Eagle-Eye Tours



Lake Erie Migration Trip Report (May 10 - 18, 2025)

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Perfectly timed, migration was happening and most days were filled with warblers of 29 species over 9 days exploring the migration hotspots of Pelee, Rondeau, and Long Point. Excellent weather, delicious food, good company, and world-class birding made this tour a resounding success. 170 bird species tallied, with some cool amphibians and reptiles thrown in for good measure.

Day 1 - Toronto

Meeting in the hotel lobby for 6:30pm, we sat down for introductions over dinner, and discussed our collective hopes and dreams for the coming days.

Day 2 - Toronto to Leamington

Our first stop of the tour at Colonel Samuel Smith Park was in some ways foreshadowing for the rest of the tour as we had an excellent dose of warblers, with many providing stunning views. Who can forget the Northern Parula that sat motionless at eye-level, belting out it’s song but a short stroll from where parked. Of course the waterbirds wanted some attention too, and the pairs of Red-necked Grebes were hard to walk away from, and even the much rarer Western Grebe was still hanging around much to the groups delight.



Western Grebe



Northern Parula

Making tracks for our hotel in Leamington after a brief burrito lunch, we fit in an afternoon stroll through the gorgeous forest known as Kopegaron Woods. The magnificent old trees and delicate wildflowers are enough of a reason to come here, but the birds also put on a show. From the boardwalk over the flooded forest floor, we watched warblers feed in the afternoon light, and a roosting rufous morph Eastern Screech Owl was the cherry on top of an excellent 1st day of birding.



Blackburnian Warbler



Eastern Screech-Owl

Day 3 - Point Pelee

A very early morning (4:30 breakfast), meant we were to Point Pelee National Park in good time, and on one of the first trams to the tip. From here we spied a young Little Gull amongst the gulls and terns on the sand spit, before catching the tram back to the Woodland Nature Trail. Here we

pursued our main quarry - the glowing ball of fire known as the Prothonotary Warbler. It delighted us over the slough forest until we had to pry ourselves away from it and the many other warblers we saw there.



Prothonotary Warbler

After a healthy picnic lunch at the visitor centre we headed off to the Hillman Marsh shorebird cell for some shorebirds. A modest assemblage remained after a Merlin bombed over, and we picked up Short-billed Dowitcher along with Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers. With some time to spare, we headed to East Beach Rd in search of a reported Red Knot. While this elusive shorebird did eventually show itself to the group, in the meantime we were able to study 4 species of terns, Ruddy Turnstone, and a pile of Cliff Swallows nesting on the side of a cottage.



Cliff Swallows

Day 4 - Point Pelee to Chatham

Another early morning meant we were at the tip in good time to get drenched by some relentless rain that wasn't meant to last so long! The desired fallout of birds didn't materialize so we were back to the VC to regroup and a plan was hatched to head back to Hillman Marsh since ducks don't mind getting wet! Trumpeter Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, Blue-winged Teal, American Coot, Solitary Sandpiper, Great Egret, and even some warblers were tallied as we walked a short loop of the property.



Barn Swallow at the tip of Point Pelee

Working our way east, we had a restaurant lunch in Erieau at Molly and OJ's before taking a quick peak at the pier where we had a Ruddy Turnstone, as well as a variety of swallows, terns, and gulls.



Group at Erieau

Our last birding spot of the day was Blenheim Sewage Lagoons where a few Wilson Phalarope had been setting up shop and sure enough we found a confiding pair almost right away. A brief rain cloud sent half the group back to the vans, but some of us soldiered on and were rewarded with more shorebirds, Ruddy Ducks, a distant Bobolink, and the trips only Eastern Meadowlarks.

