



The Pelee Island Bird Observatory Auspice

Fall 2009

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- Mysterious Starling Inc.

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- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Species at Risk Stewardship Fund
- OMNR Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program
- The Ontario Trillium Foundation
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
- University of Toronto

Project Partners

- Canadian Migration Monitoring Network
- Essex Region Conservation Authority
- Explore Pelee
- Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Ontario Parks
- Pelee Island Heritage Centre
- Township of Pelee

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

Fall Migration Report 2009



Another productive and enjoyable migration season came to a close on November 15th after 107 consecutive days of field coverage. Although it was fairly quiet this autumn compared to our long-term average, there were lots of active migration days and many highlights during the field season.

Local nesters were still much in evidence at the Point in early-August but not many migrants were documented during the first few weeks of coverage. Migration remained generally light until the 20th. Things picked up on August 24th when a nice variety of birds appeared in moderate numbers - 47 species were recorded, including twelve warbler spp., and 29 birds were banded of thirteen species.

Top 10 species banded in fall 2009

	2009	2008
Ruby Crowned Kinglet	259	194
Golden Crowned Kinglet	246	277
Swainson's Thrush	243	294
Magnolia Warbler	240	258
Hermit Thrush	185	156
Gray-cheeked Thrush	143	142
Myrtle Warbler	121	16
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	88	88
Ovenbird	84	63
American Redstart	72	140

September started on a busy note when a season-high sixty-seven species was recorded on the 1st and 83 birds were banded of nineteen species. Magnolia warblers were abundant, along with good numbers of a wide range of other species. Although the weather remained very cooperative, these conditions produced a somewhat leisurely pace for migrants in September. Despite this, just over 1000 birds were banded from September 1st – 30th during 1500 net-hours, for a monthly catch-rate of .67 birds/net-hour.

Conditions changed in October when strong northwest winds and rain eventually made its way to southwestern Ontario, and migration picked up considerably as a result. Blue Jays started to appear in good numbers on the 4th, with 238 birds recorded on the census, along with an increase of Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets and Brown Creepers. PIBO's first Fall record for Yellow-throated Warbler was on October 5th.

A steady stream of migrants moved through the area in the second and third week of October, starting on the 10th when 54 species were counted and 124 birds of twenty-two species were banded. Activity peaked on October 16th when Kinglets arrived en masse – more than 500 ruby and golden-crowns were counted and almost two hundred birds were captured in 90 minutes. An additional 200 birds were captured the next day.

The final weeks of coverage saw a drop-off in songbird migration, although a number of late birds were noted including Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, American Redstart, White-eyed Vireo, and a Black-throated Blue Warbler. Other interesting late-Fall records included two Brant recorded on October 26th, (a first-record for PIBO) and a Greater White-fronted Goose on the 27th.

Fifteen staff & volunteers, contributed enormously to the success of the migration program to ensure that PIBO continues to produce some of the most consistent, standardized counts in North America.



Thank You Volunteers!



PIBO extends a warm thank-you to all of our short and long-term volunteers in 2008. This is the first year that Janet Grand and Ron Reid visited the station and the fourth year that we've had the pleasure of Jim and Pat Woodford's company. We were also pleased to have David Hussell and Erica Dunn join us for the second year.

Janet Fairclough worked with us in October during our busiest month for bird migration and owling. Janet was on a month-long sabbatical from the Royal Society for Protection of Birds in England. It was great to have an experienced bander from another country to share techniques and skills.

Finally, many thanks from all of us to Kerry McGuire and Kirk Stewart who gave the PIBO field crew a few mornings of rest and who also cooked a wonderful 4th annual PIBO Thanksgiving dinner for a houseful of hungry friends and family!

In Memory...

We are incredibly grateful to the friends and family of Margaret Philp who chose to honour her memory by making donations to the Pelee Island Bird Observatory. Margaret and her family visited the banding station each year when they vacationed on the Island. We are touched that we have been given the opportunity to help celebrate her life.

Margaret passed away in September, after her courageous battle with breast cancer. She was the much loved wife of Martin Mittelstaedt and mother to children Christian, Hannah, Maya, and Charlotte who were the light of her all too brief life. Margaret was 43. Before her diagnosis, she had been a distinguished journalist at the Globe and Mail.

