



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Point Pelee Migration Spectacle 2017b**

May 13, 2017 to May 20, 2017

Jay VanderGaast

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*



*We had some wonderful experiences with confiding Prothonotary Warblers like this beautiful male. Photo from a previous tour, by participant Marshall Dahl.*

My second Pelee tour in a row, and this one hit the migration pretty well, even if there were still no huge influxes of birds on any given day. Still, with most warbler possibilities being around in small numbers, there were plenty of things to look at.

We kicked things off in fine fashion, as our first day at Pelee was also the the best day for warblers, and migrants in general. And what's more, on that first morning, we arrived to the tip to find a fine male Kirtland's Warbler, just our second warbler species of the tour, and on of 17 species we were to see that day. Keeping with the warblers, other nice sightings included the most confiding and cooperative Prothonotary Warblers imaginable, a fine male Cerulean Warbler singing in Tilden's Woods, and scope views of beauties like Cape May, Bay-breasted, and Black-throated Green. Other nice finds during our time at Pelee included a sleepy rufous morph Eastern Screech-Owl, multiple striking Red-headed Woodpeckers, our only Gray-cheeked Thrush in a cedar clump in Tilden's Woods, and multiple brilliant Indigo Buntings, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Scarlet Tanagers. A female Blue Grosbeak, though less showy, was our rarest find in the park, and my first ever in Canada. Nearby Hillman Marsh, meanwhile, offered up a sharp-looking American Golden-Plover among the hordes of equally sharp Black-bellied Plovers, several beautiful Ruddy Turnstones, and a handful of breeding plumaged Short-billed Dowitchers, as well as the friendliest Lincoln's Sparrow of the tour.

Moving on to Rondeau Provincial Park, we had another decent warbler day, and a visit to the Spicebush Trail gave us plenty of repeat views of some we'd already seen at Pelee, but also offered up some new ones, including Wilson's and a couple of Blackpoll Warblers. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo was another nice find here, as were both Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied flycatchers. And scope views of a Philadelphia Vireo were appreciated, and we got to appreciate the nuances of the song that make it differ from the very similar song of Red-eyed Vireo. We also had our best herp day of the trip, with 4 frog species, Snapping Turtle, and Garter Snake all making appearances. Further east, around Long Point, we finally caught up with a stonking male Canada Warbler behind the banding station, and beautiful males of both Hooded and Blue-winged warblers in the nearby Backus Woods. A wonderful banding demonstration was highlighted by a scarce White-eyed Vireo, giving us a close-up view of this rare local breeder. A quick stop at the Port Rowan Wetlands gave us a bold Virginia Rail and a Peregrine Falcon hurtling past overhead.

Heading northward, we made a quick visit to the shores of Lake Ontario, picking up our only Long-tailed Ducks and a lone first-year Little Gull at Paletta Park before ditching the Great Lakes and hitting our final venue, the fantastic alvar habitats at Carden. A well-known destination among the Ontario birding community, this area is home to a bunch of fairly local breeding birds in this part of the province, and it never fails to deliver a bunch of great sightings. This trip's most memorable range from a trio of Upland Sandpipers scurrying along in a grassy meadow, a stately Sandhill Crane striding

along another similar meadow, a cryptic American Bittern and the very local Sedge Wren (not to mention the cow moose with tiny twin calves) in the Sedge Wren Marsh, a territorial Black-billed Cuckoo, and smashing male Golden-winged Warbler and Purple Finch.

All in all, it was another fun trip to one of Canada's premier birding regions, and I thoroughly enjoyed sharing it with you. Thanks for coming along, and for providing such enjoyable company, and a few good laughs along the way. Looking forward to seeing you again soon.

--Jay

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#### 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

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### BIRDS

#### Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

**CANADA GOOSE** (*Branta canadensis*) – Every day. It is named for the country after all!

**MUTE SWAN** (*Cygnus olor*) – A few birds at Big Creek Marsh, and several around Burlington, including one on a nest in Bronte Marsh. [IN]

**TRUMPETER SWAN** (*Cygnus buccinator*) – A couple of birds circled overhead then landed in a roadside marsh near Orillia as we tried to find a Sora.

