



Point Pelee & Algonquin Park Trip Report (May 11 - 22, 2026)

[Link: Point Pelee & Algonquin Park Trip Report \(May 11 - 22, 2026\)](#)

Over the ten days our group spent birding the migratory hotspots of Lake Erie and unique breeding habitats of the Carden Alvar and Algonquin Provincial Park, we encountered an impressive 190 species. Highlights included rarities such as White-faced Ibis, Cattle Egret, and Summer Tanager. Though more common, the 26 species of warbler we encountered impressed all with their beautiful colours and songs. One particularly cooperative Prothonotary Warbler was a trip highlight for many. Spring in Ontario is always a special time for birding, and our trip was no exception.

Day 1: Toronto (May 11)

Our group arrived through the afternoon, meeting for dinner and a briefing on the birds and places we would experience over the coming days. After introductions and getting to know each other, we turned in, eager to start our journey the following morning.

Day 2: Toronto to Leamington (May 12)

Starting early (the birds do not wait after all), we ventured to Colonel Samuel Smith Park, a popular birding hotspot on Toronto's shoreline. A friendly Striped Skunk greeted us in the parking lot and we had our first hints of the many warblers that were to come. Over a short walk, we encountered a breeding colony of Red-necked Grebes, a lone Horned Grebe mixed amongst the diving ducks on the lake, and a mixed flock of warblers—a good start to our tour. Moving on, we started our long journey to Leamington, stopping for lunch (and birds) at Roth Park in Woodstock along the way. Arriving at our destination in the afternoon, we made our first foray into Point Pelee National Park in an unsuccessful attempt to find an Ash-throated Flycatcher.



Bay-breasted Warbler ©Art Cimento

Day 3: Point Pelee National Park (May 13)

Getting an early start once again, we began our first morning in Leamington by heading straight to the Tip in Point Pelee National Park. Arriving at the Visitor Centre's parking lot, we were greeted by the comical peenting of an American Woodcock, a target bird for several in our group. Though we could hear him, good looks would have to wait. Arriving at the Tip shortly after sunrise, we got our first taste of the many migrants that make use of Point Pelee each year, with a good variety of warblers and other passerines to keep us entertained. Walking back to the Visitor Centre we were rewarded with the brief appearance of a Golden-winged Warbler and excellent views of Scarlet Tanagers amongst the many migrants. On our way out of Point Pelee National Park, we stopped at Hillman Marsh Conservation Area and were surprised to find a massive group of Short-billed Dowitcher, at least 300 in number! We rounded out our day with dinner, toasting the good fortune so far.



Northern Parula ©Art Cimento



Scarlet Tanager ©Art Cimento

Day 4: Point Pelee National Park (May 14)

We elected to start the day with the trails surrounding the Visitor Centre. As the sun rose, we

started our walk on the Tilden's Woods Trail, encountering many species along the way including highlight species such as Yellow-throated Vireo and singing Wood Thrush. Moving on to the Woodland Nature Trail, we had an incredible encounter with a singing male Prothonotary Warbler a major target for the trip that offered extended, closeup views for all participants. A Great Horned Owl chick further down the path was a bonus bird for an already successful hike! We then ventured north, stopping at the Delaurier Homestead Trail for a photo-op with the famous red chairs. We picked up a few new trip birds, including a very cooperative Green Heron.



Green Heron ©Mike MacLeod



Day 5: Point Pelee National Park (May 15)

This being our last day in Point Pelee, our first order of business was to try and get views of displaying American Woodcock. We were very pleased to see several flybys! We also had a brief encounter with an Eastern Screech Owl. Moving on, we went back to the Tip for excellent up-close views of shorebirds, including Black-bellied Plover and Ruddy Turnstone. Returning to the Visitor Centre via the Woodland Nature Trail, we were once again rewarded with excellent views of many species, with highlights such as Canada Warbler and a single Summer Tanager. After lunch and a lovely walk around the Marsh Boardwalk, we returned to Hillman Marsh Conservation Area one last time and were successful in adding both Willet and White-faced Ibis for the day. Three write-ins after a busy day of birding! We bid farewell to the Pelee area and headed to Chatham for the next major destination of our trip.



Pelee Tip at Sunrise ©Gillian Butt

Day 6: Rondeau Provincial Park (May 16)

On day six, we explored Rondeau Provincial Park, visiting hiking trails and picking up several new species for the trip with notable highlights including Blackpoll Warbler, Cedar Waxwing, and Gray-cheeked Thrush. A large weather system moving through the area threatened to put a damper on our fun, but luckily passed north of us, allowing our group to continue enjoying the birds while staying dry. After a couple hikes, we decided to check the beach for one of our primary targets at Rondeau, the Red-headed Woodpecker. We were soon rewarded with a pair working on a nesting site, as well as a cameo appearance of a Pileated Woodpecker to round out our time in the Park. After that, we headed out to Simcoe, stopping at the Port Stanley Sewage Lagoons along the way, picking up several more trip birds: Ruddy Duck, Bufflehead, Pied-billed Grebe, and a phenomenal

Cattle Egret. All in all, another excellent day of birding.



