

PIBO Migration Summary: May 1-15, 2023

By Danielle Lacasse

The first two weeks of May have been a whirlwind. The month started off just how April ended, cold and wet. Rain showers and strong winds continued to plague the island. The west shoreline was completely engulfed by large waves. Despite the cold weather, forty-seven species were observed on May 2, including the first northern parula on census. Needless to say, nets were not opened for the first few days of May.

We welcomed two volunteers to the PIBO station for the month of May. Patricia, a student at Western University, arrived on May 4 and will be deploying MOTUS tags on Black-throated blue warblers, American redstarts, and Swainson's thrushes. Patricia banded her first Tree swallow; it was awesome to watch the joy and excitement on her face when she pulled the little cigar shaped bird out of the bag. This species is not caught very often at the station, which made it all the more special. David is on a three-week vacation from the UK with the intent to see as many bird species as possible. Both of these lovely people bring a wealth of knowledge to the banding team.

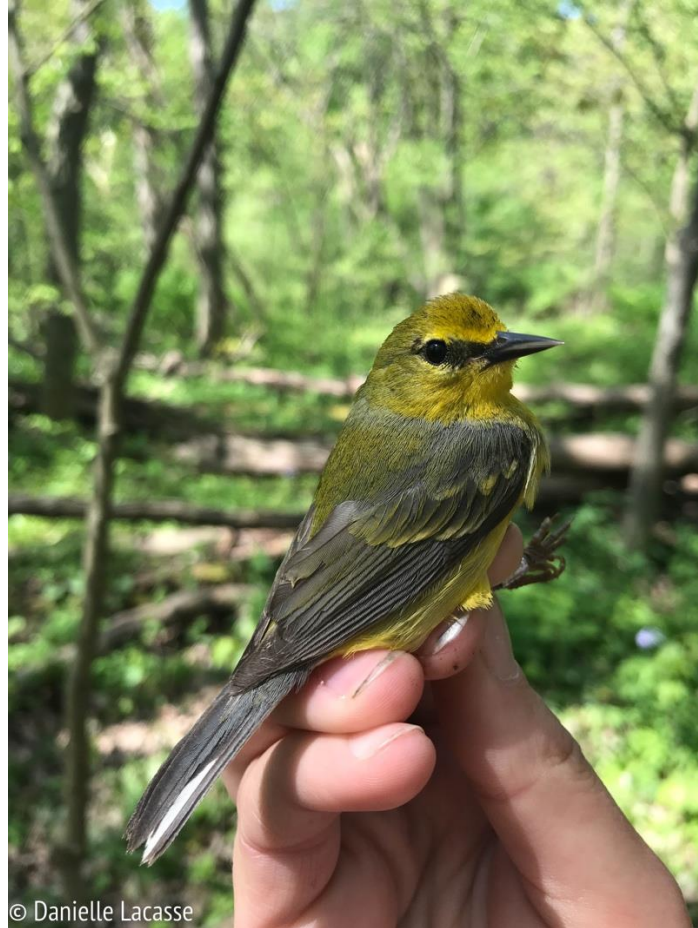
With rain back in the forecast on May 7th, nets were opened later in the day. Due to a large volume of birds and only Sumiko running the station by herself while Dave and Danielle conducted census, five out of ten nets were opened for an hour and a half. When the others returned, the remaining nets were opened. New species captured included Ovenbird, Northern waterthrush, Black-throated blue warbler and Swainson's thrush. A large reverse migration was observed during census. Lots of Yellow-rumped warblers were hawking low to the ground and paid no mind to how close they got to awed spectators. Other highlights included a Cerulean warbler, Great crested flycatchers and Eastern kingbirds. We also had our first large group of bird enthusiasts brave the muddy trail and make their way to the banding station.

As the weather started to improve, so did the number of bird species observed and captured. On May 11, 18 species of warblers were counted, one of which was a Prairie warbler, a bird not often seen on Pelee. A male Cape May warbler feeding in the cherry tree behind the station looked quite stunning with the white flower background. A very exciting capture was a Summer tanager. This species has not been banded at the station in at least the last ten years. Other newly banded species for the year were a White-breasted nuthatch, American redstart, and an Indigo bunting.



It was a slow and steady kind of day on May 14, and the banding crew was thankful as they were all running on little sleep. A steady stream of warblers was captured throughout the day. A very exciting surprise was the capture of two European starlings. David was very helpful with aging and sexing the birds, as he is quite familiar with them back home in the UK. The first White-eyed vireo of the season was captured. The white eyes of the adult were very striking, especially with the yellow contrast of their spectacles. It was nice to see the bird on the hand after the previous day's game of hide-and-seek with the one on census. Another first of the season was the capture of a Great-crested flycatcher. On census, Rob Tymstra spotted a Mississippi kite and a Yellow-throated warbler, both very rare finds for this area.

The day was full of colourful birds, a Baltimore oriole, Scarlet tanager, and Mourning warbler graced the nets with their stunning colours. A very pleasant and slightly baffling appearance was made by a Brewster's warbler (blue-winged and golden-winged warbler hybrid). It is not often that staff have to stop and look up an id for a bird, but this one made them pause for a moment. The month started off a bit rocky but it is hopefully on its way to becoming full swing.



Pelee Island Spring Song Weekend

If you have spent much time on Pelee Island, you are sure to have heard about the coveted Botham Cup and the bird race hosted by the Pelee Island Heritage Centre. The race starts at noon and runs for 24 hours. It also has to be done entirely under human power, either biking or walking around the island is allowed. The goal is to identify, either visually or through sound, as many species as you can.

Danielle started the day off blurry-eyed and early, by biking 6 km to the banding station so she would have her bike on hand for the start of her big day birdathon in addition to the bird race. A highlight from the day was an Olive-sided flycatcher. The next day, nets were opened for two hours, until it was time for the census to be conducted. Due to off-and-on showers, staff decided to close early and try to add more birds to their check lists for the bird race. Some highlights were a Green heron, Yellow-throated vireo, really nice views of a Blackpoll warbler and a Dunlin on the tip. Staff played a fun game of spot the singing White-eyed vireo, the first one of the year, and were ecstatic to locate it in some fairly dense vegetation.

Staff ended the day early to prepare for the Springsong Banquet, hosted by the Heritage Centre. It was a lovely evening filled with laughter, amazing company, and some very cool raffle prizes.

The basket full of homemade tarts and pies was especially enticing. Danielle placed 3rd in the bird race with 95 species, although Sumiko was hot on her heels with 94.