



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Pelee Island Bird Observatory

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PIBO 2020

Pelee Island Bird Observatory

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'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.

Board of Directors

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

Founders

Founder and adviser - Graeme Gibson the Younger
 Founding Patrons - Margaret Atwood and Mysterious Starling Inc.

Staff

Executive Director - Suzanne Friemann
 Field Supervisor and Bander-in-Charge - Sumiko Onishi

Graeme Gibson, from the *Bedside Book of Birds* (2005): *“A great many birdwatchers- from those who simply maintain feeders in their gardens to those, more obsessed, who wander the world in search of new and better birds-have stumbled onto a seductive truth: paying attention to birds, being mindful of them, is being mindful of Life itself. We seldom think of it this clearly, but sometimes, unexpectedly, we are overtaken by a sense of wonder and gratitude. Surely it is the encounter with a force much larger than ourselves that moves us.”*

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Cover photo: Bald Eagle Sumiko Onishi

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PIBO's 2020 field season was tossed about by the rapid changes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which required reconsideration of staffing and all other routines, including our banding station's operation for the season. It started with cancelling all our in-person annual fundraiser events in the early spring and advised all volunteers and seasonal staff to stay home. The provincial state of emergency with restricted travel advice made it difficult with the island ferry service for our seasonal Field Assistant to bring over supplies to the island.

Nevertheless, we were pleased to report some productive and enjoyable experiences through the 2020 season and will expect a positive outcome for next year. Advised by the CMMN, the daily census was completed for the spring and fall, while banding operations were cancelled due to staff shortages and to follow safety precautions at the field station. The summer monitoring of breeding birds suggested some interesting results about Prothonotary Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chats and Red-headed Woodpeckers. Despite the PIBO staff cottage's vacancy, the backyard Purple Martins had another successful breeding season. Unfortunately, we postponed the 2020 Marsh Monitoring Program under Birds Canada's stewardship, but we will be back on the canoe to search for Least Bitterns next summer. The organization remained active with the minimum staff - the Board of Directors and two full-time employees - planning for the next year and advancing the cause of wild birds and their native habitats.

Research studies completed in 2020 include:

- The daily census - standardized observation - of migrant birds at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve.
- breeding bird monitoring - Prothonotary Warbler at nest box sites, Yellow-breasted Chat on the territory, Red-headed Woodpecker on properties under the stewardship of Ontario Parks, the Essex Region Conservation Authority, and Nature Conservancy of Canada.
- Purple Martin nest box monitoring under the stewardship of Nature Canada, Northern Saw-whet owl population sampling.
- Monarch Butterfly migration counts.

PIBO's Field Supervisor made an effort to spend 168 mornings for the migration monitoring daily census, 42 days for the summer breeding bird monitoring, and 12 evenings for the Northern Saw-whet Owl population sampling with mist-netting and banding. Without mist netting, we might miss some species, but a total of 185 species was documented during the season including standard and non-standard observation.

Like many people who started enjoying opportunities to see birds in their area during the 'Stay Home' campaign under COVID-19, we enjoyed watching various species visit our feeders at home. A Yellow-headed Blackbird, Northern Mockingbird, and Evening Grosbeak delighted very much and made us think about how we can attract more birds, which might be a good theme for PIBO's educational programs. We also enjoyed participating in three bird counts - the spring online fundraiser event, the Great Canadian Birdathon for Birds Canada fundraiser, and the winter bird count.

In 2020, the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN) reviewed our study protocol to renew the membership after completing eighteen years of migration monitoring at Fish Point. The members of CMMN are more than thirty bird observatories and research stations across the country committed to collect data through standardized daily mist-netting and visual observation in their unique locations. The collected data samples contribute to our collective understanding of the changes taking place in populations of migratory birds and document migration at the station itself, and many other avian, and some non-avian, studies. In November, three PIBO staff - Executive Director, Field Supervisor, and a volunteer advisor - joined the annual CMMN meeting online. It was a beneficial experience for those two members who had not had a chance to attend the conference before.

The first online fundraiser for PIBO was held in May through Facebook Live - *Margaret Atwood Presents* - featured special guests Lorna Crozier, Trevor Herriot and artists including Measha Brueggergosman, Molly Johnson and others. This experimental event benefitted PIBO in numerous ways thanks to the generosity of everyone who organized and supported it. The restrictions of COVID-19 brought many people from around the world together for the evening.

One of the more memorable sights during the 2020 migration season was eleven Eastern Meadowlarks in the blue sky with numerous blackbirds at the tip. Millions of migratory birds have been hosted by Pelee Island as a remarkable stopover site. The dynamic ecology of migration occurring every spring and fall at Fish Point Provincial Park received recognition as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) by a non-governmental organization, Birdlife, in Canada. While the environment surrounding us in southern Ontario has been rapidly changing, Pelee Island has become an essential site for those birds and other wildlife including some species at risk.



Trilliums at Fish Point Sumiko Onishi

COVID-19 Protocols

PIBO has developed guidelines for all staff for the duration of the pandemic. Due to the difficulty in maintaining a distance of 2m at our staff cottage, we will only hire one assistant bander for the spring and one for the fall. No short-term volunteers will be employed this year. A negative COVID-19 test will be required prior to starting the banding position. All other PIBO staff will work from their home offices.

INTRODUCTION

This year's report is presented in three sections: 1) Research, 2) Education and Outreach, and 3) Fundraising and Acknowledgments. Section One presents the results of the 2020 research season including details on the spring and fall migration monitoring program, Species at Risk Monitoring, Purple Martin nest checks and Monarch butterfly counts. The results of each research program are summarized in tables presented throughout the section including: species recorded on Pelee Island in 2020; Northern Saw-whet owl capture totals; species identified in 2020 as confirmed; Purple Martin nest box monitoring, probable or possible breeders; and Species at Risk sightings, among others. This section also includes an edited version of the spring and fall bi-monthly migration updates posted on PIBO's Facebook page and website.

Section Two is a report of some of PIBO's education and community outreach programs in 2020. Details include information about the Diana Beresford-Kroeger book club, the Great Bird Friendly Habitat Design Challenge and the Edible Habitat Family Starter Kit.

Section Three highlights our first online gala, grants, the acknowledgements of our donors and the data requests.

SECTION 1-RESEARCH

Songbird migration monitoring

Migration monitoring is one of the major research projects in which PIBO was founded in 2003. Since then, the station has contributed to collecting data to detect population trends of small land birds that migrate to and from their breeding and wintering grounds each season. Many birds spend the breeding season in the Boreal Forest region in northern Canada and fly to their wintering ground in Mexico, Central and South America, and Caribbean Islands. The effective method for tracking changes in bird populations are counting and capturing birds during their migration. The island's unique geographical location allows us to study a wide variety of songbirds.

PIBO's 18th year of migration monitoring at Fish Point Provincial Reserve (Ontario Parks - Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources) conducted from April 1st to June 10th and August 1st to November 10th, for a total of 168 coverage days. The minimum number of field staff under COVID-19 restrictions forced us to postpone our mist-net operation for the year following CMMN's advice. However, a total of 168 mornings were covered by the census - standard 90 minutes visual observation at Fish Point - and a total of 185 species were recorded including a few species from non-standard observation.

The total number of species observed during the season showed we did not record much variety. However, some species were not observed along the census route compared to the netting area. CMMN mentioned their study about this issue in the biannual meeting this year. We hope to reopen our banding station again next season.

Spring migration summary

April 1st-15th

Our 2020 spring census started at Fish Point on April 1st. The high standing water extended the pond to the surrounding area along the trail, and the submerged shrubs and trees were filled with lively sound of blackbirds. The first walk of the season always gives me a sensation like waking up from a long winter. A loud **Pied-billed Grebe's** song echoed with the quacks and whistles of other ducks splashing water at the pond. Fourteen **Ring-necked Ducks**, a **Hooded Merganser** and nine additional species were observed.

A couple of **Eastern Phoebes** catching flying insects and some **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were seen high up in the canopy. There were not many other migrant species. Year after year inland flooding and debris have caused significant changes in the vegetation. Many **Song Sparrows** and some **Dark-eyed Juncos** were feeding on the ground along the beach. The lake was very calm with a gentle breeze and a clear sky for the first week of April. Most of the shoreline still looked wintery and was inaccessible because of high water. The season's first **Great Blue Herons** and **Bonaparte's Gulls** flew over the lake on April 2nd; and a **Belted Kingfisher's** clattering rattle was heard around the pond under the beautiful blue sky on April 4th.

The first large arrival of migratory birds was observed on the morning of April 5th. Many sparrows and woodpeckers were seen. Meanwhile, **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were calling and chasing each other around tree trunks. Eight of them were counted along the trail, along with many **Yellow-shafted Flickers**. Seven sparrow species including **Eastern Towhees**, **Chipping**, **Fox**, many **American Tree Sparrows**, **Dark-eyed Juncos**, and a couple of **Hermit Thrushes** were recorded along the west beach.

From April 5th to 6th, the weather got chilly and wet with intense thunder on the night of 7th. It was foggy on the morning of April 8th, but the season first **Pine Warbler** and **Swamp Sparrow** were seen. A strong north wind on April 10th was almost gale force, and the temperature remained brisk for the next several days. As the leaves on the trees started sprouting and midges began buzzing around the branches, more **Yellow-rumped Warblers** and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were observed each morning. Dutchman's Breeches began to bloom, and the trilliums began budding. Spring had arrived. **Tree Swallows** arrived and a couple of **Barn Swallows** arrived with them. **Purple Martins** were a non-standard observation.

The weather was variable from April 11th to 14th with mild temperatures, a south wind and some rain. The pond was enlivened by the antics of seven female **Hooded Mergansers**. A severe windstorm came out of the west on the 13th, and the waves were high for the next couple of mornings. Many **Brown Creepers** were observed along the trail, and two **Common Loons** flew overhead. On April 15th, there was sleet on the ground. A **Red-tailed Hawk** with its' prey was surrounded by a **Turkey Vulture** waiting for the leftovers. Two young **Bald Eagles** grabbed a large fish from the pond. A hundred blackbirds flew out from under the trees chased by a **Cooper's Hawk**. All the other birds were alarmed by the presence of raptors.



Hermit Thrush Sumiko Onishi

April 15th-31st

On April 16th, there was a medley of snow, sleet and freezing rain, which lasted almost a week. The morning of the 22nd started with 2C and sleet and snow came in the late afternoon. There was a strong south-west wind on the morning of April 19th, a thousand **Bonaparte's Gulls** showed up. From April 20th to 21st, there were north-west winds up to 31kilometers per hour. A strong east wind on 23rd brought many swallows including **Barn** and **Northern Rough-winged** to the calm west shore.

On April 23rd and 24th, the second migration of the season began. **Hermit Thrushes**, **Yellow-rumped Warblers** and **White-throated Sparrows** were observed despite the low temperature of 5C. A season's first **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was recorded along with many swallows including two **Cliff Swallows**. The weather had warmed up by the next morning (April 25th). Some **Pine Warblers** and kinglets and a season's first shorebird, **Spotted Sandpiper** were observed on the west beach. On April 26th, numerous birds were observed. **White-throated Sparrows** and **Dark-eyed Juncos** were everywhere along the trail.

On April 28th the south wind veiled the forest in the morning's mild and moist air. The tree branches with their bright green shoots stood out against the blue sky, and a **House Wren's** song echoed. I counted numerous **White-throated Sparrows** and **Eastern Towhees** along with the season's first **Baltimore Oriole** and **Nashville Warbler**. On April 29th, a total of 51 species including eight season's first species were recorded by the census. **Red-headed Woodpeckers**, **Yellow**, **Black-throated Green Warblers**, **Summer Tanagers** and, **Indigo Bunting**, and hundreds of other birds flew above me going south.

May 1st-15th

May began with the first **Wood Thrush** song and the observation of a **Black-and-white Warbler**. Freshly sprouted Trilliums, Solomon's Seals, and the familiar calls of **Common Terns** at the tip, indicated that the lake had warmed up. Pelee experienced mild temperatures (above 10C) with south winds from May 2nd to 3rd and there was a full chorus of birds and American Toads. **American White Pelicans** resting at the tip and a bright coloured male **Blue-winged Warbler** were an exciting sight in the still wintery monotone landscape. The wheezy noises of a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** and the sharp call of **Nashville Warblers** filled the air above me. The first **Warbling Vireos** and **Black-throated Green Warblers** were recorded.

