

**ONTARIO, CANADA
6 - 19 MAY 2004**

**A TRIP REPORT BY
MARTYN HNATIUK, PAUL PARSONS
& NEIL TOVEY**



Front cover: male Black Throated Green Warbler, Point Pelee

Itinerary

6 May

Toronto Airport (arrival 1400 hrs)
Highway 401 to Blenheim
Blenheim Sewage Lagoons

7 May

Wheatley Motel campgrounds
Hillman's Marsh
Point Pelee National Park

8 May

Point Pelee National Park
Comber Sewage Lagoons
Kopegaron Woods

9 May

Charring Cross
Blenheim Sewage Lagoons
Rondeau Provincial Park

10 May

Point Pelee National Park

11 May

Point Pelee National Park
St Clair National Wildlife Area

12 May

Point Pelee National Park

13 May

Rondeau Provincial Park

14 May

Wheatley Provincial Park
Point Pelee National Park

15 May

St Clair Wildlife Area
Stoney Point / Tremblay Beach area
Point Pelee National Park

16 May

Blenheim Sewage Works
Rondeau Provincial Park

Point Pelee National Park

17 May

Point Pelee National Park
Kingsville Sewage Works Lagoons Area

18 May

Long Point Area
Old Cut Banding Station
Hastings Beach Road
Big Creek Marsh

19 May

Niagara Falls Area
Queen Elizabeth Highway to Toronto
Toronto Airport (departure 1725 hrs)



Male Scarlet Tanager, Point Pelee

Tour Summary

6 May:

Left UK at 1000hrs from Cardiff Airport and landed at Toronto (Pearson) airport at 1300hrs (7-hour flight) for a bargain price of £229 return. Martyn booked much later than Paul and Neil and had to pay £329. The flight was booked with a local travel agent but we have recently come across a Canadian tour company that appears to be offering superb deals (www.canadianaffair.com)

Our hire car, reserved online through AVIS, was a Pontiac Grand Am (3.6 litre automatic - apparently this was one of their smaller engined cars!) and cost in the region of £400 for the two weeks. This included all insurance, taxes and unlimited mileage.

On departure from the airport and after a few wrong turns on the Freeways around Toronto we travelled west towards Blenheim – a journey of about 3 hours.

The first birds to be seen were the common **House Sparrow** and **Starling**, but it wasn't long before we were seeing our first roadside **Red Winged Blackbirds**, **Common Grackles** and **American Robins**. Along Highway 401 there was a good selection of other birds seen from the car, including 15 **Double Crested Cormorant**, 27 **Turkey Vulture**, 12 **Red Tailed Hawk**, 1 **Cooper's Hawk**, 3 **American Kestrel**, 2 **Great Blue Heron** and 30+ **Killdeer**. About half way through our journey we stopped at a roadside service station where we picked up 2 **Spotted Sandpiper** feeding in a small puddle in the car park area as well as **Song Sparrow** in the nearby hedges.

We arrived at our first major bird watching destination around 1700 hrs, which was Blenheim Sewage Lagoons. We obtained our permits before we flew to Canada. To obtain a permit and the combination code for the padlock you will need to write to:

The Town of Blenheim, The Clerk's Office, 35 Talbot Street West, Blenheim NOP1XO, Canada.

It is definitely worth the trouble of obtaining the permit as it was by far and away the best sewage lagoon we visited. In fact we were to return several times. Locals also told us that sewage lagoons owners are increasingly denying access to the various sites in around the region – we were to witness this at several lagoons ourselves.

The lagoons themselves consisted of 4 large areas of water surrounded by grassy fields and hedges. The best area was the

sprinkler bed in the north of the works as this is where all the wader flocks gathered.

For a first experience of North American birding it was a fantastic 2 hours birding!

1 Pied Billed Grebe, 2 Horned Grebe, 2 American Wigeon, 20 Green Winged Teal, 6 Lesser Scaup, 10 Bufflehead, 4 Ruddy Duck, 4 Greater Yellowlegs, 24 Lesser Yellowlegs, 8 Spotted Sandpiper, 300 Dunlin, 1 Semi-Palmated Sandpiper, 4 Least Sandpiper, 1 Wilson's Snipe, 16 Forster's Tern, 20 Bonaparte's Gull, 60 Ringed Billed Gull, 3 Horned Lark, 40 Barn Swallow, 4 Rough Winged Swallow, 30 Bank Swallow, 200+ Tree Swallow, 4 Purple Martin, 1 Yellow Warbler and 20 Bobolink.

