



Field Guides Tour Report

Point Pelee Migration Spectacle 2017

May 6, 2017 to May 13, 2017

Jay VanderGaast

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*Though Scarlet Tanagers weren't all that numerous this trip, the ones we did see, like this brilliant male in Tilden's Woods, played nice and offered up incredible looks!
Photo by participant Siewlin Wee.*

As the start date for this tour approached, I was keeping an eye on the weather with considerable trepidation. Reports from Pelee were dire, with heavy rain, strong north winds, and colder than normal temperatures. And the day before we were to start, most of southern Ontario was under a heavy rainfall advisory, which was especially worrisome considering that many lake front areas were already flooded. On top of this, many flights in and out of Toronto were delayed or canceled due to the weather conditions, so there was some concern not everyone would make it in on time. But, despite all the predictions, everyone did arrive on time (though a bag went missing for a couple of days!) and the weather improved just in time for our arrival.

Though it wasn't a classic spring migration, by all accounts it was equally slow all over northeastern North America, so I felt we did quite well under the circumstances. We may have had to work a little harder than usual on several days, but the rewards were still there to be found, and we did enjoy one of the better migration pushes of the spring on our third and final day at Pelee. And most of the birds we did find were wonderfully cooperative and showed well for all.

The big push of migrants on our third day at Pelee was easily the highlight of our time there, and the star of the show was a gorgeous male Kirtland's Warbler we came across along the West Beach Trail. And the best part was that we found it early, prior to all the hordes of people that descended on the area once word got out! This is now the 3rd straight tour on which I've seen this rare species, perhaps an indication that it is making a comeback. Other warbler highlights from that day include a larger than normal number of Palm Warblers, a couple of stunning Prothonotary Warblers at close range along the Woodland Trail, and incredible views of an array of other beauties, including Cape May, Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue, and Northern Parula, the latter of which we actually got scope views of! The first couple of days, though not as busy, yielded some goodies as well, including our only Canada Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat of the tour. Red-headed Woodpeckers, Blue-headed Vireos, Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, a Grasshopper Sparrow, and at least one of each possible thrush species were among the other finds that kept us happy between warblers. Afternoons here were generally spent at Hillman Marsh, where good numbers of Black-bellied Plovers and Dunlin were wonderful to see, and a trio of Pectoral Sandpipers and a lone Long-billed Dowitcher were among the less common visitors here. The evening display flights of American Woodcocks near our hotel were also memorable, especially for the folks that went off-roading for a look at a calling male in the bush!

Outside of Pelee, the cool north winds prevailed, keeping things challenging, especially since many species were not yet on their breeding territories, as expected. But, again, persistence paid off with scope views of a singing Winter Wren, and males of Chestnut-sided and Bay-breasted warblers at Rondeau, as well as a returning vagrant White-winged Dove. In the Long Point area, a very territorial male Pine Warbler very nearly landed on us, an obliging Eastern Whip-poor-will popped out on the roadside after dusk, and a gorgeous male Hooded Warbler, a curious Yellow-throated Vireo, and a singing Ovenbird perched overhead saved the day at our last stop before hitting the road. Oh, and the largest flock of Rusty Blackbirds I've ever encountered was a nice, late surprise in the magnificent Backus Woods. Further north we added Black-crowned Night-Heron, Long-tailed Ducks and a late Little Gull at Paletta Park in Burlington, a perched Peregrine Falcon at Cranberry Marsh, and a stunning pair of Red-necked Grebes offshore at Thickson's Woods.

Finishing up in the Carden Alvar is always a treat, and I think folks are often surprised at the beauty of the area, and the many wonderful, and rather local birds that we encounter here. Our brief time there resulted in sightings of local specialties like Upland Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, and the endangered eastern race of Loggerhead Shrike, plus Marsh Wren, Bobolink, Vesper Sparrow and Eastern Bluebird. And most memorable of all were two sightings on our final morning: namely a male American Bittern calling and displaying right out in the open on a grassy mound, and two pairs of curious Virginia Rails, one of which walked right up to within two feet of us! Incredible!

Non-bird highlights of the trip included my first-ever Eastern Foxsnake at Pelee, a good variety of delicious Lake Erie perch and pickerel, and some great company to share everything with. Despite the weather, this was a fun trip, and I'm glad you all chose to join me this year. I'd be happy to see you all on another tour again someday, but let's hope it's somewhere warmer next time, eh?

