



Field Guides Tour Report

Point Pelee Migration Spectacle 2015

May 9, 2015 to May 16, 2015

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Warblers, which are among the main targets on this tour, proved nicely cooperative this year, with 30 species seen. Yellow Warblers were hands down the most numerous. Photo by participant Jonathan Fry.

Ah, springtime at Point Pelee; one never knows what it might bring. This year, it brought a mixed bag, as far as the weather was concerned. We kicked off with two incredibly hot days that had us worried that any migrants would likely fly right on by Pelee and continue northwards. Immediately afterwards, the temperature plummeted (after a stormy night complete with tornado warnings) and got so cold that we were concerned that no new migrants would dare to even try crossing the lake.

In the end, we needn't have worried too much. In spite of the fact that there were no big fall outs or reverse migrations to enjoy, there were plenty of birds about; it just took a little more searching to track them down. Of course, warblers are among the main targets on this trip, and we fared exceptionally well, tallying 30 species of these little gems. Highlights among them were many, but I've just got to single out that wonderful female Kirtland's Warbler that was found on our first day. We didn't get there immediately, but that was fine, as the crowds that had enjoyed her earlier had disappeared, and we had a close encounter practically to ourselves!

That Kirtland's was our 18th species of warbler on that first day, after a pretty slow start. Also memorable that day were multiple smashing views of male Bay-breasted and Blackburnian warblers in brilliant breeding plumage, our only Northern Waterthrush at a small wetland near the start of the Tilden's Woods trail, alongside a confiding female Prothonotary Warbler, and an early male Blackpoll Warbler (again our only one) a little further along the trail. Elsewhere, we enjoyed a couple of striking male Cape May Warblers and a glowing male Prothonotary Warbler at Rondeau, scope views of a singing male Cerulean Warbler and a close Louisiana Waterthrush after a lot of searching in Baccus Woods, and a bold Canada Warbler at Paletta Park. And finally, we capped our warbler extravaganza with a dapper male Black-throated Blue Warbler (our only one!) along Black River Road, and a gorgeous Golden-winged Warbler on the Carden Plain.

As fantastic as the warblers were, the supporting cast was equally wonderful, and there were so many memorable sightings. In a marsh near Orillia, after we had just had point blank views of a bold Sora and a pair of Virginia Rails, an American Bittern started "pumping" a few yards away, then flew to an open part of the marsh to join a second bird. At Big Creek Marsh, a pair of Sandhill Cranes strode through the tall grass trumpeting loudly, while Marsh Wrens chattered in the cattails and one straddled a couple of reeds in a classic pose. Wet fields near Hillman Marsh held large flocks of sharply dressed

Black-bellied and American golden-plovers, along with a small number of Short-billed Dowitchers and a single Ruddy Turnstone. A male American Woodcock paused long enough between display flights for us to enjoy stellar spotlight views on the lawn of our hotel. And a surprise California Gull, a rarity here, spent about 10 minutes on the Tip, fortunately coinciding with our visit.

At Rondeau our only cuckoo, a Yellow-billed, perched quietly at the edge of a woodlot, near where a fuzzy young Great Horned Owl sat scowling down at us from its nest. A beautiful rufous morph Eastern Screech-Owl watched hundreds of birders pass by from a hollow tree in Tilden's Woods. Back at Rondeau, a smart pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers flew from dead tree to dead tree in the center of a roundabout, and our only Tufted Titmouse sang its chiming call just over our heads. An unusually bold Sedge Wren loudly proclaimed his territory from an exposed perch in the aptly named Sedge Wren Marsh at Carden and a Grasshopper Sparrow did likewise from a wire fence just a little further north. And finally, a ton of brilliant Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Orchard and Baltimore orioles brightened up even the grayest of days.

This was a fun trip, and a fun group with whom to make my return to Pelee after several years away. Many thanks to all of you for making my job so enjoyable and easy. I look forward to meeting up with all of you on another tour one day. Until that time, good birding to all, wherever your travels take you.

--Jay

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – Fittingly, we saw this one every day, including several pairs with goslings of various ages. [N]

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*) – A couple of pairs were seen at Big Creek Marsh. Stopping for the first ones was worthwhile, as we picked up a pair of cranes at the same time.