[I]

**GADWALL** (*Anas strepera*) – A handful of birds remained on Hillman Marsh from the good numbers that were there the previous week.

**AMERICAN WIGEON** (*Anas americana*) – A lone male was scoped at Hillman.

**MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – The common duck throughout, and we saw them daily.

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Anas clypeata*) – Just a couple of drakes were hanging on at Hillman.

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN)** (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – Hillman also had a couple of handsome drakes of this species.

**GREATER SCAUP** (*Aythya marila*) – A few birds off the tip at Pelee on a couple of days gave us a good chance to study the head shape.

**LESSER SCAUP** (*Aythya affinis*) – A lone male was the only bird left from about a dozen that were at Hillman a week earlier.

**LONG-TAILED DUCK** (*Clangula hyemalis*) – They were a long way out, but we did manage to scope about 20 of these arctic-nesting ducks off of Paletta Park in Burlington.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** (*Mergus serrator*) – A few birds daily off the tip. Just before dinner at Freddy's we also watched one bird come up from a dive with a decent-sized fish in its beak, and it was immediately mobbed by the rest of the mergansers as well as a couple of Herring Gulls, forcing it to take evasive action. It all ended well as the merganser managed to wolf down its meal without being robbed.

**RUDDY DUCK** (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – As we drove east after our day in Rondeau, we spotted a small flock of 8 of these beautiful ducks below a bluff overlooking Lake Erie.

#### Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

**RING-NECKED PHEASANT** (*Phasianus colchicus*) – Three birds, a hen and two cocks, were seen on two different days in the same fallow field near Hillman Marsh. [I]

**RUFFED GROUSE** (*Bonasa umbellus*) – We heard these birds drumming on a couple of days around the Carden Alvar. [\*]

**WILD TURKEY** (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – The reintroduction of these large birds into southern Ontario back in the 1980's has been pretty successful, judging by the numbers of these we saw. We missed turkey on just one day, in the Long Point region, ironically, where an historic turkey release site is located! [I]

#### Gaviidae (Loons)

**COMMON LOON** (*Gavia immer*) – Our only sighting was of a bird that flew overhead as we searched for Hooded Warblers in a block of forest near Long Point.

#### Podicipedidae (Grebes)

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Heard only at the Port Rowan Wetlands. [\*]

**HORNED GREBE** (*Podiceps auritus*) – A single bird was seen off of the tip at Pelee on our second day there.

#### Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Numerous throughout the Great lakes region.

#### Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

**AMERICAN BITTERN** (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) – One flushed from the roadside at the Sedge Wren marsh in the Carden Alvar, giving us a nice view as it flew low across the marsh before dropping into the cattails, out of sight.

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

**GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*) – One was at Hillman, another was seen in a creek alongside the road near the town of Wheatley.

#### Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

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

#### Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

**BALD EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – A pair of adult birds flew overhead on our first day at Pelee.

#### Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

**VIRGINIA RAIL** (*Rallus limicola*) – Nice looks at one in the middle of the day at Port Rowan Wetlands, then a couple of others were seen in marshes around the Carden region.

**SORA** (*Porzana carolina*) – Heard at the Port Rowan wetlands, but it wouldn't come out of hiding for us. [\*]

Gruidae (Cranes)

**SANDHILL CRANE** (*Antigone canadensis*) – Great looks at one feeding close to the road at the Cameron Ranch in the Carden Alvar region.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – An estimated 1000 of these handsome plovers were at Hillman on the afternoon we visited.

**AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER** (*Pluvialis dominica*) – A lone breeding-plumaged adult was a bit tricky to pick out from among all the Black-bellied Plovers, but it was easily distinguished once we got looks at it in the scope.

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – A handful were present at Hillman, where they were easily lost in all the emergent vegetation.

**KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Common and seen daily.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

**UPLAND SANDPIPER** (*Bartramia longicauda*) – A trio of these local specialties were a nice find in an open stretch of grassland in the Carden Alvar.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – A flock of about 20 birds flew past one morning at the tip, and about 10 of these were also seen at Hillman the same afternoon, looking very dapper in their breeding plumage.