--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*) – Numerous and seen every day, including many goslings at Hillman Marsh. [N]

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*) – A few birds in the Big Creek Marsh near Long Point, then a large number (52 by one local's count) at Cranberry Marsh at Whitby. [I]

TRUMPETER SWAN (*Cygnus buccinator*) – Siewlin and perhaps one or two others saw a lone bird among the many Mute Swans at Cranberry, but though we scanned through the swans a couple more times, we were unable to re-find it for the rest of us. [I]

WOOD DUCK (*Aix sponsa*) – One bird flew through the forest as we birded the Woodland Trail at Pelee.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – The most numerous duck at Hillman, with 40-50 birds present.

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Anas americana*) – A couple of pairs were scoped at Hillman, and a lone male was with a pair of Gadwall at Cranberry.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – The only duck we saw every day of the tour.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*) – A lone male was scoped at Hillman on our first visit there.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – At least a dozen birds were present at Hillman.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – A single pair of these elegant ducks were picked out of the hordes of other ducks at Hillman.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN) (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – Hillman Marsh also held a couple of pairs of these handsome small ducks.

GREATER SCAUP (*Aythya marila*) – A group of 8 were off the tip at Point Pelee one day, and a half a dozen were seen along the causeway on the way down to Long Point.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – The more likely scaup on shallower bodies of water, as at Hillman Marsh, where there was a small flock on each of our visits.

LONG-TAILED DUCK (*Clangula hyemalis*) – Most had already moved on northwards, but there were still a fair number out on Lake Ontario, where we had some good scope views.

BUFFLEHEAD (*Bucephala albeola*) – A lone female was at Hillman Marsh on our first visit there.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – Seen commonly off the tip at Point Pelee, as well as at several stops along the Lake Ontario shoreline.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

RUFFED GROUSE (*Bonasa umbellus*) – One strolled out onto the edge of the road as we were heading to our hotel after an afternoon visit to the Carden area. It then flew up almost right into the van, giving a couple of folks on the left side a fairly decent view.

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – It wasn't that long ago that turkeys were a rarity at Point Pelee, but that is no longer true, and we saw them daily there. All of Ontario's turkeys are descended from 274 birds that were released in the province as part of a reintroduction program in 1984.

Gaviidae (Loons)

COMMON LOON (*Gavia immer*) – A couple of birds flew over as we birded at Big Creek and then Siewlin scoped one she found on Lake Ontario at Paletta Park.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Heard at a small marsh near Orillia. [*]

HORNED GREBE (*Podiceps auritus*) – A bird that was transitioning into breeding plumage was seen a couple of times off of the tip at Point Pelee, while another similarly plumaged bird was at Hillman Marsh.

RED-NECKED GREBE (*Podiceps grisegena*) – The park where we usually see these birds nesting was under construction and access was closed off, so I thought we would miss them, but then we spotted a lovely pair swimming just offshore at Thickson's Woods at Whitby for a wonderful surprise.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Abundant around the lakes.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

AMERICAN BITTERN (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) – Elaine and Cynthia simultaneously spotted a bittern standing atop a grassy knoll next to a small marsh in the Carden area on our final morning. We backed the van up, then rolled down the windows and were treated to an incredible performance as the bird began calling loudly and displaying over and over again while we watched in fascination! Easily one of the (many) highlights of the tour, and a fantastic way to end things.

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – A few scattered birds were seen, but I felt like numbers have been down, perhaps as a result of the extremely high water everywhere.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – A dapper adult was flushed from its roost at Paletta Park, but we managed to see where it landed and found just the right window through which to get scope views of it.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Numerous and seen daily.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – Singles flew by overhead on two days at Pelee, and another circled around over one of the forest tracts in the Long Point area.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Seen on a couple of days at Pelee, with adults flying overhead, and a couple of subadult birds sitting in a field near Hillman Marsh. Another adult was seen flying low over Big Creek NWA.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK (*Buteo platypterus*) – One soared over a forest clearing in the Long Point region, then we had even better views of a perched bird during a brief, but unsuccessful stop to look for Blue-winged Warbler at the Glen Major forest.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Singles were over Pelee on a couple of days, and a few birds were seen during a couple of the drives. The most common and often seen hawk in the province.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

VIRGINIA RAIL (*Rallus limicola*) – A marsh in the Carden area really came through for these birds, and we had amazing responses from 2 pairs, with all 4 birds coming into view at the same time, and one bold and curious rail parading right up to us, stopping 2 feet short of my feet. Now I know what they look like from directly overhead!

