

Lake Erie Spring Migration Itinerary

[Link: Lake Erie Spring Migration](#)

Tour Overview

Join us for an exciting birding tour of the “Big 3” spring migration hotspots along the north shore of Lake Erie in southern Ontario.

On this scenic tour of extreme southwestern Ontario, we rendezvous with the myriad of neotropical and other migrants whose arrival coincides with our own. We will visit —Point Pelee, Rondeau and Long Point—we search for rare species in Canada such as Red-headed Woodpecker, White-eyed Vireo, Summer Tanager, Kentucky, Hooded and Prothonotary Warblers while sifting through flocks of beautiful Indigo Buntings, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and dozens of warbler species!

No place is better for witnessing spring migration and anything can show up, with each day bringing in a different suite of birds. Carolinian forest woodlots near Long Point are home to breeders such as Yellow-throated Vireo, Louisiana Waterthrush and Cerulean Warbler, among others. This trip also offers an exclusive boat trip to the rarely visited tip of Long Point where you'll glimpse the efforts of Citizen Scientists and biologists monitoring migration at the Long Point Bird Observatory, the oldest observatory in the Western Hemisphere.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival - Toronto



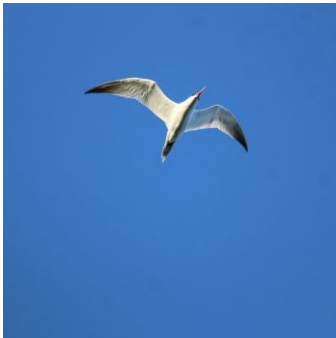
Our Lake Erie Migration birding tour begins with arrival in Toronto and an introductory dinner. Night in Toronto.

Day 2: Toronto to Point Pelee



After breakfast, we'll pack up for a three hour drive more or less directly to Point Pelee National Park. We will spend the afternoon birding in the park and may even revisit later in the evening to try our luck at displaying American Woodcocks and owls. Night in Leamington.

Days 3 & 4: Point Pelee National Park



Point Pelee is a renowned birding location that hosts birders from around the world who come to witness an intense migration spectacle. Indeed, we'll arrive at prime time that happens to coincide with the birding festival—expect kiosks, pancake breakfasts and birders galore. Also, leaf-out arrives later here so the birds will be visible in the budding treetops and bushes. A light, warm breeze from the south is the first indication that migrants are on the way. On these days we can expect new arrivals in the hundreds, but if this warm air meets a sudden cold front during the night, the resulting conditions can force thousands of passerines to descend upon the diminutive Point Pelee during their nocturnal procession. The famed “reverse migration” can occur at the tip, where an endless procession of confused birds fly back south over the lake, often to return and land in trees just above our heads. Everything from Wood Stork to Scissor-tailed Flycatcher has been seen this way, and this is what excites many birders to a twitching frenzy, though even on an average day there are dozens of warblers, thrushes, vireos, sparrows and others to enjoy at close range. Very little escapes the network of local birders, and we'll be kept in the loop with up-to-the-minute details from locals. One should expect twenty-to-thirty species of warblers, all potentially foraging at eye-level in their neotropical breeding attire! There is also variety; you may see birds like Little Gull, Worm-eating Warbler, Bald Eagle, White-rumped Sandpiper, Orchard Oriole, and American Golden-Plover all on the same day! We will bird the park in the morning and visit surrounding fields and wetlands such as Hillman Marsh in the afternoon for migrant shorebirds, including regular vagrants like American Avocet, Marbled Godwit and Willet, plus Forster's and Caspian Terns. Anything can turn up here and at Pelee - and usually does! Point Pelee is indeed a birder's dreams come true, and 100 species in a day is regular on our tour. Night 3 in Leamington, Night 4 in Chattam.

Day 5: Rondeau Provincial Park



Considered by many to be as fantastic a birding location as the famous Point Pelee, Rondeau is a beautiful Carolinian forest that offers a very pleasant birding experience. We walk some of the trails in the Park, looking for resident Red-headed Woodpecker, Wood Thrush, White-breasted Nuthatch, Baltimore Oriole and the prize bird of the park, the Prothonotary Warbler. Sometimes this “Jewel of the Swamp” allows for arms-length looks at the boardwalk! Early on we’ll sort through the flocks of returning migrants on footpaths that lead past ephemeral sloughs that act as bird magnets. We’ll look for “spring overshoots” - birds that don’t breed in Ontario but regularly arrive to Lake Erie in the spring—such as Kentucky, Yellow-throated and Worm-eating Warblers, Blue Grosbeak, Summer Tanager and maybe even a Chuck-will’s-widow! The visitor’s centre has a great feeder set-up and the picnic areas must offer some of the best birding lunches anywhere. The nearby Blenheim sewage lagoons (the best in southern Ontario) are a hotspot where migrant shorebirds and all five eastern swallows plus Purple Martins abound. Continuing our journey east, we press onward to the Long Point area where we spend our next two nights. Night in Simcoe.