TRUMPETER SWAN (*Cygnus buccinator*) – A pair on a marsh along Black River Road almost looked like they belonged there, though the birds here are part of a controversial "reintroduction" program. Controversial, as there is no evidence that Trumpeters ever occurred in this part of the country historically.

WOOD DUCK (*Aix sponsa*) – Seen in ones and twos daily at Pelee, but our best views of this flashy duck were up in the Carden region, where we saw a couple on the rail pond.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – A dozen or so at Hillman Marsh.

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Anas americana*) – A couple of males in among the Gadwalls and Mallards at Hillman.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – The default duck throughout, though somehow we missed this species one day at Pelee.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*) – We picked out a single drake among the other ducks at Hillman.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – It must have been a pretty good year for this species in southern Ontario, as there seemed to be more around than usual. We had at least a half dozen at Hillman.

GREATER SCAUP (*Aythya marila*) – These have usually moved north by this time, but we saw a quartet of them flying off the Tip one morning, showing off their long white wing stripes, with plenty of Lesser Scaups round to compare them to, too.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – A fair number off the Tip on our first morning at Pelee.

LONG-TAILED DUCK (*Clangula hyemalis*) – About 50 of these northern ducks were still present on Lake Ontario, with a couple of them close enough in to shore for some pretty nice scope views.

BUFFLEHEAD (*Bucephala albeola*) – A half a dozen birds, including a nice male, off the East Beach at Pelee.

HOODED MERGANSER (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) – A lone female was floating on a pond along Black River Road on our afternoon in the Carden region. Males are incredibly tough to find this time of year here.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – Pretty numerous off the Tip and the Burlington lakeshore parks.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

RUFFED GROUSE (*Bonasa umbellus*) – I think Jonathan was the only one other than me to finally hear the drumming of a distant one in the Carden region. [*]

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – The re-establishment of this species in southern Ontario has obviously been a success based on the number of them we saw daily at Pelee!

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – A lone bird was calling off the West Beach as we searched for the Kirtland's Warbler.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Ron and I heard one at Big Creek. [*]

HORNED GREBE (*Podiceps auritus*) – A gorgeous breeding plumaged bird floated just offshore at Pelee's Northwest Beach on the morning we went hearing aid hunting.

RED-NECKED GREBE (*Podiceps grisegena*) – Superb views of a nesting pair on a custom-made nesting platform at Burloak Waterfront Park in Burlington. [N]

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Big numbers pretty much daily.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

AMERICAN BITTERN (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) – A probable one flew over the Tip early our first morning, though there seemed to be considerable

dissent over its identification. Fortunately we had an unequivocal trio of them near Orillia our last morning. The first started calling from a reedbed right next to us as we were enjoying the Virginia Rails and Sora, then flew up and joined a second bird at the back of the marsh while a third flew past overhead! A pretty memorable moment in my view.

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – Seen in small numbers most days.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – A single bird was seen at Hillman.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – Ron and Midge just got on this bird as it flew by overhead at Paletta Lakeshore Park in Burlington.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Seen daily in good numbers.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Pretty common up around Orillia, where we saw at least 5 on our final morning, including one that flew past with a fish, and a long string of aquatic vegetation, in its talons.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) – Fabulous looks at a pair coursing over the verdant fields of the Carden Plain on our final morning.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – A quick flyby at Pelee our first morning, then much better views of one that flew in and landed nearby at Rondeau. It was a bit tricky getting everyone on it, though, as of course it was the one time I didn't carry my scope, but we managed.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Kathleen found a distant perched adult while we enjoyed the large flocks of plovers near Hillman. Another adult flew past as we searched for a chat along the South Point Trail at Rondeau.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Surprisingly few, with just a couple of sightings as we drove down to Pelee from Toronto, and one or two around Baccus Woods.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

VIRGINIA RAIL (*Rallus limicola*) – Awesome close views of a cooperative bird at the Sedge Wren marsh at Carden, and again at a slightly more reticent pair the next morning near Orillia.

SORA (*Porzana carolina*) – Wow this one was bold! It emerged from the reeds at the back end of the marsh (near Orillia) then flew across towards us before strutting out into the open just a couple of meters away from us. Couldn't imagine getting better views than that!

