO's Purple Martin gourd rack (left) and T-14 house (right). Photos by Sachi Schott.

The first Purple Martins were seen and heard investigating the new Purple Martin houses on the evening of April 12th. No other Purple Martins had been observed by PIBO before then during migration monitoring at Fish Point. After that, Purple Martins were present continuously.

The houses were first inspected on May 8th. They were found to be empty except for three dead adult Purple Martins (one after second year male and two second year males). Considering the frequent rains and cool weather that swept the island this spring, it was not surprising that some Purple Martins did not survive. The houses were checked again on May 14th. Six of the compartments held small twigs, pine needles, or dried leaves, but none had complete or even semi-complete nests.

After that, with no further nest building activity observed, the houses were not checked again until adult Purple Martins were observed bringing green leaves into some of the compartments on May 25th. By May 27th, most of the compartments contained nests in a range of stages, from just beginning to complete and lined with green leaves. There were no eggs. One compartment contained a dead adult female Purple Martin.

From there nest checks were carried out approximately every five days, with some variation due to weather and other external factors. Nest checks were not carried out for two weeks at the end of July and the beginning of August due to the absence of field staff. The nest check on August 5th revealed that most of the nestlings had fledged. Almost all of the nests were empty, with the exception of one nest each in both the gourd rack and the T-14 Martin House. Both of these nests contained nestlings that appeared to be over 20 days old, and were close to fledging. Adult Purple Martins were observed perching on the houses and on the power lines nearby, but were quite often absent altogether.

Evidence suggests that most of the Purple Martin nestlings fledged successfully. Some dead nestlings of various ages were found inside the nest boxes, but the nests showed no signs of predation or other disturbances. There was no clear cause of death for any of the eggs or nestlings that were found dead or that disappeared. Fox snakes were observed around the Purple Martin houses, but there is no evidence that any of them scaled the nest poles or entered the nest boxes. Parasites such as nest mites grew in number over time, until some nest boxes were quite heavily infested: in future years, PIBO will keep fresh nesting material on hand and be prepared to replace such nests as required. The nests were inspected more carefully when they were cleaned out on October 28th and 29th.

Table 29 - 2019 summary of results from PIBO's Purple Martin houses									
Site	# of cavities	# of active nests	% occupied	Total # eggs	Total # hatched	Total # fledged	% hatched	Egg to fledge %	Young to fledge %
T-14	14	13	0.928	62	54	44	0.871	0.710	0.815
Gourd	18	14	0.778	71	62	60	0.873	0.845	0.968

In total, twenty-seven of the thirty-two nest compartments were occupied by Purple Martin pairs who laid at least one egg. Thirteen nests were in the T-14; the other fourteen were in the gourd rack. Egg laying is estimated to have begun on May 31st and was largely complete by June 16th. Clutch size ranged between one to seven eggs, with an average clutch size of five eggs. The first nestling is believed to have hatched out on June 19th. The last date that Purple Martins were observed around the houses was August 14th; by the time the houses were checked on August 16th, all the nests were empty and all of the nestlings had fledged.

A small number of Purple Martin nestlings were banded under PIBO's bird banding permit. Twenty-nine nestlings from six nests were banded when they were estimated to be fifteen to eighteen days old. Half the nestlings from each nest were removed at one time, so that the nest boxes were never completely empty. While one batch of nestlings was being banded, the Purple Martin houses were raised halfway, so that the adults would continue to feed the nestlings that remained.

PIBO also used simple trap-doors to capture three adult Purple Martins. The first was an after second-year male, who was banded, admired, and released; the other two were second-year females that were targeted for capture because PIBO's field staff had observed that they were already banded. After they were captured, their band numbers were reported to the Bird Banding Office and it was discovered that both females had been originally banded near Lakeside, Ottawa County, Ohio, USA in the spring of 2018 when they were too young to fly. A third banded female was observed tending to a nest in PIBO's gourd rack, but she evaded capture. Because capturing adult Purple Martins was more complicated and potentially more disruptive than banding nestlings, PIBO elected to keep the banding of adult birds to a minimum. The traps were set in place on only two nest boxes at a time on five days, for no more than half an hour at a time.



Female Purple Martin with young nestlings. Photo by Sachi Schott.

Between nest checks and banding, PIBO's field staff spent time observing the Purple Martins in an effort to determine the approximate age of the adult birds associated with each nest. There are differences in plumage that allow second year (SY) and after second year (ASY) male and female Purple Martins to be identified from a distance, though the ASY males with their striking, solid deep purple colouring are the most distinctive. By the time the nests had fledged and the adult birds had left the houses, only seven adults remained unidentified (six females and one male). Of the rest, fourteen of the females were SY birds and seven were ASY; by contrast, only five SY males had nests compared to twenty-one ASY males. Clearly, ASY males were more successful at attracting mates and establishing nests than their SY counterparts, whereas the reverse was true for females: there appeared to be a bias in favour of SY females over ASY ones. There is no indication that SY males were less successful at fledgling young, though considering how few SY males established nests such an association would be difficult to detect. The two nests that were the last to fledge, approximately two weeks after the other nests in the Purple Martin houses, both belonged to SY males. A SY female and a SY male built and lined a nest in the gourd rack, but did not lay any eggs.

These observations were also an opportunity to make some informal observations as to what the Purple Martin adults were feeding their fledglings. These observations were obviously biased towards large insects that could be distinguished from the ground, but were nevertheless of interest, especially as they revealed a pattern of insect emergence on Pelee Island. Many adults had their beaks stuffed full of mayflies (order Ephemeroptera) as they shuttled to and fro feeding their newly-hatched nestlings at the beginning of July, but this windfall lasted for only a few days. Red admirals and painted ladies, both species of butterflies that belong to the family *Vanessa*, were next to be brought to the nests; and after the first week of July, dragonflies such as green darners were a common foodstuff. Pieces of green darter thoraxes were occasionally found in the used nests at the end of the season, usually with the wings snapped off: perhaps these large insects were too much of a mouthful to be eaten in one go!

Table 30 - 2019 Purple Martin Monitoring Program			
Observers	Sachi Schott, Melanie Denommé, Eric Orosz, Environmental Leadership Program, Gore Hill Public School		
# of Nest Checks	17	Hours	7 (May 8 to August 16)
Adults banded	1	Hours	1 (July 5 & 8)
Adults retrapped	2	Hours	2.25 (July 4, 6 & 10)
Nestlings banded	29	Hours	2.25 (July 4, 9 & 10)
ASY/SY Females	7 / 14	Hours	3.5 (July 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9)
ASY/SY Males	21 / 5	Total	16 hours
Adult Ages UNK	7		
Notes	2019 was the first year of PIBO's Purple Martin monitoring program. Two SY female PUMAs were retrapped, and were found to have come from Ohio.		

Overall, PIBO's Purple Martin houses appear to have had a productive year in 2019, with many young Purple Martins fledging successfully. PIBO has shared this year's results and observations with Nature Canada, in fulfillment of the arrangement by which PIBO received the T-14 Purple Martin house.

It is certain that PIBO's new Purple Martin houses would not have enjoyed the success they had this year if not for the original boxes they replaced. PIBO's Purple Martin monitoring program therefore owes a debt of gratitude to the builder of the original Purple Martin houses that were originally installed at the PIBO Field House.