Margaret died on September 9, 2009 at Princess Margaret Hospital surrounded by her family.

Journal from the Banding Lab

By Sumiko Onishi

As the end of the migration season comes around, our netting area is covered by a carpet of thick, soft fallen leaves and the sound of Flickers echoes in the quiet trees. In my country, Japan, for the coming New Year people often think about setting a new goal or objective. Since I graduated from school I haven't had any strong desire to set an objective of my own for New Years. However, since I have been working with migratory birds, one thing comes up in my mind each year -- to avoid having any injured birds during my work. Of course I already know that this is not so easy as I start spending more hours in the netting area.

Last year, my co-worker and I were fixing one of our nets between net-rounds. On the next round we found a thrush that had obviously been attacked by a hawk around the netting area. I was very regretful that I didn't notice it happening when I was at the other net. We have all seen days when lots of birds and other animals die by crashing into buildings, windows, and vehicles and also hunted by other animals or humans in reality. But I am still shaken by the injured bird before my eyes. I still feel as though I want to avoid disturbing their long journey with our nets as much as I can.

Since that happened during my work, it is in my mind like a scar. Every year I set my sights on making an effort to avoid things like this happening in our netting area. What I appreciate most is that all of my co-workers are very conscious about my strong feelings. If I didn't feel that they had the same feelings about this issue, I won't want to keep working here with the heavy responsibility.

When I look back over this year there are many happy feelings associated with studying birds and meeting visitors through my work. As with my country's good custom at the end of year, I will say thank you to all the people who support us and who visited us and who are reading this.

I really wish that the data we collect with your support brings a good result to help birds on their migratory journeys.



Sumiko



Sumiko



NMBCA Research Programs 2009



With funding through the US Fish and Wildlife Service Neotropical Bird Migratory Conservation Act Program, PIBO undertook a pilot project telemetry study focusing on migration and stop-over ecology. Conducted with support from Dr. Bridget Stutchbury, eight Swainson's Thrushes were radio-tagged and monitored through the month of October. Of interest to the project organizers was to test if birds with low fat reserves require a different habitat type and have longer stopover durations. The project will help us gain information about how passage birds use and leave the Island. Initial results were interesting and showed that the majority of birds remained on the Island for 48 to 72 hours after receiving radio tags. All birds remained right at Fish Point before eventually leaving the Island

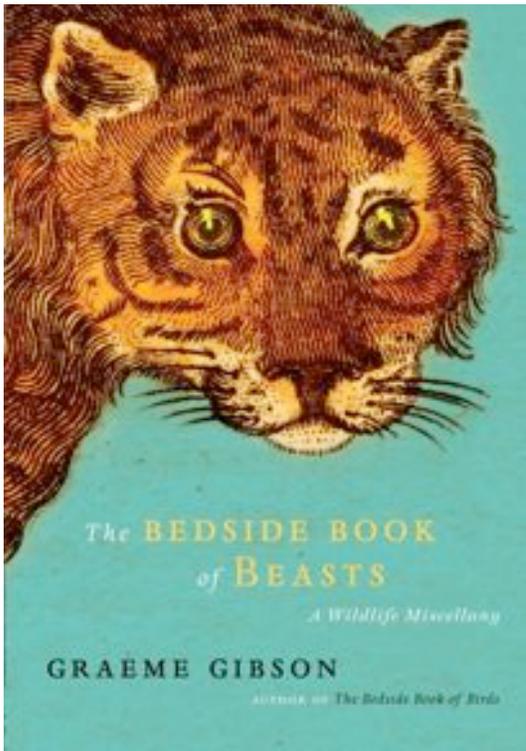
after sunset. A full report is being prepared for the PIBO final report.

We are grateful to Dr. Stutchbury for helping us develop the protocols for the project and for lending us the telemetry equipment. We couldn't have done it without you! Thanks also to Dr. Forbes for supplying us with biodegradable surgical thread to attach the transmitters.

PIBO also established eight of ten permanent breeding bird monitoring sites in July and completed surveys on three sites. These plots will be used to collect data over the long-term on nesting birds over a range of distinct habitats. The Breeding Birds of Pelee Island Project will address environmental issues relating to the conservation needs of many nesting Neotropical species found within the Carolinian Zone in southwestern Ontario.



