

## Migration Summary, September 1 to 15

By Sumiko Onishi

In mid-September, the number of migratory bird species steadily increased. The first week of September brought a heat wave and westerly wind; the days reached a high of 35 degrees Celsius from September 3 to 7. The heat wave broke in the evening of September 7, as the winds switched north and brought many birds to the Tip. September 9 held the record for the most species observed, with 68 species, while September 12 was the lowest number of species observed, with 28. Due to the heavy rains in late September, the mosquitoes at the Tip were horrendous! There was no escape; it had never been so bad at the banding station.

Warblers continued to trickle in during the first week of September, and many were captured. On September 1, the wind had shifted to the south. We managed to capture 62 birds of 12 species, of which 10 were warbler species, including Chestnut-sided, Cape-may, Black-throat blue, Bay-breasted, Black-and-white, Canada warbler, and Ovenbird.



*Martha Ramirez-Cruz with a Sharp-shinned Hawk. Photo by Sumiko Onishi*

The most abundant warbler species were Magnolia warbler and American redstart. We observed a tenth warbler species on the census: a Blackburnian. We also caught a good many Veeries and Swanson's thrushes. It was only the beginning of the thrush movement for early September. A significant movement of Red-winged blackbirds occurred on the Tip, with 380 individuals observed.

On September 2, we observed 11 warbler species, the most abundant being American redstart. We observed numerous Purple martin and Tree swallow flying high over the Tip. We observed five species of woodpeckers around

the banding station, including Downy woodpeckers and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and a Red-headed woodpecker on the census. Blackbirds were still abundant in the marsh, with Common grackles gathering in the phragmites.



*Hooded Warbler. Photo by Martha Ramirez-Cruz*

September 3 was the first day of the early September heat wave mentioned above. We banded 36 individuals of 13 species. At the Pond, we observed four Green herons and over a hundred Common grackles. On the Tip there was one Caspian tern alongside hundreds of Ring-billed and Herring gulls

There was still a lack of diversity at the banding station on September 4, with only nine species captured. The heat was still strong with a westerly wind. We observed eight species of warblers on the census, with good numbers of each, including 21 Bay-breasted warblers, 8 Cape-mays and 6 Black-throated green warblers. Surprisingly, we observed a Blue-grey gnatcatcher in the grapevines along the eastern shore of the Tip.

September 5 was another slow and hot day. Diversity remained low as we banded 26 individuals of 12 species, including a single Philadelphia vireo. Large flocks of Common grackles were observed on the census and at the banding station.

We endured our third hot day in a row on September 6, capturing an adult Brewster's warbler, which we assessed as a backcross species, meaning it was a second-generation hybrid. Furthermore, we observed a Baird's sandpiper on the Tip and many sanderlings on World Shorebird Day (September 6). We closed the nets early due to an in-coming thunderstorm from the east.



*Baird's Sandpiper. Photo credit: Martha Ramirez-Cruz*

We continued to observe a diversity of warblers on September 7 as the wind shifted north in the afternoon. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology warned of a massive movement of migratory birds over the Great Lakes region. The north wind brought relief to the Island. We observed 12 warbler species, with the Black-throated blue being the most abundant. On the census, we spotted a Connecticut warbler in the low brush on the westerly trail.

The north wind continued overnight on September 8 and did not disappoint. We banded 89 individuals of 19 species, with 10 species of warblers banded and the arrival of a Blackpoll warbler. We banded 27 Swainson's thrushes and one Great-crested flycatcher. We observed two Indigo buntings on the census.

Thrushes were plentiful during the first week of September, but they really took off on September 9. The second night of north winds rewarded us with 158 individuals banded of 18 species. We captured 54 individual warblers of 11 species and 101 individual thrushes, including 77 Swainson's thrushes, 12 Grey-cheeked thrushes, 11 Veeries, and 1 Wood thrush. While the census didn't reflect the high number of thrush and warbler species, we had a record number of American white pelicans at the Tip and in the water of the west shore: we estimated more than 400 individuals. Additionally, we observed two Northern harriers flying over the Pond, signalling the beginning of hawk migration. We thank Rob Tymstra for his efforts on the September 8 and 9 census.

On September 10, Gill ventured out independently to complete the census. On the census, she observed a black-and-white domestic cat. Later, in the marsh, she observed 200 Common grackles and was surprised to see a swimming Raccoon! At the Tip was

an adult Black-bellied plover and 13 sanderlings. At the banding station we captured 35 Swainson's thrushes and one Hooded warbler, and heard three Great-horned owls calling in the early morning before the nets opened. We observed many dragonflies along the Tip, including Green darners and Black saddlebags.

Diversity for capture was high on September 11, with the wind continuing north overnight. We netted 56 individuals of 16 species, including the first Sharp-shinned hawk of the season and nine species of warblers, with the most abundant being Magnolia and Tennessee warblers and the most unique being a Nashville and a Canada warbler. Thrushes dominated the capture numbers again, with 24 individuals of four species. We observed an abundance of Blackpoll warblers on the census, along with six other warbler species.

September 12 brought a storm from the southeast, and nets were closed for the day. Sumiko completed a quiet census, but she observed 28 species, with a small group of Purple martins observed on the Tip.

A series of slow banding days occurred from September 13 to 15. However, we observed many warblers at the Tip, high in the canopy and flying over the lake on their southern migration. On September 13, we watched 9 Sharp-shinned hawks soaring high above the west shore of the Tip, along with a Northern harrier. At the banding station, we banded a Scarlet tanager and a Yellow-shafted flicker. On September 14, we observed the first Western palm warbler of the fall season. We banded our first Northern parula of the fall season on September 15.

Additional observations over the two weeks include an increase in large flocks of Mourning doves, American robins, Red-winged blackbirds and Common grackles along Centre Dyke Road. There was a steady increase in Monarch butterflies and a variety of dragonfly species, including Black saddlebags and Green darners. We anticipate the observation of sparrows within the next week. In conclusion, the weather on Pelee Island, specifically at the Tip, became steadily cooler, with northerly winds bringing many migratory birds to the banding station.