Days 6 - 8: Long Point Bird Observatory



The least accessible of the "Big Three" migration hotspots of the northern shore of Lake Erie, Long Point is home to North America's oldest bird observatory, LPBO. Long Point is the longest sandpit in the world and depending on weather, we will spend one day boating out approximately 35 kms to the very Tip. This dynamic place is only inhabited by the few privileged LPBO volunteers, monitoring migrants landbirds and conducting migration ecology research. The Long Point Bay itself can harbor interesting waterfowl, gulls, terns, and shorebirds and we will be looking out for all of these. The Tip itself, is a magical place, where in stark contrast to Point Pelee and Rondeau, we will be birding alone. Many rarities and vagrants have been discovered here in the past including several first records for Ontario. It is truly one of the most remote and special places in southern Ontario. The Long Point birding area is also the best place to experience the Carolinian forest. We have many options in the area but the focus is on the assortment of large woodlots that harbour breeding specialties such as Hooded, Cerulean, Pine and Blue-winged Warblers, Yellow-throated Vireo and Louisiana Waterthrush. In some years Acadian Flycatcher may arrive early enough for us to find them. The Birds Canada headquarters is an excellent place for a visit and to scope out ducks over Long Point's Inner Bay. We visit the "Old Cut" research station one morning to see what migrants have arrived overnight. Usually with the help of LPBO's volunteers we manage to see some exciting birds up close. We'll visit Long Point Provincial Park and the massive Big Creek Marsh, where Least Bittern, Common Gallinule, and King Rail are real possibilities, amongst an assortment of marsh birds. One evening, we will go out for an after-hours adventure along the sand roads around Long Point for Eastern Screech-Owl and Eastern Whip-poor-will. After our third morning of birding we'll pack up and head north. Nights in Simcoe except for last night in Toronto.

Day 9: Departure from Toronto

Our Lake Erie Spring Migration birding tour concludes today in Toronto. You can leave for flights home anytime today.

What to Expect

Overview

The Lake Erie Spring Migration tour is a fast-paced birding tour, which focuses on observing the spring bird migration. While this tour provides an amazing bird-watching opportunity, it's worth mentioning that it requires early starts; as early as 4:30am. If you're okay with early mornings and consecutive days of easy to moderate walks on level terrain, you're likely to find the experience both enjoyable and manageable.

Food

We mostly have breakfast at the hotel before we head out for the day, but there may be some pre-breakfast walks. Lunch will be picnic-style out in the field, or at a local restaurant. Dinner is usually at a restaurant close to the hotel. Each evening after dinner we compile the day's checklist, review

the day's activities, birds, and other observations, and plan the next day's activities.

Accommodation

Accommodations during the tour vary from basic to standard hotels in locations close to where we want to go birding.

Walking

This tour involves moderate walking on mostly level terrain. However, we could have some slippery or uneven terrain. The longest walks are at Point Pelee, where you may walk up to 3-5 km (2-3 miles) round trip at slow pace in the park on one of the days. While the walking on this tour is generally flat, early starts and birding consecutive days could contribute to fatigue. That said, the walks are done at a slow pace and this can also be discussed with the guides, and alternatives can be offered when possible.

Driving

Most days have a small to moderate amount of driving. The longest drive will be approximately 3 hours.

Climate

The tour will take place at the peak of spring migration, marking the onset of spring and early summer in Ontario. While we can expect pleasant weather, rain and varying conditions are possible as we move between locations. It's best to dress in layers, as the weather can change quickly.

Mornings may be cool, while days are generally warm, but insects are likely, especially as the season transitions. We recommend packing warm layers, including sweaters, gloves, a warm hat, and a jacket. Long-sleeved shirts and trousers are advisable to protect against biting insects, as well as sunglasses, a sun hat, and a lightweight rain jacket.

Boat Trips

Depending on the weather, there will be a boat trip to the rarely visited tip of Long Point, where participants will get a glimpse of the work being done by Citizen Scientists and biologists monitoring migration at the Long Point Bird Observatory, the oldest such observatory in the Western Hemisphere.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- All accommodation
- Ground transportation (12-passenger vans)
- All meals and soft drinks
- 4 - 8 participants with one guide, 9 - 12 participants with two guides and two vehicles
- All park, conservation, entrance fees

Tour Price Does Not Include

- Flights to and from Toronto
 - Travel Insurance
 - Items of a personal nature
 - Taxes (13% HST)
 - Alcoholic beverages
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