

Biweekly Migration Summary

April 1 – 14, 2026

By Vince Moreau

With temperatures slowly rising, the birds have started their spring migration, and we have begun our the daily censuses at Fish Point. Dutchman's breeches already cover the ground and tree buds are timidly growing. Birds like the Northern cardinal, the American robin, and the Carolina wren are already making their songs heard in the morning. Birds such as the Red-winged blackbird are also loudly establishing their territories for the coming breeding season.

The first week of census also brought some rather cold weather, with temperatures around 0°C for a couple mornings, leading to low bird activity. Still, blackbird numbers are topping the chart: averaging 66 every day, with and Common grackles coming in second with 48. Small passerines usually arrive later in spring, but we have observed a few Song sparrows and the occasional Field sparrow. Tree swallows and Eastern phoebes can already be seen feeding near the Fish Point's wetland and along the Lake Erie shoreline. April 4 brought the always anticipated first warbler, a cute "butterbutt", the Yellow-rumped warbler, along with an Eastern bluebird. On April 5, we counted 159 Red-breasted mergansers, most of them heading south along the west shore; daily counts normally average 27 individuals. The first Northern Rough-winged swallow and Blue-gray gnatcatcher were seen on April 6.

The second week started calmly. On April 8, in collaboration with Birds Canada, we conducted a frog survey as part of our Marsh Monitoring Program, but no frogs were heard yet. Most passerines migrate at night, and the nights of April 8 and 9 nights had strong south winds across the central US that blew us more birds. Strong overnight winds or physical barriers can

sometimes result in a mysterious phenomenon called migration correction (or reverse migration), when we see high numbers of birds flying south in spring in plain daylight. Many blackbirds were seen “correcting” on April 10; of a total of about 400 blackbirds at Fish Point, over half of them were observed flying southward! The first Swamp sparrow, Ruby-crowned kinglet, Hermit thrush and Sandhill crane were also seen, and an uncommon Louisiana waterthrush was observed at Lighthouse Point. On April 11, the third species of warbler was seen, a bright yellow Pine warbler!

Starting April 15, the banding activities begin, continuing the monitoring coverage at Fish Point.