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*) – A lone bird at Big Creek NWA was the only one we saw.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Up to 30 of these handsome plovers were present in the shorebird cell at Hillman Marsh on each of our visits there, with most birds already in their beautiful breeding dress.

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Seen almost daily, with memorable sightings including the ones on the roof of the visitor center at Pelee (presumably nesting there) and a pair with 4 incredibly cute, fuzzy youngsters along one of the Concession roads in the Long Point region. [N]

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

UPLAND SANDPIPER (*Bartramia longicauda*) – It took a while to find the right field for these cryptic birds, but our persistence paid off when we spotted one sitting up on a boulder, where it remained long enough for us to enjoy lengthy scope views before winging off with its partner.

RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*) – A single bird was among the Black-bellied Plovers on our first visit to Hillman.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – The most numerous of the shorebirds at Hillman, though a high of only about 100 birds one day was far below the totals I've seen here some years.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER (*Calidris melanotos*) – Not very common on spring migration here, but we saw 3 of these large peeps at Hillman Marsh one afternoon.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – There was some debate going on as to the correct identification of the lone dowitcher at Hillman one afternoon, but I learned the next day that photos clearly showed it to be a Long-billed, which is generally far outnumbered by Short-billed here.

WILSON'S SNIBE (*Gallinago delicata*) – Only in the Carden area, where we had good looks at a couple of birds.

AMERICAN WOODCOCK (*Scolopax minor*) – These birds were displaying near our Leamington hotel again this year, but unfortunately weren't using the large grassy field next door as they did last year. We were still treated to awesome display flights, and for the 3 folks that dared venture into the bush, excellent views of a bird in the ground were a real treat.

SOLITARY SANDPIPER (*Tringa solitaria*) – True to its name, a lone bird was seen along Pelee's Woodland Trail on two consecutive days.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Small numbers were at Hillman each day.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – There were also a few of these at Hillman, and it was nice to be able to compare the two species side by side.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Large numbers daily at Hillman, with only a few birds in breeding plumage.

LITTLE GULL (*Hydrocoloeus minutus*) – A very distant gull roosting on a floating log offshore of Burlington's Paletta Park initially looked good for this species, and once a non-breeding Bonaparte's Gull landed next to it for a good comparison before being chased off, I felt even better about this identification. With my second group a week later, we had what was probably the same bird flying around just offshore, which made me feel even more certain we made the correct call.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – The default gull in most of the province.

HERRING GULL (AMERICAN) (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) – A couple of these larger gulls were seen off the tip, and a lone bird was with a bunch of Ring-billed Gulls at Hillman one day.

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – Up to 15 of these large terns were present at Hillman each afternoon.

BLACK TERN (*Chlidonias niger*) – Siewlin picked out this bird way in the distance as we birded on that cold and windy morning at Big Creek. We then watched as the bird flew closer and closer until it passed by just in front of the viewing platform, giving us wonderful views.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*) – A couple off of the tip one day, and a few birds along the shores of Lake Ontario.

FORSTER'S TERN (*Sterna forsteri*) – A small number of these silvery-winged terns were roosting at Hillman each afternoon.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [H]

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) – This is the third summer that this local rarity has been present at Rondeau Provincial Park, and we had a nice look at it at the feeders of the pink-trimmed house on our second pass. This was a country tick for me on last year's tour.

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Common and seen daily, including one bird on a nest along the Schuster Trail. [N]

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

EASTERN WHIP-POOR-WILL (*Antrostomus vociferus*) – With the heavy rains this spring, it was inadvisable to use the sand roads in the Long Point region, so I was forced to try and find a new site for this bird. Luckily, it worked like a charm, and we heard two birds calling from our chosen spot along a good gravel road, then had excellent views as one came and sat on the roadside, then on a pine stub before flying back to the forest.

Apodidae (Swifts)

CHIMNEY SWIFT (*Chaetura pelagica*) – Like many species, swifts were a little late in arriving due to the cool spring conditions, but we still managed to see a few, including a pair doing a courtship flight overhead at Rondeau.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – Not seen at Pelee, but we picked up a few of these elsewhere along the way.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) – This lovely bird has seen a steep decline in the province, so it was nice to see quite a few of them this year. First we had several encounters at Pelee, including one that flew in next to the visitor's center as we waited for the shuttle to the tip. We also saw a couple at Rondeau, with one bird showing up right overhead at our picnic lunch site.