We then set off for Wheatley, which was about half an hour away. We arrived at our digs for the next 12 nights: Lakeside Motel and Campsite (www.lakesidevillage.on.ca) A room cost \$80 per night).



Black & White Warbler, Point Pelee

7 May:

Despite being rather tired we all rose before dawn – the adrenaline already kicking in. We'd not even left the motel room when the day's first bird passed by the window - a **Green Heron**. We decided to have an early pre-breakfast walk around the motel grounds which were set on the banks of Lake Erie, hoping to familiarise ourselves with the more common species. A fairly good list was acquired and these included: 6 **Common Loon**, 150+ **Red Breasted Merganser**, 4 **Common** and 10 **Forster's Tern**, 2 **Caspian Tern**, 3 species of Gull, 2 **Spotted Sandpiper**, 2 **Killdeer**, 2 **Purple Martin**, 5 **Yellow Rumped Warbler**, 4 **Song Sparrow**, **Horned Lark**, 2 **Northern Cardinal**, **Mourning Dove**, 10 **White Crowned Sparrow** and 1 **Swainson's Thrush**.

After a quick breakfast we set off to Hillman's Marsh, clearly signposted from the main Wheatley to Leamington Road.

Just after turning off the main highway Paul spotted an adult **Bald Eagle** flying to its monstrous nest on the right hand side of the road.

Our first stop was the Canoe Launch area of Hillman's Marsh, which we found by mistake at the west end. A downpour then ensued for 20 minutes or so. What we then witnessed was our first experience of a 'fall' – North American style! Within 100 yards of the car we saw: 10 **Great Blue Heron**, 7 **Great Egret**, 2 **Wood Duck**, 2 **Blue Winged Teal**, **Ring necked Pheasant**, 1 **Solitary Sandpiper**, 4 **Spotted Sandpiper**, 1 **Chimney Swift**, 3 **Warbling Vireo**, 2 **Blue Headed Vireo**, **Black Capped Chickadee**, 2 **American Crow**, 2 **Downy Woodpecker**, 1 **Tennessee Warbler**, 50 **Yellow Warbler**, 2 **Magnolia Warbler**, 5 **Black Throated Green Warbler**, 30 **Yellow Rumped Warbler**, 30 **Palm Warbler**, 2 **Black & White Warbler**, 6 **Common Yellowthroat**, 1 **Scarlet Tanager**, 1 **Indigo Bunting**, 4 **Brown Headed Cowbird**, 6 **American Goldfinch** and our first **Baltimore Orioles**.

After recovering from the rush of birds we arrived at Hillman's Marsh main car park (\$4 fee). We had planned a 2-hour stop here but it turned out to be a 5-hour bird walk. One of the first birds (**found by Martyn 'White Pelican' Hnatiuk**) was a drake **Cinnamon Teal** on the Shorebird area of the marsh. This proved to be a major rarity for not only the area but for Canada. Once the news had been released, nearby Point Pelee was emptied of all its birdwatchers, with crowds peaking at 200 people watching the bird for the rest of its 2 day stay.

Besides the Teal another 90+ species were seen on the three-mile trip around the reserve. The best included: a 200+ roost of **Double Crested Cormorant**, 7 **Great Egret**, 1 **Green Heron**, 4 **Wood Duck**, 2 **American Wigeon**, 3 **Blue Winged Teal**, 7 **Green Winged Teal**, 2 **Bufflehead**, 1 **Red Tailed Hawk**, imm. **Bald Eagle** (seen close overhead), 7 **American Coot**, 15 **Semi-palmated Plover**, 1 **Greater Yellowlegs**, 30 **Lesser Yellowlegs**, 3 **Solitary Sandpiper**, 50 **Dunlin**, 3 **Least Sandpiper**, 10 **Ruby Crowned Kinglet**, 3 **Northern Flicker** (yellow shafted), 2 **Eastern Kingbird**, 1 **Veery**, 2 **Grey Catbird**, 2 **Brown Thrasher**, 2 **Nashville Warbler**, 20 **Yellow Warbler**, 20 **Yellow Rumped Warbler**, 20 **Common Yellowthroat**, 20 **Palm Warbler**, 2 **Cliff Swallow**, 2 **Northern Cardinal**, 10 **Chipping Sparrow**, 40 **White Crowned Sparrow**, 10 **White Throated Sparrow**, **Song Sparrow**, 30 **Baltimore Oriole** and 16 **American Goldfinch**.

