

Migration Summary, August 1 to 15

By Sumiko Onishi

The lightening, pouring rain, hailstorm that came during the last week of July was bad luck for some late nesters. The violent wind blew down the nest and nestling of an Eastern kingbird: luckily, we rescued the wet baby bird before it succumbed to hypothermia, and after drying and warming it, we returned it to parental care.

PIBO's fall fieldwork season began on August 1. The morning temperature was 21C, with gentle north wind. It was a quiet morning after a summer full of bird's territorial songs and warning calls. A Yellow-rumped warbler seen the day before (non-standard observation) and a flock of young Common grackles hanging around was the sign of beginning of the fall migration season. We recorded a total of 39 species on the season's first census, including many young Yellow warblers, Baltimore orioles and some Blue-gray gnatcatchers along the west beach. The morning sun was mistily orange in the smoky sky from the wildfires in the far north of the province.

Some shorebirds started showing up along the beach. Quite a few Killdeers and Spotted sandpipers were recorded during the census on August 2. A young Forster's tern was spotted along with hundreds of Bonaparte's, Herring, Ring-billed gulls, with many Common terns sitting on the sand bar at the tip of Fish Point. While those migratory birds were coming to the island, local breeders like Prothonotary warblers, Red-headed woodpeckers, and Green herons feeding their young were regularly seen.

On August 4 a Blackburnian warbler was observed as new for the season, as well as quite a few swallows. On the 5th, the first big group of Purple martins showed up along the shore. On the 6th about 20 Bank and 45 Barn swallows were flying around at the tip. The number of American white pelicans was slowly increasing: 105 were counted along with hundreds of gulls and cormorants. On the 7th, another big group of Purple martins – 100 – flew high up in the sky above the shore. The temperature was warm on these days, and the sky very hazy.

While many swallows started moving south, there were still some Barn swallows feeding their nestlings. At PIBO's Purple martin nesting box, where the last two nestlings were hatched on July 18 they were still in the box on August 15, even though

they looked fully mature enough to leave the nest.

From August 8 to 10, Least sandpipers, Marbled godwits, and one Lesser Yellowlegs were seen at the tip, and quite a few Green herons around the pond. From August 11 to 15, warblers and flycatchers started coming through. The season's first Least flycatcher and a Tennessee warbler were recorded on the 11th. On the 13th, a flock of warblers was seen on the east shore. Many of them were Yellow, but some Blackburnians, Cape May, and Black-and-white warblers were observed in the flock. PIBO's netting area was as flooded as it is in the spring due to the frequent rain during the past couple of weeks, unusual for August. On the 14th and 15th, several Northern waterthrushes, a Yellow-bellied flycatcher, and a merlin were recorded as new for the season.

During the summer breeding season, we observed many local breeding birds that had suffered severe nest-mite infestations, and the nestlings and fledged young were beset by harsh weather, including hail and heavy rain. Now that the fall migration season has started on Pelee Island, we are expecting to see how successful their breeding season was.



Eastern Kingbird young, photo by Sumiko Onishi



Cliff swallow nestling, photo by Sumiko Onishi