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes carolinus*) – This species has shown the opposite trend in the province to that of the Red-headed Woodpecker, with numbers increasing and the species expanding their range in the province greatly. We recorded them daily on the tour, except for the final day at Carden.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – A couple of birds showed well during our walk in the lovely Backus Woods.

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – A commonly seen species throughout the tour.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (*Picoides villosus*) – Some folks saw one at the Rondeau feeders, and the rest of us caught up with another at Paletta Park in Burlington.

NORTHERN FLICKER (*Colaptes auratus*) – Pretty common throughout, with the birds here belonging to the "Yellow-shafted" variety.

PILEATED WOODPECKER (*Dryocopus pileatus*) – Great scope looks at one in the Backus woods after some people missed the previous one along the Tulip Tree Trail at Rondeau.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – Freddy spotted our only one, a handsome male, on the Carden Alvar on our final morning.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – And Joann spotted this bird perched on a dead tree along the Lake Ontario shoreline as we scanned Cranberry Marsh for waterfowl.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

LEAST FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax minimus*) – Flycatchers were another group of birds that were greatly delayed in returning due to the cold spring, and this was the only Empid to have arrived back yet, making it a pretty easy identification.

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – This is the earliest returnee among the flycatchers, but I was still somewhat surprised to see one along the West Beach Trail at Pelee. Less of a surprise was finding a nest on one of the sign kiosks at Carden. [N]

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus crinitus*) – Though I saw my first one in the province on May 1st, there really weren't many of these back yet, and in the end we only heard one or two birds at Backus Woods. [*]

EASTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) – A couple along the West Beach Trail at Pelee, then we saw them daily after we left the Pelee area.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus migrans*) – An endangered species in the province, with a 2015 survey revealing only 11 breeding pairs left in Ontario, with the Carden region being the main breeding area. A program to release captive-bred birds has met with some success, but for now the species' fate in precarious at best. We saw a distant pair on our afternoon visit to the region.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO (*Vireo flavifrons*) – A spontaneous last-minute stop in a promising forest block near Simcoe didn't net us the hoped-for Cerulean Warblers, but this bird and a Hooded Warbler were excellent consolation prizes!

BLUE-HEADED VIREO (*Vireo solitarius*) – Normally by this time, Blue-headed Vireos have mostly gone through the south, and few if any are seen at Pelee. Not the case this year, as we saw single birds on each of our first two days at the park, and up to a dozen of them on the third day's visit, which was easily the best migrant day of the trip.

WARBLING VIREO (*Vireo gilvus*) – Pretty amazing that we only saw one of these normally common vireos (and no Red-eyed!), and that was at Paletta Park in Burlington.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Seen daily, with some good-sized migrating flocks at Point Pelee's tip on a couple of mornings.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – Not seen at all in Point Pelee NP, where the rare Fish Crow is maybe even more likely in the park at this time of year. We did see a couple around Hillman though, then plenty once we left Pelee.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Increasing in the regions along Lake Ontario's north shore, and we saw our lone one as it flew over Thickson's Woods.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

PURPLE MARTIN (*Progne subis*) – Small numbers in the Pelee area, including a nice perched male at Hillman.

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Overall quite numerous throughout, with many using the nest boxes on the Carden Alvar, and a few using natural nest sites in tree snags around Pelee. [N]

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – Just a couple of birds at Hillman, as they hadn't returned in numbers yet.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Seen in good numbers daily, making it hard to imagine it's actually a species of concern in the province. [N]

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – As with the Bank Swallow, this species hadn't really arrived back in numbers, and we were only able to pick out singles at Hillman a couple of times.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE (*Poecile atricapillus*) – It's always a bit of a surprise to not see this common bird at Pelee, but it is scarce there at this time of year. We did see one at Hillman, then plenty more at the other sites we visited.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta canadensis*) – Another species that has usually moved through the Pelee area by now, but we saw quite a few of them daily there, as well as almost everywhere else we visited.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta carolinensis*) – A lone bird at Pelee, then seen regularly around Rondeau, Long Point, and points north.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

HOUSE WREN (*Troglodytes aedon*) – Heard more than seen, but we recorded this common wren daily on the tour.

WINTER WREN (*Troglodytes hiemalis*) – A singing bird along the Spicebush Trail at Rondeau was a bit tricky to locate, but when we did, we had incredible scope views of it belting out its song. Hard to believe all that sound comes out of such a tiny bird!