Summer Student Melanie Denommé checking the PIBO gourd rack. Photo by Sachi Schott.

PIBO's Purple Martin nest checks were carried out by Sachi Schott (Assistant Field Biologist), Melanie Denommé (Summer Student), and Eric Orosz (Volunteer). Assistance was also provided by the students of the Environmental Leadership Program (London ON), and Gore Hill Public School (Leamington ON). Checking the Purple Martin boxes was a popular activity with visiting students, and PIBO is considering advertising Purple Martin nest checks as a public outreach event, similar to the annual Public Owling Nights, but on a smaller scale. The nest monitoring and Purple Martin banding have been an exciting addition to PIBO's field programs, and they will continue to be refined in future years.

Monarch butterfly counts

During the fall migration monitoring season PIBO conducts standardized monarch butterfly migration counts as part of the 90-minute census performed each morning. The surveys occur along the 2.25 km path at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve (Ontario Parks – Ministry of Natural Resources).

* * *

In 2018, PIBO saw a large increase in the number of monarchs, which were seen more frequently and in greater numbers than they had been in recent years. In September 2018 large roosts of over one thousand monarch butterflies formed in the trees at the tip of Fish Point and elsewhere on the island as they waited out a spate of bad weather. This was the first time in many years that large roosts of monarch butterflies have been seen on Pelee Island. In total, PIBO recorded 2701 individual monarch butterflies in 2018.

Without a similar abundance of roosting butterflies to report, the total number of monarch butterflies recorded in 2019 seemed meager by comparison (only 844). However, leaving aside the days in September 2018 when roosts were observed, the pattern of monarch butterfly numbers in 2019 was almost exactly the same as in 2018: approximately 200 butterflies observed in August, building to a peak in September, and then diminishing considerably in October until no monarchs at all were counted in November. Therefore, it does not appear that 2019's reduced total is due to an overall reduction in the population of monarch butterflies: rather, it seems more probably that it was caused by the failure of the weather to recreate the conditions that in 2018 led to monarch butterflies being driven down to roost at Fish Point.

In May 2019, PIBO was approached by Danielle Ethier, the Bird Population Scientist at Bird Studies Canada, who was interested in using PIBO's monarch data in her research project reinvestigating population trends and the fall migration phenology of monarchs along the Great Lakes shoreline, in partnership with Canada Wildlife Services. PIBO was more than happy to comply with this request for data, but participation was delayed by the discovery that PIBO's monarch data had not been entered since 2008. Once the missing data had been entered, a spreadsheet containing all of PIBO's observations of monarch butterflies from 2003 onwards was assembled and dispatched. PIBO looks forwards to hearing more about the results of Danielle's meta-analyses, and will be following her work with great interest.

As well, Danielle Ethier suggested that PIBO might be interested in contributing monarch data to the Trinational Monarch Knowledge Network. PIBO will follow up on this promising venue for collaboration in the future.

Table 31 - Monarch butterfly counts at Fish Point in 2019

Date	August	September	October	November
1	X	6	0	0
2	X	7	4	0
3	X	5	0	0
4	X	28	0	0
5	3	16	0	0
6	1	1	0	0
7	2	0	26	0
8	10	4	0	0
9	4	20	4	0
10	3	2	0	0
11	3	5	0	X
12	2	0	0	X
13	0	14	0	X
14	5	1	0	X
15	8	5	2	X
16	52	110	0	X
17	10	4	0	X
18	6	11	0	X
19	0	0	0	X
20	6	0	2	X
21	21	0	0	X
22	0	0	0	X
23	8	0	0	X
24	13	0	0	X
25	7	16	0	X
26	16	0	0	X
27	1	43	0	X
28	8	48	0	X
29	5	8	0	X
30	6	4	0	X
31	5	X	0	X
Total	205	358	38	0
Grand Total	844			

90-minute walking survey conducted at Fish Point, Pelee Island, from Aug 1st to Nov 10th, 2018, beginning 1 hour after sunrise.

X – survey not conducted.

Dragonfly counts

Other migratory insects found on Pelee Island include Common Green Darners and Saddlebag species of dragonflies, and the less numerous Blue Darners. As with the monarch butterflies, PIBO records the numbers of dragonflies seen during the daily census at Fish Point each fall.

Dragonfly numbers were down greatly in 2019 compared to last year. Only 390 dragonflies of various species (mostly Common Green Darners) were seen, while 700 were counted in 2018. Overall, aside from being greatly reduced, dragonfly sightings followed the usual pattern, with the greatest number being counted in August and then diminishing from there, until only three were observed in October and none at all during the daily censuses in November.

Table 32 - Dragonfly counts at Fish Point in 2019				
Date	August	September	October	November
1	X	1	0	0
2	X	1	1	0
3	X	0	0	0
4	X	2**	0	0
5	1	15**	0	0
6	0	0	0	0
7	5	0	1	0
8	6	2**	0	0
9	8	2	0	0
10	8	0	0	0
11	12	2	0	X
12	5	0	0	X
13	9	25	0	X
14	12	2**	0	X
15	10	16**	0	X
16	13	7	0	X
17	5	30	0	X
18	2	3	0	X
19	1	0	0	X
20	3	0	0	X
21	2	0	0	X
22	3	0	0	X
23	20	7	0	X
24	7	3**	0	X
25	44**	15	0	X
26	14**	6	0	X
27	2	4	0	X
28	10	4	1	X
29	5	2	0	X
30	7	2	0	X
31	22	X	0	X
Total	236	151	3	0
Grand Total	390			
90-minute walking survey conducted at Fish Point, Pelee Island, from Aug 1 st to Nov 10 th , 2018, beginning 1 hour after sunrise.				
* - Saddlebag ** - Green Darners *** - Blue Darners				

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 Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN) Daily Estimated Totals, the Christmas Bird Count and the 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 eight requests for data from researchers and research groups via the NatureCounts website in 2019. 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):

‘Boreal avian monitoring using CMMN data’ – David Iles, Canadian Wildlife Service

‘Louisiana Waterthrush critical habitat identification – preliminary investigation’ –Marie Archambault, Canadian Wildlife Service

‘Horned Lark migratory connectivity’ – Nancy Mahony, Environment and Climate Change Canada



Mixed blackbird flock. Photo by Sumiko Onishi.

Canadian Migration Monitoring Network membership renewal & habitat monitoring protocol

The Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN) is a network of independent bird migration monitoring and research stations created to improve researchers' understanding of Canadian migrant birds and bird migration⁶. One of the responsibilities of the CMMN is to standardized data collection among the various bird migration monitoring and research stations by assisting them to create comprehensive study protocols. Membership is renewed every five years and involves a review of PIBO's Migration Monitoring Study protocol to make sure that it meets the standards of the CMMN.

PIBO has been a member of CMMN since 2006, and its membership came up for renewal in October, 2019. The CMMN reviewed PIBO's Migration Monitoring Study protocol against a checklist of their membership requirements and identified several areas where PIBO's protocol needed to be updated or revised. The revisions were made by Assistant Field Biologist Sachi Schott, resulting in the creation of a new edition of PIBO's Migration Monitoring Study protocol which was submitted to the CMMN at the end of October and accepted.

