



The Auspice

Pelee Island Bird Observatory

Spring/Summer 2013

Spring Migration Summary

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And a sincere thank-you to our many individual donors, friends, supporters, partners and PIBO's hard-working volunteers!



Hermit Thrush

Sumiko Onishi

PIBO's 11th spring migration monitoring season got underway at Fish Point on April 1st. The day was cloudy, with strong northwest winds, and a chilly zero degrees. Similar conditions prevailed over the next few days, including some light snow on the 3rd. Activity on the 5th included 70 scaup, 40 vultures, 15 Redheads, 10 Gadwalls, and 2 Tundra Swans. Seven sparrow species were recorded on the 7th. Warm southerly winds produced large numbers of Red-breasted Mergansers (1000) on the 14th. A wave of sparrows arrived on April 15th – nine species were recorded on the official census including 75 juncos, 52 Chipping Sparrows, and 5 towhees, among others. An Eastern, or 'Yellow', Palm Warbler was recorded on the west beach. A Willet was observed at Lighthouse Point in the afternoon.

There were quite a few birds around on the 21st – fifty-two species were recorded, including a White-eyed Vireo. Two-hundred swallows were observed at Fox Pond on the 25th. Fifty-five species were documented on the day and a Prothonotary Warbler was banded. A Louisiana Waterthrush was banded on the 26th. It was extremely foggy on April 29th and generally quiet on the census, but an afternoon walk along the beach at the PIBO cottage produced a Red-headed Woodpecker and Henslow's

Sparrow. Species observed on May 1st included 'Brewster's', Golden-winged and Hooded Warbler. The 2nd was active as well, with 140 Yellow-rumps, 33 Palms, and 14 Nashvilles noted on the day. Eight spring 'firsts' were reported on May 3rd including an early banded Blackpoll and Wilson's Warbler. East winds dominated over the next few days and numbers tapered off on the 5th, although a few shorebirds made an appearance – Black-bellied Plover and Lesser Yellowlegs. Steady rain on the 9th was followed by a lacklustre start the next day, but migrants picked up as the morning wore on. A Black-billed Cuckoo was new for the spring and fourteen warblers species were detected, including a banded Hooded Warbler.

Fifty-eight species were recorded on May 11th including 16 warbler *spp.* A banded Golden-winged Warbler was the first in the nets this season. A second Golden-winged and a Blue-winged were captured on the 14th. May 16th and 17th were busy, with 77 and 74 species recorded, respectively. Twenty-one warbler species were tallied on the 16th along with good numbers of flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Indigo Buntings. A Whip-poor-will was heard at Fish Point that evening.

May 19th was active – American Redstarts and Magnolia Warblers were numerous along with nine other warbler species and a singing Yellow-throated Vireo. Sixty-five species were tallied on the 20th, including 18 warbler species and a singing Dickcissel at the tip. Forty-four species were recorded on May 23rd and an Acadian Flycatcher was banded. A banded Connecticut Warbler was one of 12 warbler species on the 25th. Small numbers of turnstones, Sanderlings, and Dunlins were observed at the tip. Late migrants

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PIBO Cuba Trip 2013

By G. Gibson, the Elder

In March of this year PIBO organized the first of what we expect will become an annual birding and nature trip to Cuba. It is an intriguing and generous country, the birds are marvelous and largely accessible. Our guide, Arturo Kirkconnell, is a curator in the Cuban National Museum of Natural History and -- along with Orlando Garrido -- author of the Field Guide to the Birds of Cuba.

After a night in Havana we travelled two and a half hours in a comfortable bus to Cuba's great wetland, Ciénaga de Zapata, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We spent three nights there in Cabins overlooking a beach on the Bay Of Pigs. During the days we explored semi-tropical woodlands, grasslands, mangroves, salt and brackish waters in search of birds, butterflies and various other flora and fauna. In the evenings we went in search of the Stygian owl.

While all locations we visited on the trip are productive, Zapata is remarkable. At least sixteen of Cuba's endemic birds breed in the area; at last count six among them are considered globally threatened. March is by far the best time to see them because migrants are passing through and breeding Cuban birds are singing on territory.