After a quick snack in the car park we left Point Pelee. On the short journey from Hillman's Marsh to the park we notched up another 2 **American Crow**, 8 **Turkey Vulture** and **American Kestrel**.

We arrived at the Point Pelee National Park at 1230 hrs and paid the seasonal fee (\$60), which is cheaper than paying for the daily ticket (\$12) – depending on how many visits you'll make to the park. Arriving at the Centre Car Park we took the tram to the Tip. For the next two hours we scoured the tip and surrounding area and recorded: 2 **Great Crested Flycatcher**, 5 **Chestnut Sided Warbler**, 2 **Orchard Oriole**, 3 **Ruby Throated Hummingbird**, 2 **Downy Woodpecker**, 10 **Palm Warbler**, 20 **Yellow Warbler**, 6 **Black Throated Green Warbler**, 1 male **Mourning Warbler** seen by Neil only, 2 **Bay Breasted Warbler**, 4 **Black Throated Blue Warbler**, 1 **Blue Headed Vireo**, 3 **Magnolia Warbler**, 1 **Warbling Vireo**, 30 **Baltimore Oriole**, 4 **Swainson's Thrush**, 2 **House Wren**, 1 **Black Billed Cuckoo**, 2 **Blackburnian Warbler**, many **Blue Jay**, 4 **Blue Grey Gnatcatcher**, 3rd winter plumage **Glaucous Gull**, 4 **Great Black Backed Gull**, 2 **Common Tern**, 2 **Bufflehead**, 6 **Greater Scaup**, 2 **Rose Breasted Grosbeak**, 2 **Lincoln's Sparrow**, 6 **Common Yellowthroat**, 1 **Blue Winged Warbler** and 2 **Scarlet Tanager**.

At 1600hrs we decided to go and have a meal at Lucy's Diner (**formerly known as Doug's Place**) just outside the Park. The restaurant garden had a multitude of bird feeders for you to browse at will, whilst trying to eat. The star of this visit was spotted by Martyn and came in the shape of an adult **Red Headed Woodpecker** giving good views from one of the feeders. The supporting cast included **Blue Jay**, **Baltimore Oriole**, 10 **White Throated Sparrow** and 20 **White Crowned Sparrow**. The food was great too!

Later we returned to the park to do the Sanctuary Trail, which was supposed to be best at late afternoon. It didn't disappoint and here we picked up: 1 **Cooper's Hawk**, 1 **Brown Thrasher**, 2 **Least Flycatcher**, 5 **Yellow Warbler**, 10 **Yellow Rumped Warbler**, 2 **Chestnut Sided Warbler**, 4 **Nashville Warbler**, 2 **Black Throated Blue Warbler**, 2 **Warbling Vireo**, 1 **Black Billed Cuckoo**, 2 **Eastern Towhee**, 1 **Northern Parula**, 1 **Yellow Breasted Chat** and 3 **Orchard Oriole**.

Just before dusk we decided to walk the Marsh Boardwalk and connected with 5 **Swamp Sparrow**, **Sora Rail** and **Green Heron**. Finally at dusk we went to the De Laurier Trail Car Park to watch 4 **American Woodcock** performing their displays and array of sounds overhead. 114 species for the day!



Male Yellow Headed Blackbird, St Clair's Reserve

8 May:

We decided to have a relatively late start today after yesterday's success and left Wheatley at around 0800 hrs for Point Pelee. In the fields just north of the park we spotted a hunting Male **Northern Harrier**.

After arriving at the Centre Car Park we decided to walk the Tilden Woods Trail, many good birds were seen and included: 3 **Turkey Vulture** (perched), 1 **Northern Harrier** (overhead), 1 **Cooper's Hawk** (on nest), 3 **Ruby Throated Hummingbird**, 3 **Downy Woodpecker**, 2 **Eastern Kingbird**, 6 **Red Eyed Vireo**, 3 **Blue Headed Vireo**, 2 **Black Capped Chickadee**, **House Wren**, 4 **Veery**, 20 **Yellow Warbler**, 4 **Chestnut Sided Warbler**, 8 **Magnolia Warbler**, 5 **Black Throated Blue Warbler**, 4 **Black Throated Green Warbler**, 30 **Yellow Rumped Warbler**, 1 **American Redstart**, 2 **Northern Waterthrush**, 6 **Indigo Bunting**, 14 **Baltimore Oriole** and 6 **Blue Jay**.

