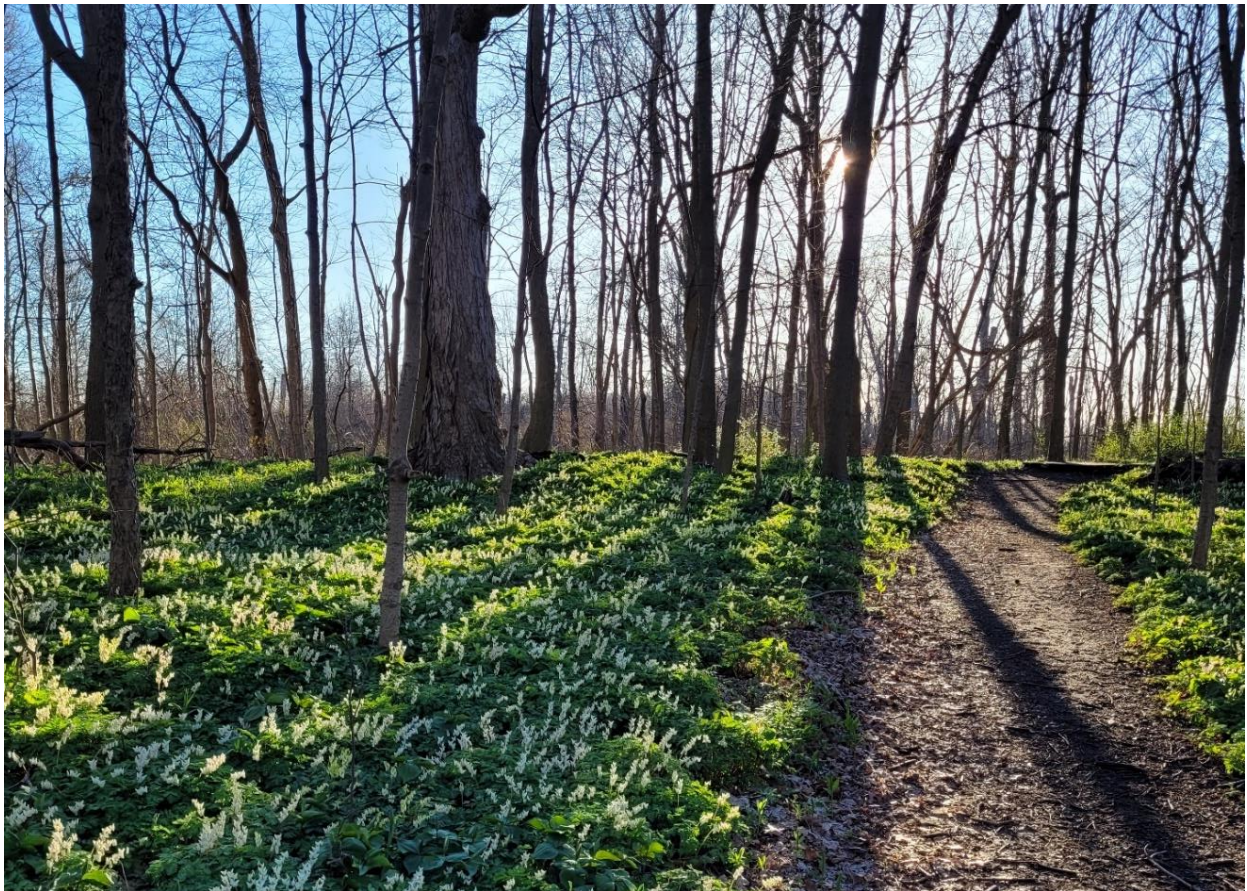


Biweekly Summary for April 15 – 30

By Olivia Maillet

After a spell of extreme winds, PIBO's spring banding began on April 15. Early migrants included many Hermit thrushes, Ruby-crowned kinglets, and Red-winged blackbirds. We also observed large flocks of herons, waterfowl, and shorebirds arriving from the south, including 80 dunlin flying in tight formation off the tip of Fish Point: a sure sign of spring. Dutchman's Breeches were in full bloom in the forest, providing ample cover for between two to three dozen White-throated sparrows, which popped out from under the foliage as we walked along the trail on our daily census.



Sunlight peeking into the forest at Fish Point, where Dutchman's Breeches were in full bloom.

Photo by Olivia Maillet

On April 18, a Blue-gray gnatcatcher, three Pine warblers and three early Northern parulas joined over 70 Yellow-rumped warblers dripping from the trees along the east shore of Fish Point. The next few days of favorable winds brought the first Blue-headed vireos, Palm warblers, and another big wave of Ruby-crowned kinglets. During the census on April 20, we spotted an unbanded Piping plover at the tip of Fish Point. Unbanded Piping plovers are a rare sight in Ontario, where most individuals are colour-banded and uniquely identifiable as part of conservation efforts to monitor their population. Later in the day, this small, sand-coloured Piping plover was joined on the sandbar by largest of all North American plovers, a Black-bellied plover.



An unbanded Piping plover on the tip of Fish Point. Photo: Olivia Maillet.

After April 21, there was a short lull in arrivals. Cold northwesterly winds postponed the advent of some anticipated species, but a stunning Red-headed woodpecker and two chatty Pied-billed grebes were lovely to see at the pond. On April 24, Fish Point was relatively cold and quiet

during standard migration monitoring hours, but we banded an Eastern phoebe and observed a Black-throated Green warbler above the banding station.

Though most mornings were stormy and banding was limited to scattered moments of clear skies, the last week of April was filled with new arrivals to the island. An estimated 1.2 million birds crossed Sandusky county—just south of Pelee— on the evening of April 26. The next morning, we observed 18 new species for the year, including a Yellow-breasted chat and a Louisiana waterthrush. After the rain, the netting lanes were quite swampy, and apparently wet enough for shorebirds: we banded a Solitary sandpiper that was caught in a particularly wet net lane. Field Supervisor Sumiko Onishi could not believe how small it was!



A Solitary sandpiper banded at PIBO on April 26. Shorebirds are banded on the upper leg to reduce metal band wear because they spend a significant amount of time foraging in deep water. Photo by Olivia Maillet

The highlights from the last few days of the month were a bright Blue-winged warbler and a beautiful Hooded warbler. Several boldly marked Red-headed woodpeckers foraged in the dead trees around the station and, during census, we saw up to 23 individuals at the tip, possibly debating whether or not to fly back across the lake to Ohio! We recorded up to 75 species on the daily census each morning, and observed significant reverse migrations of warblers, blackbirds, and woodpeckers off the tip at Fish Point. Since netting began on April 15, we banded 190 birds of 34 species, and recaptured 12 individuals.



A bright male Hooded warbler banded at PIBO on April 29. Photo by Olivia Maillet