A few notable sightings: Zapata Wren; Zapata Sparrow; Bee Hummingbird; Cuban Trogon; Gray-fronted Quail-Dove; Blue-headed Quail-Dove; Cuban Parakeet; Cuban Parrot; Cuban Pygmy Owl.

Returning to Havana for one night we set out early next morning for the Sierra del Rosario Highlands. In 1984 the area was designated a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. Our first stop was Las Terrazas where the upland habitat provided us with a rich assortment of new species. The area is also known for its early green revolution and we had lunch in a most agreeable organic restaurant. After a night in the area, with more birding in the morning, we returned to Havana. A few notable sightings: Cuban Solitaire (a haunting song); Giant Kingbird; Cuban Grassquit; Cuban Oriole; Western Spindalis.

Our last full day was spent exploring Havana's evocatively rich historical presence. Founded in 1519 it is one of the oldest cities established by Europeans in the so-called New World. In 1982 UNESCO designated Old Havana a World Heritage Site, and it is perfectly obvious why they did so.

In total, those on the 2013 Cuba trip saw 126 species, including 18 endemic to Cuba. We will be organising a similar trip in 2014. For a tentative itinerary for next year's PIBO Cuba Trip, please visit our website, pibo.ca, or get in touch with us at info@pibo.ca.



Cuban Toady (above), Black-necked Stilt (below) are just a few of the 126 bird species observed on the PIBO 2013 Cuba Trip. Photos courtesy of G. Richardson and L. Atwood.



NEW PIBO EDUCATION BROCHURE

PIBO's attractive new brochure about our free education programs will help us expand our in-class, on-island, and video conference programs.

About Pelele Island Bird Observatory
The Pelele Island Bird Observatory (PIBO) is a non-profit charitable devoted to the study and conservation of birds. Our field station, located in Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve, is open to the public each spring and autumn.

PIBO's Mandate
Conduct long-term migration monitoring research on Pelele Island as a member of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network (CMMN).
Conduct long-term studies of Pelele's significant breeding bird communities.
Serve as an educational centre for the public, school groups, and the community and promote volunteer participation in local conservation projects.
Highlight the importance of Pelele Island's unique natural heritage.

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Ontario
Environment Canada

PIBO Educational Programs	In-class Programming	Video-conferencing Program
A significant part of PIBO's mission is to educate and inspire the next generation of environmental stewards. To fit the needs of each class, PIBO's educational programs can be presented in the classroom, on Pelele Island, or via video-conferencing. The programs are free and available for Grades 1-12. In-class and video-conferencing programs are available in the Fall and on-island programs can be arranged in the Spring and Fall. Collectively, our educational programs were designated by the Base Regal Conservation Authority (BRCA) in 2012 when PIBO was presented with BRCA's Conservation Education Award for Organizations.	PIBO staff visit classrooms across Southwestern Ontario with classroom-based presentations and activities, using local species as case studies. Students learn about habitat requirements, biodiversity, and impacts of humans and knowledge on the environment. Students also learn about PIBO's work monitoring migratory songbirds and our species at risk studies on Pelele Island. "Pelele has a very special place in our hearts and we now hope to share that special place with our students!" —Teacher, Tecumseh, ON	New in 2012, students and PIBO staff can now connect via a video-conference live-up in the classroom. This program is available to the class, near or far, and can often be combined with on-island programming. During the video-conference, students interact with PIBO biologists as we capture and band birds live from Pelele Island. "Students were engaged and challenged to participate!" "We look for in presentations we take part in...we look forward to having PIBO in the future!" —Teacher, Leamington, ON
"Pelele is a beautiful Pelele Island!" Classes can see songbirds banding demonstrations, talk with PIBO staff and students about migration monitoring and conservation, and take part in guided nature walks through the Canadian forest of Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve.	On-Island Programs Come visit us on beautiful Pelele Island! Classes can see songbirds banding demonstrations, talk with PIBO staff and students about migration monitoring and conservation, and take part in guided nature walks through the Canadian forest of Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve.	



2nd Annual PIBO Windsor Fundraiser

The 2nd Annual PIBO Windsor Fundraiser was held on May 8, 2013, at Beach Grove Golf and Country Club. Many thanks to Margaret Atwood and fellow award-winning author Elizabeth Hay for being our guests of honour. Elizabeth treated the audience to a reading from her wonderful book, *Alone in the Classroom*, and after dinner, both Elizabeth and Margaret signed copies of their books and chatted with guests.