Gruidae (Cranes)

SANDHILL CRANE (*Grus canadensis*) – Stopping for those Mute Swans at Big Creek paid off as we spotted a pair of cranes near the swans, and they put on a nice show, striding around in the open and bugling loudly. Love that sound! More were heard and seen in the Carden region.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*) – A nice surprise at Hillman on our first afternoon visit, just before the rain storm chased us back to the van. I had thought this bird had left a few days earlier, so wasn't expecting to see it. A rather rare species in southern Ontario.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – We had great side by side studies of this species and the next in the wet fields near Hillman Marsh on our first afternoon. About 50 of these lovely birds were seen altogether that afternoon.

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis dominica*) – A big group of over 100 of these dapper plovers created quite a traffic situation along the narrow back roads between Pelee and Hillman. The first mixed plover group we had closer to Hillman was a bit more enjoyable as we had them all to ourselves!

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Pretty much daily. We flushed one bird from a nest as we searched for Red-headed Woodpeckers at Rondeau, and we had a nice demonstration of the "broken-wing" act they perform so convincingly! We backed off and she settled back down pretty quickly. [N]

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*) – Quite scarce for such a common species. We saw 3 birds, all together along the shoreline at Paletta Lakeshore Park.

SOLITARY SANDPIPER (*Tringa solitaria*) – We only saw a single, Solitary Sandpiper, and that was along the boardwalk on the aptly named Woodland Trail at Pelee.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – We picked out a couple of these at Hillman Marsh on our second visit.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – A small group of these slim yellowlegs were feeding around the edge of a small pond in the Hillman area, and a couple were at Hillman the next day.

UPLAND SANDPIPER (*Bartramia longicauda*) – Excellent looks at several of this declining species on the Carden plain, where our best views came on the first afternoon, when we had one sitting on one of those zig-zag split rail fences, a male Eastern Bluebird perched right beside it.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – Everyone missed the first one I picked out of a large flock of shorebirds that whipped past as we watched the plovers, but luckily we spotted another in brilliant breeding plumage the next day, in the same field with all those dowitchers.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – A pair of these on the Tip one morning were a nice find.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – The most numerous shorebird, with a couple of hundred at Hillman and a few at the Tip one morning.

SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*) – A small group of these were among the many Dunlin at Hillman.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*) – Excellent scope views of a small group in a wet field as we drove to Hillman, and several more at the marsh itself, where we were just a bit too late to see a Long-billed Dowitcher that had been found earlier. The subspecies that commonly occurs here is the more rufous-colored, western form, *hendersoni*.

WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*) – Several in the Carden region, where we heard them performing their winnowing display, and had a good look at one perched high up on top of a hydro pole.

AMERICAN WOODCOCK (*Scolopax minor*) – Fantastic looks at a bird we spotlighted on the grassy lawn next to our hotel after dark one evening, after we heard it calling and displaying overhead.

WILSON'S PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus tricolor*) – A brightly colored female was a good find at Hillman, as it is quite a scarce spring migrant in southern Ontario.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – A small flock of these, mostly in non-breeding plumage, were on the Tip early one morning.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – The default gull, with lots seen daily.

CALIFORNIA GULL (*Larus californicus*) – I'm not a big gull fanatic, so I was pleased to have picked a 2nd cycle California Gull out of the gull flock at the Tip before any of the myriad other birders there had found it. It proved to be the rarity of the day in the park, though it only stuck around for about 10 minutes and everyone that raced down there later missed it.

HERRING GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) – A small number at Pelee, including several alongside the California Gull for good comparisons, and a single in Burlington.

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – A couple of these massive terns were at Hillman, and a few more along the shores of Lake Ontario.

BLACK TERN (*Chlidonias niger*) – Sarah really wanted to see this species, but she, and most everybody, missed those first few that went past at Northwest Beach. Luckily, we wound up with excellent looks at one that did a close flyby at Big Creek Marsh.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*) – A fair number flew past as we birded along various beaches at Pelee, and a few were also along the Lake Ontario shoreline.

