



# The Auspice

Pelee Island Bird Observatory

Summer 2011

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

## Spring Migration 2011



Another busy and rewarding spring migration season wrapped up on June 10th and, as usual, it was a mix of the expected and the unexpected, and just about everything in between. It was PIBO's wettest April and May since 2003, which is really saying something given our typically wet conditions. But despite the weather – and the reduced netting effort due to the rain – it was an active spring compared to the last few years and lots of interesting migrants stopped over at Fish Point on their way north.

### Top 10 species banded in Spring 2011 and previous spring totals

	2011	2010
Magnolia Warbler	75	44
Red-winged Blackbird	44	68
Swainson's Thrush	42	26
Yellow Warbler	39	26
American Redstart	33	13
Canada Warbler	32	29
Common Yellowthroat	31	26
Gray Catbird	30	27
Ovenbird	28	43
White-throated Sparrow	27	19

A typical mix of early birds was recorded throughout the first half of April and new arrivals were documented almost daily. A few raptors were observed from the 4th – 15th including small numbers of American Kestrels, Merlins, Red-tailed, and Sharp-shinned Hawks. Landbirds were active including Tree and Barn Swallows, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and an early Northern Parula on April 12th. A Grasshopper Sparrow was recorded at the tip on the 10th.

In keeping with the time of year, a nice variety of 'temperate' migrants were on hand mid-month, including twelve sparrow species, followed by a steady increase of long-distance 'neotropical' migrants such as the swallows and swifts, grosbeaks and tanagers, and a nice mix of warblers. Strong winds and heavy showers produced a lull in activity during the third week of April. A singing Sedge Wren was discovered at Fox Pond on April 23rd. Another rainy day on April 25th was followed by dramatic fallout of birds on the 26th – seventy-one species were recorded during the official count period, including ten Spring 'firsts'.

The first week of May remained cool and wet but still quite active. Many new arrivals included Peregrine Falcon (May 1st), Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Golden-winged Warbler (2nd), Clay-colored Sparrow (3rd), Yellow-breasted Chat and Hooded Warbler (4th), and Lesser Black-backed Gull (6th). After a brief pause from May 8th – 11th, a sustained wave of songbirds moved through the area for almost five days. Three staff and volunteers recorded more than eighty species during PIBO's official count period on four of the five mornings – a station first. Among numerous other species, a 1st year "Nelson's" Gull (Herring/Glaucous hybrid) discovered at the tip by Ken Burrell and Brandon Holden was also noted by PIBO staff.

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## Spring Coverage *cont'd*


The pace continued into the third week of May and it was active in the netting area as well, despite the rainy conditions.


In all, 330 birds were captured from May 16th – 22nd including 83 individuals of twenty-six species banded on the 17th. Highlights included a Connecticut Warbler and Scarlet Tanager captured on the 18th and three Hooded Warblers from the 19th – 22nd. It remained fairly busy towards the end of the month and diversity remained high, with fifteen warbler species noted on May 28th. Although flycatchers and vireos and a variety of shorebirds were observed in good numbers throughout the last week of May and into early-June, diversity dropped off after the 29th and local breeding birds accounted for most observations, apart from an Olive-sided Flycatcher (29th) and White-eyed Vireo on the 30th.

Full details of the spring coverage season will be included in our 2011 final report. We return to the field on August 1<sup>st</sup> to start our Fall migration coverage and welcome you to come and visit us at Fish Point!



(Blackpoll Warbler & Mourning Warbler photos by Sumiko Onishi)

 The Pelee Island Bird Observatory has received funding from the Ministry of Natural Resources Species at Risk Stewardship Fund for projects in 2011. This funding will support our Species at Risk monitoring programs, as well as our SAR education programs. The preliminary results of our surveys include three Least Bitterns noted during our Marsh Bird Monitoring, and two Yellow-breasted Chats on our point counts. We have also been monitoring a Prothonotary Warbler nest. We'll continue to monitor the Bald Eagle nests on the Island and the Chimney Swift colony at the West Dock too.

 Results of our Breeding Bird Census studies from the past two years are currently being compiled into a report and will be available in October 2011.... Stay tuned!

## Going For It, A Homage

(After the Venerable Bede)

By Brian Brett

When the raging of our prime  
extends beyond the age of our bones,  
when our arms no longer reach  
the text of our life,  
and suddenly the blood is gone  
from the heat and the moment,  
the secrets within gesture and behaviour  
become everything; not wanting youth  
but the memory of it, the glory, chasing  
hopeless time and desire.

We are watching  
two white swans float overhead in the autumn,  
circling the water, their lonely honks signal  
a desire that trundles alongside patience -- the pond  
is suspicious, the high sedge may conceal predators.  
This is also our story -- we are moving with them  
through the banquet hall, like ghosts, yet alive,  
attending the feast and the enigma:  
two white swans aflight above a pond,  
two white swans marching into the pumpkin field.

- Brian was the guest author at Spring Song 2010

## Did You Know...?

The fastest animal in the world is the Peregrine falcon, which can reach a speed of up to 100mph in a diving swoop for prey

The slowest bird in the world is the American woodcock, flying at speeds of 5mph (8kmh) without sinking.

A flock of starlings is called a 'murmuration'.

A flock of swallows is called a 'gulp'.

There are about 10,000 known species of birds alive in the world today, of which over 400 are endangered.