On May 4th to 8th there was a north wind, and the temperature was around 6C. The first **Orchard Orioles**, **Eastern Kingbirds**, **Ovenbirds**, and **Cape May Warblers** were seen, and many **House Wrens** arrived. On the calm afternoon of May 6th, a **Whip-poor-will** started singing at dusk and entertained us with its' rhythmic song for a long time (non-standard observation). The temperature warmed up to 8C on May 7th, and the first **Blackburnian Warbler** was observed. **Yellow**, **Nashville**, and **Western Palm** warblers were frequently seen at this time.

A cold snap with a strong northeast wind came on May 8th, and the temperature dropped to 1C for the morning. There was some snow on the ground, but the freezing weather warmed up with the south-west wind. On May 10th, a **Cliff Swallow** was observed in a small group of mixed swallow species at the pond. May 11th was another cold morning with a strong north-west wind (4C). A **Great-crested Flycatcher** and a **Black-crowned Night Heron** were observed for the first time. Numerous **White-throated sparrows** as well as Lincoln and Song Sparrows were busy feeding on the ground. As a non-standard observation, many **Baltimore Orioles**, **Orchard Orioles** and **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** were getting their fill at our garden feeders all day.

A singing **Sora** was first observed on May 12th. **Black-bellied Plovers**, **Semipalmated Plovers** and a group of **Sanderlings** were observed from May 13th to 14th. Two **Orange-crowned Warblers** were seen in a wrench of warblers along the west beach. Warm spring rain on the night of May 14th dropped a 'bucket full' of birds at Fish Point. On May 15th, there were numerous thrushes, flycatchers and warblers at the south end of the trail. Hundreds of birds took off into the blue sky as if caught in rush hour traffic. Twenty-seven **Baltimore Orioles** six **Red-headed Woodpeckers** and six **Scarlet Tanagers** were observed at this time. Finally, the first **Magnolia** and **American Redstart** were seen, along with many **Chestnut-sided** and **Black-throated Blue Warblers** and a couple of **Northern Parulas**. Fourteen warbler species were recorded, but there were definitely more than that. In the afternoon, birds were fluttering around everywhere, and some **Bay-breasted** and **Blackpoll Warblers** were a non-standard observation.



Black-throated blue Warbler Sumiko Onishi

May 16th to 31st

The latter half of May saw many warblers hanging around the area. The wonderful variety of species stayed for a week and then tapered off with the arrival of vireos and waxwings. On May 16th, we heard the sounds of **Least Flycatchers** and **Eastern Kingbirds** everywhere, and a total of 62 species were recorded. Fourteen warbler species were observed: including the first **Golden-winged**, **Mourning** and **Hooded Warblers**. Two more species including a **Prothonotary Warbler** as a non-standard observation.

Numerous **Nashville**, **Yellow** and **Blackburnian Warblers** were present. On May 17th, a first **Bay-breasted** and **Prothonotary Warbler** were spotted. It was a chilly morning and a northeast wind brought scattered showers during the census. **Red-headed Woodpeckers**, **Least Flycatchers**, **Warbling Vireos** and **Scarlet Tanagers** were singing everywhere. In the afternoon 21 warbler species were recorded, including **Northern Waterthrush** as a non-standard observation. Then a large group of **Barn Swallows** appeared.

The cold stormy weather from May 18th to 19th made the census route hazardous because of many fallen trees battered by the wind. Sand and water obscured the trail. The boardwalk to the west beach was entirely underwater. Regardless of the inclement weather hundreds of warblers remained in the area and the variety was remarkable. Nineteen species were recorded on May 18th and 18 species on May 19th. Many different species sang in the trees, and a **Chimney Swift** was a season's first. We observed a total of 61 species on the 18th and 62 species on the 19th.

On May 20th and 21st, a large variety of birds was still present. Sixteen warbler species were recorded. In total not many of each species was recorded, but there were numerous **Swainson's Thrushes** and **Veerys**. The lively singing of the numerous **Red-headed Woodpeckers** and **Scarlet Tanagers** were heard all along the trail. The season's first **cuckoo** and more **Cedar Waxwings** brightened the air. The weather warmed in the afternoon, and flying insects began to show up. Over the next several days rain created many big puddles in the field along the drive to Fish Point. On May 22nd, clouds of midges moved high up in the air in the early morning and evening skies. The sounds of drizzling rain mixed with different birds' songs rang through the forest. The mild temperatures finally brought forth the green leaves on the trees. A season's first **Ruddy Turnstone** and some

shorebirds were seen at the tip. As a non-standard observation, the buzzy calls of five **Common Nighthawks** were heard in the twilight.

On May 23rd a dense fog in the morning reduced visibility to less than 10-meters, but the songs of **Tennessee Warblers** were heard in the fog shrouded trees. On the morning of the 24th the temperature jumped to 18C and numerous **Red-eyed Vireos** including many **Philadelphia Vireos** arrived. **Northern Mockingbirds** and many **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** including some **Willow** and **Alder** were counted. The first **Acadian Flycatcher** was recorded on May 26th. Numerous **American White Pelicans** began to arrive on May 27th.



Scarlet Tanager Sumiko Onishi

June 1st to 10th

Early June began with a warm south wind, which brought the temperature to 20C for the week. The voice of the forest was more subdued than it had been in the previous two weeks. A total of 31 species was recorded on June 3rd, including four young **Bald Eagles** who were probably fledglings from the nest near the netting area. On June 4th, we observed many **Yellow-billed cuckoos** chasing each other along the west beach. A **Least Flycatcher** and an **Acadian Flycatcher** were also seen. June 6th was a beautiful day with blue skies, but was punctuated with many mosquitoes and stable flies. A **Hooded Warbler** and a **Willow Flycatcher** were heard. A total of 40 species was recorded. From June 7th to June 10th, the last day of the census, few migrants were recorded.

Fall migration summary

August 1st-15th

PIBO started census at Fish Point August 1st. The first week felt like autumn and the temperature dropped from 26C to 20C. It was a welcome break from the heat of the previous week. Many birds with their young started moving away from their nest sites and little by little, their young became independent.

On August 1st, we recorded 37 different species including a large flock of swallows. **Tree** and **Barn Swallows** were seen roosting in the phragmites at the pond along with a flock of **Bank** and **Northern Rough-winged swallows** on August 2nd and 3rd. Some resident young **Great Blue Herons**, a **Great Egret**, and some **American White Pelicans** were regularly seen at the pond and the tip. The weather was pleasantly warm (18C) on August 4th and the first **Sanderlings** were seen and **Bonaparte's Gulls** resting at Fish Point. The next morning (August 5th) the pond was loud with frog calls and birds chirping in the sun. Five adult **Red-headed Woodpeckers**, probably local nesters, entertained us with calling, drumming, and chasing each other around the viewing deck. Many **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers**, including both adults and fledglings, were observed.

On August 9th, **Baltimore Orioles** and **Yellow Warblers** were observed all along the trail and many **Eastern Wood-Pewees** and season's first **Least Flycatcher** were recorded. After the big group of swallows left, **Purple Martins** began to gather at Fish Point on August 10th. Their calls filled the air above the trees during the census. There were still some **Barn Swallows** and **Purple Martins** taking care of their young. On August 12th, a **Green Heron's** sharp call was heard at the pond, and 60 **American White Pelicans** were recorded. The steady northeast wind during the night stimulated another swallow migration. Hundreds of **Purple Martins** flew high up in the blue sky. **Barn Swallows** flew around clouds of midges above the canopy on August 14th. After the wind shifted to a strong easterly direction, some shorebirds avoiding the wind, including **Killdeers**, **Spotted Sandpipers**, and **Sanderlings**, were observed along the shore.



August 16th to 31st

On August 16th, there were signs of migrants in the gloomy forest under the overcast sky. A **Northern Waterthrush** and a **Black-and-white Warbler** were firsts for the new season. Many **Purple Martins** at the tip began leaving for the south. From the evening of the 16th to the 18th, north winds brought more warblers and flycatchers. A seasons' first **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** along with many other flycatchers were seen on August 18th. The north wind of August 19th shifted to the south on the morning of the 20th. During those mornings, many **Baltimore Orioles** and **Warbling Vireos** moved through the area. I recorded 48 species including numerous **Blackburnian Warblers** and **Red-breasted Nuthatches** on August 20th. A **Prothonotary Warbler** was seen on the 21st.

Despite the heatwave during the last week of August, I encountered a variety of warblers. On August 22nd **Tennessee** and **Mourning Warblers** of the season were observed. A total of 57 species was recorded including a young **Prothonotary Warbler**. Many birds clustered around a small puddle at the south end of the trail to get relief from the heat and dryness. The temperature went up to 23C in the morning of August 25th, and sixteen **Sanderlings** were seen on the west beach. On August 27th a total of 57 species were observed, including 13 warbler species and many **Eastern Kingbirds**. From August 28th to 29th, the weather was poor, but many **Black-throated Blue Warblers** remained.

The morning temperature dropped to 15C on August 30th because of a northwest wind. It was a busy census day and we counted in total 61 different species including 16 warbler species. The seasons' first **Blackpoll Warblers** and many **Belted Kingfishers** were seen. **Philadelphia Vireos** and a hundred **American White Pelicans** were also recorded. On August 31st many warblers, **Cedar Waxwings**, and swallows flying over us were observed. **Barn** and **Bank Swallows**, **Purple Martins** and **Chimney Swifts** were observed. Forty-seven species were recorded, including numerous **American Redstarts** and **Red-eyed Vireos** seen in the shrubs along the shore.



Blackburnian Warbler Sumiko Onishi

September 1st to September 14th

As September began, the pond was getting busier with many birds roosting, and about fifty **Wood Ducks** gathered there. On September 3rd, an accipiter flew out from the trees and started chasing other birds. A total of 62 species was recorded including 13 separate warbler species. During the night, a brief northwest wind brought cooler air (15C) and on the morning of September 4th the seasons' first **Swainson's Thrush** was recorded.

September 5th was a very busy day and 53 species were recorded. Hundreds of warblers, including many **Blackpolls Warblers** were seen. Ten **Bald Eagles** were seen sitting at the tip and many **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** were a pleasant addition to the census. On the morning of September 6th the temperature dropped to 11C after a strong north wind. We observed hundreds of warblers, including numerous **Blackpoll** and **Bay-breasted** and **Swainson's thrush** at the tip. **Yellow Warblers**, **Baltimore Orioles** and the seasons' first **Gray-cheeked Thrush** were among the 60 species recorded that day.

On September 7th, we had a very intense thunderstorm overnight with lightning and rain. We saw more than a hundred **American White Pelicans** flying around with thousands of **Double-crested Cormorants** along the shore. September 9th was very foggy with low visibility (10km). Numerous **Red-eyed Vireos** were seen on the previous few days. At the pond, two **Merlins** and an **American Kestrel** were chasing each other and showing off their acrobatic flight skills. A highlight of the day was seeing an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** sitting on a dead tree branch at the tip and hearing another one nearby.

The northeast wind of September 10th brought many migrants and stable flies. A total of 55 species including hundreds of **Swainson's Thrushes**, flycatchers and 14 warbler species were recorded on September 11th. On September 13th a total of 13 warbler species including some **Northern Parulas** and many **Merlins** were observed. A nonstandard observation was hundreds of **American Robins** moving southward in the twilight. On September 14th, 53 species, including numerous thrushes and 14 different warblers were recorded, **Virginia Rail**, **Blue-headed Vireo**, **Western Palm Warbler** and the first **Song Sparrow** were also observed. It was surprising that three **Connecticut Warblers** including a seasons' first seen the day before showed up in the bush along the pond. Many **House Wrens** and a couple of **Indigo Buntings** were still around.