MARSH WREN (*Cistothorus palustris*) – Great looks at a responsive bird in a small roadside marsh near Orillia. Love how they often straddle a couple of different cattail stalks while singing.

CAROLINA WREN (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – This species has moved steadily northward in the past few decades, and is now reasonably common in many areas of the province. We saw them nicely at a few sites, including a pair that seemed to be building a nest in a hollow stump at Pelee. [N]

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – Lots of these were moving through, and were easily seen with the general lack of foliage on the trees.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus satrapa*) – A bird along the Schuster Trail was pretty late for Pelee. Later we had incredible scope views of an unusually stationary bird at Thickson's Woods!

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – Another of the many species that should have mostly passed through Pelee by this time, but there were plenty of them still around, and we saw them daily.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia sialis*) – We found a few of these lovely birds on the Carden Alvar, where there are plenty of nest boxes available for them to use.

VEERY (*Catharus fuscescens*) – Beautiful views of this rusty thrush on our first walk along the Woodland Trail at Pelee, then seen again at Rondeau.

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH (*Catharus minimus*) – Our lone bird was seen along the West Bech Trail, hopping along on the trail ahead of us, and allowing us good scope views.

SWAINSON'S THRUSH (*Catharus ustulatus*) – Thrushes were behind schedule, as were many other birds, and there were very few about, though we managed to see all the possible species. We only had two singles of this species at Pelee this trip.

HERMIT THRUSH (*Catharus guttatus*) – Generally an early migrant, but there were still a couple of birds in the south, and we saw singles each day at Pelee, including one feeding near to the trail by the Cactus Field, where we'd gone to look for the chat.

WOOD THRUSH (*Hylocichla mustelina*) – One of the best voices in the eastern forests belongs to this thrush, and we were treated to many renditions of their song. We also saw a quite a few at Pelee, and even more at Rondeau, where they are a fair bit bolder than in most other places I've encountered them.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – One of the most common and familiar birds in the region, and we saw plenty of them daily. [N]

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Another common species that we saw daily, including a pair working on a nest near the Pony Barn at Rondeau. [N]

BROWN THRASHER (*Toxostoma rufum*) – We spotted our first along the lake front road at Rondeau, then plenty more in the Carden Alvar, where they are a common breeding bird.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Unfortunately common, though there were few, if any, seen in Point Pelee itself. [I]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

AMERICAN PIPIT (*Anthus rubescens*) – Excellent looks at a single bird that flew in and dropped to the ground right in front of us as we were scoping shorebirds at Hillman.

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – These always dapper birds were seen a few times both at Pelee and elsewhere.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – Singles at Pelee and Rondeau weren't cooperative for everyone, and a bird in a mist net at Long Point's banding station didn't meet the criteria for counting as a life bird, so it was great to get a last-minute bird in the same forest patch that gave us our Hooded Warbler and Yellow-throated Vireo.

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – We managed to see a couple of birds at Pelee and Rondeau, but we heard quite a few more than we actually saw.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*) – Though we saw them daily, there weren't big numbers of them, and most of them were males, which is pretty usual among birds, as they show up first to establish territories before the arrival of the females.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER (*Protonotaria citrea*) – This warbler has a pretty limited breeding range in Canada, and it's one of the big targets for many birders at Pelee. We had nice looks at a couple of birds along Pelee's Woodland Trail, then another singing male along Rondeau's Tulip Tree Trail, both places among the few breeding sites in the province.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis celata*) – A scarce spring migrant here, so one in Tilden's Woods was a nice find.

NASHVILLE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*) – Aside from about half a dozen on our final day at Pelee, we saw only one bird on our first day there, and a single at Rondeau.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*) – One of the few warbler species that actually stay and breed at Pelee, and they were seen pretty much daily.

HOODED WARBLER (*Setophaga citrina*) – After missing out on one at Pelee, we hinged our hopes on finding one on breeding territory near Long Point, but a local birder dashed those hopes when he told us none had arrived on their territories yet. So we were pretty thrilled when I heard one singing at our final stop in the region before continuing northward. A little playback brought it close, and Maureen soon spotted it for us, and we wound up with great looks at this beauty!

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Three males our first morning along the Woodland Trail were our only ones at Pelee, but we picked up a couple of males also at Rondeau, and singles at Long Point and Paletta Park.