The continent with the largest concentration of bird species, is South America, with over 3,000. Antarctica has the least with about 65 different bird species.

The turkey vulture is the only bird of prey that uses its sense of smell to find food.

(From: [www.andreawansbury.com](http://www.andreawansbury.com))



## Other PIBO News...



Need an Island Getaway? Spectacular Carolinian birds and butterflies on Lake Erie! The Pelee Island Bird Observatory's Bird House offers a four-season lakeside cottage. It can be rented weekly in July and August, or for weekend birding packages with our Migration Stewardship Program during the rest of the year.

The house has three bedrooms with double beds, a fully self-catering kitchen, and a large, comfortable common room with a view of the beautiful north bay of Pelee Island. To view pictures of the house or for more information about our Stewardship Program please visit [www.pibo.ca/birdhouse](http://www.pibo.ca/birdhouse)

One of our staff members will return to school in September! Claire Sanders will be pursuing her Master's of Science degree at the University of Windsor starting in September. Claire will be working under Dr. Dan Mennill on a part-time basis while continuing in her role as Executive Director of PIBO. Research in Dr. Mennill's laboratory focuses on the ecology and evolution of communication and mating systems of wild animals, especially birds.

Sumiko Onishi has been painting birds since she first visited the Island in 2006. We've made 10 of her images into greeting cards. The cards come in a package of five – they are printed on recycled, acid-free paper and are packaged in biodegradable plastic. These beautiful cards make great note cards or a perfect gift, while supporting our work. Contact us for shipping costs to your location.



## Bird Race 2011

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Pelee Island Heritage Centre sponsored Bird Race for the Botham Cup!

The Bird Race started in cool, ominously cloudy conditions on Friday. Nonetheless, eight brave teams entered the race on Friday afternoon. Six teams rode bicycles and two teams raced by car. We also had two brand new teams join us this year as well as three people under 12-years of age!

Thank you to the following race teams:

The Double O's (Eric Orosz, Michael Orosz)

The Flappers (Tom & Vicky Hillier)

Quest for Fliers (Dianna Wolfe & Rob Willson)

Gross-breasted Rosebeaks (Rob Tymstra, Larry Cornelis, Paul Carter)

Ridgetown Royal Terns (Brian Wilkie, Scott Makey, Donna Makey)

Bells on Bikes (Cassie DeMarco & Anne Belle)

J&K Rolling (Kestrel DeMarco & Jerry DeMarco)

Flit & Fly (Judith King, Vivianne Hebert, Rob Kearns)

The teams collectively saw a total of 154 species; among them were some very interesting and unusual sightings that included Henslow's Sparrow, Prairie Warbler, Lesser-black Backed Gull, Yellow-breasted Chat, Sedge Wren, White-eyed Vireo, Sandhill Crane, and Yellow-throated Vireo.

Hearty congratulations go to team 'Gross-breasted Rosebeaks' who won the Botham Cup with 129 species. Second place went to Jerry Demarco and his 12-year old daughter, Kestrel, with 115 species. Thanks again to all participants. We admire your dedication and hard work and look forward to seeing you next year!





# Highlights!

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

- Sedge Wren (April 24)
- Grasshopper Sparrow (April 10 & May 3)
- Worm-eating Warbler (May 2)
- Clay-colored Sparrow (May 3)
- Thayer's Gull (May 12)
- 'Nelson's' Gull (Herring/Glaucous hybrid) (May 12)
- Acadian Flycatcher (Numerous dates)
- Louisiana Waterthrush (May 17)
- Connecticut Warbler (May 18)
- Prothonotary Warbler (Numerous dates)

Other interesting sightings documented but not recorded by PIBO include:

- Glossy Ibis
- Kirtland's Warbler
- Henslow's Sparrow

## Pelee Island Bird Observatory

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THE ONTARIO  
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# Spring Song Success!



Congratulations to the Pelee Island Heritage Centre for hosting another successful Spring Song festival! Hundreds of bird and book enthusiasts came to revel in the enduring enchantment of Spring migration. The guest authors this year, who were introduced by Margaret Atwood, were award winning Nino Ricci and his wife Erika de Vasconcelos. The community was also graced with the presence of guest birder and Saskatchewan author Trevor Harriett.

On Sunday, PIBO hosted our second annual Spring Song Community Pig Roast. This year we had a substantial 200lb pig, kindly donated by Fuerth Family Farms in Woodslee, which easily fed over 100 birders, Islanders, and cottagers. It was a chance for us to make new friends and to thank the old ones for their enduring support. Thanks to the Township of Pelee for use of the East Park Campground for this get-together.

Also, a big thank you to Magister Porcendi Richard Pope & his wife Felicity who did a wonderful job of preparing & carving up the beast and to Colin Mousseau for delivering it and cooking it to perfection. Finally, thanks to Jay Nagaliesen & Dave Malloch for the use (and instruction) on your terrific roaster.

As soon as Spring Song was over, we quickly moved on to another exciting project. With funding from the Pelee Island Winery, filming began for a video-conferencing education project that we will pilot in the fall. This project will help us connect our researchers in the field with students in urban classrooms. And, as the weather and birds cannot be relied upon, part of the project involves making a video of our work at the migration monitoring station. A terrific film crew from Prisma Light bunked with us and followed us for a couple of days. We also got the Pelee Island Public School kids to brush up on their acting skills and help us out for a morning. Thanks PIPS!



## 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.)

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