FORSTER'S TERN (*Sterna forsteri*) – About a dozen of these pale-winged terns were roosting at Hillman, but they also flew around a bit and showed off their silvery upperwings. Another was seen flying past at Big Creek Marsh.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – As usual, only in towns and cities. [I]

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – A common, everyday bird.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus americanus*) – We didn't find the Summer Tanager or the Worm-eating Warbler that had been reported just outside of Rondeau Provincial Park, but we did have a few consolation prizes, and this was probably the best. It showed very well right next to the road as we were heading back to the car.

Strigidae (Owls)

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL (*Megascops asio*) – I was particularly pleased to see this one, as it was my first Rufous morph screech-owl ever. The bird was roosting in a hole high up along the Tilden's Woods Trail, where it remained for at least three days.

GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*) – A hot tip from the park staff at Rondeau led us to an owl nest just outside the park, and we had fine views of a half grown fuzzy juvenile peering at us from the nest. Despite some searching, we were unable to find either of its parents.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

COMMON NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles minor*) – Kathleen and Sarah saw one the first night at Pelee flying over the hotel at dusk.

EASTERN WHIP-POOR-WILL (*Antrostomus vociferus*) – One approached us after playback, and a couple of folks saw a shadow flit by just over our heads, but the bird didn't stick around and wouldn't come back a second time, though it continued to call from well back in the forest. [*]

Apodidae (Swifts)

CHIMNEY SWIFT (*Chaetura pelagica*) – A few seen daily overhead at Pelee, though for some, the single bird that flew over the Blue Elephant in Simcoe was the first one they got on to.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*) – A few birds at Pelee, and a single male that showed well in Baccus Woods.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) – We heard one at Skunk's Misery our first day, but it stayed too far back to see. A few days later we had superb views of a gorgeous pair at Rondeau, after a tip from a birder at the Visitor Center. This woodpecker has declined considerably in Ontario, and is listed as a species of Special Concern in the province.

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes carolinus*) – Heard or seen most days, with very good looks at one excavating a nest hole in Tilden's Woods. This species seems to be increasing in the province, and I've been finding plenty of them on the bird surveys I've been doing the past couple of weeks. [N]

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – We were getting a bit puzzled as we tried to find the woodpecker tapping continually in Baccus Woods, until I realized the bird was inside the tree working on a nest hole! Eventually it emerged and gave us some good views. [N]

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – The most commonly seen woodpecker, with one or more seen on most days.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*) – A single bird showed well at Paletta Lakeshore Park in Burlington, and another was seen along Black River Road.

NORTHERN FLICKER (*Colaptes auratus*) – We missed this one at Pelee, but saw them daily after we left there.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – Jonathan saw one on a roadside power line as we drove from Rondeau to Simcoe, and that was the only one until we scoped a distant bird at Carden. Another species that seems to be decreasing in the province.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus virens*) – It seemed that many of the flycatchers hadn't yet arrived, and we missed some species that I had expected. But pewees had already arrived in numbers and we saw a bunch of them at Pelee.

LEAST FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax minimus*) – The only Empid that we recorded, and I think the only one reported during our time at Pelee. We had just one or two most days.

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – Singles at Rondeau and in the Carden region. Always the earliest arriving of the flycatchers in the province.

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus crinitus*) – A couple were seen at Pelee, and a few at Rondeau and Baccus Woods, but it seemed to me that the vast majority of these birds hadn't arrived yet.

EASTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) – After the phoebe, this is usually the next species to arrive in the province. Fair numbers were about, and we saw them daily.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus migrans*) – We saw a significant percentage of the remaining Ontario population of this rare species!

We had our first along a paved road towards the south end of the Carden Plain, and then Ron picked out another bird near the Windmill Ranch. With only about 10-20 pairs left in Ontario, it is one of the province's rarest breeding species.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO (*Vireo flavifrons*) – We found a pair at Skunk's Misery on our first afternoon, and I would not have been surprised had they been our only ones, but we had a couple more excellent sightings over the next days at Pelee and also heard one singing at Baccus Woods.

WARBLING VIREO (*Vireo gilvus*) – A very commonly heard voice, and often seen bird throughout the trip.

PHILADELPHIA VIREO (*Vireo philadelphicus*) – We only had two of these, on consecutive days at Pelee, but we had excellent views of both.