Other PIBO News...



🦋 Congratulations to Graeme Gibson, the Elder, on the publication of *The Bedside Book of Beasts*, a stunning companion to the internationally best-selling *The Bedside Book of Birds*. Graeme has generously committed 50% of the net royalties to be donated to two organizations. One is the Iran Cheetah Project, administered by the Wildlife Conservation Society and Panthera in support of the Iran Ministry of Environment. The other organization is PIBO. Thank you, Graeme! Learn more at www.bedsidebookofbeasts.com

🦋 In May, the Pelee Island Bird Observatory received a generous donation of a lakefront cottage, which has aptly been dubbed "The Bird House!" This terrific property at the north end of the Island will be used as overflow accommodation for staff and volunteers. When not being used directly for PIBO purposes, the house will be rented out to island visitors.

🦋 PIBO is now on canadahelps.org ... this fundraising website is a public charitable foundation and is Canada's only donation portal that provides access to all of Canada's 80,000 charities. For charities like PIBO, CanadaHelps.org provides a cost effective alternative to setting up our own online donations facilities. There is no set up fee, no annual charges, and we receive immediate notification when a donation is received. CanadaHelps facilitates over \$20 million in donations to Canadian charities annually.

🦋 Owling 2009 was a huge success! We held 4 owling nights in October during our Northern Saw-whet Owl project. Though one of the evenings was rained out, close to 75 people joined us on the other three evenings. We even managed to catch owls on two of the three nights! Thank you to everyone who came out. It was fun to share our excitement for owls with our community.



Highlights!

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

- Willet (August 2)
- Whimbrel (September 1)
- Whip-poor-will (September 12)
- Connecticut Warbler (September 15)
- Yellow-throated Warbler (October 5)
- Red Bat (1st PIBO record) (October 5)
- Northern Goshawk (October 17)
- Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (October 18)
- Surf Scoter (October 20)
- Brant (1st PIBO record) (October 26)
- Greater White-fronted Goose (October 27)

Pelee Island Bird Observatory

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Spring Song 2010



On May 7-8, at the height of spring migration, Pelee Island will celebrate its Ninth Spring Song Weekend. Events kick off at noon on the Friday with the start of the Botham Cup 'Green' Bird Race. Teams of 2 to 4 people of all birding abilities are encouraged to join the race. Participants might combine it with their annual Baillie Birdathon and raise money for PIBO at the same time! There is an option to run the 'Green Race', scouring the Island on foot or by bicycle.

Our guest writer is Brian Brett, past chairman of the Writers Union of Canada and author of *Trauma Farm: A Rebel History of Rural Life*, which has been nominated for a Writers Trust Award. Margaret Atwood will introduce Brian at the banquet. Guest birders are the internationally acclaimed Robert and Birgit Freybe Bateman! We look forward to seeing you all for a terrific evening that celebrates the natural wonders of Pelee.

GALAPAGOS, ECUADOR HIGHLANDS, AND A RAIN FOREST LODGE, April 8-28, 2010

Marylee Stephenson, Ph.D, PIBO supporter and author of "The Galapagos Island: Exploring, Enjoying, and Understanding Darwin's Enchanted Islands" – from Mountaineers Books, will be your host for this trip, her ninth to Ecuador and the Islands. All travel handled by a Quito-based firm – so the best prices and most comfortable, unpretentious lodgings in "boutique" hotels in Quito and beautiful haciendas in the Highlands. There are 4 days in a rustic, but fully equipped lodge in the rain forest –owned by Indigenous peoples. The last week is the Galapagos segment – for the perfect wrap-up!

All segments of the trip are guided by trained and certified Ecuadorians. Marylee is there as an experienced traveller and "social facilitator" – sharing her knowledge of the destinations and travel planning.

A perfect photographic opportunity with 1500 species of birds in Ecuador, great food, a beautiful motor/sailboat in the Galapagos that holds 12. Our group will be just 6-7.

For a detailed itinerary with photos and costs, send a note to marylee@axion.net.

Please Become a Friend of PIBO...

Please enroll 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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