The most significant change required by CMMN was the adoption of a standardized protocol for habitat monitoring within PIBO's count area at Fish Point. PIBO had previously carried out habitat monitoring once, early in PIBO's history, but had not repeated any of the habitat surveys. Now, in order to comply with CMMN's requirements, PIBO has committed to carrying out habitat surveys at least once every five years, beginning in 2020. The surveys are heavily based on the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) habitat protocol, and involve taking photographs of the vegetation at certain defined points within PIBO's netting area and along the census route as well as creating maps and filling out survey sheets describing the various levels of vegetation within the count area. Completing these habitat surveys will require the hiring of an additional field technician, and Pelee Island resident Rob Tymstra has been discussed for the position, as he has previous experience with similar surveys and is familiar with the plant species on the island.

Standardized habitat monitoring is essential for making comparisons of the number and diversity of avian species on Pelee Island from year to year. Changes in habitat lead to changes in bird activity, and without a benchmark from which to evaluate long-term changes in the vegetation on and around Fish Point, PIBO and the CMMN cannot draw meaningful conclusions about the results of PIBO's migration monitoring programs. Adopting this habitat monitoring protocol is therefore vital to the success of PIBO's research programs. It is recommended that similar habitat monitoring be carried out for PIBO's Breeding Bird Census and Point Count sites as well. The habitats at these sites were evaluated once when the plots were first established, but the vegetation surveys were not repeated. As a second round of the breeding bird censuses was recently completed and the point count sites have begun to be surveyed once again (for more information, please see Section One – 2019 Breeding Bird Point Counts), the time is right for the vegetation surveys to be repeated as well.

⁶ 'About the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network' (<https://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cmmn/index.jsp?targetpg=about>), accessed December 2nd, 2019.

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 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. For more information on these activities, please see PIBO's 2019 Education Program Summary Report.

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 and hosted three public owling nights in the fall. Due to the new direction being given to PIBO's education program, the on-line video sessions with classrooms were not carried out in 2019.

School Groups & Visitors

PIBO welcomed several visiting groups to Pelee Island in the spring and summer of 2019. Most often, these groups were met at Fish Point and treated to a discussion of PIBO's work and the importance of Pelee Island to migrating birds. Some of the visiting student groups, from Ontario middle and high schools, were able to participate in a few of PIBO's field research projects.

Dan & Environmental Leadership Program (London District High School)

Pelee Island received its annual visit from Dan Van Lieshout and the students of the **Environmental Leadership Program** (run out of **Catholic Central High School** in London, Ontario) on the week of May 5th to 10th. The Environmental Leadership Program is a co-op program with a strong focus on the outdoors, and each year the program's participants carry out landscaping, invasive species management, and other work on Pelee Island for PIBO and other organizations.

The Environmental Leadership Program were able to visit the banding station on Tuesday, May 7th, 2019, on what turned out to be one of PIBO's busiest days for banding. Many birds were captured, including several different warbler species, and the students were able to observe the banding process, and help out PIBO's banding assistant Eric Orosz by scribing while he was on net runs. The morning was so busy that there was no time to explain the whys and wherefores of banding, so PIBO's field staff and volunteers (Sachi Schott, Eric Orosz, and Peter Coe) visited the students that night at their campsite to discuss migration monitoring and PIBO's part in the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network. On the following day a group of students visited the PIBO cottage and helped out by preparing the vegetable garden for planting, moving the canoe, and emptying a defunct rain barrel. They also helped to lower the Purple Martin boxes and check their contents – sadly, there were three dead adults in the boxes, but no nesting activity. The students also moved the display cases in the PIBO exhibit at the Heritage Center so that their lights could be plugged in.

As always, the students in this year's Environmental Leadership Program were an enthusiastic, tireless group who kept their good humour and strong work ethic even in the face of rain and windy weather, and the hard trek into the banding station. They were respectful of the birds, and asked many intelligent questions about birding, bird banding, and Pelee Island. Their assistance at the PIBO cottage was greatly appreciated by PIBO's field staff.

Groupes Voyages

On May 6th, a group of approximately twenty-five birders from Quebec arrived on the morning boat for a day trip to Pelee Island. The group, from **Groupes Voyages**, were touring birding locations in Ontario, and had visited Rondeau and Point Pelee earlier in the trip. As their boat arrived at 11:30 a.m. they were too late to visit the banding station; but PIBO's Assistant Field Biologist met them at the Stone House, where they were enjoying lunch, to describe PIBO's banding program, migration monitoring, and breeding bird work, and to answer their questions about the birds they could expect to see on their visit (a task that was made challenging by the fact that bird names are often very different in French from what they are in English!). Afterwards, the group left for a self-guided birding walk at Fish Point before departing on the 4 p.m. boat.

Road Scholar group

Road Scholar (roadscholar.org) is a not-for-profit travel company offering educational adventures for adults. One of their adventures offers participants the chance to learn more about birds and bird migration in the Great Lakes, and this group visited Pelee Island for a day trip on May 23rd, arriving by plane from Ohio at 10 a.m. The group of twelve participants and five birding guides, led by Lisa Brohl (chair of the Lake Erie Islands Conservancy and a founding board member of Lake Erie Islands Nature and Wildlife Center) hired the Pelee Island trolley for a tour of the island. Thunderstorms and rain in the morning meant that the banding station was closed, but PIBO's Assistant Field Biologist and Summer Student met the group at the Heritage Center to describe PIBO's banding program and migration monitoring work, and to direct them to the new PIBO exhibit, 'There and Back Again: PIBO's Band Encounters and Band Recoveries'. The group then departed to visit Conorlee's Bakery for lunch, and to go birding at the cemetery, with plans to look for Yellow-breasted Chats at the Stone Road Alvar, and visit Fox Pond at Fish Point. PIBO's field staff were able to direct them to where they could find Black-bellied Plovers and Horned Larks, and the group was very appreciative!

Paint Creek Garden Club

Twenty of the members (and some of their spouses) of the **Paint Creek Garden Club** from Michigan visited Pelee Island and stopped by Fish Point on June 6th. Their visit was led by Jayden, and was facilitated by Clayton of the Stone House. They took the trolley on a tour of the island, and were met at Fish Point by PIBO's Assistant Field Biologist and Summer Student, who accompanied them on a short walk to Fox Pond. The group greatly admired the waterleaf, which was in full flower, and remarked on the many snails on the trail.

Gore Hill Public School

Gore Hill Public School in Leamington was one of the schools that PIBO connected with via video conferencing in 2018; and this year teacher Trevor Stanley arranged a visit to the island for twenty-seven students in grades 7 and 8, and nine parent supervisors. Fortunately the day of their visit (June 21st) was beautiful and sunny, and although the banding station was closed PIBO's field staff set up a demonstration mist net at the PIBO field cottage to show them the banding equipment in person. No birds were captured, but one of the Purple Martin houses was lowered and the students were able to see eggs and the first nestlings of the year. After admiring the Purple Martins (and some of Pelee Island's snakes), the students set off to continue exploring the island. Some students expressed an interest in volunteering with PIBO as a means of acquiring the community service hours required for high school graduation, and this may be a partnership worth pursuing in the future.