Day 5 - Rondeau Provincial Park

Up early and off to Rondeau Provincial Park for the morning, we birded in the area known as "Warbler Way" and the "Pony Barn". Rightfully named, we enjoyed many warblers such as Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, American Redstart, Magnolia, and Black-throated Blue to name but a few. Wood Thrush sand right above us, and around the Pony Barn we heard a Louisiana Waterthrush while 1 or 2 people glimpsed it walking along the edge of a wooded pool. More confiding was a pair of White-eyed Vireo that were likely going to nest in the area and a nice specialty to see on the tour. Ontario's lone lizard species, the Five-lined Skink, was also observed this morning.



White-eye Vireo



Five-lined Skink

After a brief stop at the Visitor Centre where we viewed singing Yellow-throated Vireos, we were on to the Tulip Tree trail which was also very productive. Golden-winged Warbler was a big highlight, as was another Prothonotary, and our first Mourning and Blackpoll Warblers.



Guides Adam and Daniel at Rondeau

Picnic Lunch at the visitor centre, then a pitstop to try for Tufted Titmouse just outside the park boundary. Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, and Blue-winged Warbler all showed well. Since we parked at a beach access point, we took the opportunity to walk to the shoreline, get sand in our shoes, and enjoy a relaxing few moments in the sunshine.



Beach at Rondeau

The last birding stop of the day before making our way to Simcoe for the night, was the Port Stanley Sewage Lagoons. Here we spied Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, and a single Marsh Wren singing from the cattails.

Day 6 - Long Point

For some, today was the best day of the entire tour - a trip to the remote bird-banding station at the tip of Long Point that is only accessible by boat. White-winged Scoters, Red-throated Loon, and Long-tailed Ducks were seen from the water, while once on the sand we were able to enjoy many landbirds in the junipers and cottonwoods. Red-headed Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Tennessee Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Palm Warbler, and more were all enjoyed in this idyllic location we had all to ourselves.



At the tip of Long Point © Daniel Giesbrecht



Bay-breasted Warbler at tip of Long Point © Daniel Giesbrecht

Once back to the mainland, we made a quick stop at Big Creek National Wildlife Area where we added a couple of Common Gallinule and Sandhill Cranes, and our best looks at Forster's Tern. Dinner near Turkey Point at the Marshview Patio meant we could do a bit of birding before an excellent meal.



Turkey Point Marsh © Daniel Giesbrecht

Day 7 - Long Point

We started the morning birding the "Old" Long Point Provincial Park, spending a few productive hours racking up species like Eastern Wood-Pewee, Great-crested Flycatcher, Philadelphia Vireo, Swainson's Thrush, and Scarlet Tanager. There were many warblers such as Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Wilson's, and everyone's favourite - the Canada Warbler! Off to the Long Point Bird Observatory on Old Cut Blvd, we were enthralled by some banding demonstrations and birded the woodlot. More vireos and warblers were spotted, including our first Hooded Warbler, as well as some feeder birds like House Finch.