Northern Parulas Sumiko Onishi

September 15th to 30th

The latter half of September started with the sound of alarm calls from **Blue Jays** and **Yellow-shafted Flickers** harassed by **Sharp-shinned Hawks** and the sharp calls of sparrows in the bush. The wind was blowing from the southwest, and the temperature was 13C on September 16th. The seasons' first **White-throated Sparrows** and **Winter Wrens** were seen with thrushes. September 17th was chilly grey weather with north winds reminding me to put on gloves! Many **Ovenbirds** were seen along the trail, and a group of thrushes and warblers were seen in the shrubs at the south end.

The morning temperature went down to 9C on September 18th and 62 species were observed. A seasons' first **Brown Creeper** was seen as well as other seasons' firsts including: **Yellow-throated Vireo**, **Brown Thrasher**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, and **Chipping, Lincoln's** and **Swamp Sparrows**. There were many flycatchers and warblers in the vegetation along the beach. A **Semipalmated Plover** was also a seasons' first. September 20th was another chilly morning (7C). Thirty-four species were recorded including a few warblers, and a seasons' first **Ruddy Turnstone** seen with **Sanderlings** at the tip.

For the next two days, fewer warblers and thrushes were seen. On September 22nd four hundred **Blue Jays** arrived, their white bellies reflected in the morning sun and flew south from the tip. South winds warmed the island September 23rd and 24th. Several **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were observed as new for the season. Otherwise, there was not much activity observed for those days. On September 25th, the winds dropped, and the lake became very calm. Numerous **Red-breasted Nuthatches** and **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** arrived. The seasons' first **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** was recorded and three hundred **Blue Jays** and many **Blackpoll Warblers** flew over.

South winds September 26th to 28th resulted in a quiet census. Two **Peregrine Falcons** chasing after Flickers and **Blue Jays** were observed at the pond on the 27th. A northwest wind on the evening of 28th brought heavy rain and was followed by a drop in temperature. By the next morning, the temperature had dropped to 9C. A nonstandard observation was of **American Kestrels** in the field along the road and **Brown Creepers** were seen by the trail. Strong southwest winds on September 30th formed white caps on the surface of the lake. It was a quiet census day, but a **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was seen in the interior (where it was protected by the wind) and 50 **American White Pelicans** were seen at the tip.



Red-breasted Nuthatch Sumiko Onishi

October 1st to October 15th

On October 2nd, strong north winds brought lots of birds and a total of 55 species was recorded. Included were sparrows and finches, many **Gray Catbirds** and **Brown Thrashers**. Fourteen warbler species and a couple of Empidonax flycatchers were in the trees. **Yellow-rumped** and **Western Palm Warblers** and many **Northern Parulas** were observed. The census also included a variety of other species: kinglets, **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers**; and seasons' first **Northern Mockingbird** and **Hermit Thrush**. A strong northwest wind came on October 3rd and the temperature dropped to 4C. The high-pitched calls of hundreds of **Golden-crowned** and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were heard in the bush and high up in the canopy. Numerous **Winter Wrens** flew beside me like waves rolling over water, making their two-note call while the sharp calls of **White-throated Sparrows** were heard in the shrubs. **Blue-headed Vireos**, flycatchers, and an **Indigo Bunting** enriched the days' observations.

On October 5th, the wind shifted to the northwest during the night and the morning temperature was 6C. Many **American Goldfinches** and other types of finches were recorded. **Rusty Blackbirds** and **Red-winged Blackbirds** started arriving. There was a busy census on October 8th with sparrows in the bushes and blackbirds and finches flying over the trees. During this time 54 species was recorded: this included seven sparrow species, numerous **White-throated Sparrows** and **Dark-eyed Juncos**. The seasons' first **Fox Sparrows** and **Eastern White-crowned Sparrows** were also recorded. A cloud of **Pine Siskins** along the roadside was a nonstandard observation.

On the morning of October 11th hundreds of sparrows arrived with the northeast winds. Numerous **Dark-eye Juncos**, and **Eastern Meadowlarks** seen in the fields along the road were a nonstandard observation. A hundred **Rusty Blackbirds** were also seen in the area at this time. On October 12th, thousands of **European Starlings** arrived continuously along with **Blue Jays**, **Red-winged Blackbirds**, and accipiters. A **Nelson's Sparrow** was a first for the season. Strong northwest winds with rain during night on October 13th brought flying insects to the east side, which **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, kinglets, nuthatches, and other species feasted on.

Winds from the southwest with gusts up to 16 knots brought scattered rain on October 15th. Twenty-five species including: **Dark-eyed Juncos**, **Yellow-rumped Warblers**, and kinglets were observed. Many birds taking shelter in the dense vegetation were probably missed.



Yellow-rumped Warbler Sumiko Onishi

October 16th to 31st

Several days of southwest winds brought in chilly weather. On October 17th, for the first time ever at the PIBO station, a group of **Trumpeter Swans** was observed at the pond.

North winds brought rain during the night and some thrushes, a **Common Loon**, and some **Red-breasted Mergansers** and **Horned Grebes** arrived on October 19th. Although the rain continued all day on October 21st, the temperature rose to 15C. The morning of October 22nd was soggy after another rainy night but the wind switched from north to east between midnight and dawn. Numerous birds including a group of 40 **Eastern Bluebirds** and a hundred **American Robins** flew around me on my walk to the census observation point. The forest and the west beach resounded with the calls and songs of kinglets and sparrows. Numerous **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** and **Song Sparrows** were seen along with **White-throated Sparrows** and **Dark-eyed Juncos**. A few Peregrine Falcons exhibited their hunting skills by chasing a smaller bird over the lake. Numerous **Hermit Thrushes** were also observed.

The morning of October 24th saw the temperature drop from 17C on the previous day, to 4C. Several **Northern Harriers** flew over the tip and the season's first **Black-bellied Plover** was observed. From October 25th to 26th, the wind from the north brought thousands of migratory birds to the area. Blackbirds flying south from Fish Point created a long line in the air. Hundreds of **Golden-crowned** and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** were hopping around along the trail and the beach. We also recorded numerous **Brown Creepers**: as well as juncos, **White-throated**, **White-crowned**, **Song**, **Field**, and **American Tree** swallows in the dry grasses.

On October 27th, an **Evening Grosbeak** was a rare site at the pond. His piercing call reached my ears before I saw him flying around at the pond. For the next two days, a couple of season new species arrived including **White-winged Scoters** and a **Red-shouldered Hawk**. Hundreds of kinglets were observed, but most had left before October 31st. On Halloween morning, the temperature dropped to 0C. A variety of ducks including: **Hooded Mergansers**, **American Wigeons**, **Gadwalls**, **Green-winged Teals**, and **Mallards** were observed at the pond. On this busy morning several thousand blackbirds, which included a large number of **Rusties** formed a never-ending line in the sky.



Evening Grosbeak Sumiko Onishi

November 1st to 10th

A variety of birds arrived continuously during this period. **Red-winged** and **Rusty Blackbirds**, **Common Grackles**, **Eastern Bluebirds**, **American Goldfinches**, **Dark-eyed Juncos** and numerous **Red-tailed Hawks** were seen everywhere.

There were dark grey clouds to the north when I drove to Fish Point on November 1st. The weather was notably changeable and impatient. Soon after I started the census, hail and rain came. By the end of my walk, the skies had cleared. The strong west winds remained for three mornings from November 2nd to 4th. A couple of **Killdeers** and a **Greater Yellowlegs** were observed flying over the pond, and numerous **Common Goldeneyes** were observed on the shore. On November 4th, the winds from the southwest raised the temperature to 10C and three **Black-bellied Plovers** were seen on the beach.

Thousands of blackbirds came through from November 5th to 7th. November 8th was another busy morning I observed hundreds of **Golden-crowned Kinglets**; and a **Nashville Warbler** was spotted amongst them. As well as blackbirds, a variety of other species were observed including: numerous robins, bluebirds, waxwings, and goldfinches flying overhead. Several **Belted Kingfishers** and a group of **Horned Larks** showed up in the blue sky at the tip at Fish Point. Many **American Pipits**, some were flying over and some walking along the shore; and a hundred **Chipping Sparrows** and **Dark-eyed Juncos** were observed feeding in the dry grasses along the beach. The thrill of hearing so many different flight calls in the clear sky distracted me from finding birds on the ground. There were more than a hundred waterfowls in the water in the distance.

Although the wind had been out of south for the last several days, the skyway of migratory birds flew into it as if they were in rush hour traffic. Two **Tree Swallows** with their wings folded flew in the wind and numerous, Red-breasted **Mergansers** showed up along the shore on November 9th. The season's last census was completed on November 10th. Thousands of blackbirds were still in the sky, and hundreds of **American Goldfinches** and **Dark-eyed Juncos** flew over. The sight of so many birds made me wonder how many blackbirds actually existed. On November 9th and 10th many **Red-bellied** and **Downy Woodpeckers** were spotted and on the last morning a hundred **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were hopping along the trail.



Swans Sumiko Onishi

2020 Summary (Spring and Fall)

The pattern of bird migration is closely connected to weather conditions. PIBO has been recording temperature and wind direction, which are the major factors for determining when and where birds will stop on their migration routes. To summarize the 2020 spring migration trends at Fish Point, I compared the air temperature at the start of each daily census with the number of species recorded during the spring of 2019 and the spring of 2020.

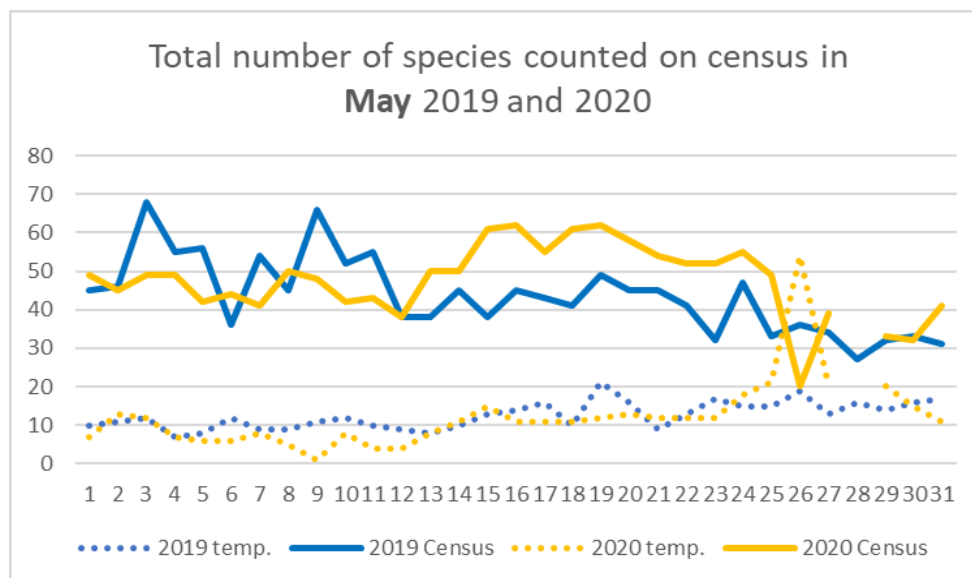
A noticeable difference was observed in May when the temperature remained low between the second half of April through the first half of May. This is when we usually see large numbers of birds for both the census and the banding operations. Lower temperatures in the second week of May appeared to have delayed the arrival of large groups of birds. When the temperatures started warming up gradually for the second half of May, we recorded the arrival of many more species. These conditions lasted for about a week. A particularly large variety of warblers began to arrive after a warm spring rain on the night of May 14th.

Comparing the peak migration periods for the fall of 2019 with the fall of 2020 the migration patterns for common species like swallows, wrens, and blackbirds, were similar even though the banding record was absent. Several mornings displayed remarkable migratory movement. On August 30th, 61 species were recorded and on September 10th, 55 species were recorded. This included the arrival of hundreds of Swainson's Thrushes. On September 18th, 62 species were recorded and on October 22nd, 44 species were recorded, including numerous sparrows and kinglets. The number and the diversity of shorebirds observed during the migration season has decreased over the last several years because high water levels have significantly reduced shoreline habitat.