**DUNLIN** (*Calidris alpina*) – Roughly 50 were present at Hillman.

**LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*) – Generally the most common peep besides Dunlin, though we only had about 10 at Hillman this time.

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER** (*Calidris melanotos*) – A couple at Hillman, including one bird feeding along the edge of the marsh incredibly close to where we stood on the berm.

**SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris pusilla*) – We managed to pick out a single one among the other shorebirds at Hillman, looking grayer than the accompanying Least, in addition to having dark legs.

**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus griseus*) – Four or five birds showed nicely at Hillman. Easy to pick out by their bright rufous underparts.

**WILSON'S SNIPE** (*Gallinago delicata*) – We only saw one at Carden, but had nice looks at it as it sat atop a large boulder not far from the road.

**AMERICAN WOODCOCK** (*Scolopax minor*) – On the earlier tour I'd managed to locate a display area for this species, and a way to it without stumbling through the bush. It paid off with smashing looks at a bird on the ground, while another one glided in overhead as it descended after performing its display flight.

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*) – A few scattered bird along the lake shores.

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*) – Our only yellowlegs of either sort was a pair of these that flew past as we birded at the tip one morning.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**BONAPARTE'S GULL** (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Just a few birds over Lake Erie on one day at Pelee.

**LITTLE GULL** (*Hydrocoloeus minutus*) – Wonderful close looks at a lone bird, likely the same one I'd seen on the first tour, flying just offshore at Paletta Park in Burlington.

**RING-BILLED GULL** (*Larus delawarensis*) – The most widespread and common gull in the province. Seen daily.

**HERRING GULL (AMERICAN)** (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) – A couple of these went after a Red-breasted Merganser which had just come to the surface with a fish across the road from Freddy's Restaurant.

**CASPIAN TERN** (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – A handful of these large terns were seen along the shoreline of Lake Ontario.

**BLACK TERN** (*Chlidonias niger*) – Lots of these lovely marsh terns were doing courtship flights around Big Creek Marsh near Long Point.

**COMMON TERN** (*Sterna hirundo*) – Seen a couple of times offshore at Pelee, as well as at Paletta Park in Burlington.

**FORSTER'S TERN** (*Sterna forsteri*) – A couple of birds were in the marsh at Big Creek, then a single was seen among the Common Terns at Paletta Park, where it was a bit of a surprise as they aren't common in that area.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) [H]

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaidura macroura*) – Numerous throughout. [N]

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus americanus*) – A single bird in Tilden's Woods sat still long enough to be scoped, though it was always a bit obscured. Another the next day along the Spicebush Trail at Rondeau performed even better.

**BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) – A calling bird responded well and popped out into a bare tree, where it sat and called again until we finally had to walk away from it. This was on our final morning in the Carden area.

Strigidae (Owls)

**EASTERN SCREECH-OWL** (*Megascops asio*) – A rufous morph bird was back at its regular haunt (a spot it's been for several years) in Tilden's Woods. It was initially pretty tough to see in the morning, but by afternoon had moved more out into the open where we had good scope views.

Apodidae (Swifts)

**CHIMNEY SWIFT** (*Chaetura pelagica*) – We had just a few each day at Pelee and Rondeau.

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

**RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD** (*Archilochus colubris*) – Hummingbird numbers seemed to me to be down, and we saw only singles once each at Pelee, Rondeau, and Paletta Park.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

**BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – One was along the creek at Paletta Park, and another at a roadside marsh near Orillia.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

**RED-HEADED WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) – This is getting to be a scarce bird in the province, so it's always nice to see. We had great looks at a pair that seemed to be thinking about nesting along the Woodland Trail at Pelee, and we also had a single bird at Rondeau.

**RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes carolinus*) – And this species is getting more numerous in the province. We recorded them on each of the first 6 days of the tour. One interesting sighting was of a lone bird that flew off the trip of Point Pelee and out over the water, all the way across to Pelee Island.

**DOWNY WOODPECKER** (*Picoides pubescens*) – In general the most commonly encountered woodpecker, and we had them daily through the whole tour.