Kathleen spotted our first, a bird that was hanging out at about eye level, near the tram stop at the halfway point.

RED-EYED VIREO (*Vireo olivaceus*) – Even more numerous than the Warbling Vireo, and we had plenty of them daily.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – In good numbers daily, with several flocks of migrants around Pelee.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – None at Pelee, but plenty everywhere else. We did see one crow our first morning near the Tip, but as we neither saw nor heard any American Crows there, and there was a single Fish Crow reported later that morning, chances are we actually saw a Fish Crow. Without hearing its diagnostic call, however, we have to leave this as an unidentified crow species.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – A single bird flew over as we birded in the Carden region, the wedge-shaped tail and characteristic croaking call easily distinguishing it from the numerous crows there.

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – A single bird flew past as we were watching the Short-billed Dowitchers in the wet field near Hillman, and a few folks got pretty good views of it.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

PURPLE MARTIN (*Progne subis*) – Just a few birds in the Long Point region, with pretty nice looks at a couple of males flying over the entrance to Baccus Woods.

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Numerous and seen every day in healthy numbers.

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – A few offshore among the many Tree and Barn swallows at Pelee, but best seen at Burloak Park in Burlington.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Lots daily, including the nesting birds under the shelter at the Tip washrooms. [N]

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – A couple of birds were seen by some at Hillman, and we all caught up with more along the Lake Ontario waterfront.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE (*Parus atricapillus*) – Oddly scarce in Pelee, where our only record was a heard only bird the first day. Common everywhere else though.

TUFTED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus bicolor*) – One of Gary's target birds, so he was pretty happy (as we all were) when this one flew right to us in response to my whistled imitation along Rondeau's South Point Trail.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta carolinensis*) – We saw just a single bird in the great Carolinian forest along the Tulip Tree Trail at Rondeau.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*) – Heard at least most days, and seen pretty regularly at Pelee and Rondeau.

SEDGE WREN (*Cistothorus platensis*) – What a showboat this bird was. We had an exuberant one in the Sedge Wren marsh at Carden on our first afternoon's visit, then an even bolder one the next morning that was up and singing next to the road as we drove by. All we had to do for a good look was roll the windows down!

MARSH WREN (*Cistothorus palustris*) – Lots were calling at Big Creek Marsh, and we had some incredible close views of a couple that chased each other around and sang from the reeds just a couple of meters away. I love it when they perch on two reed stalks with their legs splayed wide.

CAROLINA WREN (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – Heard along the Tilden's Woods Trail at Pelee, but that bird proved to be elusive, and we only caught up with this species at Paletta Park in Burlington, where we had super scope views of a singing bird along the little woodland trail there.

Poliptilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliptila caerulea*) – Seen pretty much daily, with some especially nice views of a nest-building pair along the South Point Trail at Rondeau.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – A couple of late migrants were still hanging around at Pelee on our first morning there.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia sialis*) – A lovely male surprised us along the trail at Baccus Woods, popping up just as we neared the parking lot after a long afternoon hike. A few more were seen on the Carden Plain, including one sharing a fence with the Upland Sandpiper.

VEERY (*Catharus fuscescens*) – The main push of thrushes came through after our tour, but there was a small wave on our first morning at Pelee, when we saw five of these birds, mainly along the Woodland Trail.

SWAINSON'S THRUSH (*Catharus ustulatus*) – Our only ones were on our first morning at Pelee, when we saw three birds all together feeding low along and on the Woodland Trail.

WOOD THRUSH (*Hylocichla mustelina*) – Heard several times, but the only one we saw was on the Tulip Tree Trail at Rondeau, where some persistence led to us tracking down a singing bird, which then dropped to the forest floor to start feeding.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – A common and familiar sight on a daily basis.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Another bird we saw in fair numbers every day.

BROWN THRASHER (*Toxostoma rufum*) – We had only one at Pelee, another at Rondeau, then found them to be numerous on the Carden Plain, where we saw at least a half dozen.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Too many for my liking. [I]

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – There weren't many about, but we saw a few small flocks on our first couple of days at Pelee.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – Heard far more often than seen, though we got decent views of one along the Tilden's Woods Trail at Pelee and several at Rondeau.