We observed the arrival of numerous Red-breasted Nuthatches in 2019. Impressive numbers of Pine Siskins were observed in early October 2020. Based on the research of Ron Pittaway, who writes the "Winter Finch Forecast", the distribution of finches is tied to the availability of cone and seed crops, which are their preferred food. Pittaway's prediction about where finches will show up in the winter 2020 was verified by what we observed this fall. As an illustration, Evening Grosbeaks have slowly extended their range and moved southwest in Eastern Europe. In the census, an Evening Grosbeak was recorded on October 27th, and another one was seen in a nonstandard observation on November 7th.

<https://finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2020>

Many other stations continued banding late into the season and captured numerous birds this year. It is our theory that the birds had a better migration and breeding season this year because COVID 19 restrictions reduced human interference. If this is the true, the results will be reported by the CMMN.



A list of interesting and unusual species recorded by PIBO staff this spring and fall

Yellow-headed Blackbird - Apr 10
 Red-headed Woodpecker - Apr 29, Aug 1
 American White Pelican - May 3, Aug 1
 Eastern Whip-poor-will - May 6
 Prothonotary Warbler - May 16, Aug 21
 Acadian Flycatcher - May 26
 Yellow-breasted Chat - Jun 13, Aug 23
 Prairie Warbler - Sep 4
 Connecticut Warbler - Sep 13
 Olive-sided Flycatcher - Oct 12
 Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow - Oct 12
 Trumpeter Swan - Oct 17
 Evening Grosbeak - Oct 27

Field Effort

For the last decade, our organization worked hard to secure enough field staff to expand our research programs and tasks. Last year we had overwhelming support from ten individuals who were either hired for the season or volunteered. Our Field Assistant shouldered most of the responsibilities during the Field Supervisor's absence. There were many changes in 2020 because of the complications surrounding COVID 19. As previously mentioned, the organization continued its' activities despite reduced staff. Some tasks, however, were impossible. Although there were many difficulties the Field Supervisor continued to conduct fieldwork independently on the island. Despite the challenges, it was a rewarding season and we learned new things about bird ecology. We continue to explore new methods for protecting them on Pelee Island. We very much appreciate all the support given to PIBO to complete this season.

2020 Field Effort			Field Hours			
	MM*	PUMA*	SAR*	Owling*	Other*	Total hours
Sumiko Onishi	252	11.5	21.75	72.5	18	375.75
Graeme Gibson		7.5	4.75		4	16.25

* MM: Migration Monitoring, PUMA: Purple Martin Monitoring, SAR: Species at Risk, Owling: Northern Saw-whet Owl Monitoring, Other: Bird Race, Birdathon and Christmas Bird Count

Migration Monitoring Coverage at Fish Point from 2007 to 2020

Year	Coverage			Netting Period			Birds captured	Net Hours	Bird / net hr	Species banded	Species recorded
	Spring	Fall	Days	Spring	Fall	Days					
2020	April 1- June 10	Aug 1- Nov 10	168	N/A	N/A	0	23	256	0.09	2	185
2019	April 1- June 8	Aug 5- Nov 10	164	Apr 15- Jun 1	Aug 16- Oct 20	121	2568	4172	0.61	84	185
2018	April 1- June 10	Aug 1- Nov 10	173	Apr 20- May 31	Aug 17- Nov 8	126	2943	4006	0.74	79	190
2017	April 1- June 11	Aug 1- Nov 15	179	Apr 21- May 31	Aug 17- Nov 10	127	3367	3727	0.9	80	185
2016	April 1- June 10	Aug 1- Nov 15	179	Apr 15- Jun 2	Aug 17- Nov 4	125	2584	4131	0.62	77	193
2015	April 2- June 9	Aug 1- Nov 15	176	Apr 20- Jun 3	Aug 15- Nov 8	129	2493	3652	0.68	76	194
2014	April 1- June 10	Aug 1- Nov 15	178	Apr 18- Jun 5	Aug 15- Nov 8	134	2661	4497	0.59	75	197
2013	April 1- June 6	Aug 1- Nov 15	173	Apr 15- Jun 5	Aug 15- Nov 8	142	2519	4209	0.6	82	200
2012	April 4- June 10	Aug 1- Nov 15	174	Apr 13- Jun 15	Aug 13- Nov 8	123	3772	4296	0.86	81	201
2011	April 4- June 8	Aug 1- Nov 15	173	Apr 12- May 31	Aug 11- Nov 15	119	2404	3356	0.72	78	203
2010	April 2- June 10	Aug 1- Nov 15	177	Apr 2- May 28	Aug 4- Nov 10	139	3498	4280	0.82	85	193
2009	April 1- June 10	Aug 1- Nov 15	178	Apr 2- May 24	Aug 5- Nov 11	134	3296	4500	0.66	88	198
2008	April 3- June 14	Aug 1- Nov 15	180	Apr 5- Jun 10	Aug 3- Nov 11	147	3505	5075	0.71	82	194
2007	April 1- June 15	Aug 1- Nov 15	183	Apr 2- Jun 1	Aug 1- Nov 15	139	2672	4739	0.55	84	205

TABLE 7 - LIST OF SPECIES AND FORMS RECORDED BY STAFF DURING 2020

Common Loon	Common Snipe	White-breasted Nuthatch*	Canada Warbler
Horned Grebe	Bonaparte's Gull	Brown Creeper	Yellow-breasted Chat
Pied-billed Grebe*	Ring-billed Gull	Carolina Wren*	Hooded Warbler
American White Pelican	Herring Gull	House Wren*	Summer Tanager
Double-crested Cormorant	Great Black-backed Gull	Winter Wren	Scarlet Tanager*
Great Blue Heron*	Caspian Tern	Marsh Wren	Northern Cardinal*
Great Egret*	Common Tern	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Rose-breasted Grosbeak*
Turkey Vulture	Mourning Dove*	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Indigo Bunting*
Green Heron*	Yellow-billed Cuckoo*	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher*	Eastern Towhee*
Black-crowned Night-heron	Black-billed Cuckoo*	Eastern Bluebird*	American Tree Sparrow
Mute Swan*	Great Horned Owl*	American Robin*	Field Sparrow*
Tundra Swan	Northern Saw-whet Owl	Wood Thrush*	Chipping Sparrow*
Trumpeter Swan	Eastern Screech Owl*	Veery	Nelson's Sparrow
Canada Goose*	Whip-poor-will	Swainson's Thrush	Savannah Sparrow
Wood Duck*	Common Nighthawk	Gray-cheeked Thrush	White-throated Sparrow
Mallard*	Chimney Swift	Hermit Thrush	White-crowned Sparrow
Gadwall	Ruby-throated Hummingbird*	Gray Catbird*	Fox Sparrow
American Widgeon	Belted Kingfisher	Northern Mockingbird	Song Sparrow*
Northern Shoveler	Red-headed Woodpecker*	Brown Thrasher*	Lincoln's Sparrow
Blue-winged Teal	Red-bellied Woodpecker*	European Starling*	Swamp Sparrow
American Green-winged Teal	Downy Woodpecker*	American Pipit	Dark-eyed Junco
Ring-necked Duck	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Cedar Waxwing*	Eastern Meadowlark*
Scaup species	Yellow-shafted Flicker*	Northern Parula	Brown-headed Cowbird*
White-winged Scoter	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Orange-crowned Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird*
Bufflehead	Eastern Wood-Pewee*	Tennessee Warbler	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Common Goldeneye	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Blue-winged Warbler	Rusty Blackbird
Hooded Merganser	Acadian Flycatcher	Golden-winged Warbler	Common Grackle*
Red-breasted Merganser	Willow Flycatcher	Nashville Warbler	Baltimore Oriole*
Bald Eagle*	Alder Flycatcher	Yellow Warbler*	Orchard Oriole*
Northern Harrier	"Trail's" Flycatcher	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Evening Grosbeak
Red-shouldered Hawk	Least Flycatcher	Magnolia Warbler	Purple Finch
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Eastern Phoebe*	Cape May Warbler	House Finch*
Cooper's Hawk*	Great Crested Flycatcher*	Black-throated Blue Warbler	Pine Siskin
Red-tailed Hawk*	Eastern Kingbird*	Blackburnian Warbler	American Goldfinch*
American Kestrel	Red-eyed Vireo*	Yellow-rumped Warbler	House Sparrow*
Merlin	Warbling Vireo*	Black-throated Green Warbler	Total: 185 species and forms
Peregrine Falcon	Philadelphia Vireo	Prairie Warbler	
Wild Turkey*	Yellow-throated Vireo	Western Palm Warbler	
Virginia Rail	Blue-headed Vireo	Pine Warbler	
Sora	Blue Jay*	Bay-breasted Warbler	
American Coot	American Crow*	Blackpoll Warbler	
Black-bellied Plover	Horned Lark*	Black-and-white Warbler	
Semipalmated Plover	Purple Martin*	American Redstart	
Killdeer*	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Prothonotary Warbler	
Solitary Sandpiper	Bank Swallow	Ovenbird	
Spotted Sandpiper	Tree Swallow*	Northern Waterthrush	
Ruddy Turnstone	Cliff Swallow	Connecticut Warbler	
Sanderling	Barn Swallow*	Mourning Warbler	
Least Sandpiper	Black-capped Chickadee*	Common Yellowthroat*	
American Woodcock*	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Wilson's Warbler	

Breeding evidence/possible breeding evidence in 2020 for 66 species marked *

Northern Saw-whet Owl monitoring

PIBO's nonstandard owl banding started on November 11th after the census. The standardized observation of migratory birds was wrapped up for the season. This year the nets were moved to a different area on Pelee for the benefit of the single staff member who took care of the netting operation. The nets were set up because of favourable weather until December 12th, much later than the usual owl monitoring period. A total of twenty-one Northern Saw-whet, and two Eastern Screech Owls were banded in a nonstandard census of migrating owls.

Since 2004, the observatory banded 357 migrant Northern Saw-whet Owls and captured more than fifteen owls that were originally banded at other locations, ranging from Northern Ontario to Minnesota. In 2012, we banded 55 Saw-whet Owls (0.18 birds/net-hour) and recaptured six Saw-whet Owls already banded in previous years or at other banding stations. Our busiest night was November 13th, 2012 when we banded 25 Saw-whet Owls (0.51 birds/net-hour). Our previous data showed that the total catch rate is similar regardless of the varied total net hours (average 0.107). Shifting the netting period from early October to late October and mid-November, increased the catch rate, which was also probably enhanced by a move to a more southern location.