Other Pelee Island groups

From August to November 2019, PIBO's field staff were fortunate to be joined by a second Assistant Field Biologist in the person of Kathy Parker, a knowledgeable birder and naturalist with extensive experience leading tours and nature walks. As part of her duties, she was occasionally accompanied on the daily census by visitors who were interested in experiencing more of PIBO's field work on the island. She also led a private nature walk on the afternoon of September 14th at Fish Point for a group of young girls who were interested in learning more about the natural history of the island.

Pelee Island Farmers' Market

The Pelee Island Quarry Market takes place every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in July and August in the old limestone quarry on East West Road, across from the Pelee Island Winery. Local farmers, vendors and artisans are invited to set up tables and sell produce, baked goods, crafts, and more. PIBO has occasionally manned a booth at the market in the past, but usually only briefly, as the market's hours of operation overlap with PIBO's migration monitoring program. 2019 was the first year that PIBO was able to have a sustained presence at the Quarry Market thanks to the hard work of Summer Student Melanie Denommé, who attended the market each week from June 15th to July 13th, 2019. PIBO had some merchandise to sell, in the form of various crafts and books donated by Sumiko Onishi, Sachi Schott, and Lynn Yamazaki; but the main purpose of the booth was to advertise PIBO's banding station, and to answer any questions visitors may have had about birds and bird migration. Pamphlets from the Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) and Nature Canada's Cats and Birds program were also made available. Twenty to thirty visitors are estimated to have engaged with PIBO's booth each week.



PIBO's booth at the Pelee Island Quarry market. Photo by Sachi Schott.

Melanie's work demonstrates that the Pelee Island Quarry Market can be a valuable showcase for PIBO's education programs and research work by providing a space where visitors can reach out and ask questions of PIBO staff outside of the dates and hours of the Migration Monitoring program. For this reason, PIBO's Executive Director Suzanne Friemann has suggested using the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program to fund a position within PIBO that would exist principally to engage in on-island outreach at places like the Quarry Market. This possibility will be explored further in future years.

Additional On-island Outreach

As well as attending the Pelee Island Quarry Market, PIBO's Summer Student Melanie Denommé organized an informational talk at the Pelee Island Winery on July 14th, 2019. Five people attended her talk on the physiology and ecology of migrating birds, and asked questions about PIBO's work and birds generally. Afterwards, she led a bird walk at Fish Point and discussed local birds and PIBO's censuses.

Both of these events were organized at relatively short notice and therefore could not be widely advertised; and while attendance was lower than could have been wished for, it does indicate that there is an interest in these sorts of educational and informative events on Pelee Island. Organizing and hosting such events could be part of the duties of a PIBO employee dedicated to on-island outreach (as discussed in the section above), perhaps in cooperation with the Nature on Pelee Group, a volunteer group of islanders interested in promoting the natural biodiversity and features of Pelee Island.

Pelee Island Grapevine – Baby Birds



HAVE YOU SEEN US?

Baby bird season is here, and to help both you and the birds, here's what you can do if you find a baby bird.

Hatchlings: Closed eyes, little to no feathers, some fluff. If possible, return to nest. If nest has been knocked down, replace as best as you can and replace the hatchlings. Avoid subsequent contact but keep a close eye on the nest – Mom may not be around often, but she should check every now and again. Gentle and limited handling WILL NOT scare the mother away.

Fledglings: Has feathers, and some fluff, but cannot fly (like the image at the top). Likely to be found on the ground, seemingly abandoned. Do not worry! At this stage in the bird's life, they are gaining their independence and have left the nest. Mom will be nearby, and may still feed the fledgling, but your presence may scare her away. If the fledgling is in a dangerous area, such as near a road, move them to a safer area up high, out of reach of dogs, cats, and other predators.

Leaving a baby bird where you found it or putting it back in the nest is the best course of action!

For more information, contact PIBO at info@pibo.ca or (647) 746-7388.





PIBO's advertisement about the proper care of baby birds ran in the Pelee Island Grapevine this summer. Text by Melanie Denommé; illustrations by Sachi Schott.

PIBO ran a small advertisement in the Pelee Island Grapevine this summer that contained advice on what to do with baby birds. This advertisement was timed to coincide with the fledging season for many local bird species, and counselled people to leave young birds where they found them.

The Pelee Island Grapevine enjoys a wide circulation among islanders, who often share it with their friends and guests. It provides a platform through which PIBO can share information with island residents, and helps to raise PIBO's profile locally. PIBO also posted the baby birds poster on the Pelee Island Bird Observatory Facebook page.

PIBO Picnic

PIBO hosted its annual picnic during the Spring Song weekend, on May 12th, 2019. Approximately 30 people attended, cramming into the PIBO cottage on Stone Road to escape the strong winds, cold temperatures and overcast skies outdoors. The event was plastic-free: the invitation posted on Facebook requested that people bring their own plates and forks, and extra ceramic plates and metal cutlery were provided for guests to use. This cut down considerably on the amount of garbage created, and is a step in the right direction towards minimizing single-use plastics. Many compliments were received on the food, which was provided by Jeff Hasulo and Suzanne Friemann (PIBO's Executive Director).

Guests included the weekend's guest birder Danny Catt, guest author Steve Burrows, and tour book author, photography teacher, and 'Indian Art from the Edge' founder Marylee Stephenson, who were part of a group that had visited the banding station earlier in the day. Participants in that weekend's Book House retreat also attended. Altogether, \$625 in donations were collected, with several visitors making very generous donations of \$50 or more. More than a fundraiser though, the PIBO picnic is a chance for PIBO to give back to Pelee Island and to thank island residents and cottagers for their support and encouragement, without which PIBO could not exist.

Spring Song Bird Race

Also taking place during the Spring Song weekend was the annual Bird Race. Beginning at noon on May 10th, six teams (three green and three non-green) spent twenty-four hours scouring Pelee Island for all the bird species they could find. In total, the teams observed 156 species, a list that was enlivened by sightings of a Cattle Egret and White-winged Dove at Lighthouse Point, and a Canvasback. The White-winged Dove in particular was not just a first for the Bird Race, but a first for Pelee Island! In the end, the coveted Botham Cup was claimed by the Empty Nesters (Anne Bell & Jerry De Marco), with a total of 124 species.

By the end of the twenty-four hour period, the teams had seen all six species of vireo that are found on Pelee Island; twenty-four species of warblers; and ten species of sparrow. Two species that failed to make an appearance this year were two of Pelee Island's avian Species at Risk: both Prothonotary Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat eluded all six teams.