**NORTHERN FLICKER** (*Colaptes auratus*) – A common species though there didn't seem to be too many about this year. We had several at a variety of sites through the week.

**PILEATED WOODPECKER** (*Dryocopus pileatus*) – Heard only at Rondeau and Backus Woods. [\*]

#### Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – One came hurtling overhead as we birded the Port Rowan Wetlands.

#### Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

**OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER** (*Contopus cooperi*) – Not a terribly common migrant, and always a good find. One was spotted atop a tree at Tilden's Woods, but flew off before I could get anyone on it, so finding another along the Spicebush Trail at Rondeau was great.

**EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE** (*Contopus virens*) – Heard more often than seen, though we did get our bins on a few, with best views coming at Rondeau.

**YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax flaviventris*) – Among the last of the migrant Empids to come through. Our day at Rondeau saw a pretty good push of them, as we saw three of these there, including a pair squabbling and chasing each other around near the Pony Barn.

**ALDER FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax alnorum*) – Our final Empid, found in a small marshy area next to where we had our lone Black-billed Cuckoo in the Carden Alvar.

**WILLOW FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax traillii*) – Our only one was a singing bird at the tip on our first morning at Pelee. A couple of folks claimed it as Alder, but the song clearly was of this look-alike species.

**LEAST FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax minimus*) – This was the most commonly recorded Empid, seen on several days, including close-up views of a feisty bird that was about to be banded at Old Cut.

**EASTERN PHOEBE** (*Sayornis phoebe*) – Seen only after we left Pelee behind, and always in the proximity of man-made structures, on which they nest. In fact, I've never seen a phoebe nest on any natural site.

**GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus crinitus*) – A typical voice in the hardwood forests of southern Ontario, and we saw a good number of them, too. Missed only on our day along the shores of Lake Ontario.

**EASTERN KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) – A common bird in the region, and we saw them every day.

#### Laniidae (Shrikes)

**LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE** (*Lanius ludovicianus migrans*) – A very rare bird nowadays in eastern Canada, and this subspecies is on the Endangered Species list here. The Carden region is one of the last strongholds and hold the majority of the breeding pairs remaining in Ontario. We had scope views of a distant bird from the hide.

#### Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

**WHITE-EYED VIREO** (*Vireo griseus*) – Always a tough bird, as there are usually few that show up at the migration hotspots, and it is only an occasional breeder in the province. Our only one was not really countable by ABA listing rules, as it was being banded at Old Cut and we only saw it in the hand. But we sure had great looks at it!

**BLUE-HEADED VIREO** (*Vireo solitarius*) – Last week this early migrant was the most numerous vireo. This week, they were down to singles on two days at Pelee and one at Rondeau, with all three giving us very nice views.

**PHILADELPHIA VIREO** (*Vireo philadelphicus*) – Never numerous on migration here, but we did get decent views of singles on three days, once each at Pelee, Rondeau, and Paletta Park. The Rondeau bird was especially good, giving us scope views as it sat quietly for a minute or so. And it was great to hear the Paletta bird singing. The song is very similar to Red-eyed Vireo's but less rushed, with a longer pause between phrases.

**WARBLING VIREO** (*Vireo gilvus*) – Numerous at Pelee, and most other sites, but strangely absent at Rondeau.

**RED-EYED VIREO** (*Vireo olivaceus*) – Coming through in fair numbers, and we saw them daily at the migration spots.

#### Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

**BLUE JAY** (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Common, noisy and conspicuous. Seen every day, including a few small migratory flocks that were flying around the tip at Pelee.

**AMERICAN CROW** (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – Missed at Pelee, though that's not unusual as they are scarce there at this time of year at least. After we left the park, we saw them daily.

#### Hirundinidae (Swallows)

**NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW** (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – A little group of these swallows was seen along the Lake Ontario shoreline at Paletta Park.

**PURPLE MARTIN** (*Progne subis*) – We probably saw more martin apartments than martins, but we did see a few birds each at Pelee and the Long Point region.