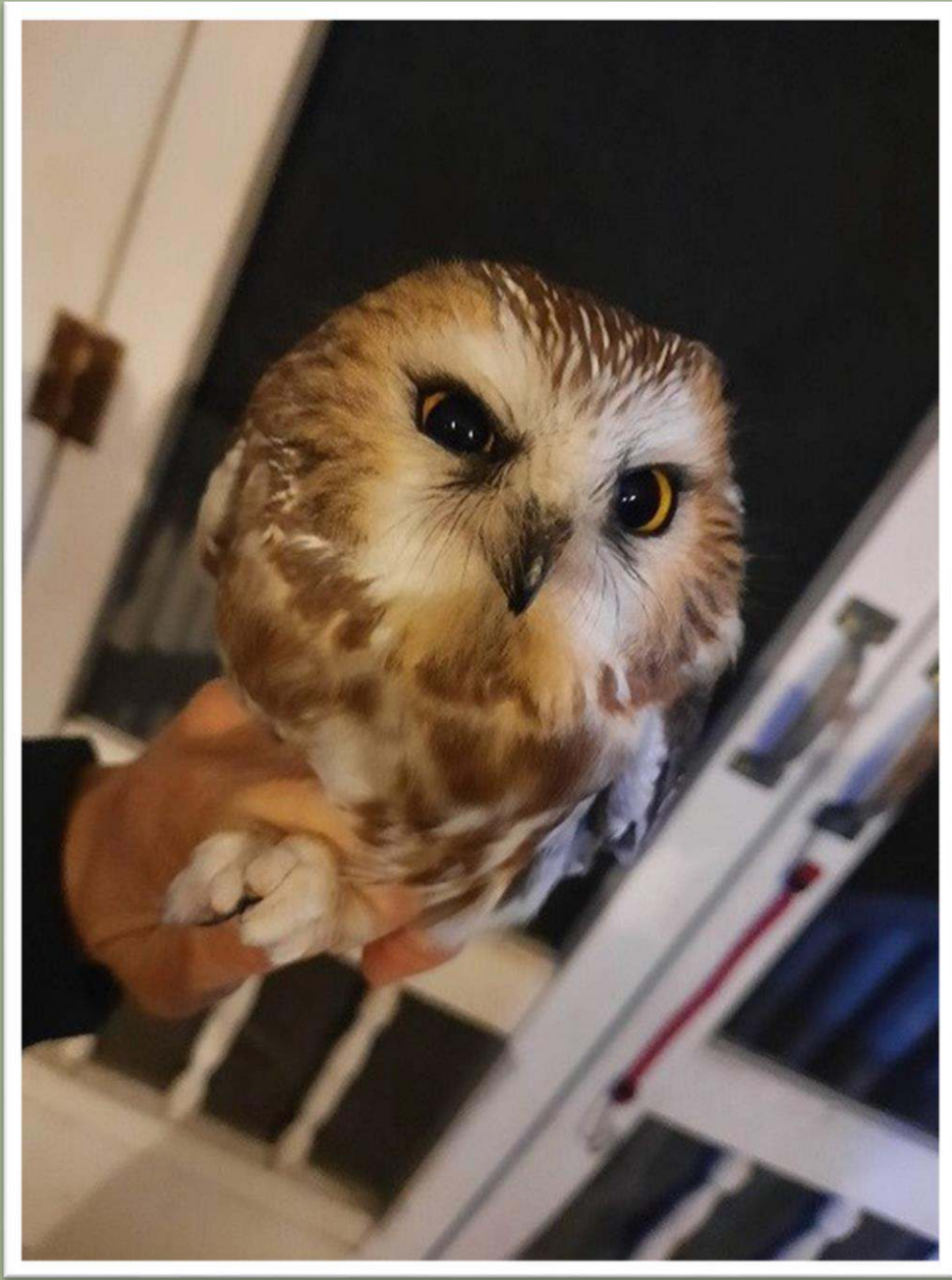
The range of the Northern Saw-whet Owl is quite widespread, and Pelee Island is located at the border of the year-round and winter range. This leads to the question of whether they use the island as a stopover site, or they remain in this range for the winter. On November 21st we recaptured a hatchling Saw-whet Owl originally banded on Kelleys Island during the previous month. It appeared that the young owl had been moving around the islands for a month. Because they are nocturnal and we rarely see them. It will be interesting to find out whether or not any Saw-whet Owls remain for the winter on the island*.

*A Northern Saw-whet Owl was observed on December 28th, 2020

2020 Northern Saw-whet Owl encounter record

Originally banded				Recaptured		
Species	Year	Date	Location	Year	Date	Location
NSWO* ₁	2018	Nov 3	Pelee Island	2020	March 18	Whitefish Point, MI
NSWO* ₂	2018	Nov 11	Pelee Island	2020	Oct 22	Innisfil Simcoe County, ON
NSWO	2020	Oct 28	Kelley's Island	2020	Nov 21	Pelee Island
See map below for *1 *2						





Northern Saw-whet Owl Sumiko Onishi

Table 4-Owls captured at East West Road in 2020

Date	Species	Banded	Retrap	Net hours	Birds/net hour	Temperature
Nov 11		0		23	0	6 C
Nov 12		0		19	0	4 C
Nov 21	NSWO EASO	9 1	1	26	0	8C
Nov 23	NSWO EASO	1 1	1	26	0.42	6 C
Nov 26		0		21	0.03	7C
Nov 28		0		11	0	4C
Nov 30	NSWO	1		26	0.04	7 C
Dec 4	NSWO	7		26	0.3	4 C
Dec 5		0		13	0	1 C
Dec 6	NSWO	3		26	0.11	0 C
Dec 7		0		24	0	0 C
Dec 11		0		15	0	7 C
Total 21 NSWO 2 EASO		23	2	256	0.09	

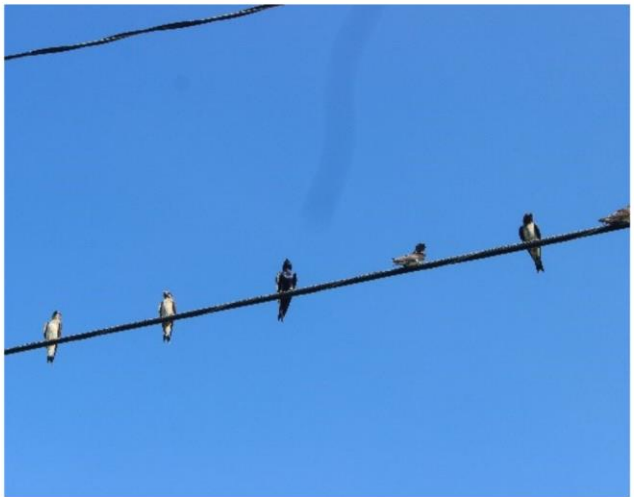
Purple Martin Monitoring from June to August 2020

In the summer of 2019, PIBO started monitoring Purple Martin boxes at our staff cottage, and reported the result to Nature Canada. Unfortunately, we could not observe as much this year because of staff limitations due to COVID-19. However, we still managed a total of 11 hours checking the nests this summer, and marked another successful breeding season.

We saw the first adult Purple Martin arrive at the nest box on April 26th. For the first check on May 29th one nesting pair had three eggs, the other nests were unoccupied. Nine of the thirty-two boxes contained nest materials, but many of the other boxes were only half-built. The wooden boxes were all filled, but many of the plastic gourds remained empty. We found four dead adult martins, probably killed by a cold snap in April.

By June 11th, most of the boxes were occupied and contained four to six eggs. About half of the nesting pairs produced a total of 56 fledglings by June 24th. On July 4th, we observed 132 nestlings. By July 13th, 128 nestlings were seen, and they looked as if they would fledge soon. Both nest box structures had the proper predator guards, but no staff was able watch for predators at the cottage all the time. Possible predators were: Fox Squirrels, raccoons, Fox Snakes, owls, and Cooper's Hawks. We did observe a Cooper's hawk land on a box while we were present. From our observation, although there was some predation, at least 128 young were fledged this season.

After seeing many Purple Martins gather at the tip on August 14th, we checked the nest boxes at our staff cottage. There were no martins seen while we were there. We assumed they had not returned to the nests for some time since many spider webs and moths had collected around the boxes. One pair laid eggs a second time after the first nestlings failed to fledge. It looked as if the parents deserted the young before feeding them well enough to fledge.



Advisor Graeme volunteering as scribe; Adult Purple Martins; Purple Martins fledglings; Purple Martin's egg Sumiko Onishi

Species at Risk (SAR) Monitoring 2020

Species at Risk Act (SARA) is a law that protects Canada's native wildlife from extinction. The Act states our legal responsibilities for studying and finding ways to aid the recovery of endangered species. The Species at Risk refers to both the natural habitat and the population that occupies that habitat. This Species at Risk is threatened by human activity and classified as either Endangered, Threatened, or of Special Concern. In Ontario, there were nineteen species of birds classified as Species at Risk under the Act. The determination of the classification of a species is the responsibility of the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC); a group of experts which assesses and identifies Species at Risk.

Towards the end of May, we started seeing some Species at Risk at the Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve study site. A pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers, (of Special Concern), displayed territorial behaviour at the pond, and a male Prothonotary Warbler, (Endangered), sang every morning after the middle of May. An Acadian Flycatcher, (Endangered), was seen along the census route nearly every year about the same time although it did not stay in the area. Once the weather warmed up the unique call of the Yellow-breasted Chat, (Endangered), was heard along the Stone Road and along the East West Road. A few Eastern Meadowlarks, (of Special Concern), were seen along the edges of the field. The sightings of Species at Risk were documented from April to November and added to the migration and the non-breeding bird reports.

Every summer PIBO has been monitoring Species at Risk on Pelee Island from June to July. The task of monitoring Species at Risk is time consuming and takes expert knowledge and a keen ear. If the at risk species are not spotted along the census route, the observer must drive around the territory of each species and spend ten minutes or longer making a confirmation. This can take many hours. The frequency of their singing varies from day to day, depending on the weather. Once they start nesting, some species become quiet and secretive to avoid discovery by predators. The field ornithologist must know when the species is most active in order to observe them best. The ornithologist and seasonal staff should be able to identify both their calls and their songs. Yellow-breasted Chat, for example, do not respond to the playback CD every time, and sometimes their vocalization is varied and more challenging to identify. Once the breeding site is found, less experienced staff can continue to monitor them. Furthermore, setting up a sound recording device at each breeding site is worth considering as a SAR monitoring strategy in the future.

Species at Risk classified as endangered, threatened, or special concern in Ontario.

Prothonotary Warbler (Endangered) monitoring 2020

In May 2020, the trees began to fill up with lively warblers. A male Prothonotary Warbler sang at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve, the usual sign of spring. We began monitoring Prothonotary Warblers periodically after the end of May. The rising lake level and frequent precipitation over the last several years has created a perfect habitat for them. A male sang constantly between May 28th and June 10th in the area around the natural tree cavity nest boxes. However, Tree Swallows and House Wrens already occupied most of the tree cavity nest boxes by the time he arrived. On June 12th, a female carrying nest material and food was observed at the same tree cavity where the male had been spotted. From June 18th to July 4th, the male sang infrequently and appeared to be moving around in the area from June 24th to the 30th. The photos shown below are of the natural tree cavities where the bird was observed. Later a House Wren peeking out of, or going in to the cavity, was observed at each site. This indicated competition between Prothonotary Warblers and House Wrens. Although both species make dummy nests during the breeding season, we wondered if those nest boxes interested more House Wrens in the area. Later a male Warbler was heard singing near another tree cavity at a site a bit distant from the other sites; but we could not identify the actual nest site. We think that they may have successfully raised their young in one of the many natural cavities in the area. Adult Prothonotaries were observed frequently along the census route at the beginning of August, and a young Prothonotary was found on August 22nd at a similar location.



Prothonotary warbler; Prothonotary warblers at tree cavity, a young Prothonotary warbler Sumiko Onishi

Prothonotary Warbler Monitoring at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve			
Year	Breeding evidence	Number of fledglings	Observation
2010	confirmed	5	2 pairs were nesting, one pair successfully fledged 5 young, but the second pair had 5 young perish. Presumably, the female died the day/night of hatching while the male was still around the box. *
2011	confirmed	Unconfirmed	A male and a female observed on May 28. A male singing observed on June 1. Two hatch-year PROWS banded on August 12.
2012	unconfirmed	N/A	A singing male, a female and nest building observed on May 4, 12, 13, 20, 26, 30, June 7 and 23 at the same location as 2010 and 2011. Later discovered partially built nest in the box.
2013	confirmed	5	N/A
2014	confirmed	4	A singing male observed at the box on May 10, 23. A pair observed at the box on June 14. Four nestlings observed on June 23.
2015	confirmed	Unconfirmed*	A male singing and carrying food to a female in the box, and the female came out from the box on May 28, June 2, 5, and 7. Active around the box on June 17- at least a young was peeking through the box. The parents were around. Likely to be fledged on the day.
2016	confirmed	5	
2017	unconfirmed	N/A	A singing male at the boxes on June 24 & 26. Discovered a nest built in one box; when the nest boxes were cleaned out in November, the nest was clean and looked unused.
2018	unconfirmed	N/A	A singing male observed on May 23, 27, June 5, 7, 17 & 18. A male carrying nest material into the box on May 28. Discovered incomplete nests in some boxes.
2019	Unconfirmed	N/A	No activity observed during 13 visits for May 16, 24, 28, June 1, 8, 16, 21, 28, July 5, 12 & 19. One female observed during daily census at Fish Point on May 31.
2020	unconfirmed	N/A	A singing male seen often from May 28-June 10; female carrying nest material/food observed June 12; June 18-July 4 singing male occasionally seen & sounded as if moving 15 m east & south from original area on June 24 & 30. Young PROW seen Aug 22 during census.

