

2011 Fall Migration Summary



Scarlet Tanager

PIBO's 9th season of autumn migration monitoring at Fish Point got underway on August 1st and ran until November 15th, for a total of 107 consecutive days of coverage.

In keeping with early-August, local breeding birds and dispersed young dominated the area during the first few weeks of coverage. Although migration activity was minimal, a few shorebirds were recorded on most days – Ruddy Turnstones and Sanderlings – along with a steady stream of southbound swallows (mostly Purple Martins and Barn Swallows) from the 3rd – 10th.

Lots of gulls and terns were observed at the tip throughout August including more than 900 of the former (mostly Ringed-bills and Herrings) and 60 Common Terns on August 3rd. A **Least Bittern** (a presumed migrant) was heard at Fox Pond on August 7th. Few birds-of-prey were noted apart from a couple of local Bald Eagles, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, and a vocal Eastern Screech-Owl in the netting area. Warm temperatures and southerly winds made for a quiet time from August 11th – 14th, but there was a noticeable upswing in activity mid-month thanks in part to some cooler weather towards the end of the summary period.

Although it was generally slow in the netting area, the banding season started off on an exciting note with the capture of two hatch-year **Prothonotary Warblers** on August 12th, side-by-side in the same net. The youngsters were undoubtedly from the nest located within a kilometre of the banding station, which successfully fledged at least two young this year.

Shorebirds continued to trickle through the area mid-month and small numbers of Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers, Sanderlings, Ruddy Turnstones, and Spotted Sandpipers were recorded almost daily. A **Hudsonian Godwit** appeared at the tip on August 18th and lingered for a couple of days – a station 'first'. Swallow migration was also active – a station-high 102 Cliff Swallows were observed drifting south off the tip on August 12th, along with 50 Barn Swallows and 48 Purple Martins on the 14th, followed by another 70 Cliff Swallows on the 20th.

Activity picked up steadily towards the end of month, culminating on August 29th with the first significant fall-out at the station since coverage got underway on the 1st. PIBO staff and volunteers were treated to a nice variety of birds that day (64 species) including small groups of

five shorebird spp., six flycatcher spp., four thrush spp., and good numbers of fifteen warbler species. Another busy morning on August 23rd included the capture of nine warbler species and a **Yellow-throated Vireo** – the first banded at the station since operations began in 2003. Near-gale conditions on the 24th made for a quiet morning and there was little of note on the day with the exception of a windswept **Red Knot** at the tip.

Warm temperatures in early September made for a quiet time until the wind shifted to the north on September 5th, which produced a nice variety of species on the day including fifteen warbler spp. Another active day followed with 55 species recorded during the standard count period on the 6th, including eighteen warbler spp., along with 119 birds banded of twenty-three species.

Showers and southerly winds set-in for almost a week from the 7th to 14th and there was little to report with the exception of 600 Common Terns recorded at the tip on September 12th. This all changed on September 15th, however, when a large influx of thrushes kept staff and volunteers busy throughout the morning – 49 Gray-cheeked and 43 Swainson's Thrushes were banded during six hours of mist-netting. The 49 Gray-cheeks represent a station-high, single day, banding total for this species.

Migration continued in fits-and-starts during the second half of September. Highlights over the period included a banded **Connecticut Warbler** on the 20th, the first Peregrine Falcon of the fall (21st), 1000 Common Terns on the 23rd, a banded Northern Parula (25th), and a season-high 11,500 Double-crested Cormorants recorded on September 26th.

It was relatively quiet during the first half of October apart from a few active mornings at the start of the month. Typically the busiest time of the year, migration at the Point from the 1st – 15th was casual compared to previous years. Despite the general lull, however, a nice variety of birds filtered through the area including an active morning on the 2nd when eight warbler species were recorded along with good numbers of kinglets, thrushes, six sparrow species, and the first banded Orange-crowned Warbler of the fall.

Another substantial fall-out on October 4th included a wide range of species (57) reported on the day including 4 raptor spp., a banded Eastern Wood-Pewee, 3 Blue-headed Vireos, both species of nuthatches, lots of kinglets (73 Golden-crowns), thrushes (22 banded), and eight warbler species, among others. A captured Fox Sparrow was new for the fall. More steady showers and southerly winds from the 5th to the 15th produced little of note with the exception of a large group of Blue Jays (721) observed heading southwest off the tip on the 9th, and 6 Bald Eagles and a late Magnolia Warbler observed on October 15th.

Migration picked up considerably during the second half of the month as typically late-Fall species such as the kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and White-throated Sparrows, started showing up in increased numbers. A surprising six warbler species were recorded on the 17th including a late Magnolia Warbler and American Redstart. There were lots of birds around on October 18th as well, with 47 species recorded. Good numbers of Yellow-rumps (87) and Golden-crowned Kinglets (60) were observed along with a nice variety of others in moderate numbers, including a late banded Mourning Warbler. This pace was maintained over the next few days, including 123 Golden-crowned Kinglets (21st) and 100 Yellow-rumps documented on October 22nd.

Unseasonably mild temperatures and some steady south winds brought things to a near standstill until the 27th when a change in the weather produced 44 species on the day, including lots of sparrows. In all, 130 sparrows of six species were recorded – mostly Juncos (56) and

White-throats (51) along with the first American Tree Sparrows of the fall (22). Diurnal migrants were active on October 28th with more than 6000 high-flying blackbirds (mostly redwings and grackles) recorded heading south off the tip during the morning census. Three Horned Grebes and a single Snow Bunting were new for the fall. The final three days of October were generally quiet with the exception of a station-high 91 Horned Grebes recorded on census on October 30th.

The first few days of November saw some interesting and dramatic developments including a station-high 22,000 blackbirds counted on the 3rd. Most of the high-flying flocks (almost too high to even detect, let alone identify) appeared to be Red-wing Blackbirds along with lesser numbers of grackles, Rusty Blackbirds, and cowbirds. Other noteworthy sightings during the first week of November included a late Red-eyed Vireo observed in the netting area on November 1st, 70 Horned Grebes and 80 Buffleheads (3rd), and a season-high 514 American Crows observed flying south, also on the 3rd.

Warm temperatures (15° C at dawn on the 9th, for instance) and south winds made for a quiet time until the 10th, when another good push of waterfowl arrived including more than 1000 Red-breasted Mergansers, 145 Buffleheads, and 330 unidentified waterfowl species. Mergansers reached a peak of 3500 birds on the 11th along with the first Hooded Mergansers of the fall.