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER (*Setophaga kirtlandii*) – On our final day at Pelee, there had obviously been a push of migrants, and I opted to head up the West Beach Trail, thinking it would be a good time and place for this rare species to show up. Even I was surprised when we eventually bumped into a couple of birders who claimed to have just seen one up the trail, and then, a few minutes later, we came upon the bird, a male, feeding right next to the trail. We all got great looks at it, and just before word started getting out and hordes of birders began to show up to see it. A fantastic experience, and my third consecutive year getting one of these birds here!

CAPE MAY WARBLER (*Setophaga tigrina*) – The same push of migrants that brought the Kirtland's Warbler also brought a few of these, and we saw about 5 of them through the day there, and none on any other day.

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*) – A trio of birds were found on the big warbler day at Pelee, including one cooperative male that sat still long enough for all of us to get good scope views!

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER (*Setophaga castanea*) – None at all at Pelee, but we got word of a male along Bennett Road at Rondeau as we were about to leave, and got some nice views of it, then had even better looks at another male the next day at Paletta Park.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER (*Setophaga fusca*) – Another of the warblers that really didn't come in until our third day at Pelee, and again, we saw about 5 that day, all brilliant males. Another three were seen the following day at Rondeau, but overall there weren't great numbers in yet.

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*) – One of the earlier warblers to arrive, and one of the few to breed at Pelee. Unlike the other species, this warbler was numerous, and we saw large numbers of them daily.

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) – None were at Pelee during our stay, but we did manage to locate a single male at Rondeau, and then a couple more at Thickson's Woods. Often one of the more numerous species at Pelee during the trip.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – Three of these dapper birds came in with the other warblers on our third day at Pelee, with another three the following day at Rondeau.

PALM WARBLER (*Setophaga palmarum*) – One of the more numerous species on the big warbler day at Pelee, and we kept coming across these as we walked up the West Beach Trail. I estimated about 20 of them, though it could have been more. In any case, I've rarely seen so many in a single day. Oddly, we never saw them on any other day of the trip.

PINE WARBLER (*Setophaga pinus*) – An incredibly territorial male at the Backus Woods parking lot put on an incredible show, and even landed right in the middle of the parking lot and grabbed a couple of insects after most of the group had gotten back in the van.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (*Setophaga coronata*) – Usually most of these have already gone through, but they were still around this year in good numbers, with 30-40 being seen on the big warbler day.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*) – There were also good numbers of these seen or heard daily, with about 20 or so on our big warbler day, and many giving excellent close views as they sang from open perches.

CANADA WARBLER (*Cardellina canadensis*) – Among the later of the warbler migrants, but the only one we saw was a lovely male in a wet area along one of the seasonal trails near Tilden Woods on our first day at Pelee.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT (*Icteria virens*) – Though this species is occasionally reported during my visits to Pelee and Rondeau, I had never had any luck finding them prior to this trip. But word was that a cooperative bird was hanging out in a large brush pile in the Cactus Field, so after our picnic lunch that first day, we wandered over to that area. It was easy to find the spot, as there were about 50 people peering into the brush pile searching for it, and we got very lucky when I spotted the bird immediately as we arrived by the crowd. And boy was it cooperative! It was sitting in the sun on a log, long enough for all of us to get a scope view of it, and to allow many other folks to use our scope to see it as well. An Ontario tick for me, and my first in Canada in a long time.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW (*Ammodramus savannarum*) – One bird showed briefly among a group of sparrows along the West Beach Trail at Pelee. It was my first for the park, but not everyone had a satisfactory view of it, so it was pleasing to find one on territory on our last morning in the Carden Alvar.

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*) – just a few birds around Pelee, but more commonly seen after we left the park.

FIELD SPARROW (*Spizella pusilla*) – The song of this sparrow is one of my favorite of all the local birds' songs, and we got to hear it, and see a couple of the birds, at the Glen Major Forest area on our way north to Carden.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) – We were at Pelee during the peak of this sparrow's migration, and we saw them in pretty good numbers daily there.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) – This sparrow was also peaking during our time on the tour, and we saw loads of them as well, every day.

VESPER SPARROW (*Pooecetes gramineus*) – One was singing in the rain near the hide on our last morning on the Carden Alvar, and we were able to get good scope views of it between the raindrops.

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – A couple at the tip and along the West Beach Trail at Pelee were good finds, as it doesn't seem to be too common in the park. They are more regularly encountered in the Carden Alvar, though we only heard them there this trip.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – Though there were a couple seen in Pelee, they are surprisingly uncommon there, but at all other sites we visited, this is usually among the most numerous species present.