* reported by Dean Ware * No check on the nestling with opening the box

Yellow-breasted Chat (Endangered) monitoring 2020

Toward the end of the migration season in May, we began to check whether Yellow-breasted Chats had returned to their territory. They were frequently found at the Alvar along Stone Road and along the East West Road. It is relatively easy to hear the male singing from the road, except on windy days. We stopped by the site in the morning, in the evening, or whenever we were in the area to hear them singing. On June 13th, 2020, we observed the first Yellow-breasted Chat (#1) in Chat breeding territory. The male sang frequently on a dead tree branch covered by a vine and shrub thicket in the Alvar on East West Road, which is owned by the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The male was heard frequently for several days and then not heard from for a while. On June 28th, another (?) singing male (#2) was heard on the Stone Road Alvar owned by the Essex Region Conservation Authority. On June 30th, a singing male was again observed at the ERCA Alvar property. Another singing male (?) (#3) was heard farther north, where a male had been observed every year for the past few summers. On July 3rd, the same male (#1) was heard singing again at East West Rd and other Chats were heard at the Stone Road. On July 9th, another male sang on the north side of Stone Road Alvar on Ontario Nature's property. Unfortunately, we observed no other evidence of their breeding. We could not determine whether there were several males in each territory, or one male that moved around a lot. We think there are at least two Chat territories, one on Stone Road and one on East West Road.

Yellow-breasted Chat Monitoring along Stone Rd and East West Rd					
Year	Breeding evidence	Possible territories	Date observed	Location	Observation note
2012	Unconfirmed	2	June 22, 23	Stone Rd Alvar Conservation Area, Essex Region Conservation Authority, Ontario Nature, Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). Coordinates: N/A Comments: One bird observed on territory from previous years and one male heard in new area. No nesting evidence at former known sites at Brown's Rd, NCC or Pelee Island Winery property on East West Rd.	Two males seen in suitable nesting habitat in response to playback tape.
2013	Unconfirmed	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2014	Unconfirmed	2	June 14, 25	Ontario Nature on Stone Rd, NCC on Stone Rd	Singing males responded readily to playback tape
2015	Unconfirmed	2	May 28, June 22, July 2	NCC Finley & Krestel on East West Rd, NCC S. Cohen on Stone Rd.	Singing male
2016	Unconfirmed	2	June 2, 6, 28	NCC Finley & Krestel on East West Rd, NCC S. Cohen on Stone Rd.	Singing male
2017	Unconfirmed	1	June 16	NCC Finley & Kestrel on East West Rd	Singing male
2018	Unconfirmed	1	June 8	NCC S. Cohen on Stone Rd	Singing male
2019	Unconfirmed	0	N/A	N/A	Call-back survey was conducted along Stone Rd and Brown's Rd in May, June and July but no YBCH were heard
2020	Unconfirmed	2	June 13, 15, 16, 28, 30, July 3, 9	NCC Finley & Kestrel on East West Rd, NCC S. Cohen, Ontario Nature on Stone Rd.	Singing male

Least Bittern (Threatened) monitoring 2020

In 2020, PIBO was planning to conduct its thirteenth Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP) at Lighthouse Point and Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve. The MMP led by Birds Canada has been a significant contribution for studying the quality of wetland and the diversity of inhabited wildlife in Ontario's wetland. For the past thirteen surveys, PIBO had recorded the secretive 'Threatened' bird, Least Bittern. Unfortunately, we could not arrange for extra hands to conduct this survey for this season due to COVID-19. We are aiming to get our canoe out to Lake Henry next summer.



Green Heron Sumiko Onishi

Least Bittern Monitoring at Lighthouse Point Provincial Nature Reserve (Date observed)				
Year	Least Bittern	Green Heron*	American Coot*	Pied-billed Grebe*
2007	N/A			
2008	June 18			
2009	June 9			
2010	June 13	June 13, 26		
2011	May 31, June 17, 29			
2012	May 29	May 29, June 13		
2013		May 30, July 3		
2014	July 4		June 9	
2015	No survey			
2016	June 13			
2017	June 1, July 5			
2018	May 24, July 2			June 12
2019	June 18, June 30			
2020	No survey			

* Other targeted species for Marsh Monitoring Program

Bald Eagle (Special Concern) monitoring 2020

On Pelee Island, some adult Bald Eagles remain in their territory during the winter as long as there is open water for hunting fish. There are typical locations at which adult Bald Eagles are observed daily. Islanders observe many of their large nests in the deciduous forests during the winter. In early March, we begin to see some eagles near their nests; later these nests will be covered by thick vegetation and become invisible. In April 2020 PIBO staff spotted a nest near the banding station at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve, and spotted another nest behind the agricultural field along Stewart Road. A young Bald Eagle, probably a yearling and too young to breed, was seen near the nest along Stewart Rd a few times, but the nest seemed to be an unused. Once the canopy grew the active nest at Fish Point became invisible from a distance, but adult birds were observed frequently flying back and forth during the breeding season. We noticed two adults on the nest between April 11th and April 25th and we think their behaviour indicated that they were feeding young. On May 3rd two adults sat on a branch near the nest, and at least two or three (unconfirmed) fledglings were seen on June 3rd at the west beach across from the nesting site. Based on our observation and the general information we have about their breeding timing, we assumed that they established their territory during the winter between December and February. The eggs were incubated from the middle of February to mid or late March. The young were fed until the end of May when they left the nest. Since the pair had a successful brood this season, we expect to see them return next season.

Note: [Bald Eagle Management Plan | Ontario.ca](#)

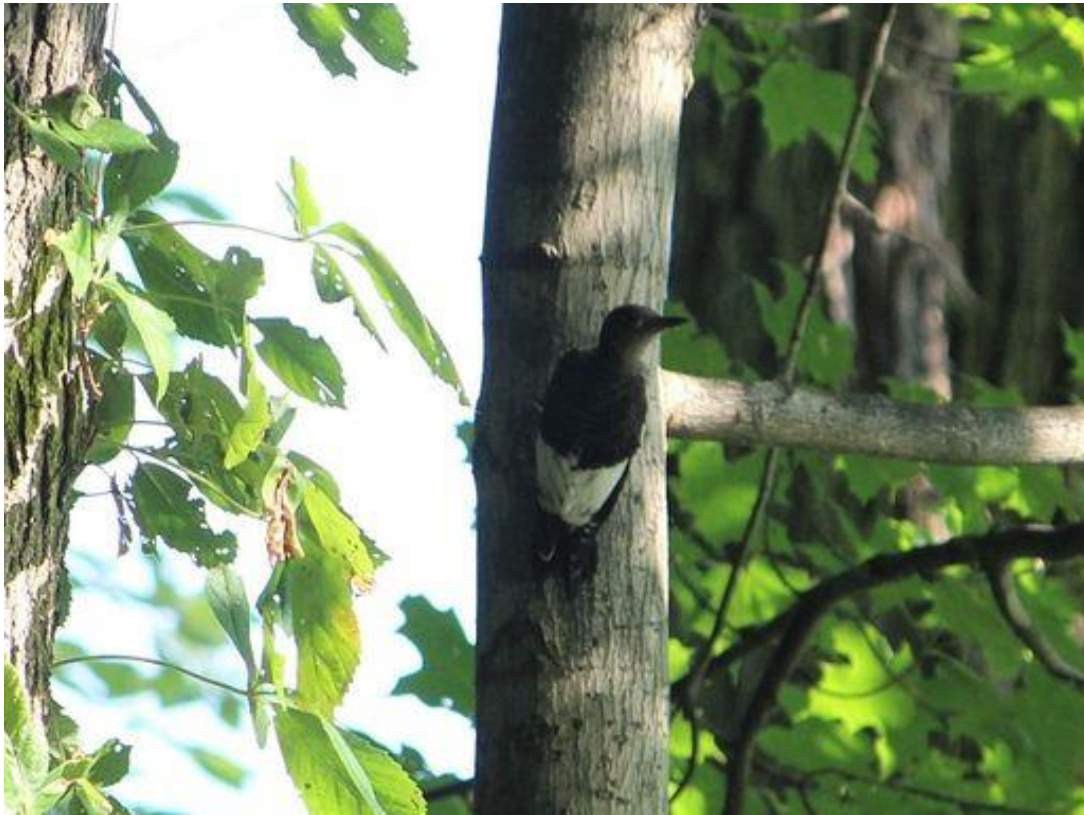
Red-headed Woodpecker (Special Concern) monitoring 2020

Red-headed Woodpeckers are regular spring migrants, and one recently confirmed nester on Pelee Island has been recorded for 15 years. In spring 2016 successful breeding evidence was reported by the PIBO staff. One pair, with at least one confirmed fledgling, was seen frequently at the netting area in August. Although there was no documented breeding record for the next few years, a successful breeding pair was observed in June and July 2020.

In May 2020 there were at least four Red-headed Woodpeckers seen frequently around the pond along the census route. They were quite lively calling and chasing each other. On June 6th, a male or female head was observed peeking out of a tree cavity, and on June 8th another Woodpecker was observed quietly collecting insects. They became more subdued at this time, and only one, probably a male, was seen near the nest until July 9th. On July 11th two birds were heard calling each other around the nest; it was assumed that both parents were collecting food. On July 23rd four adults were observed at the pond calling and drumming to each other. On August 2nd, an adult with young was seen at the nest site. At least five adults and three young were observed in the area throughout the month of August; this indicates that more than one pair was nesting in this area.



Red-headed Woodpecker at Fish Point Sumiko Onishi



A young Red-headed Woodpecker at Fish Point Sumiko Onishi

Acadian Flycatcher (Endangered)

Acadian Flycatcher on Pelee Island		
Year	Date Observed	Location
2014	N/A	
2015	July 12	Wilds Pelee on Curry Dyke owned by NCC*
2016	May 29, 31, June 2	Fish Point**, Richard & Beryl Ivey Conservation Area on East-West Rd
2017	June 3	Fish Point**
2018	June	Middle Point Woods on East Shore Rd owned by NCC*
2019	N/A	
2020	May 26, June 4	Fish Point**

* NCC- Nature Conservancy of Canada ** Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve owned by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

Eastern Wood Pewee (Special Concern)

Date added to the Species at Risk in Ontario List June 27, 2014

Breeding status: Confirmed

Territories: Increased from 3 (2010) to 9 at Middle Point Woods (NCC) in 2018

Decreased from 7.4 (2010) to 4 at Fish Point in 2016

Five at Wilds Pelee (NCC) in 2015

Breeding evidence: fledged young

Observation dates: From late May to June

Location: PIBO's breeding bird census plots

Threats: Loss of habitat, change in managing forests, decrease of flying insects, and predation during breeding season.

Eastern Meadowlark (Threatened)

Breeding status: Unconfirmed

Territories: Unconfirmed, at least one or two territories noted

Breeding evidence: Unconfirmed

Observation dates: From June to August

Location: agricultural field along the West Shore Rd

Threats: Loss of habitat, changes in land use such as farming practice, predation by other small mammals.

Barn Swallow (Threatened)

Breeding status: Confirmed

Territories: Numerous

Breeding evidence: Nests with eggs, fledged young

Observation dates: N/A

Location: Various sites such as old barn, walls and foundation of building, under the bridge at canal

Threats: Loss of nesting and foraging site associate with modern farming and use of pesticide.

American White Pelican (Threatened)

Breeding status: Not confirmed on Pelee Island, but confirmed on other surrounding islands

Territories: *observed at Big Chicken Island in 2016, Middle Sister Island in 2016, 2017, and 2018

Breeding evidence: nest, eggs, and fledged young

Observation dates: July to August

Location: N/A

Threats: change in lake water level affect their nesting site, water pollution, predation and human disturbance.

*Citation: ONTARIO BIRDS VOLUME 37 NUMBER 1 APRIL 2019, American White Pelicans expand breeding range into Western Lake Erie, 2016-2018

2020 Great Canadian Birdathon

It was very hot and windy all day. The temperature was already 22C in the morning and 32C by the afternoon. Strong west wind 22kts (25mph) blew blasts of hot air. I was drenched in sweat and kept drinking lots of water. As a result, I recorded 84 species. In addition to my normal census area, I visited some different locations at the east and the north side of the island, but I will say Fish Point was busiest for the day especially with lots of warblers. I ended up visiting my census route for the second time. Some highlights of my birdathon were 18 warbler species including Prairie and Prothonotary Warblers and a Common Snipe.