Next stop was again within the park, this time at the North West Beach / Sanctuary Trail Area, which was the area we covered yesterday. A different set of birds had arrived and included: 10 **Orchard Oriole**, 6 **Warbling Vireo**, 3 **Cedar Waxwing**, 3 **Least Flycatcher**, 3 **Indigo Bunting**, ♂ **House Finch**, 3 **Northern Parula**, 1 **Northern Harrier** (overhead), 10 **Nashville Warbler**, 1 **Red Breasted Nuthatch**, 2 **Ruby Throated Hummingbird**, 2 **Eastern Towhee**, 6 **Blue Grey Gnatcatcher**, 3 **Black & White Warbler** and 1 **Yellow Bellied Flycatcher**.

Having stayed within the park for most of the morning we decided to travel further afield in the afternoon. We visited Comber Sewage Lagoons, about 20kms north of the park.

When we arrived we found that like most of these areas, the sewage lagoons now had "No Trespassing" signs on the front gates. We did however find a path going around the right hand side which led through the woods and onto the back of the lagoons (well we didn't jump over the fence, so I guess that's OK). Birds seen in the next hour on this 1km walk included: 1 **Red Shouldered Hawk**, 10 **Yellow Warbler**, 4 **Yellow Rumped Warbler**, 5 **Magnolia Warbler**, 10 **Turkey Vulture**, 6 **Spotted Sandpiper**, 52 **Black Bellied Plover**, 2 **Blue Winged Teal**, 1 **Wood Thrush**, 7 **Red Breasted Grosbeak**, 1 **Great Crested Flycatcher**, 4 **Wood Duck** and 12 **American Goldfinch**.

On the way back to Wheatley we saw over the fields another **Northern Harrier**, 20 **Horned Lark** and 1 **Chimney Swift**.

Arriving in Wheatley we decided to finish the day off at Kopegaron Woods, which was signposted off the main Wheatley to Leamington road 2kms west of Wheatley. Free parking. The woods themselves were alive with birds and we saw 56 species here, the best being: 3 **Turkey Vulture**, 1 **Ruby Throated Hummingbird**, 2 **Downy Woodpecker**, 2 **Red Bellied Woodpecker**, 2 **Eastern Kingbird**, 2 **Great Crested Flycatcher**, 2 **Black Capped Chickadee**, 3 **House Wren**, 4 **Veery**, 8 **Nashville Warbler**, 20 **Yellow Warbler**, 6 **Chestnut Sided Warbler**, 1 **Orange Crowned Warbler**, 11 **Magnolia Warbler**, 30 **Yellow Rumped Warbler**, 2 **Blackburnian Warbler**, 11 **Black Throated Green Warbler**, 8 **Black Throated Blue Warbler**, 6 **Palm Warbler**, 5 **Black and White Warbler**, 15 **Ovenbird**, 4 **Common Yellowthroat**, 4 species of Sparrow namely, **Song**, **Savannah**, **White Throated** and **White Crowned**. 4 **Northern Cardinal**, 4 **Rose Breasted Grosbeak**, 3 **Indigo Bunting**, 8 **Baltimore Oriole** and 14 **American Goldfinch**.

Picking up some pizza in Wheatley just before dark we noted the town had a 7-pair colony of **Chimney Swift**.



Paul & Neil taking a break on West Beach, Point Pelee

9 May:

Today we decided to spread our wings a bit. We heard that pair of Upland Sandpiper were breeding in a cow field west of Charing Cross near the main road on the right as you leave the town. Unfortunately we had no joy. However we did see 3 **Eastern Meadowlark** in the field and 2 **Northern Harrier** nearby.

Our next stop was the previously visited Blenheim Sewage Lagoons, once again the site didn't let us down, the star birds being: 3 ♀ **Wilson's Phalarope**, supported with a host of new birds including 2 **Black Throated Green Warbler**, 4 **Yellow Warbler**, 3 **Palm Warbler**, 6 **Yellow Rumped Warbler**, 1 **Grey Cheeked Thrush**, 22 **Bobolink**, 2 **Greater Yellowlegs**, 4 **Lesser Yellowlegs**, 2 **American Wigeon**, 150 **Least Sandpiper**, 200 **Dunlin**, 2 **Pectoral Sandpiper**, 4 **Blue Winged Teal**, 6 **Green Winged Teal**, 7 **Spotted Sandpiper**, 4 **Bufflehead**, 2 **Pied Billed Grebe**, 2 pair **Redhead**, 6 **Purple Martin**, 2 **American Coot**, 1 **Brown Thrasher**, 2 **Horned Grebe**, 3 **Black Bellied Plover**, 42 **Short Billed Dowitcher**, **Black Tern** and 6 **Forster's Tern**.

