

Bird Banding Summary 19/04/21

The calm before the storm...



Carolina Wren. Photo by Alessandra Wilcox.

You know spring has come when the canopy sounds like a rusty vehicle about to break down. The blackbirds are in! The **brown-headed cowbirds**, **red-winged blackbirds**, **rusty blackbirds**, and **common grackles** have set the stage for the highly anticipated peak migrants. Their display songs and rattles fill the frigid forest air from dawn to dusk; there's seldom a quiet moment at the banding station. Birds are starting to trickle into the nets and migration is proceeding gradually.

The first week of banding, since April 12th, has been a slow one; the temperature has rarely been above 10°C and the threat of rain often hangs over our heads. **American robins** are our most frequent capture, as their passionate chases often end anticlimactically with a face full of nylon. We've been getting several repeated recaptures, so they must've settled into their new summer home. We also catch the occasional **common grackle**, or **red-winged blackbird**, and they made sure to let us know what they think of us with a couple hard bites before we finished

processing them. **Hermit thrush** have started to become more abundant by the end of the week and we certainly welcome them with open...nets.

If you listen carefully you can hear the tinkling of **brown creepers** slinking up trees, while **black-capped chickadees**, **white-breasted nuthatches**, and **Carolina wrens** patrol the area. Over the past week we've noticed a shift from a great abundance of **golden-crowned kinglets** to **ruby-crowned kinglets** as they make way to their breeding grounds further north. When you're holding their dainty bodies, it's almost hard to believe how resilient and determined these little creatures are. A **winter wren** has also been hanging around the station and occasionally you can see it quietly slip from thicket to thicket, so swiftly you could mistake it for a mouse. Most noteworthy, however, is the pair of **great-horned owls** that can sometimes be heard calling well into the late morning hours. These owls have to increase their hunting effort to accommodate their rapidly growing, voracious chicks. Keep an eye out for nesting birds and remember to be respectful of their privacy during such a crucial time! Speaking of nesting birds, a pair of **bald eagles** and their two older juveniles have been keeping a watchful eye over our netting area. Last week I watched as an adult eagle body slammed a **red-tailed hawk** out of the canopy, almost crashing into the station, and made off with its freshly-caught bounty. The red-tail was not pleased, and let us know with a series of intimidating shrieks, but I'm sure the younger eagles were taking notes.

The breeding season is kicking off and love is in the air! It's certainly hard to miss with the drums of woodpeckers, the constant drone of blackbirds, and the liquid chittering of while they dart to-and-fro scouting for nest cavities. It'll only get better from now on as we await the return of the outlasting migrants. Soon the vegetation will be bursting and the forests around the netting area will be thick with the sound of new migrants. Although, this week calls for some disappointing news...snow? Again? With a **purple martin** pair just beginning to bring nesting material back to their carefully selected apartment at the PIBO cottage, and the **eastern bluebirds** across the island settling down on their eggs, we can only hope they survive. But let's end off on a hopeful note! The dutchman's breaches, trilliums, and trout lilies are in full bloom around Fish Point, and business is booming in the bird world. We can't wait for what's to come!