Table 33: 2019 Spring Song Bird Race Teams & Totals	
Green Teams – Botham Cup	Species Totals
Empty Nesters (Anne Bell & Jerry DeMarco)	124
NC C-Birds (Jill Crosthwaite, Mhairi McFarlane, & Noor Cheema)	102
Guelph Gliders (John Ambrose, Leanne John, & Stan Kozak)	99
Non-green Teams	Species Totals
Pelee Island Bird Brigade (Paul Jones, Jodie Van Dieen, & Peter Simpson)	121
Harried Coots (Judith King & Vivianne Hebert)	102
No Egrets (Emily Sinclair, Ian Sinclair, Paul Hevenor, & Josh Hevenor)	78

TABLE 34 - 2019 SPRING SONG BIRD RACE SPECIES LIST

Common Loon	Great Black-backed Gull
Horned Grebe	Caspian Tern
American White Pelican	Common Tern
Double-crested Cormorant	Forester's Tern
Great Blue Heron	Mourning Dove
Great Egret	White-winged Dove
Cattle Egret	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Green Heron	Great Horned Owl
Turkey Vulture	Common Nighthawk
Mute Swan	Chimney Swift
Canada Goose	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Wood Duck	Belted Kingfisher
Mallard	Red-headed Woodpecker
Blue-winged Teal	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Canvasback	Downy Woodpecker
Greater Scaup	Yellow-shafted Flicker
Bufflehead	Eastern Wood-Pewee
Common Merganser	Least Flycatcher
Red-breasted Merganser	Eastern Phoebe
Bald Eagle	Great Crested Flycatcher
Northern Harrier	Eastern Kingbird
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Red-eyed Vireo
Cooper's Hawk	Warbling Vireo
Red-tailed Hawk	Philadelphia Vireo
American Kestrel	White-eyed Vireo
Merlin	Yellow-throated Vireo
Peregrine Falcon	Blue-headed Vireo
Ring-necked Pheasant	Blue Jay
Wild Turkey	American Crow
Sora	Horned Lark
Black-bellied Plover	Purple Martin
Semipalmated Plover	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Killdeer	Bank Swallow
Greater Yellowlegs	Tree Swallow
Lesser Yellowlegs	Cliff Swallow
Solitary Sandpiper	Barn Swallow
Spotted Sandpiper	Tufted Titmouse
Ruddy Turnstone	Black-capped Chickadee
Dunlin	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Semipalmated Sandpiper	White-breasted Nuthatch
Least Sandpiper	Brown Creeper
Short-billed Dowitcher	Carolina Wren
American Woodcock	House Wren
Bonaparte's Gull	Winter Wren
Ring-billed Gull	Marsh Wren
Herring Gull	Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Eastern Bluebird
American Robin
Wood Thrush
Veery
Swainson's Thrush
Gray-cheeked Thrush
Hermit Thrush
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
American Pipit
Northern Parula
Orange-crowned Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Blue-winged Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Magnolia Warbler
Cape May Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Western Palm Warbler
Pine Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
American Redstart
Ovenbird
Northern Waterthrush
Common Yellowthroat
Wilson's Warbler
Canada Warbler
Scarlet Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Eastern Towhee
Field Sparrow
Chipping Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow

White-crowned Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Eastern Meadowlark
Brown-headed Cowbird
Red-winged Blackbird
Common Grackle
Baltimore Oriole
Orchard Oriole
Purple Finch
House Finch
Pine Siskin
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow

Total: 156 species and forms

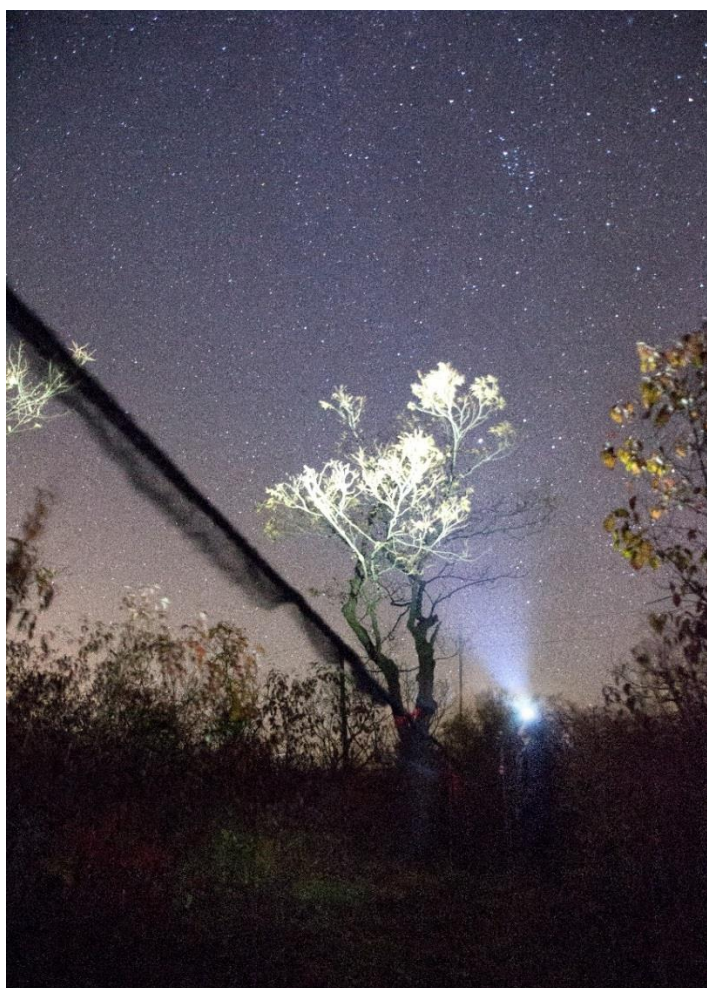
*(Species in **bold** are new for Pelee Island)*

Public owling nights

PIBO's Public Owling Nights are an annual event wherein members of the public are invited to drop by the PIBO field cottage on Stone Road to enjoy mulled wine, hot cider, and other refreshments while waiting for the opportunity to see PIBO's owl banding program in action. Mist-nets are set up on the PIBO property and a tape with both the Northern Saw-whet Owl and Eastern Screech Owl call is played to attract members of both species.

PIBO's first public owling night on October 19th was the most well-attended in PIBO's history, due to the presence of the 'Still Standing' film crew (for more information, please see [Section Three: Media Mentions – 'Still Standing'](#)). It was also the only public owling night in 2019 to capture an owl, and the only public owling night to take place on the date for which it was scheduled. PIBO's other two public owling nights both had to be moved to the next day due to rain and strong winds. The rescheduled owling night on October 27th did not receive any visitors at all, but on November 3rd six visitors stopped by the field house and enjoyed good food and wonderful company even though no owls were captured.

For more information on PIBO's additional Northern Saw-whet Owl banding, please see [Section One – 2019 Northern Saw-whet Owl banding](#).



Furling owling nets. Photo by Hannah Mittelstaedt.

Section Three – Other News

2019 Windsor Fundraiser



Poster by Jeff Hasulo

PIBO's 6th annual Windsor fundraising dinner 'Margaret Atwood Presents: An Evening with Steve Burrows' took place at the Essex Golf and Country Club in LaSalle on May 8th, 2019. The guest of honour was Steve Burrows: an apt choice, as (among many other things) he is the author of the Birder Murders, a mystery series starring a police inspector who is an avid birder. Each title in the series features the collective noun for a group or species of birds, and the plots deftly handle matters about birds, birding and environmental causes.

The evening featured an introduction by Margaret Atwood; a talk by Steve Burrows; and a live auction facilitated by Peter Hrastovec, all of it overseen by long-time PIBO M.C. Paul Vasey. Items for both the silent auction and the live auction were donated by Margaret Atwood, David Ward, Gary Landon, Peter Hrastovec, Shirley Grondin, Balzac's Coffee, Caesar's Windsor, Marylee Stephenson (who contributed artwork from 'Indian Art from the Edge', an organization that sells works by Aboriginal artists living on the street or in shelters), Kim Fahner, and Sarah Hunter. Books were available for purchase from Biblioasis Books, and were signed by Steve Burrow and Margaret Atwood. Complimentary wine was provided courtesy of the Pelee Island Winery. This event was sponsored by the Chandisherry Foundation, Karen and Dave Dorman, Pelee Island Winery and The University of Windsor.