**TREE SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Missed at Rondeau, but otherwise seen in good numbers daily, with plenty using nest boxes up at Carden. [N]

**BANK SWALLOW** (*Riparia riparia*) – A lone bird was seen at Hillman, then a few more at Big Creek Marsh. Considered a Threatened species here in Ontario, at least partially due to loss of nesting habitat, which won't be helped by all the erosion of banks due to the extremely high lake levels this spring.

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – Also treated as Threatened, which always surprises folks as they are pretty numerous on this trip. We saw plenty every day, including the nesting ones under the shelter at the shuttle stop at the tip.

**CLIFF SWALLOW** (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – Our only record was of a single bird flying among other swallows at Hillman.

#### Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

**BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE** (*Poecile atricapillus*) – Just a single bird at Pelee, though that's not surprising as we often don't see this bird in the park. Once we left Pelee they were plentiful.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

**WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta carolinensis*) – A single bird at Old Cut was all we could muster up this trip.

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

**BROWN CREEPER** (*Certhia americana*) – We also had just one of these, a singing bird along the Spicebush Trail at Rondeau that showed nicely.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

**HOUSE WREN** (*Troglodytes aedon*) – A common species in the region, and we saw or heard them almost daily, and saw one entering a nest hole a couple of times. [N]

**WINTER WREN** (*Troglodytes hiemalis*) – Heard at close quarters in the Carden Alvar, but those cedars sure were dense, weren't they? [\*]

**SEDGE WREN** (*Cistothorus platensis*) – We managed to scrape up a single bird in the Sedge Wren Marsh at Carden, but it wasn't especially vocal and it took some time to track it down. When we did, we got some good scope views, at least.

**MARSH WREN** (*Cistothorus palustris*) – Excellent close looks at an excited male that kept buzzing around while his mate checked us out from the dense cattails.

**CAROLINA WREN** (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – We heard these on several days, but our only sighting was at Old Cut, where a pair was busy feeding three fledglings as they hopped about in a tangle of branches next to the trail. We had super looks, good enough to see that 2 of the 3 kids had already been processed at the banding station. [N]

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers)

**BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – Good numbers at Pelee and Rondeau, where they breed.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus calendula*) – The cold spring evidently delayed these early migrants, as there were still small numbers pushing through at Pelee.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

**EASTERN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia sialis*) – Always a pleasure to see, and we had nice views at Carden where a couple of pairs were making use of the conveniently placed nest boxes along the fence lines. [N]

**GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH** (*Catharus minimus*) – Just one was seen, feeding in a stand of cedars near Tilden's Woods among a good number and variety of warblers, all of them, thrush included, offering multiple good views.

**SWAINSON'S THRUSH** (*Catharus ustulatus*) – Small numbers of these were seen most days at Pelee and at Rondeau, with the best one being a cooperative bird at the end of one of the bridges along Woodland Trail.

**WOOD THRUSH** (*Hylocichla mustelina*) – The ethereal song was heard daily at Pelee, but we didn't score a sighting until we got to Rondeau, where these birds seem to be a little bolder and easier to see than anywhere else.

**AMERICAN ROBIN** (*Turdus migratorius*) – Common, familiar, and cheery. Any day seeing a robin is a good day, and we saw them daily.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

**GRAY CATBIRD** (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Maybe not as familiar as the robin, but they were still pretty common and seen daily.

**BROWN THRASHER** (*Toxostoma rufum*) – We waited until we got to the Carden Alvar for this species, but they are fairly common breeders up there and they were pretty vocal and easy to find.

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*) – Though it's not an uncommon species in the province, they're not often seen at Pelee, so the one that was at the tip one morning was a pretty big deal, and my first sighting in the park.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – An unfortunately numerous species. [I]

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

**CEDAR WAXWING** (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – A single bird on our first day at Pelee seemed a bit odd for this gregarious species, but a few flocks showed up later in the trip.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

**OVENBIRD** (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – We heard quite a few, but didn't manage to get our eyes on one until our final morning in the Carden region. Even the ones there didn't sit still for long enough for anything but fleeting looks.

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – This one eluded us altogether, though we heard a couple at Pelee and the Carden area. [\*]

**GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER** (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) – Our final species of warbler for the trip, giving us 27 species seen (plus 2 others heard). We had wonderful close views of a stunning male on breeding territory in the Carden Alvar.

