

Point Pelee & Algonquin Park Trip Report (May 7 - 18, 2024)

[Link: Point Pelee & Algonquin Park Trip Report \(May 7 - 18, 2024\)](#)

Birding the migration hotspots along Lake Erie, along with Carden Alvar and Algonquin Provincial Park, our group tallied an incredible 190 species over 12 days! Some rarities from further west included: Ferruginous Hawk, Black-billed Magpie, and Yellow-headed Blackbird, while searching out the 27 species of warbler we recorded was a daily highlight. Never a dull moment, each day brought new places, new trails, and new birds!

Day 1: Toronto

We gathered for dinner at our hotel and fuelled up for what would be an exciting 12 days exploring southern Ontario. Some guests that arrived early took advantage of the day by birding some nearby parks.

Day 2: Toronto to Leamington

After an early morning departure (which would be the norm on this tour), we found ourselves at a very birdy Colonel Samuel Smith Park on the shores of Lake Ontario. The breeding colony of Red-necked Grebes put a great show, while a normally secretive Least Bittern revealed itself practically at arms length! The first taste of migrating warblers and an eventually cooperative Winter Wren rounded out an excellent start to the tour. We dragged ourselves away and made the long drive to Leamington. With some time to spare in the evening, a quick visit to the Hillman Marsh shorebird cell provided some nice diversity of waterfowl and shorebirds. As word spread of a very rare Ferruginous Hawk in the area, a few keen participants joined the guides in seeking out this rare western raptor. A bevy of parked cars meant we were in luck, although we would have to settle for distant scope views.



Red-necked Grebe © Rosemary Clapham



© Nick Bartok

Day 3: Point Pelee National Park

We would start each morning at Point Pelee making the pilgrimage to the Tip to sift through the gulls and terns before dispersing to explore other trails in the park. Tilden's Woods and Sleepy Hollow provided us with our first looks at a wide array of migrants, and we all began to suffer from

“warbler neck” as many of the warblers were feeding high in the canopy.



Birders at the tip of Point Pelee © Adam Timpf

Day 4: Point Pelee National Park

The morning sojourn to the tip rewarded us with a rare Lesser Black-backed Gull, a Great Egret flying in off the lake, and large numbers of Red-breasted Merganser and Bonaparte's Gull. Woodland Nature Trail provided excellent views of endangered Prothonotary Warblers lighting up their flooded swamp territories. Looping back on Redbud trail provided us with an equally stunning and cooperative Hooded Warbler. Continuing to hit the trails, a roosting Eastern Screech-Owl at Sleepy Hollow obliged, as did a beautiful Scarlet Tanager foraging down low. Marsh Boardwalk allowed us to explore a new habitat where we heard Marsh Wrens and Common Yellowthroats, and recorded a few shorebirds, ducks, and a cruising Northern Harrier. An evening hike through the older growth Kopegaron Woods was soothing for the soul as we hiked amongst the copious spring wildflowers while being serenaded by Wood Thrush.



Eastern Screech-Owl © Adam Timpf



Birding in flooded forest in Kopegaron Woods © Adam Timpf

Day 5: Point Pelee National Park, Wheatley, Mitchell's Bay

A flyby Common Loon and cooperative House Wren were noted at the tip before an incoming band of thunderstorms chased us back to the Visitor Centre to regroup. With the wind and rain not relenting, we headed out of the park to Wheatley Harbour where we found Ruddy Turnstones

foraging on the beach and Cliff Swallows gathering mud for their nests. At Shrewsbury we encountered a known pair of Black-billed Magpies, a rarity in this part of the province, while on the other side of the road an active eagles nest added to the excitement. Not done yet, we zipped up to Mitchell's Bay for another western treat - a Yellow-headed Blackbird visiting a feeder. A Black-crowned Night Heron provided stunning views on a nearby trail.



Black-crowned Night Heron © Rosemary Clapham

Day 6: Rondeau Provincial Park and Port Stanley Sewage Lagoons

Arriving at Rondeau Provincial Park, we relished the lack of people and increase in birds. Sifting through the thrushes, vireos, and warblers we were kept busy with highlights including Lincoln's Sparrow, White-eyed Vireo, and heard only Yellow-throated Vireo and Golden-winged Warbler. Always hard to leave Rondeau, but we recorded a Red-headed Woodpecker on our way to Port Stanley Sewage Lagoons where we added Ruddy Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Common Gallinule and American Coot.



Lincoln's Sparrow © Rosemary Clapham



Boardwalk in Rondeau Provincial Park © Adam Timpf

Day 7: Long Point

Birding at Long Point Bird Observatory meant not only birds in the bushes but birds in the hand! Warblers were on the menu again with a good diversity and some coming through the banding lab where we watched the birds get banded, weighed, and measured. Exploring some nearby areas we

added Grasshopper, Field, and Vesper Sparrows, a calling Black-billed Cuckoo, and a very cooperative Blue-winged Warbler. An evening adventure allowed close views of Black Tern at Big Creek Marsh, displaying Woodcock and Eastern Whip-poor-will singing next to the road. Southern Flying Squirrels thoroughly entertained as they took peanuts from a feeder and glided off into the night.



Wilson's Warbler and Nick Bartok © Rosemary Clapham



Big Creek Marsh © Adam Timpf



Flying Squirrel © Rosemary Clapham

Day 8: Long Point

Another morning at Long Point Bird Observatory and the “old” Long Point Provincial Park meant more warblers, with Canada, Blackpoll and Ovenbird being seen while Mourning Warbler and Yellow-billed Cuckoo were heard. A Sedge Wren was a surprise find working the grasses just below our position at the Old Cut observation platform. Another difficult place to leave, we made tracks northward.



Day 9: Carden Alvar

The Mecca for grassland birds in Southern Ontario was exceptional and provided stunning views of Wilson's Snipe, Upland Sandpiper, Virginia Rail, Bobolink, and Eastern Meadowlark. Cooperative Golden-winged Warblers made up for the previously "heard only" one, while the hybrid Brewster's Warbler was an interesting study.



Virginia Rail © Rosemary Clapham



Wilson's Snipe © Rosemary Clapham

Day 10: Algonquin Provincial Park

A day spent exploring the spruce bogs and boreal forests of Algonquin Provincial Park was a stark departure from the Carolinian forests of the deep south. Breeding birds like American Black Duck, Canada Warbler, Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin, Common Raven, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Evening Grosbeak were all on their home turf. Moose were a sure sign of the north, and we saw several as we criss-crossed the park.



Moose © Rosemary Clapham



Algonquin boardwalk © Adam Timpf

Day 11: Algonquin Provincial Park to Toronto

A final morning in Algonquin meant we could hunt down some better views of species like Bay-breasted and Cape May Warblers, listen to the drum of Ruffed Grouse, and catch a brief glimpse of White-winged Crossbills that zipped overhead. A well deserved ice-cream break at Kawartha Dairy on the drive to Toronto was a notable stop.



Birding in Algonquin Park © Adam Timpf



Black-throated Blue Warbler © Rosemary Clapham



Algonquin Park © Adam Timpf

Day 12: Toronto

Everyone began their journey home for some much deserved rest after a very successful and bird

adventure. [Point Pelee & Algonquin bird list](#)