Black-throated Blue Warbler at Old Cut

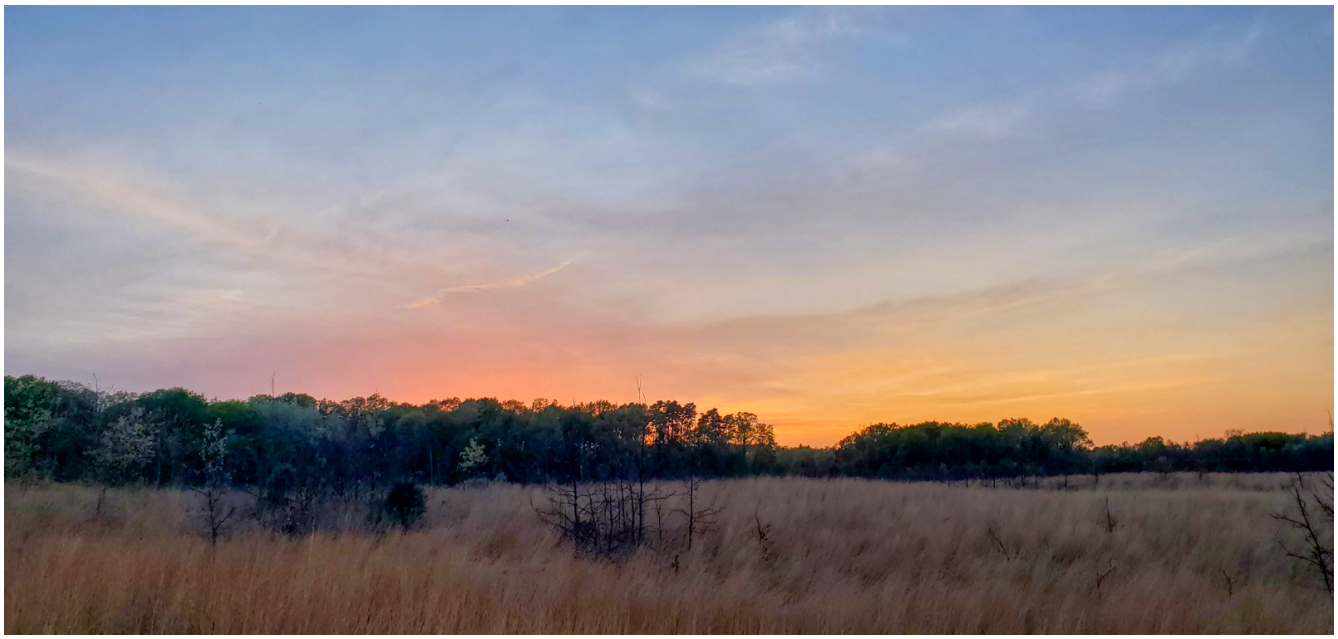
After lunch we headed for the older growth forest of Backus Woods in search of local breeders. Here we saw a slew of woodpeckers like Hairy, Downy, Pileated, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Brown Creeper was a new addition, and we had another Hooded Warbler and Scarlet Tanager.



Hooded Warbler

After dinner, most of the group opted in for some evening birding. Before it got too dark, we picked up some singing sparrows like Field, Grasshopper, and the rare and endangered Henslow's Sparrow which we viewed through a scope at a respectable distance. As it got dark, we picked up some

displaying Woodcock overhead, and heard and saw Eastern Whip-poor-will once night fell. Lastly, we made a final stop at a local flying squirrel feeder at a friends house. We watched 1 or 2 Southern Flying Squirrel come in for a few peanuts before sailing off into the night.



Sunset near Walsingham while we wait for the Eastern Whip-poor-will to start singing © Daniel Giesbrecht



Eastern Whip-poor-will

Day 8 - Long Point to Toronto

Our last day of birding saw us begin the day at a local woodlot with a very cooperative Cerulean Warbler singing overhead and providing great views for what is typically a difficult species to observe in the canopy. Wide awake from that adrenaline rush, we headed back to the Long Point Bird Observatory for some relaxed birding where people could walk the trails or observe more banding demonstrations. Green Heron's were nesting in the pines nearby, and we were able to enjoy scope views of the attendant parents. A surprise morning flyby of a Common Nighthawk was a highlight. Off to my farm for some grassland and forest birding, we enjoyed excellent views of Black-billed Cuckoo, Grasshopper Sparrow, Clay-coloured Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, Blue-winged and Hooded Warblers. Enjoying lunch at my house, we viewed Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds enjoying the feeders.



Grasshopper Sparrow

Following lunch we made a quick pitstop to check out a field full of Bobolinks doing their R2D2-like songs as they displayed over a hayfield that provides a refuge for these once common birds. Continuing on, we picked up a Northern Harrier in flight as we drove onwards to the St Williams Conservation Reserve. Here we added our final warbler of the trip - a Pine Warbler, along with a very cooperative Indigo Bunting.



Indigo Bunting

Day 9 - Toronto

After breakfast, clients and guides departed the hotel.



Our group

Lake Erie Migration eBird list (May 10 - 18, 2025)