Cattle Egret ©Mike MacLeod

Day 7: Long Point Provincial Park and Bird Observatory (May 17)

To start our day in Simcoe, we headed out in the early morning to the Big Creek National Wildlife Area, despite the wind, we were able to track down Sandhill Crane and Common Gallinule. We next visited Long Point Bird Observatory to watch banding activities at the Old Cut station. The nets were active, which afforded us the opportunity to observe some difficult-to-see species such as Ovenbird and Northern Waterthrush up close. Walking the trails around the station yielded a good selection of warblers and our first observation of Belted Kingfisher a surprisingly scarce species on our trip. After a fun morning observing banding activities, we moved to nearby West Quarter Line, a location that gave us our first Eastern Bluebirds, Grasshopper Sparrows, and a well-hidden Clay-coloured Sparrow. In addition to these finds, we were greeted with the song of multiple Blue-winged Warblers, Hooded Warblers, and Eastern Towhee. After a delicious lunch at Charlotteville Brewing Company, we returned to West Quarter Line at dusk to get additional views of displaying American Woodcock and singing Eastern Whip-poor-will before turning in after our successful day.

Day 8: Rock Point Provincial Park and Niagara Falls (May 18)

We spent much of the day on the road, making the long trek from Simcoe to Orillia. That does not mean we were not able to fit in some birding however, with stops at Rock Point Provincial Park and Niagara Falls. Though picturesque and full of birds, these sites did not produce many new observations for the trip, with incidental observations of Savannah Sparrow and Common Raven being our primary additions for the day. We then stopped in the beautiful Niagara Region for a late lunch at the Henry of Pelham vineyards, nestled at the foot of the Niagara Escarpment. Continuing on our way, we arrived in Orillia and turned in for the night.

Day 9: Carden Alvar (May 19)

After a welcome hot breakfast, we headed to the famous Carden Alvar Important Bird Area, a unique place known for many species that are otherwise scarce in Ontario. Almost immediately, we were greeted with new species for our trip, with many singing Eastern Meadowlark and Bobolink displaying nicely. With a little effort, we were able to hear additional species such as Upland Sandpiper and Olive-sided Flycatcher, as well as reclusive marsh birds such as Sora, Virginia Rail, and American Bittern. We made an additional stop at a location on the north end of the alvar known for Blue-winged and Golden-winged warbler, which had proven difficult to see on our trip. We were rewarded with good views of a Brewster's Warbler and several singing Blue-Winged Warbler. After this, we enjoyed a well-earned lunch and made our way to Spring Lake Resort, taking the opportunity to drive in to Algonquin Park at sunset for a moose cruise to get a taste of what the area has to offer.

Day 10 - Algonquin Provincial Park (May 20)

We began our first day in Algonquin with a trip to the Spruce Boardwalk before stopping in Whitney for another hot breakfast. After a hike at the Logging Museum, we stopped in at the Visitor Centre to bird from the viewing platform. We encountered several new species in the Park, including Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Pine Siskin, and Evening Grosbeak. Arriving back at Spring Lake Resort, we found a nice collection of warblers, including several Canada Warblers and a trip-first Wilson's Warbler, along with Evening Grosbeak. In the evening, we searched for woodcock, owls, and nightjars. Though we were unsuccessful with owls, we observed our only Common Nighthawk for the trip and were treated to exceptional views of displaying American Woodcock. Watching these comical birds would prove to be a highlight for many on the tour!



Beautiful Spruce Bog Boardwalk ©Nick Bartok

Day 11: Algonquin Provincial Park (May 21)

Starting our final day with a trip to the Old Airfield, we were disappointed to learn the tree that had been home to this year's Black-backed Woodpecker nest had been blown over in a recent storm, making our trip to see this Algonquin specialty unsuccessful. We carried on to Arowhon Road and the old railbed section of the Mizzy Lake Trail, where we were treated to another great selection of warblers and a couple of new species in Winter Wren and Veery before beginning our journey back to Toronto. After stopping in Huntsville for lunch and then a delicious ice cream at Kawartha Dairy, we continued on to our hotel in Toronto. We enjoyed one last dinner as a group, reminiscing on the great trip we had shared, and said our goodbyes before turning the last page on an incredible birding adventure.



2026 Group ©Nick Bartok

Day 12: Toronto (May 22)

With our trip over and many new memories made, everyone was on their way, either heading home or continuing on to new adventures. After 11 days, we had observed an impressive 190 species, with many highlights and a lot of shared excitement. Great birds and great company made this a trip to remember!