A great time was had by all, and the fundraiser was once again a big success. The money raised will support our spring and fall migration monitoring work. We thank PIBO Board Members Jan Graybiel, Paul Vasey, and Chair Graeme Gibson, the Elder, for organizing such a wonderful event. We also thank our event sponsors and partners: TD Bank, Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation, Cooper's Hawk Vineyards, Balzac's Coffee Roasters, Phog Lounge, University of Windsor Bookstore, and The Windsor Star. And of course, we thank those who attended and supported our work! We couldn't do it without you.

dogs (including vegetarian), 30 pounds of homemade potato salad, all while catching up on the latest news! A big thanks to all our guests – hope to see you next year.



Grill-master Paul Vasey



Author Elizabeth Hay reads from her novel *Alone in the Classroom* at the 2nd Annual PIBO Windsor Fundraiser.

Spring Migration... (continued from page 1)

continued to filter through on the 26th including 8 warbler spp., ones-and-twos of Traill's and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and Swainson's Thrush. A similar morning on May 27th included the season's first Whimbrel. There was a noticeable decline in migration activity after the 28th and the majority of birds recorded at the end of May were local nesters. It was a productive but generally uneventful final ten days of the spring coverage season apart from another Acadian Flycatcher (June 4th) and 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls (June 6th).

In all, PIBO staff and volunteers conducted 71 mornings of consecutive coverage (less one day) at Fish Point from April 1st – June 10th and recorded 170 species during our official count period, including 32 warbler species and 'forms'. Based on the average daily catch-rate, it was PIBO's quietest spring banding season, with 532 birds captured of 63 species in 1321 net-hours, for an average catch-rate of 0.40 birds/net-hour (10-year average 0.58).

It was another successful season of standardized monitoring at Fish Point. Thanks very much to all our supporters including author Elizabeth Hay, Jim Wigle at Ontario Parks, and Ken Burrell. PIBO's 11th fall migration coverage season will start-up on August 1st. Have a great summer!

Spring Picnic!

A cool and very windy day wasn't enough to thwart a hearty crew from dropping by the Stone Road cottage for PIBO's 4th annual island picnic. More than a 120 bundled-up guests attended the May 12th get-together and managed to put away 90 Italian sausages, 20 hot



Highlights!

PIBO had a number of interesting sightings on the island this spring:

- ‘Eastern’ Palm Warbler (April 17th)
- Willet (April 20th)
- Prothonotary Warbler (April 25th)
- Louisiana Waterthrush (April 27th)
- Henslow’s Sparrow (April 29th)
- ‘Brewster’s’ Warbler (May 4th – 6th)
- Dickcissel (May 20th)
- Acadian Flycatcher (May 23rd, June 4th)
- Connecticut Warbler (May 23rd, June 4th)

Pelee Island Bird Observatory

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Join Us On



Spring Song 2013

The Pelee Island Heritage Centre’s annual Spring Song Festival was held from May 11th – 13th. It was wonderful weekend of books, birds, and good company. The highlight was a reading from award-winning author Elizabeth Hay from her 2007 novel, *Late Nights on Air*. Thanks to Elizabeth and her partner Mark Fried for joining us.

The “all green” Pelee Island Bird Race was held on the weekend as well. An impressive 159 species was tallied on Pelee by seven teams in twenty-four hours. Congratulations to Mike and Ken Burrell, and Alvan Buckley – winners of the coveted Botham Cup!

Nesting News!



Five Prothonotary Warbler eggs were discovered on June 9th in a Pelee Island nest box, and 5 healthy young were noted on the 22nd. Hopefully a second brood might be on the way.

Become a Friend of PIBO...

Please enrol me as a Supporter of the Pelee Island Bird Observatory (PIBO) in the category indicated below. (You will receive a charitable receipt for the full amount of your donation. Cheques should be made out to the Pelee Island Bird Observatory.)

Friend of PIBO at \$35.00 to \$99.00 Companion of PIBO at \$100 to \$249
 Benefactor at \$250 and above

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