Common snipe Sumiko Onishi

List of Species Recorded for Great Canadian Birdathon

1	Pied-billed Grebe	26	Eastern Screech-Owl	51	House Wren	76	Chipping Sparrow
2	American White Pelican	27	Common Nighthawk	52	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	77	Brown-headed Cowbird
3	Double-crested Cormorant	28	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	53	American Robin	78	Red-winged Blackbird
4	Great Blue Heron	29	Belted Kingfisher	54	European Starling	79	Common Grackle
5	Green Heron	30	Red-headed Woodpecker	55	Cedar Waxwing	80	Baltimore Oriole
6	Turkey Vulture	31	Red-bellied Woodpecker	56	Tennessee Warbler	81	House Finch
7	Canada Goose	32	Downy Woodpecker	57	Blue-winged Warbler	82	American Goldfinch
8	Wood Duck	33	Yellow-shafted Flicker	58	Nashville Warbler	83	House Sparrow
9	Bald Eagle	34	Eastern Wood-peewee	59	Yellow Warbler	84	Black-throated Blue Warbler
10	Cooper's Hawk	35	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	60	Chestnut-sided Warbler		Total 84 species
11	Merlin	36	Trail's Flycatcher	61	Magnolia Warbler		
12	Wild Turkey	37	Least Flycatcher	62	Cape May Warbler		
13	Killdeer	38	Eastern Phoebe	63	Black-throated Green Warbler		
14	Spotted Sandpiper	39	Great Crested Flycatcher	64	Blackburnian Warbler		
15	Sanderling	40	Eastern Kingbird	65	Prairie Warbler		
16	Least Sandpiper	41	Red-eyed Vireo	66	Bay-breasted Warbler		
17	American Woodcock	42	Warbling Vireo	67	Black-and-white Warbler		
18	Common Snipe	43	Blue Jay	68	American Redstart		
19	Ring-billed Gull	44	American Crow	69	Prothonotary Warbler		
20	Herring Gull	45	Purple Martin	70	Ovenbird		
21	Great Black-backed Gull	46	Barn Swallow	71	Northern Waterthrush		
22	Mourning Dove	47	Black-capped Chickadee	72	Wilson's Warbler		
23	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	48	Red-breasted Nuthatch	73	Northern Cardinal		
24	Black-billed Cuckoo	49	White-breasted Nuthatch	74	Indigo Bunting		
25	Great Horned Owl	50	Carolina Wren	75	Field Sparrow		

2020 Christmas Bird Count (CBC)

The 2020 Christmas Bird Count, recording all the birds seen and heard on Pelee Island over a twenty-four-hour period, was scheduled to take place on December 20th. It was to be conducted jointly with the other Lake Erie Islands (Kelleys and Bass islands). It would have given both birders and non-birders a chance to explore and enjoy the quiet winter habitat. Unfortunately, it was cancelled at the last minute because of the regional government's decision to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Some island residents did record birds they observed while enjoying their daily walk, and kindly sent us the results. These included individuals counting birds all over the island, including the lakeshore, and at home bird feeders. A total of 4,972 birds were recorded; including 2,350 scaup species of 46 species. The number of birds recorded varies each year depending on the availability of open water for waterfowl, and the quantity of natural food available for other birds in December. Because we had a relatively mild November and early December, many Red-breasted Mergansers, Common Goldeneyes, and Scaups arrived after the 2020 migration census was completed. It was a quiet day for those counting the few American Tree, Song, and White-throated Sparrows, but was a precious time for everyone, considering the stresses caused by COVID-19. PIBO wishes to thank all the volunteers who participated in the 2020 bird count.

Table 6 – Birds recorded on Pelee Island during the Christmas Bird Count in December

Species	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Horned Grebe	5	3						
Turkey Vulture		1						
Canada Goose	450	65		502	844	293	135	271
Mute Swan	3	2						
Tundra Swan	2	2		10	144	3	2	4
Trumpeter Swan					1			
Gadwall	94	2				70	40	
Wood Duck		1						
American Black Duck		1			2	3		
Mallard	35	5	2	9	24	119	48	3
Greater Scaup		4		13	5		12	5
Lesser Scaup				8	22			
Black Scoter							4	
Long-tailed Duck							1	
White-winged Scoter					2			
Bufflehead	71	194	146	259	408	104	266	205
Common Goldeneye	30	166	58	319	447	13	143	436
Red-breasted Merganser	389	205	23	890	19	166	554	935
Common Merganser				10	2			33
Ruddy Duck					1			
Great Blue Heron				2			1	
Ring-necked Pheasant		3	3	22	30	1	10	5
Wild Turkey	620	50	50	303	158	119	3	4
Common Loon								1
Pied-billed Grebe				1		1		
Horned Grebe				1		1	1	
Double-crested Cormorant			1			3		
Bald Eagle	10	6	6	13	10	5	16	7
Northern Harrier				1	13		1	1
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1						1	
Cooper's Hawk	5	2	1	2	2	3	3	1
Red-shouldered Hawk					1	1		
Red-tailed Hawk	2	4	3	11	9	8	7	4
Rough-legged Hawk				2	1	1		
American Kestrel		1						
Peregrine Falcon					1			
American Coot	35							
Sandhill Crane		12			83			23
Killdeer					2			
Bonaparte's Gull		3		8		73	5	4
Ring-billed Gull	60	20		60	9	21	80	11
Herring Gull	51	46		76	14	57	101	26
Great Black-backed Gull	7			5	4		10	1
Common Tern	3							
Mourning Dove	40	36	3	8	24			10
Eastern Screech-Owl				3	1			
Great Horned Owl	2	8		3			2	
Snowy Owl				1			1	
Belted Kingfisher	1							
Red-bellied Woodpecker	14	3	2	20	28	8	21	6
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker				2		2		2
Downy Woodpecker	32	8	9	44	43	27	49	20
Northern Flicker	12	3		35	10	18	32	10
Eastern Phoebe				2				
Northern Shrike				1				
Blue Jay	35	6	41	49	24	28	33	23
American Crow				2	49		4	
Horned Lark	14	10		23	59	1	1	72
Black-capped Chickadee	87	12	28	89	50	29	102	65
Red-breasted Nuthatch		2	8		1			
White-breasted Nuthatch	14	11	6	10	14	1	11	1
Brown Creeper		1		1	12	12	21	10
Winter Wren		2		1	1	3		
Carolina Wren	22	10		18	16	2	12	6
Ruby-crowned Kinglet			1					
Golden-crowned Kinglet		8	6		13	1	7	5
Eastern Bluebird	11	7	7	14		32		
Herm it Thrush					6	1		
American Robin	6	4	25	12	27	111	26	12
European Starling	254	97		1043	814	996	3417	1268
American Pipit					40			
Cedar Waxwing	25	15		77		6		
Lapland Longspur					1			1
Snow Bunting				5	98			3
Common Yellowthroat							1	
Western Palm Warbler				1				
Yellow-rumped Warbler				3	7	2	7	12
Eastern Towhee					2			1
American Tree Sparrow	6	15	18	140	142	19	7	17
Field Sparrow		2					2	
Song Sparrow	2	10		8	9	1		
Swamp Sparrow				1				
Eastern White-crowned Sparrow	1							
White-throated Sparrow	5	20		34	20	18	26	31
Dark-eyed Junco	33	12		103	118	2	17	51
Northern Cardinal	19	21	15	102	103	15	64	17
Red-winged Blackbird		2		2	44	4	2	10
Rusty Blackbird				1			3	
Common Grackle	15			9	30			4
Brown-headed Cowbird	1	15		52	192	2		34
House Finch	32	66	1	9	14	2	29	12
American Goldfinch	3	8		16	35	15	1	11
Pine Siskin							6	
House Sparrow	63	187		165	97	12	66	147
Gull spp		64	7					
Scaup spp	2350							
Total	4972	1396	470	5054	6231	1077	1468	4600
Total Species	46	52	25	61	61	50	51	48

Migratory Monarch butterfly and dragonfly count

During the 90-minute census count, the number of Monarch Butterflies and dragonflies is also recorded along the Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve census route.

Although the time of day might not be ideal for counting butterflies (since 2003) and dragonflies (since 2017) for the survey, it is a relatively standardized count from August to October. The longest consistent record of Monarch Butterfly counts on their migration in Essex County. It had been data lying idle for some time since we were fully occupied with other bird research. In 2019, with several previous PIBO staff's contributions, the data became shareable with researchers and the public on the NatureCounts (Birds Canada) website through the Trinational Monarch Knowledge Network. This extensive database shares the collected observation and counts of monarchs and milkweed across Canada, Mexico, and the United States - which Birds Canada takes part. [NatureCounts - Trinational Monarch Knowledge Network \(birdscanada.org\)](https://birdscanada.org)

In 2020, 281 monarchs were recorded, a considerably smaller number from the last years. We presumed that how many monarchs we could see might be affected by various weather conditions. For example, thousands of monarchs were recorded mostly at the west beach on September 8th, 2018, which was quite unusual due to bad weather conditions a few days prior. We usually observed some roosting on the east side where they warm up first in the morning. We witnessed in 2018 what might be part of a phenomenon that researchers described as a one-year 'blip' of the population. The compiled PIBO data also contributed to a statistical study published by Danielle M. Ethier at Birds Canada in 2020, which presented a trend of monarch population passing through the north shore of Lake Erie from the breeding grounds. In the study, Ethier described the number of monarchs counted at Point Pelee and Pelee Island as nonsignificant change/decline over the last ten years in contrast to the significant decrease at Long Point. This study suggested future studies are needed about different migratory groups, flyways, type of stopover site, and breeding range between the two count sites to consider monarch conservation. Besides bird migration, we learned there were still many unknown ecological features about Monarch Butterfly migration.

Meanwhile, a result from the fourth International Monarch Monitoring Blitz in 2020, which thousands of volunteers and citizen scientists participated in, showed a significant decline of the winter population in Mexico and the summer population in North America. We hope the other fieldwork, combined with our constant observation, will support a scientific study to protect the monarch population.

We started unofficial dragonfly counts in 2017 with the routine monarch count during census - 90 minutes standardized bird count - and the number we recorded for each morning is shown in the following table. Several different species, including Saddlebag, Green Darners, and Blue Darners, showed up during the count, but unfortunately, they were not noted for this year.



Monarch butterfly Sumiko Onishi

Monarch Butterflies and Dragonflies Recorded During Census 2020

Date of month	August		September		October	
	Monarchs	Dragonflies	Monarchs	Dragonflies	Monarchs	Dragonflies
1	2	x	20	7	1	3
2	x	x	x	x	x	x
3	3	x	2	1	x	x
4	1	x	1	1	x	x
5	5	x	4	35	1	x
6	2	x	10	30	x	1
7	4	x	3	x	x	x
8	5	x	3	25	x	x
9	5	x	25	20	3	x
10	3	4	5	x	x	1
11	x	x	7	4	x	x
12	1	1	2	1	1	x
13	5	4	22	2	x	x
14	5	x	4	1	x	x
15	2	x	x	x	x	x
16	4	2	1	1	x	x
17	14	3	x	10	1	x
18	14	1	x	6	x	x
19	15	6	x	x	x	x
20	25	3	x	2	x	x
21	2	4	x	1	x	x
22	1	10	x	x	x	x
23	5	3	x	x	x	1
24	3	7	x	x	x	x
25	12	2	1	1	x	x
26	x	x	x	x	x	x
27	7	3	x	x	x	x
28	5	15	x	x	x	x
29	2	4	2	5	x	x
30	x	x	x	x	x	x
31	x	3			x	x
Subtotal	162	76	112	153	7	6
Total	281 Monarchs and 235 Dragonflies were recorded during census x = zero count or no record November omitted due to few records					

Backyard Wildlife Photo Collection





Baltimore Orioles Sumiko Onishi



Orchard and Baltimore Oriole (above left), House Wren (above right), Northern Cardinal (below left), American Goldfinch (below right) Sumiko Onishi

SECTION 2- EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Island Education

Normally PIBO welcomes many visitors to our banding station throughout the year. However, as our field operations were suspended for the spring and fall migration seasons, we did not have any visitors for the 2020 banding season. In addition, all provincial parks were closed to the public until May 31 to help prevent the spread of COVID 19. We very much missed seeing our annual visitors and friends as well as the “first-timers” to Pelee Island.