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia motacilla*) – It took us a long time to track this one down on territory in Baccus Woods, but when we finally found it, we had fantastic looks at it in the creekside vegetation.

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – The only one we saw was with the female Prothonotary Warbler at the start of the Tilden's Woods trail. Others were heard in Baccus Woods and along the Black River Road.

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER (*Vermivora cyanoptera*) – Our first at Rondeau eluded a couple of folks, but the next morning we found a male singing next to the parking lot at Baccus Woods, absolutely glowing in the bright early morning sunshine.

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) – Our 30th, and final warbler species. We found this one, a gorgeous singing male, on our final morning near the Sedge Wren marsh, then heard another 4 or 5 as we continued our drive north of the marsh.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) – A high of 5 birds on our first day at Pelee, with several other sightings through the rest of the week.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER (*Protonotaria citrea*) – By no means a guaranteed species on this tour, as it is quite a scarce breeder in Ontario. We would have been happy with just the female we saw at Pelee, but the male along the boardwalk on Rondeau's Tulip Tree Trail was spectacular, and made us even happier!

TENNESSEE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis peregrina*) – Moving through in good numbers during the trip, and we heard and/or saw them daily. One of the most numerous warblers we saw at Rondeau.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis celata*) – Always a rather scarce passage migrant, so the one we saw so well in the mixed feeding group of warblers at the Northwest Beach just before our pizza dinner was a good find, and our only one of the trip.

NASHVILLE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*) – Surprisingly few were about, and we managed just a fleeting sighting or two at Sleepy Hollow picnic site one day, then much better views of 3 or 4 at Rondeau.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – One of the few warbler species that actually breed at Pelee, and one of the more commonly encountered species.

HOODED WARBLER (*Setophaga citrina*) – As we searched for Worm-eating Warbler outside of Rondeau Park, we came across a small party of birds including a female Hooded, which we first mistook for a female Wilson's until she flashed the white in our tail. We subsequently had much better views of her as she fed actively in the underbrush. Unfortunately a vocal male the next day at Baccus Woods just wouldn't show itself.

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Another of the warbler species I think of as "common" that wasn't really that numerous, though we did have excellent looks at several at Pelee and a male along Black River Road.

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER (*Setophaga kirtlandii*) – On every previous trip to Pelee, no Kirtland's Warbler had ever been reported while I was at the park, so when I got word at 3:00 PM our first afternoon that a female had been found, I was pretty stoked. But, with all that was going on, it was over 4 hours later that we finally made it to the spot where 100+ people had already seen it, and only 4 or 5 other birders were around trying to refind it, as it had been some time since the last reported sighting. After a first sweep along the trail proved unsuccessful, we turned back and then got word that the others had found it just ahead of us! We rushed forward and were treated to spectacular views as she fed on and near the trail for the next 10 minutes or so in full view! A long-awaited lifer for me, and certainly the bird of the trip for the group!

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Setophaga tigrina*) – One our first day, and 3 the next day at Pelee were all rather drab females, so we were really pleased to find 3 more birds at Rondeau, two of which were brilliant males that gave us some wonderful looks.

CERULEAN WARBLER (*Setophaga cerulea*) – One of the main targets for us at Baccus Woods, as we narrowly missed this one at Pelee. It took a fair bit of hiking through some unimaginably gorgeous hardwood forest before we finally heard the distinctive song of a Cerulean, but we just couldn't locate that first bird. We moved on reluctantly, but soon came across another singing bird, and this one we managed to spot high in the canopy. By sticking with it, we got several decent looks before it came lower and in better light and we wound up with excellent scope views of it!

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – There weren't many about this trip, and we saw only 4 in total, including a couple our first day at Pelee, another on that cold day near the Marsh Boardwalk, and a good-looking male that showed well at Paletta Park.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) – Maggie's were one of the more numerous warblers during our stay at Pelee, and we had numerous nice encounters with these flashy little birds on most days.

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER (*Setophaga castanea*) – This is usually one of the less common warbler species, so I was pleased to see so many of them this year. By my count we saw 11 birds over 5 different days at Pelee, Rondeau, and Paletta Park in Burlington. Of these all but a couple were stunning males, most of which gave us very pleasing views.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER (*Setophaga fusca*) – This flamboyant warbler was among the more regularly encountered species and we had numerous fine views of males in all their spring finery.