2019 Toronto Fundraiser

PIBO's 2019 Toronto Fundraiser was a Wild Bird Ball, held on April 28th at the Crow's Theater in Toronto, featuring special guests John Alcorn, Molly Johnson, and Billy Newton Davis.

The official sponsor for the Wild Bird Ball was Air Canada, with additional support provide by the Bank of Montreal, Cineplex Media, Phamous Characters, Richard White & Sandy Bourque, House of Anansi Press, Donna Hayes, NFQ Ventures Inc., Nancy Lang, Murray Frum Foundation and Penguin Random House Canada. Items for the silent auction were donated by Hoax Couture, Food Dudes, Margaret Atwood, Charles Patcher, David Ward, Keith Lem, April Sgaana Jaad White, Robert Bateman, Air Canada, Jaalen and Gwaai Edenshaw, Long Branch Mosaics, Anja Karisik, Chris Bacon, and Daniel St. Amant.

In total, 143 guest attended, contributing \$80,000 through ticket sales and the silent auction.



PIBO's Wild Bird Ball fundraiser in Toronto, Ontario. Photo by George Pimentel.

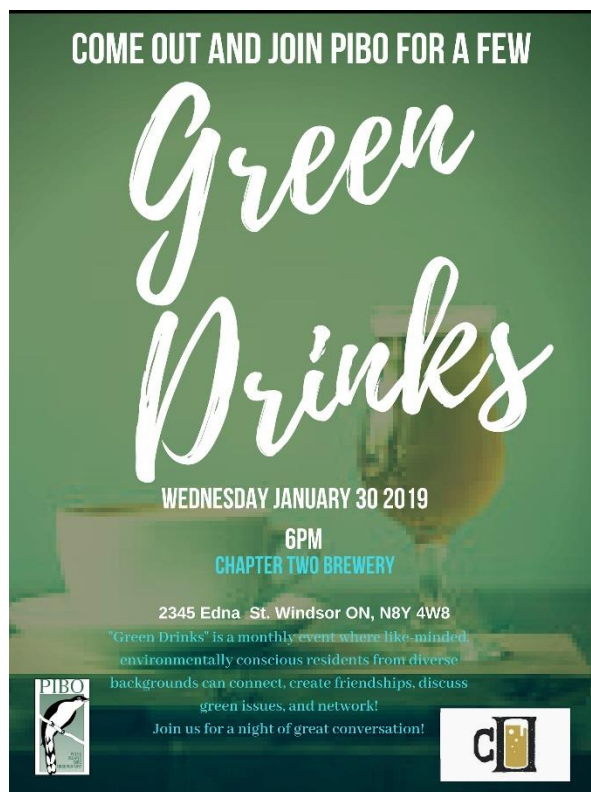
Music & Migration



Poster by Jeff Hasulo

For the second year, PIBO hosted a concert at the Capitol Theater featuring the musicians of the Windsor Symphony Orchestra. On the playbill were music that reflected the influence of nature and bird song. New for 2019 was the addition of a series of authors reading on the theme of birds, spring and nature. Poet laureate for Sudbury (2016-18), Kim Fahner read from her latest book of poems that included ones about Pelee Island. Daniel Lockhart, a First Nations poet read from his latest works and children's author and illustrator Werner Zimmermann, based in Guelph, read and displayed illustrations from his book *At the Pond*. Although audience was small this year, those in attendance enjoyed the evening very much.

Green Drinks



Continuing in 2019, PIBO's Green Drinks events were hosted by PIBO's Executive Director, Suzanne Friemann. Held once a month at Riviera Pizza in Windsor on the last Wednesday of each month, these informal meetings are a chance to make Windsorites aware of PIBO and provide an opportunity for local environmentalists to get together in a casual setting to network, meet new people, and talk about local issues.

Update to on-line fundraising initiatives

In 2017, PIBO ran two on-line fundraising campaigns through Generosity by Indiegogo. The first, 'Monarchs for Moms', raised money to plant milkweed and native wildflowers on PIBO's McCormick Road Property on Pelee Island. The second, 'The Grass is Too Green Over the Septic Tank', successfully raised \$10,000 to partially cover the cost of purchasing and installing a new septic system at the PIBO field house.

Unfortunately neither of these projects could proceed in 2019. PIBO's science officer position has been vacant since August 2018 and there have not been any field staff available to proceed with creating monarch butterfly habitat. The septic system has been put on hiatus due to the cost. PIBO hopes to have progress to report on both of these projects in 2020.

Birds of Pelee Island Checklist

Both PIBO's banding station and the Pelee Island Heritage Centre have in the past distributed copies of the 'Birder's Official Checklist' that was published by the Pelee Island Bird Observatory and created with the assistance of PIBO. The checklist was also used during the Spring Song Bird Race as a means for the various teams to record which species they had seen. Copies of the checklist began to run out early this year, and as the digital file for the original checklist could not be found, PIBO's Executive Director Suzanne Friemann undertook to design and print a new, updated list of all the species that have been observed on Pelee Island. It is hoped that copies of this new bird list will be made available to PIBO's field staff as a hand-out that can be distributed to visitors both at the banding station and at PIBO's booth at the Quarry Farmers' Market. Copies will also be made available to the Pelee Island Heritage Center.

PIBO Brochure

Along with the 'Birder's Official Checklist', copies of the PIBO brochure also began to run out in 2019. PIBO's original brochure, while attractively designed and incorporating many classic illustrations of Pelee Island's species at risk, did not contribute much space to describing PIBO's field or educational programs, and so at the suggestion of PIBO's Field Supervisor Sumiko Onishi, Assistant Field Biologist Sachi Schott wrote and designed the first draft of a new PIBO brochure with sections on PIBO's migration monitoring, breeding bird, and on-island education programs.

As yet, this brochure has not been completed: better photographs need to be sourced and properly attributed, and Executive Director Suzanne Friemann will add information to the section on PIBO's education programs. It is hoped that a final version of this brochure will be completed soon, so that it can be handed out by PIBO's field staff to visitors at the banding station and at PIBO's booth at the Quarry Farmers' Market, as well as at the Pelee Island Heritage Center and other locations.



A draft for a new PIBO brochure, created by Sachi Schott.

Heritage Center exhibit



'There and Back Again': a temporary display about PIBO's band encounters and band recoveries at the Pelee Island Heritage Center. Photo by Sachi Schott.

As planned, PIBO took advantage of its new display cases to add a new, temporary display to its exhibit at the Pelee Island Heritage Center in May 2019. 'There and Back Again: PIBO's Band Encounters and Band Recoveries' explained how information about the movement of banded birds is reported, shared and showcased some of the band encounters, and recoveries that PIBO has been involved in. The display was researched and designed by Assistant Field Biologist Sachi Schott, who also created a new colouring page that was integrated into the exhibit. This temporary display was part of the 'Birds & Species at Risk' exhibit in the Heritage Center from May to the end of November 2019. Kim Gardner, Eric Orosz, John and Hanne Hettinga, and the students of the Environmental Leadership Program all assisted in its installation. The display will be replaced in May 2020 with a new temporary exhibit about bird weight and its relevance to migration.

