

Biweekly Summary, May 1 – 15

by Olivia Maillet

May started strong with several big waves of new species and a high volume of warblers both observed and banded. We recorded up to 58 species on the daily census each morning. At the beginning of the May, Yellow-rumped warblers were still the most common, but after the first week, they largely moved on and were replaced by Tennessee warblers and eventually Bay-breasted warblers. On May 2, we saw the first Ruby-throated hummingbirds, timed perfectly to coincide with the blooming of red columbine. Prothonotary warblers arrived at Fish Point on May 6. They wasted no time, and immediately began to sing from the flooded forest floor and check out the nest boxes installed by PIBO.

Cold north winds quieted both the forest at Fish Point and the netting area, but we persisted with our standard netting and observations and were rewarded daily. A Yellow-breasted chat visited the netting area while we were closed due to rain, and an Olive-sided flycatcher sang from atop a dead tree, also near the netting area. On May 5, we banded the first Black-throated Green warbler of the season, and on May 6, we banded a Wilson's warbler, before anyone even saw or heard one on the Island. The first flycatcher of the season, a Least, was banded on May 7. We banded another male Hooded warbler on May 8, and a Golden-winged warbler the next day. After hearing them for more than a week in the canopy, we finally banded our first American redstart on May 13.



A male Golden-winged warbler banded on May 9. Photo by Olivia Maillet

Our banding station saw more visitors this month, both human and avian. We welcomed many guests who braved the muddy trail into the forest to watch as we conducted our research, and to learn about PIBO's work. These included a school group, a nature tour group, some of PIBO's board members, and more! On our busiest day, we banded 96 individuals of 17 species, which consisted mostly of White-throated sparrows, Yellow-rumped warblers, and Cape May warblers. Though our banding numbers slowed down significantly, we began to recapture species that breed on Pelee Island, such as Yellow warblers. On May 13, we recaptured a female Baltimore oriole that had hatched in 2018 and been banded here at PIBO in 2019, making it nearly six years old!



A female Baltimore Oriole that was banded in 2019 and recaptured this spring. Photo by Olivia Maillet

Some shorebirds stopped at the tip of Fish Point: a willet, a dunlin, a few Ruddy turnstones and Black-bellied plovers, a sanderling, and for three days, another Piping plover—this time with field-readable colour bands. We learned from Birds Canada that this plover was one of the fledglings from a nest at Presqu'île Provincial Park in 2023. Up to 16 American White pelicans rested at the tip of Fish Point, where a couple of young Bald eagles attempted to steal their freshly caught fish.

The Pelee Island Heritage Centre's 23rd Annual Springsong Weekend was held on the second weekend of May, and brought a plethora of eager birders to the Island. More birds arrived

as well: Sumiko Onishi, our field supervisor, counted 68 species in 24 hours. We banded only a few due to the cold, at times rainy, weather, but we observed many more: four Scarlet tanagers came down to eye-level near the station and sometimes dozens of Baltimore orioles were counted each day during the census.



A Gray Catbird hopping along a fallen branch outside of PIBO's banding station. Photo by Olivia Maillet

It seemed that all the midges and mosquitoes emerged at once following the Springsong Weekend. Instead of capturing birds, our mist nets were covered in hundreds of insects—which surely must foretell more flycatchers and insectivorous warblers to come! Since netting began on April 15, we have banded 470 birds of 53 species, and have had 40 recaptures.



A brightly marked male Chestnut-sided Warbler. Photo by Olivia Maillet