In-class presentations

PIBO’s Great Bird Friendly Habitat Design Challenge

Academy Ste. Cecile	1 class	15 students
Windsor Islamic High school	1 class	15 students

Two classes 30 students

In January, PIBO’s Education Coordinator began a project with two local high school biology classes in order to create a garden design that would benefit and attract local birds. Two high schools competed against each other in creating the best design for a local senior’s residence- Cardinal Place Retirement Home. Monthly visits to classrooms and biweekly learning challenges gave the students a chance to learn about site planning, native plants, the requirements of local and migratory birds, and the social needs of seniors living in residence. Students had multiple field trips as well as in class and virtual experiences. Although the students did complete their designs and received expert advice from a number of professionals in the field, the project could not be completed due to the current restrictions.

Distance/virtual Programs

As the year progressed, it was evident that any in person event or lesson would have to be modified due to the restrictions in place from the pandemic. In the spring, the Education Coordinator developed the *Edible Habitat Family Starter kit* pilot in just a few short weeks. Ten families and seniors were selected to receive a kit delivered to them that included soil, vegetable seeds, milkweed, a container, trowel, bird identification guide, bird feeder/bath (if living in their own home), watering device, native berry bush and information on native plants. Families and seniors faced with psychological impacts of physical distancing and the disruption of their routines experienced the benefits of creating an edible habitat garden for themselves, the birds and pollinators. Partners included Unifor Environmental Committee, Greater Windsor and Essex County Horticultural Society, Lee Valley Tools, Native Trees and Plants from Amherstburg, and educators Phyl Marie Feiss and Leo Sylvestri. Seniors in the pilot received further assistance in the form of communication via telephone with local high school students. Weekly calls about the progress of the gardens, the birds in their yards and other topics provided the seniors and students a much needed communication link during the beginning of the lockdown.

The Diana Beresford-Kroeger Book club

On January 20th a new PIBO created initiative was launched- the Diana Beresford-Kroeger book club. Spurred on by the visit from Diana in the fall of 2019, over 20 women met weekly to discuss Diana's book *To Speak for the Trees*. Meetings were held in the Sho, Art and Spirit gallery in Windsor. In addition to the book discussions, the members also shared presentations, created art works and went for local tree walks. When the COVID restrictions meant that get-togethers could no longer be held in person, online Zoom meetings were scheduled for every two weeks. The group has met several times outdoors with social distancing in place for neighbourhood poetry readings and tree walks, tours of conservation areas, tree plantings, and seasonal celebrations. Now into the third book, the members have formed a cohesive group of women interested in the health and wellbeing of our neighbourhood trees, the importance of habitat conservation and the interconnection of species. When the education coordinator's contract finished in May, Sho Gallery officially took over the running of the book club. PIBO's Executive Director is still part of the club and several members are interested in the new project, Bird Friendly Cities.

Additional media, outreach, and education

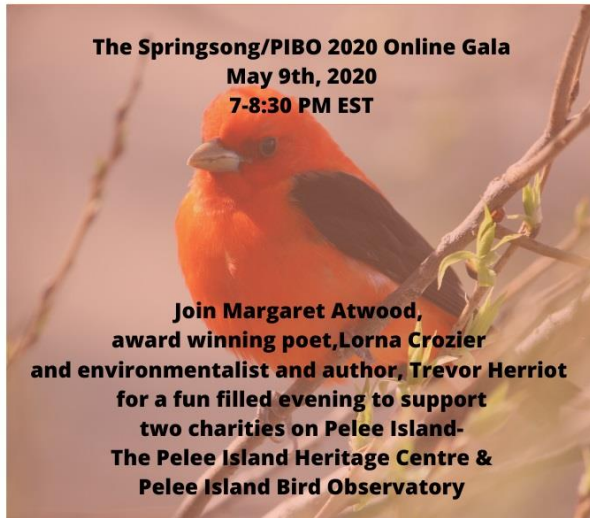
The observatory connected with thousands of additional viewers this year through the PIBO website and social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Our Facebook site has drawn a very faithful group of followers who are attracted to the page by its focus on the daily happenings at the field station at Fish Point each spring and fall, accompanied by a wonderful selection of photos. Perhaps more than anything else, the observatory's Facebook page conveys what PIBO does and what PIBO is. Our Twitter site has maintained a steady following over the years, while PIBO's Instagram page is continually growing with almost 700 followers so far.

Additionally, bi-monthly updates of migration activity on the island were sent out to members and posted on social media in the spring and autumn. Lastly, regular newsletters were emailed to members on a monthly basis. The newsletter is another effective way to keep PIBO's friends and supporters up-to-date with the latest bird news from the island, along with recent developments at the observatory.

SECTION 3 – FUNDRAISING, GRANTS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

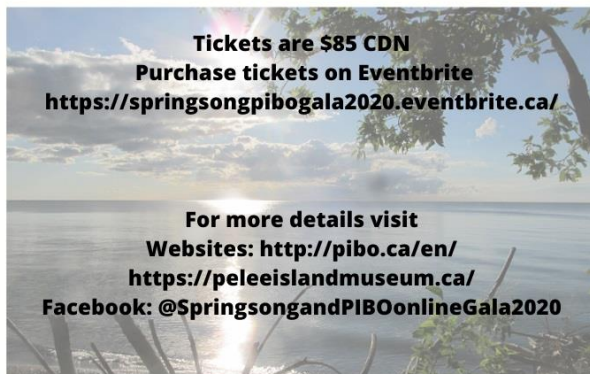
PIBO's first online gala

On May 9th PIBO and the Pelee Island Heritage Centre teamed up to host an online gala as a fundraiser for both organizations after both the Windsor dinner and the SpringSong event were cancelled. With the theme of an old timey variety show, hosts Paul Vasey, Margaret Atwood, Kim Gardner, Ron Tiessen, Marilyn Simonds and Suzanne Friemann introduced guest artists, drew names for prizes, showed off delectable dishes and kept the audience entertained for over two hours. Guest artists were Lorna Crozier, Trevor Herriot, Molly Johnson, Dave Bidini and The Rheostatics, Sam White of Shakespeare in Detroit, Measha Breuggergosman and Jessica Gibson. Thanks to the technical and design work by Made by Emblem Design, Those Canadians and Fraser Stark of Facebook Canada, everything ran smoothly on Facebook Live. A silent online auction accompanied the gala and was very successful. Many individuals and organizations donated highly sought after and original works. Author Marilyn Simonds took it upon herself to create a menu for the evening with recipe submissions from over two dozen friends and supporters. She cooked many of the recipes and showed them off during the event. It was the first time PIBO had hosted an online event and it was only successful because of the many people who made it happen.



The Springsong/PIBO 2020 Online Gala
May 9th, 2020
7-8:30 PM EST

Join Margaret Atwood,
award winning poet, Lorna Crozier
and environmentalist and author, Trevor Herriot
for a fun filled evening to support
two charities on Pelee Island-
The Pelee Island Heritage Centre &
Pelee Island Bird Observatory



Tickets are \$85 CDN
Purchase tickets on Eventbrite
<https://springsongpibogala2020.eventbrite.ca/>

For more details visit
Websites: <http://pibo.ca/en/>
<https://peleeislandmuseum.ca/>
Facebook: @SpringsongandPIBOonlineGala2020



Grants

In late 2020, PIBO received some excellent news; our application to the **Ontario Trillium Foundation was approved!** The Resilient Communities Fund supports the non-profit sector to recover and rebuild from the impacts of Covid-19 to meet communities' needs across Ontario effectively. With this grant, we will create several new positions. Working with Nature Canada on their Bird Friendly Cities project, PIBO will hire a part-time Urban Bird Educator to make Windsor a more bird friendly city. The Salal Foundation out of Victoria B.C will assess our engagement organizing strategies and tactics and implement new approaches to our work. Finally, a part-time fundraiser will help secure new revenue sources and increase our ability to access financial resources.



Data Usage

PIBO's long-term migration monitoring data has been submitted by the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network and the Canadian Bird Banding Office at the end of each season for analysis as part of a nation-wide effort to track changes in the populations of native songbirds. The submitted data set and the analysis are presented in the website 'Nature Count' (naturecounts.ca) managed by Birds Canada with a view of understanding the patterns and dynamics of bird populations across the Western Hemisphere. Additionally, PIBO's Species at Risk records are sent each year to the Natural Heritage Information Centre (OMNR) and added to the province's historical database and used currently by species recovery teams.

PIBO's substantial database of 18 years, accumulated millions of standardized sightings of more than 300 species. The full biometric (species, age, sex, wing-length, mass) of more than 60,000 birds banded at Fish Point since 2003. The information collected by PIBO's many dedicated seasonal staff and volunteers is being used by several organizations and individuals including government ministries (Environment and Climate Change Canada & the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry), public and private institutions (the Nature Conservancy of Canada & Nature Canada). The website 'Nature Counts' data set are available to the general public including universities, graduate & undergraduate students, at naturecounts.ca.

An ongoing co-research project of Environment and Climate Change Canada and CMMN identifies the breeding and the migration range of Blackpoll Warbler whose population has declined significantly since the 1970s. [Blackpoll Warbler | Partners in Flight](#) PIBO's banding data including age, sex and wing chord contributed to the research project.

Although it is an exceedingly small portion of the data, one significant contribution from our database provides information for the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) to assess the avian species at risk of extinction.

Our non-bird dataset which is the standardized monarch count also contributed to statistical analysis in a manuscript entitled *Population Trends of Monarch Butterflies (Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae) Migrating From the Core of Canada's Eastern Breeding Population* by Danielle M. Ethier published in 2020.

Here are some other examples of PIBO's data requests through Nature Counts website for 2020.

1. Bird populations and weather change in central/eastern Canada online blog on Nature Canada
2. Ecological Atlas in partnership with KI First Nation in Ontario for indigenous community use Wildlife Conservation Society Canada
3. Lab Studies in Ornithology Research Project
4. Alternate Year Irruptive Migration in Northeastern, White-breasted Nuthatches



Sunrise at Fish Point Graeme Gibson

Acknowledgements

The Pelee Island Bird Observatory depends on the generous support of the many organizations and individuals who all contributed to the success of PIBO's operations in 2020. This help comes in many forms ranging from grants from major charitable foundations and government and donations from the public, sewing bird bags, and organizing events. PIBO is grateful for the collective effort of so many people, their show of support for the work we do, and the vote of confidence it provides us.

We would also like to thank all the many folks who made our first online gala a great success! From the hosts, guest artists (**Lorna Crozier, Trevor Herriot, Molly Johnson, Dave Bidini and The Rheostatics, Sam White of Shakespeare in Detroit, Measha Breuggergosman & Jessica Gibson**) the design and technical support teams, the generous people who donated items for the silent auction and the door prizes, and the recipe contributors to those who purchased tickets and participated in the silent auction. So many people made this event a great night that we could not list all the names.

Finally, thank you everyone who donated, volunteered, shared our posts and newsletters, liked our pages and followed us throughout the year. It has been a tough year, but we made it because of you!

Organizations

Balzac's Coffee Roasters
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 Curtis Brown Group Ltd
 Gamechanger Co
 Library and Archives Canada
 Nature Conservancy of Canada
 Ontario Parks
 Penguin Random House
 The Ontario Trillium Foundation
 The Pelee Island Heritage Centre
 The Pelee Island Winery
 The Pelee Island community

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 Jerome Fagan
 John Gruetzner
 Karen Deegan
 Karen Lloyd
 Kate Alexander
 Kim Gardner
 Leslie Wilkins
 Margaret Atwood
 Margaret Ruggles
 Marie Slight
 Martin Kuhn
 Matthew Gibson
 Maureen Kenny
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 David Ward
 Dawn Miles
 Donna Hayes
 Erika Braithwaite
 Eva Tihanyi
 Fraser Stark

Stay Home” separated us from family and friends,
but it wasn’t hard once we learned it gives us a
chance to get closer to nature around our home!”

- Sumiko Onishi, Field Supervisor



Northern Mockingbird Sumiko Onishi