Also in 2019, Pelee Island Heritage Center Director Kim Gardner oversaw the installation of a sign directing visitors to PIBO's exhibits, created last year by Sachi Schott.



'Birds and Species at Risk': a new sign for PIBO's Heritage Center exhibits. Photo by Sachi Schott.

Media Mentions - CBC's 'Still Standing'

In September 2019, PIBO was approached about appearing as part of the CBC television show 'Still Standing', which combines reality television and stand-up comedy in a travelogue exploring Canada's small towns. Currently filming their sixth season, 'Still Standing' was interested in featuring PIBO's Public Owling event in their episode on Pelee Island, and after preliminary interviews and discussions with CBC Story Producer Shayla Howell and the rest of the 'Still Standing' team, it was arranged that they would attend and film PIBO's first Public Owling Night of 2019, on October 19th. The crew arrived late that afternoon to set up their equipment and to film a preliminary interview between PIBO's Assistant Field Biologist Sachi Schott and 'Still Standing' host Jonny Harris, as well as to get shots of the preliminary work that goes into each owling night (setting up mist-nets, preparing mulled wine, and so forth).

Even before 7:30 p.m., guests had begun to arrive – and it wasn't long before the PIBO field house was filled to capacity! A proper headcount was impossible to take, but at least 80 people attended, making this the busiest owling night PIBO has ever hosted. Between the guests, the cameras, the spotlights, and the microphones, it was a matter of some anxiety whether or not an owl would be captured – but the birds (and the weather) pulled through, and the very first net run captured an unbanded second-year Eastern Screech Owl. Both the owl and the film crew were very cooperative, and in a short time the owl was able to be released back into the privacy and comparative quiet of the Stone Road Alvar.

The 'Still Standing' crew also briefly visited PIBO's banding station at Fish Point, where they were able to film the capture and banding of a Sharp-shinned Hawk on an otherwise slow day. The last part of Pelee Island's 'Still Standing' adventure was a stand-up show on October 22nd at the Pelee Island Winery pavilion, where Jonny Harris performed his 'toast' to Pelee Island.



Behind the scenes at the taping of 'Still Standing'. Photo by Shayla Howell.

PIBO would like to thank Alex, Samantha and Hunter Bainbridge-Parker for their help hosting the Public Owling Night, and Lynn Yamazaki for providing refreshments (including owl-themed cupcakes!). The Pelee Island episode of 'Still Standing' is expected to air sometime in the fall or winter of 2020. PIBO will post more information about the air date on the PIBO Facebook page as it becomes available.

Field house maintenance

PIBO's field cottage on Stone Road enjoyed several upgrades in 2019:

- A new, durable plastic countertop was purchased to replace the wooden cutting board that had previously covered the opening (intended for a sink insert) in the top of one of the cupboards;
- And, over two years after it was first begun, the new floor in the kitchen of the field cottage is finally complete! After a long wait, enough laminate flooring was purchased to finish covering the new sections of floor in the entryway and bathroom. Island handyman Randy Gardner also laid tile in the entry way, which will be much easier to keep clean than bare plywood.

Banding station maintenance



A new door for PIBO's banding station. Photo by Sachi Schott.

While PIBO's banding station continues to weather the elements admirably, by the spring of 2019 it was impossible to deny that it needed a new door. The old one had been recycled from the previous banding station and was in an advanced stage of rot. PIBO posted a request on Facebook for a new door, and very quickly a generous supporter came forwards and offered to donate the ideal screen door, for free, even trimming it to the required size – it only needed someone to transport it to the island! Fortunately Michael Orosz stepped in and volunteered to bring it over on the ferry. Island residents John Stephen and Lois Armstrong donated varnish and a paintbrush, to make the door extra weather-tight, and after weathering an impressive thunderstorm the afternoon before, the door was carefully carried along the flooded path to the banding station, where it was soon in place to protect PIBO's field staff from the many mosquitoes at Fish Point.

The banding station roof was also replaced, at the end of August 2019. As it turned out, the original roof of corrugated transparent plastic was not sturdy enough to withstand the (surprisingly powerful!!) force of falling acorns, especially once it had become somewhat brittle from repeated freezing and thawing. The designers and builders of the banding station, Jon and Hanne Hettinga, and Alex and Karen Bustard, took it upon themselves to replace the damaged roof with second-hand materials acquired from a greenhouse operation. The new roof is thicker and denser, but also has more give to it, which should help to cushion the blow of branches, acorns, and whatever else Fish Point and the elements can throw at it!

As with all of the work PIBO does, these projects could not have happened without the generous help and support of many people. It took many pairs of hands to get the door to Pelee Island – and to build the banding station itself. PIBO remains extremely grateful for the support and contributions of the islanders, cottagers, and social media followers who help to make its many programs possible.



Yellow-shafted Flicker being released at PIBO's banding station. Photo by Hannah Mittelstaedt.

Bird Rescues

While PIBO's mandate is the conservation and study of birds, people occasionally reach out seeking aid for a bird in distress. PIBO staff do not have the formal training or resources for wildlife rehabilitation work, but in such cases do their best to see that the bird gets the help it needs.

On October 12th, 2019, PIBO's Field Supervisor Sumiko Onishi returned from census with an unlucky young Ring-billed Gull who had a fishing lure stuck to both of its feet and its bill. PIBO's field staff used pliers to carefully bend back the barbed hooks and pull them out. Fortunately, the gull did not suffer any other injuries, and it flew well when it was released a few minutes later.

A short post about the incident was posted to PIBO's Facebook page, and provided an opportunity to remind PIBO's followers who enjoy fishing to:

- use barbless hooks, or use pliers to flatten the barbs;
- double-check that line, leaders, and knots are sound and in good condition; and
- dispose properly of hooks and fishing line (another common hazard).



A fishing lure removed from the feet and bill of a Ring-billed Gull. Photo by Sachi Schott.

2019 Staff & Volunteers

Suzanne Friemann continues as Executive Director.

Sumiko Onishi once again headed the field team as PIBO's Field Supervisor and Bander-in-Charge.

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

Kathy Parker joined PIBO's field staff in the fall as a second Assistant Field Biologist. 2019 was the first year that such a position was created, and having another employee at the banding station was of material assistance during those times when the Field Supervisor could not be present. Kathy's extensive experience with leading birding and nature tours also made her an excellent tour leader when PIBO was contacted with requests for nature walks.

Mary-Jo Rusu joined PIBO in May of 2019 as the new Education Coordinator.

//

Shane Abernethy was PIBO's volunteer from April 14th to April 27th, 2019. Having begun birding only last year, he nevertheless has already volunteered at Long Point Bird Observatory in the past (and plans to return there later this year), and also holds a M.Sc. in environmental science. The banding experience he has gained with PIBO will help bring him closer to his goal of becoming a Master Bander.

Both a long-time visitor to PIBO and Pelee Island and a former volunteer, **Eric Orosz** volunteered at PIBO from May 6th to May 20th, 2019. His experience at PIBO and as a participant in Long Point Bird Observatory's Young Ornithologist Program made him an invaluable assistant at the banding station, especially as his stay overlapped with the PIBO's busiest spring days. As well as helping out with PIBO's migration monitoring program, he also assisted with moving and preparing PIBO's display cases at the Heritage Center; helped to conduct the Marsh Monitoring amphibian surveys; carried out several repairs to the PIBO field cottage and banding station; monitored both the Prothonotary Warbler and Purple Martin nest boxes; and planted wildflower seeds to rejuvenate PIBO's struggling wildflower garden.