SWAMP SPARROW (*Melospiza georgiana*) – Our first were a dueling couple of birds near the viewing platform at Cranberry Marsh, with others seen in the Sedge Wren Marsh in the Carden region.

EASTERN TOWHEE (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) – Nice views of a couple of singing males at Pelee, then heard a few times thereafter.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

SCARLET TANAGER (*Piranga olivacea*) – Another species that was way behind schedule, and our only ones were about 5 males that came in with the big push of warblers at Pelee. Good thing was they gave an exceptional show, feeding quite low near the trail in Tilden's Woods to the delight of the many birders there.

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – It may be a common bird, but that sure doesn't detract from its beauty. We saw these stunners pretty much daily.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – There were just a few birds daily in the Lake Erie shoreline parks, but most of those offered up stellar views as they often were feeding quite low and close to the trails.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

BOBOLINK (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) – I think that given how delayed migration was, we were lucky to see any of these at all on territory, but there were a couple of males hanging around a suitable hay field in the Orillia area nonetheless.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Have you ever seen so many of these in your life? Super abundant throughout.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*) – A handful of birds on the grasslands of the Carden Alvar were all we encountered.

RUSTY BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus carolinus*) – Cynthia spotted a female of this early migrant along the Tulip Tree Trail at Rondeau, and we felt lucky to have gotten one, as they are usually well north of here by this time. So we were blown away to find a flock of 20+ birds foraging and calling in a wet area of Backus Woods. By far the largest group I have ever seen anywhere.

COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – Numerous throughout.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – Never as numerous as Red-wings or grackles, but still a common bird that we saw daily.

ORCHARD ORIOLE (*Icterus spurius*) – Another species that was way behind schedule, and we saw just one bird on our first day at Pelee, then 4 on the day of the big push of migrants.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE (*Icterus galbula*) – On the other hand, there were already lots of these about and we saw many every day. The lack of foliage really helps in seeing these birds, as once the leaves emerge, it is pretty tough to get the kind of looks we were scoring regularly.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – A single male was seen daily around the Visitor Center at Pelee, and a few others at Rondeau and in Burlington. [I]

PURPLE FINCH (*Haemorhous purpureus*) – I think Siewlin was the only one to see a female of this species on our first day at Pelee.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*) – Another common bird that was seen on a daily basis.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – I was a bit dismayed to see a couple of birds around the shuttle stop at the tip. [II]

MAMMALS

EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – A few bunnies were seen around Pelee and Rondeau, where this species is the only one possible.

SNOWSHOE HARE (*Lepus americanus*) – A roadside rabbit on our final morning in the Carden Alvar was this species. Of course at this time of year it is not in its white winter pelage, so it looks only slightly different from a cottontail.

PLAIN EASTERN CHIPMUNK (*Tamias striatus*) – The province's only chipmunk, and a common species at all sites visited except at Pelee, where it appears to be absent.

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – The common large squirrel here, though there are far more of the black, melanistic form around than the standard gray variety.

RED SQUIRREL (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) – Generally requires stands of conifers, so not a Pelee animal, but we saw them at the Old Cut banding station, as well as around Burlington and the Carden Alvar.

DEER MOUSE (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) – Cynthia saw a mouse that appeared to be this species at Rondeau, though I'm not sure how one would rule out the very similar White-footed Mouse.

MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*) – One was seen at Hillman, another at Big Creek Marsh.

NORTHERN RACCOON (*Procyon lotor*) – A few sleepy animals snoozing in the crotches of trees.

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – Some saw one at Pelee, then we saw loads of them at Cranberry Marsh and a few around Orillia.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

It wasn't a great tour for herps, but we did see the following:

Wood Frog (*Rana sylvatica*): Joann spotted one of these masked frogs at Rondeau

Common Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*): Several at Pelee and Rondeau, including a large black one that lacked stripes.

Eastern Fox Snake (*Elaphe gloydi*): considered a Species at Risk, as this snake has a very small global range, with 70% of the population restricted to southern Ontario around Lake Erie and the Georgian Bay. The remaining 30% are found in Ohio and Michigan. We had a beautiful one curled up in the sun along the trail to Tilden's Woods. It was the first one I'd ever seen, so I was quite thrilled with the sighting.

Totals for the tour: 154 bird taxa and 9 mammal taxa