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*) – Hands down the most numerous warbler of the trip. Even on that cold morning when there were few birds about, there was always a healthy supply of Yellow Warblers to brighten our spirits.

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) – One of the most numerous warblers at Pelee this trip, with 20+ seen daily there, and plenty of others throughout the trip, with most being males in good breeding plumage.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Setophaga striata*) – One of the later migrant warblers, and I wasn't certain we would connect with this species so early in May in a year with a rather late spring. But word of one along the boardwalk in Tilden's Woods lured us in beyond the roosting screech-owl we had come to see, and we only had to walk until we came across the warbler paparazzi to get super looks at a fine male feeding quite low and near the trail. It was to be our only one of the trip, unsurprisingly.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – We came awfully close to missing this species, as we bailed on the only one we came close to at Pelee when word that the Kirtland's was just up the trail reached us. Fortunately (and much to Sarah's delight), we heard one calling along Black River Road, and managed to lure it in to the roadside for beautiful views of a dapper male, which kept alive our hopes of hitting 30 warbler species for the trip!.

PALM WARBLER (*Setophaga palmarum*) – An early migrant, with most birds having passed through by the time we run the trip. But we found a couple of late stragglers together our first evening at Northwest Beach, and a single bird the following day at the same site.

PINE WARBLER (*Setophaga pinus*) – Another early migrant, but this one breeds in southern Ontario and we had great looks at a male on territory in Baccus Woods.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (*Setophaga coronata*) – Usually by this time of year there are mostly females of this early migrant passing through, but perhaps due to the late spring, there were quite a few males, too. We saw this species daily in small numbers, though there were quite a few, mostly males, at Paletta Park in Burlington.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (WEST MEXICO) (*Setophaga coronata nigrifrons*)

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*) – There weren't overwhelming numbers of this one, but we still had several fine views of them throughout the week.

CANADA WARBLER (*Cardellina canadensis*) – While we had acceptable views of a couple of birds in Tilden's Woods, I think everyone was grateful for that fabulous singing male that put on such a great show in the cedar hedge at Paletta Park. Capping that off, we saw another male quite well that afternoon along Black River Road.

WILSON'S WARBLER (*Cardellina pusilla*) – This species isn't as common in the east as it is out west, so it wasn't too surprising that our only one was that bright male we found during our hearing aid search at Northwest Beach.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

EASTERN TOWHEE (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) – While we saw a couple at Sleepy Hollow in Pelee, we had far better views of several of these in old field type habitat at Rondeau.

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*) – Singles on our way down to Pelee, at Pelee itself and at Rondeau, a bit surprising for this usually common species. The only place we saw it in reasonable numbers was at Paletta Park.

FIELD SPARROW (*Spizella pusilla*) – We saw only one pair, near the Red-headed Woodpeckers at Rondeau, but they showed beautifully. We also heard the unmistakable song of these birds a few other times at Baccus Woods and the Carden Plain.

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – Though this is a common bird of open fields and agricultural areas in Ontario, we didn't come across them until we got to the Carden Plain, where we saw and heard plenty of them.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW (*Ammodramus savannarum*) – It took a couple of tries to finally see one, but we wound up with superb looks at a singing bird on a roadside fence in the Carden Alvar.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – It always surprises me how scarce this bird is at Pelee, where we only heard one. Once we left the park, we encountered them in the high numbers I normally expect.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW (*Melospiza lincolni*) – Our only one showed up in the same bush as our lone female Hooded Warbler near Rondeau.

SWAMP SPARROW (*Melospiza georgiana*) – Get in the appropriate habitat and these sparrows are pretty common. We saw quite a few up north, particularly in the Sedge Wren Marsh at Carden.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) – The bulk of these birds had already passed through, but we found a few lingering migrants at both Pelee and Rondeau, and heard their beautiful song in the Carden region, where they breed.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) – A small party of them at the Tip our first morning, then scattered individuals during the rest of the trip, including a couple in some sparse shrubbery out on the Carden Plain, where they looked a little out of place.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

SCARLET TANAGER (*Piranga olivacea*) – After seeing 15+ of these spectacular birds our first morning at Pelee, many of them males, think we expected to see them every day, but we had no more at Pelee the next two days and only a single female at Rondeau, and a lone male at Baccus Woods over the rest of the trip.