**BLUE-WINGED WARBLER** (*Vermivora cyanoptera*) – Excellent looks at 3 different birds on breeding territories around Backus Woods, where I couldn't scrape up even one a week earlier.

**BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** (*Mniotilta varia*) – Seen daily at Pelee, where most of the ones coming through were females, indicating that the males were all pretty much up on their breeding territories already.

**PROTHONOTARY WARBLER** (*Protonotaria citrea*) – An endangered species in Canada, and there may be fewer than a dozen breeding pairs remaining in the province. That means the two territorial males along the Woodland Trail represent a significant part of the remaining breeding population in Ontario. The one at the first bridge was incredibly tame and seemed completely unconcerned at having so many people around. It often fed just a few feet away, and at one point flew right between Judy and me as we stood side by side along the trail. Couldn't have missed us by more than a few inches! [N]

**TENNESSEE WARBLER** (*Oreothlypis peregrina*) – Moving through in good numbers during the trip, though the emergent vegetation made them a bit hard to track down. Still, we managed to see a fair number of the ones we heard on a daily basis.

**ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER** (*Oreothlypis celata*) – Quite a scarce spring migrant, but one turned up by the solar panels near the tip one morning and gave us excellent views as it fed in the low junipers next to the trail.

**NASHVILLE WARBLER** (*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*) – Most had already moved through, but we saw a few stragglers during our first two days at Pelee.

- MOURNING WARBLER** (*Geothlypis philadelphia*) – Along one of Pelee's seasonal trails, we heard both this species and a Hooded Warbler singing just off the trail, but the dense vegetation kept us from spotting either of them. [\*]
- COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Aka the Very Common Yellowthroat. Seen and/or heard daily.
- HOODED WARBLER** (*Setophaga citrina*) – The one at Pelee may have eluded us, but a spontaneous stop in one of the Backus Woods parking lots came good with another. I heard one singing as we pulled in, and by playing a single song phrase quietly back to it, I prompted the bird to pop out onto an open perch, where it sat very still, and allowed us to enjoy long scope views before we slipped away and left it to its territory.
- AMERICAN REDSTART** (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – Seen every day, including at least one extended scope view of a singing male at Pelee. There were still a fair number of adult males coming through, but also some females and first year males, which look very similar to the females, though often with a few random black feathers scattered in their plumage.
- KIRTLAND'S WARBLER** (*Setophaga kirtlandii*) – Shortly after arriving at the tip on our very first morning, I heard an unfamiliar warbler song and tried to locate the source. At that point one of the local hike leaders passed by and asked me if we'd found any good, and I responded by quietly telling him that I may have just heard a Kirtland's. And just then, the bird sang again, then popped out into the open where we had fine views of him before we moved off and left the bird to the incoming crowds as word spread through the park of the find. This is the third year and 4th consecutive Pelee tour on which I've seen this rare species, after having been skunked on every previous visit to the park.
- CAPE MAY WARBLER** (*Setophaga tigrina*) – Small numbers were coming through at Pelee and we had several nice males, including one that we managed to scope for some awesome views. Our only sighting away from Pelee was of a female at Old Cut.
- CERULEAN WARBLER** (*Setophaga cerulea*) – A singing male along the boardwalk at Tilden's Woods eventually came through and showed off for us as we came back from the trek out to see the Blue Grosbeak, making up for one we'd missed at the tip, and negating the need to try and track one down on breeding territory,
- NORTHERN PARULA** (*Setophaga americana*) – Quite a few were passing through, and we saw and heard them daily, though none were better than that gorgeous singing male foraging below eye level just a few feet away on Rondeau's Spicebush Trail.
- MAGNOLIA WARBLER** (*Setophaga magnolia*) – One of the most numerous migrant warblers encountered this tour, with daily sightings, mainly of striking males. Hard to believe we couldn't even scrounge up one a few days earlier.
- BAY-BREASTED WARBLER** (*Setophaga castanea*) – We encountered single males on each of our days at Pelee, then had a whopping 4 (that's a good count for this uncommon species) at Rondeau. Always nice to see this beauty so well.
- BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER** (*Setophaga fusca*) – Another species we encountered daily at the migration sites. We might have become a little jaded with them if they weren't so darned spectacular!
- YELLOW WARBLER** (*Setophaga petechia*) – By far the most numerous species of warbler throughout. In addition to the scores we saw daily, we saw a tidy little nest at about knee level right next to the trail at Pelee. [N]
- CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER** (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) – A few birds daily in the migration hotspots, but most of those were handsome males, including one that dropped down to the track in front of Barbara and Gayle.
- BLACKPOLL WARBLER** (*Setophaga striata*) – That first one along the Spicebush Trail at Rondeau was elusive, but we eventually spotted him moving sluggishly through the subcanopy of a tall budding tree, where we managed to score some scope looks despite the fact that he never sat still for long. After all that work, we lucked into another one that landed in a tree right beside our picnic lunch spot. It was also right next to a male Yellow-rumped Warbler, a nice juxtaposition of the earliest and latest migrants among the warblers.
- BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER** (*Setophaga caerulescens*) – We saw only a total of 4 of these birds, a lovely male on our first morning at Pelee, a female on our final day there, and two birds at Rondeau on our busy day there.
- PALM WARBLER** (*Setophaga palmarum*) – After seeing about 5 of these on our first day in Pelee, we saw only one other bird at the Old Cut banding station.
- YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER** (*Setophaga coronata*) – Though this is the earliest of the migrant warblers, they were evidently somewhat behind schedule, as there were still small numbers moving through and we saw a few on almost every day of the trip.
- BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER** (*Setophaga virens*) – Another handsome songster that graced us with scope views. Several of these were seen daily at the migration hotspots.
- CANADA WARBLER** (*Cardellina canadensis*) – A singing bird eluded us along the Spicebush Trail at Rondeau, but we lucked into our only one the following day at Old Cut. While we enjoyed watching the family of Carolina Wrens behind the banding station, this bird suddenly popped into view and we all had great, if not terribly long, views of it before it ducked back into thick cover.
- WILSON'S WARBLER** (*Cardellina pusilla*) – Never a numerous migrant, and we saw just two birds, lone males at Rondeau and Burlington's Paletta Park.

*Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)*

- CHIPPING SPARROW** (*Spizella passerina*) – Though not seen at Pelee, we had this common sparrow daily after we left the park.
- FIELD SPARROW** (*Spizella pusilla*) – A denizen of old-field habitats, which are pretty scarce at Pelee, and thus we didn't see this bird nor hear its delightful chipper song until we got into those kind of habitats at Backus Woods and the Carden area.
- WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) – There were still quite a few of these handsome sparrows moving through Pelee, and we were able to hear their cheerful songs regularly as well.
- WHITE-THROATED SPARROW** (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) – Also seen daily at Pelee, though in smaller numbers than the White-crowned, as this is an earlier migrant and most had already passed through.
- VESPER SPARROW** (*Poocetes gramineus*) – Only encountered on the Carden Alvar, where we had two of these somewhat nondescript birds. The white outer tail feathers and that tiny tract of rusty feathers on the shoulder are good field marks.
- SAVANNAH SPARROW** (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – One bird showed up at the tip at Pelee on our first morning. Otherwise, we only saw this grassland species in the Carden Alvar.
- SONG SPARROW** (*Melospiza melodia*) – Oddly, this common species is anything but at Pelee, though we did see some at Hillman, then loads more once we left the park.
- LINCOLN'S SPARROW** (*Melospiza lincolni*) – A couple of birds around Pelee mostly gave us the slip, but we got excellent looks at another as we walked back to the parking area after watching shorebirds at Hillman Marsh.
- SWAMP SPARROW** (*Melospiza georgiana*) – A common bird in appropriate marshy habitat in the Carden region.
- EASTERN TOWHEE** (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) – Nice looks at a singing male along the West Beach Trail, then several more at Carden, where they are pretty common and easy to find.

### Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

**SCARLET TANAGER** (*Piranga olivacea*) – There weren't many about on any given day this spring, it seemed, but we did manage to find a few brilliant males at Pelee and Rondeau.

**NORTHERN CARDINAL** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – A very common bird here, and we saw and heard them every day.

**ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK** (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) – Decent numbers at all the migration hotspots, and we had plenty of great looks, including a male feeding on the ground just a few feet away in Tilden's Woods.

**BLUE GROSBEAK** (*Passerina caerulea*) – A female turned up in the Cactus Field at Pelee on our second day there, but we didn't go look for her until the next, and there she was in the same place, in an area of short grass, feeding on the seed heads. A scarce but nearly annual vagrant here, this was my first for Canada.

**INDIGO BUNTING** (*Passerina cyanea*) – A few small flocks were moving around through the park during our time there, and eventually we all got some fine views, none better than that stunning singing male at the Cactus Field.

### Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

**BOBOLINK** (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) – The Carden Alvar is a great place for this declining grassland species, and we saw a handful of striking males there.

**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Did we see these? Oh, yeah, just a couple...of hundred each day.

**EASTERN MEADOWLARK** (*Sturnella magna*) – Only on the Carden Alvar, where they like the same habitat as Bobolinks.

**COMMON GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – Lots of these daily.

**BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD** (*Molothrus ater*) – And plenty of these every day, too.

**ORCHARD ORIOLE** (*Icterus spurius*) – Small numbers were seen on each day at Pelee, with the majority being first-year males.

**BALTIMORE ORIOLE** (*Icterus galbula*) – We had daily sightings of these orioles, which did nothing to diminish the wow factor of these brilliant birds.

### Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

**HOUSE FINCH** (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – One male on the roof of our Leamington hotel, and another at Paletta Park were our only ones. [I]

**PURPLE FINCH** (*Haemorhous purpureus*) – I heard the call notes of one going over in the alvar region, and a little playback brought him right back to us, where he sat nearby singing his head off. A gorgeous bird with a wonderful song, so it was a great experience all around.

**AMERICAN GOLDFINCH** (*Spinus tristis*) – Numerous throughout the trip.

### Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Too many for my liking. [I]

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## MAMMALS

**EASTERN COTTONTAIL** (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – We saw bunnies daily, and all were this species.

**PLAIN EASTERN CHIPMUNK** (*Tamias striatus*) – The only chipmunk in the province. Common at Rondeau and the Long Point area.

**WOODCHUCK** (*Marmota monax*) – Our only one was feeding on the roadside in the alvar region.

**EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – Quite a few each day, mainly of the black, melanistic form.

**MUSKRAT** (*Ondatra zibethica*) – One was up on a log at Hillman Marsh, and led us to our sighting of a Blanding's Turtle on the other end of the same log.

**NORTHERN RACCOON** (*Procyon lotor*) – Several at Pelee, mostly sleeping in the crotches of trees, but there was also a bold one that came scavenging for picnic scraps during one of our lunch breaks.

**MOOSE** (*Alces alces*) – A cow with two very young, small calves feeding along the edges of the Sedge Wren Marsh at Carden were a surprise for me, as they were my first ever moose in the region.

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

In addition to the warm-blooded critters, we also saw the following herps:

Gray Treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*): Two were on a wooden post, a third on the adjacent railing, along the Tulip Tree Trail at Rondeau.

Wood Frog (*Rana sylvatica*): Easy to identify as this species generally shows a dark mask. As with all the frogs, this was on the Tulip Tree Trail.

Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*): The green one with the large dark spots. We saw a couple along the Woodland Trail at Pelee in addition to the ones at Rondeau.

Green Frog (*Rana clamitans*): One seen and heard at Rondeau.

Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*): A rather large one was crossing the road close to the Visitor Center at Rondeau.

Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*): The most often-seen turtle in southern Ontario. We had singles on three days at Pelee, Rondeau, and Long Point.

Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*): Easily told by the yellow chin on an otherwise uniformly dark turtle. We had one on a log with a muskrat at Hillman.

Common Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*): A few each at Pelee and Rondeau.

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**Totals for the tour: 163 bird taxa and 7 mammal taxa**