

Migration Summary, August 16 to 31

By Sumiko Onishi

Since mid-August the number of migratory birds observed around the census area has increased day by day. Some migrants started showing up after the excess rain that fell during the night of August 14th, and many warblers and flycatchers arrived with the strong north wind on the morning of the 16th. Numerous Least and some Yellow-bellied flycatchers were seen from the viewing deck at the pond and in the vegetation along the east shore. The netting area, quiet during the early morning, started catching some warblers just before noon. A total of 13 birds of seven species, including three Yellow-bellied flycatchers and a Canada warbler, were banded.

On August 17, many Blackburnian warblers were seen high up in the trees along the Fish Point trail, and hundreds of swallows – Barn and Bank – kept showing up and going over the water at the tip during the census. Lots of Carolina and House wrens were seen in the area on the 18th. Numerous Tennessee, Blackburnian, and Cape May warblers were observed and banded, and 22 Tennessee warblers along with twenty birds of 10 other species were banded the next morning.

Large numbers of swallows were continuously seen on August 20 and 21. Many Barn swallows foraged over the water, and more than 200 swallows – mostly Bank, but a few Barn, Tree, and Cliff – were seen sitting on a hydro line on our way home. On the census walk, the season's first Semipalmated plovers were recorded.

The north-east wind became strong, and the temperature dropped quite a bit over the night of the 21st. In the morning, the temperature was 17C and many stable flies swarmed around us on the west beach. Some warblers were seen high up in the trees along the west shore, but the netting area was quiet during the early morning. Around 9:30 a dozen birds flew into the nets and the assistant banders, Gill and Martha, quickly extracted them, after which the nets were closed for a while. A total of 43 birds of 13 species were banded, including many Magnolia, Blackburnian, Cape May and Bay-breasted warblers.

Another big swallow migration took place on August 23rd. Hundreds of swallows – many Purple martins and Barn, and some Tree, Bank, Northern rough-winged, and a

few Chimney swifts – kept showing up along the west beach. A big group of Purple martins circled high up in the sky and slowly headed south from the tip.

A severe thunderstorm drenched the the south Essex region on the night of the 23rd – between 170 and 180 mm. The road to Fish Point from the west shore was about 30cm underwater, and the Stewart Road to Fish Point was flooded as well. These roads were closed and from the 24th to the 27th.

On the 26th, quite a few flycatcher species, such as Great-crested, Least, Yellow-bellied, Trail's, Eastern phoebe and Eastern wood-pewee, were seen, and a total of 61 species were recorded, including 11 warbler species and some Chimney swifts. After the census, I cautiously walked the flooded trail to the netting area and confirmed there were no damage at the banding lab and the netting lane wasn't flooded much. However, the entire pass to the netting area had severely flooded and the depth was over knee height. Hip waders were required to do the netting. It was nice to see many frogs, toads, cray fishes, and small creatures moving in the water; however, many dead earthworms were observed on the base of the trees.

The wind shifted to the north-east during the 26th and the 27th, temperature dropped to 16C. PIBO staff acquired hip waders, and were eager to march into the flooded swamp for the busy migration period.

On August 28th, numerous Red-eyed and a few Warbling vireos were seen on the census. Two Philadelphia vireos were spotted at the cottage as well – non-standard observation. After the census, I walked into the banding station and opened five nets for a two and half hours. A total of 16 birds were banded, and quite a few thrushes were also seen.

The wind had been north-east since the previous day, and the morning temperature became on August 29 was 16C. Many birds were calling when we opened the nets, and a good variety of warblers were observed – 15 species recorded for the morning. A Brown creeper and Wilson's warbler and Ovenbird were recorded on the census as new for the season. A total of 62 birds of 20 species were banded, including 18 Magnolia warblers and 10 American redstarts.

The morning of August 30th was quieter, and not many birds were calling around the

banding station. After we caught a few birds on each net-round, a big flock of birds flew into the net 6. A total of 47 were captured in one net, and half of the nets were closed for the rest of morning. A total of 80 birds of 17 species were banded (37.5 net-hour), including many warblers - 15 Magnolia, 12 American redstarts, 11 Tennessee and others – and a Semipalmated sandpiper was seen as the season's first on the census.

On August 31st a strong north wind cleared the sky and the bright full moon highlighted the shadows of trees on the ground during the night. It was the busiest morning so far, with 16 warbler species observed on the census. In the netting area a total of 149 birds of 24 species were banded (35.6 net-hours), including 37 American redstarts and 21 Magnolia warblers along with 13 other warbler species. In the late afternoon there were numerous Red-eyed vireos and warblers flying along the road at the west shore.

The weather was good for migration during the last three days of August, and many warblers came through the area. We are expecting to see more warblers during the next two weeks, such as Chestnut-sided, Nashville, and Black-throated Blue, and Brown creepers and Winter wrens. Raptors and numerous thrushes will no doubt start showing up soon as well.