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – Seen in small numbers most days. Especially memorable was finding a female on a nest in a vine tangle at eye level near the woodland trail at Paletta Park. [N]

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – These lovely birds were pretty common throughout the trip. We kicked off with a couple of birds at Skunk's Misery, then saw 20+ birds the next morning at Pelee. We wound up recording them every day, with several fabulous views of birds feeding low next to the trails at Pelee.

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*) – Underwhelming numbers this trip, with just a few birds at Pelee, and none that blew us away with great views. We finally ended up with nice scope views of a singing male along the South Point Trail at Rondeau.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

BOBOLINK (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) – I always enjoy watching these birds perform their aerial displays and singing their bubbly songs, and we all enjoyed this wonderful experience in the lush grasslands of the Carden Plain, where these birds are still pretty common.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Loads of them everyday and everywhere. If they weren't so abundant, I think folks would appreciate their beauty so much more.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*) – Like the Bobolink, this grassland species is declining due to reduced habitat and changing farming practices in southern Ontario. Fortunately there is still plenty of great habitat up at Carden, where we saw several of these delightful birds.

COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – Abundant pretty much everywhere.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – Seen daily throughout, but seemingly not as numerous as Red-wings and grackles, though after the first hour or two at Pelee, you just stop looking at blackbirds.

ORCHARD ORIOLE (*Icterus spurius*) – The experience with this species at Pelee always creates a false impression as to their abundance in Ontario. While there are always plenty about at Pelee (20+ birds seen daily there), they are actually quite scarce and local as breeders elsewhere in the province.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE (*Icterus galbula*) – Pelee is one of the best places to see this species, with large numbers (50+) seen daily, and often low in the underbrush and close to the trails. We had plenty of these fiery birds every day.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – A pair in a residential area at Rondeau was our first, and a few others were seen in Simcoe and Burlington.

This is an introduced species here in the east, and is generally found in urban areas here.

PURPLE FINCH (*Haemorhous purpureus*) – A female at Pelee on our first morning, then a fine pair along the roadside in the Carden region.

PINE SISKIN (*Spinus pinus*) – Oddly we saw just a single bird just outside the park at Rondeau. Surely there were more of this normally gregarious species around?

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*) – Just a handful at Pelee, but pretty common everywhere else on the tour.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Generally only in urban areas. [I]

MAMMALS

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – Three at Rondeau were our only ones. One ran across the road ahead of the van as we were leaving the park, followed by a second one, and then a deer, all in the same place in the space of a few seconds. I was hoping to see a large predator hot on their heels, but no such luck!

SNOWSHOE HARE (*Lepus americanus*) – A rabbit we saw briefly along the Black River Road appeared more like this species than a cottontail, and the habitat seemed better for Snowshoe Hare, too.

PLAIN EASTERN CHIPMUNK (*Tamias striatus*) – Baccus Woods, in particular, was crawling with these little guys!

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – Numerous throughout, with lots of black morph ones along with the "normal" gray type.

RED SQUIRREL (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) – A few in conifer dominated forest in Baccus Woods and the Carden region.

MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*) – One for some in a canal at Big Creek, and another in the Sedge Wren Marsh at Carden.

COYOTE (*Canis latrans*) – As we birded at Paletta Park, a large male loped into the center of the loop trail we were on and started barking and yapping like crazy, obviously perturbed by something. We thought perhaps we were near a den, but park employees told us that wasn't the case, and the den was on the other side of the park from us. We never did figure out what had this dog so riled up, but we had great views of him!

NORTHERN RACCOON (*Procyon lotor*) – A handful at Pelee and Rondeau, generally sleepy looking ones perring out of tree hollows or curled up in a large fork.

STRIPED SKUNK (*Mephitis mephitis*) – Edith spotted this one foraging in the tall grass on the Carden Plain, and we had some great looks at him rooting around for a morning snack.

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – A lone one in hot pursuit of the two bunnies at Rondeau.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 170 bird taxa and 10 mammal taxa