

## Breeding Bird/Banding Summary July 16, 2021

Dear friends and supporters of [PIBO](#),

The days are long and hot, and the air is thick with moisture; almost every evening, strong winds roll the clouds in to soak the ground once again. With the summer storms come bountiful mosquitos, which are the perfect feast for breeding birds looking for extra protein for their young. Now that summer is well underway, most successful parents have sent their first brood on their way to feed and explore for themselves. Feeding such rapidly growing young for such a short period of time is intense work, but most birds waste no time after the first fledge and start incubating their next clutch right away! The goal for many breeding birds is to produce as many young as they can while food is still plentiful, and before the shortening days encourage migration. As the birds snatch what is left after the explosion of fish flies, new waves of insects burst from the stagnant water after every storm and provide a seemingly endless supply of fresh protein for the hungry babies.

The prothonotary warbler pair have decided to take full advantage of the mosquito boom and are already devoutly feeding their second brood! Their first brood, of at least four young, had successfully fledged and are most likely nearby exploring the territory and learning how to gather food for themselves. Unfortunately, no other pairs of prothonotaries have been located, although several males still sing their hearts out every day with the hope that they might attract a stray female. We are so glad that at least one pair has found success on our island. Hopefully, those fledglings will survive the harsh migration and return to follow in their parent's footsteps.

A pair of red-headed woodpeckers were seen briefly on July 3rd, the first time since just after migration ended! They both called to each other and fluttered from branch to branch, taking short rests to preen in the sun. Perhaps they have also finished caring for their brood and are relishing the opportunity to rest and strengthen their bond. Now that more than half the summer has passed, the red-headed woodpeckers might not nest again because their incubation and nesting period can be up to 45 days long.

The yellow-breasted chats are also doing phenomenally! Three consistent pairs have been located across the island throughout the summer, and two of these have supplied evidence that they have nests to care for. Yellow-breasted chats are, unfortunately, perfect candidates for brood parasites such as brown-headed cowbirds, which vastly outnumber our limited chat population. Both species can be found in the same habitat, and if the chat nest isn't sufficiently hidden in the dense thicket, female cowbirds will lay their eggs and the foreign young are likely to overtake the nest. In order to determine our chat's success, now all there is to do is keep a close eye on the surrounding territories for fledged young.

And of course, the purple martins: it is with great pride that we announce the first successful fledglings of this year's colony! All of the young are strong, sizeable, and have grown incredibly rapidly over the season. When we did our last regular nest-box check, some fledglings that had been previously banded in other boxes were found tucked into boxes that weren't their own! A purple martin slumber party perhaps? There are still some fresh hatchlings, and babies that still have a week or more to go before

they can take to the sky with their older neighbours. An interesting observation is that the nests that took longer to build and broods that are developing later in the season belong to second-year females; all the young that are ready to fledge currently were cared for by older parents. Perhaps nest building and incubation is all part of the learning curve for new parents.

The summer days are flying by, and soon the breeding season will wrap up and migration will begin once again! It won't be long before the PIBO team starts to set up the nets in August to prepare for the beginning of fall migration monitoring. With migration in mind, remember to leave your feeders out for as long as you are able! Keeping your feeders out will not discourage birds from migration; they rely on changing daylight length and more complicated environmental cues. The birds need all the fuel they can get for the gruelling journey ahead of them, especially our fresh fledglings that are just starting to come to grips with the world.

The summary was written by Alessandra Wilcox.  
Purple Martin fledgling by Alessandra Wilcox.