2019 PIBO volunteers Shane Abernethy (left) and Eric Orosz (right).

Dawn Miles & Peter Co answered an urgent call for help from PIBO's Field Supervisor Sumiko Onishi and generously volunteered their time at the banding station from May 2nd to May 11th, 2019. They were essential to the smooth running of the station during PIBO's busiest spring banding days and were practically run off their feet in the deep mud around the banding station! They were kept busy extracting many warblers and Red-breasted Nuthatches, banding, scribing, and making the visual field observations that are essential to PIBO's migration monitoring program. PIBO would have accomplished far less this spring without them, and they are the true V.I.P.s of the season!

Ron Tymstra, a Pelee Island resident and passionate lister and birder, worked part-time for PIBO carrying out the census from May 8th to 14th, 2019, which was especially helpful during such a busy time.

Melanie Denommé was PIBO's 2019 Summer Student. Having graduated with her undergraduate degree from Western University, she began attending the University of Guelph as a graduate student in September. As well as participating in PIBO's migration monitoring activities, she also assisted with developing the inaugural season of PIBO's Purple Martin monitoring programs, helped conduct the Marsh Monitoring bird and vegetation surveys, and represented PIBO at the summer Quarry Markets. She also led several bird-related talks and walks in July.

After volunteering with PIBO in 2019, **Hannah Mittelstaedt** returned twice this fall to assist at the banding station and with PIBO's Northern Saw-whet Owl banding program. Having begun to learn how to extract birds last year, this year she began banding, and has proved to be a quick and able learner. Hannah is a talented photographer, and some of her photos from this year grace this report.

Kyle Parkinson is a graduate student at the University of Windsor and a past co-worker of Sachi Schott's. Though his stay with PIBO was a short one, his birding and banding experience let him fit seamlessly into the daily routine at the banding station.

Heather McBrien, another past volunteer with PIBO, volunteered again in April 2019 but was obliged to cut her visit short due to a family emergency. We hope to see her back at PIBO again at a future date.



Canada Geese in Fox Pond. Photo by Sumiko Onishi.

In Memoriam: Graeme Gibson the Elder

(On September 18th, 2019, Graeme Gibson the Elder, long-time chair of the PIBO board, passed away. The following tribute was contributed by his son and the founder of PIBO, Graeme Gibson the Younger.)



Graeme Gibson the Elder (right) and Margaret Atwood (left) at PIBO's 2019 fundraising dinner in Toronto. Photo by George Pimentel.

This is a thank you to Graeme the Elder for all of his contributions towards making Pelee Island Bird Observatory such a successful undertaking. We couldn't have done it without his positive support. He will be remembered for the many delightful conversations about birds and nature that he brought back from his travels all over the world. We hope we will continue to pass these ideals on to future generations.

- Graeme the Younger

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:

Air Canada	Matthew Gibson
Allan Slaight	Pelee Island Book House
Balzac's Coffee Ltd.	Rod Bell
Bank of Montreal	Allison Lock
Cineplex Entertainment	Bird Studies Canada
Donna Hayes	Birgit Bateman
House of Anansi Press	Cave of the Heart
Margaret Atwood	CAW Regional Environment Council
Murray Frum Foundation	Claire McAllister
Nancy Lang	Debbie Crawford
Nature Canada	Denise Du Vernay
NFQ Ventures Ltd.	Denise Jaques
Penguin Random House Canada Ltd.	Donna Hayes
Phamous Characters Inc.	Donna Jane Macdonald
Rick White & Sandy Bourque	Elisabeth Louise Dennys & Eric Young
William Bruce Bailey	Elizabeth Pineo
Ariel Burkett	Green Sun Rising Inc.
Chandisherry Foundation	Ian & Catherine Delaney
Charles Baillie	Jill Morrison
Coleen Grissom	John Ambrose
Dave Dorman & Karen Deegan	John Gruetzner
David McCorquodale	Karen Deegan and David Dorman
Ellen Deason	Karen Vanderlee
HR Pictures Inc	Karl Jirgens
Jonathon Rodzik	Lambton Wildlife Inc.
Milton T. Kelly	Landscape Effects
Nadia Salam	Leanna Crouch
Pamela Dillon	Linda Irving
Paul Maranger	Local 444 Unifor
Penguin Random House USA	Marg McKillop
Rosamond Ivey	Master Class/Yanka Industries
Susan So	Nick de Pencier & Jennifer Baichwal
Suzanne Ivey Cook	Pamela Goldstein
University of Toronto Library	Patricia Toal
University of Windsor	Philip Dyke
Anna Porter	Richard & Felicity Pope
Grace & Dave Mossop	Ronald Meng
Hilary Brown Bierman	Sarah Jane Gruetzner
Little, Brown and Company	Sonja Smits
Lynn Bevan Fund at Toronto Foundation	Stuart Payne
Lynne Fox	Steven Price
Mark McLean	Anne Ross

Barbara Gowdy
 Barbara Koch-Donga
 Book Clubs for Inmates
 Brenda Poole
 C&M Fontaine
 Catherine Wismer
 Cyndra MacDowall
 Cynthia Dunlavy
 Daniel Turko
 Datlaf Weseloh
 David Cogswell
 David Scott
 David Ward
 Deanna Lloyd
 Donna Waspe
 Emily Galloway
 Eva & Edward Borins
 Geoff Joyner
 Harold Atwood
 Invisible Publishing Collective Inc.
 Irene Small
 Jane Boyd
 Janet Barkhouse
 Joanne Bignell
 John King
 John Stanley
 Karen Wilson
 Kathryn Tiessen
 Lake Erie Islands Nature & Wildlife Center

Leanne Chisholm
 Leslie Mercer
 Lindsey Hewitt
 Lisa Kellett
 Lois Armstrong
 Marilyn Spink
 Marion Parsons
 Martha Watson
 Mary Graham
 Mary Ladky
 Melissa McCarthy
 Nobina Robinson
 Paul Vasey
 Penny Kavanaugh
 Reg Barnes
 Renee Silberman
 Richard Pope
 Sarah Webster
 Steven Noble
 Susan Whitlock
 Suzanne Cogswell
 The Writers' Union of Canada
 Thomas Best
 Vanessa Dykstra
 Vincent Bauer
 Vintage/Penguin Random House UK (on behalf
 of Naomi Alderman)
 Walter Schmoranz

We would also like to thank Steve Burrows for being the guest of honour at PIBO's Windsor fundraising dinner and at the Pelee Island Heritage Center's Spring Song dinner and Jody Allair of Bird Studies Canada for donating the Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes. Special thank you to Salah Bachir, Kate Daniels and Sandy Bourque for organizing the Wild Bird Ball.

A sincere thank you as well to our many individual donors, especially those who attended the Windsor and Toronto dinners, friends, supporters, partners, and PIBO's hard-working volunteers.



Purple Martin houses at PIBO's field house in November, 2019. Photo by Sachi Schott.

PIBO's field programs
will resume
April, 2020.