After 2 hrs we decided to visit the nearby Rondeau Park (12\$ fee a day). This place soon became our favourite site with a multitude of walks and habitat types. We spent the rest of the day walking some of these paths but started at the Information Centre where a bird feeder brought in some good birds such as: **Ruby Throated Hummingbird**, **Red Headed Woodpecker**, **Hairy Woodpecker**, **Northern Flicker**, **Downy Woodpecker**, **White Breasted Nuthatch**, **Black Capped Chickadee** and **Orchard Oriole**.

The first track we took was Bennett's/Spice Bush Trail, birds were passing through thick and fast, so as usual a 1-mile walk took us 5 hours. Birding highlights on this walk included 20 **Turkey Vulture**, 1 perched **Whip-Poor-Will**, 2 **Hairy Woodpecker**, 3 **Downy Woodpecker**, 4 **Northern Flicker**, 12 **Least Flycatcher**, 4 **Great Crested Flycatcher**, 2 **White Breasted Nuthatch**, **Yellow Throated Vireo**, 3 **Blue Headed Vireo**, 6 **Warbling Vireo**, 10 **Red Eyed Vireo**, 6 **Black Capped Chickadee**, 8 **Veery**, **Hermit Thrush**, 3 **Wood Thrush**, 2 **Brown Thrasher**, **Tennessee Warbler**, 20 **Nashville Warbler**, 39 **Yellow Warbler**, 9 **Chestnut Sided Warbler**, 15 **Magnolia Warbler**, 6 **Black Throated Blue Warbler**, 36 **Yellow Rumped Warbler**, 7 **Black Throated Green Warbler**, 4 **Blackburnian Warbler**, 6 **Palm Warbler**, 4 **Bay Breasted Warbler**, 20 **Black & White Warbler**, 16 **Ovenbird**, 4 **Common Yellowthroat**, 2 **Swamp Sparrow**, 2 **Northern Waterthrush** 15 **Rose Breasted Grosbeak**, 3 **Rusty Blackbird**, 6 **Orchard Oriole** and 20 **American Goldfinch**.

With only an hour's light left we decided to have a quick look at the lake at the South Point trail. Birds here in the next half an hour included: 4 **Common Loon**, 100 **Double Crested Cormorant**, **Caspian Tern**, 2 **Common Tern**, 15 **Forster's Tern** plus 6 **Chimney Swift** and 5 **Purple Martin**.



Paul at the Tip of Point Pelee



Male Baltimore Oriole, Point Pelee

10 May:

Today we were up before dawn to take the 1st tram to the Tip of Point Pelee. At the Tip reverse migration was in swing, with birds flying out over the Tip in a southwards direction, many at just above head height. Birds noted included: 120 **Blue Jay**, 160 **Red Winged Blackbird**, 60 **Common Grackle**, 27 **Baltimore Oriole**, 45 **American Goldfinch** and 52 **Brown Headed Cowbird**. We also noted 2 **Caspian Tern**, 1 **Black Scoter**, 3 **Turnstone**, 6 **Greater Scaup**, 2 **Lesser Scaup**, 1500+ **Red Breasted Merganser** and 2 **Common Loon**.

After an hour or so we decided to bird the Tip trees and then walk back to the centre via Loop Woods, Sparrow Fields and Woodland Trails. This took us about 3 hours. Birds seen along these routes included: 2 **Eastern Towhee**, 4 **Downy Woodpecker**, 2 **Blue Winged Warbler**, 4 **American Redstart**, 8 **Rose Breasted Grosbeak**, 7 **Least Flycatcher**, 4 **Ruby Throated Hummingbird**, 6 **Common Yellowthroat**, 30 **Yellow Warbler**, 10 **Palm Warbler**, 20 **Blue Grey Gnatcatcher**, 6 **Black Throated Blue Warbler**, 4 **Indigo Bunting**, 4 **Bay Breasted Warbler**, 20 **Yellow Rumped Warbler**, 1 **Red Bellied Woodpecker**, 10 **Black and White Warbler**, 2 **House Finch**, 8 **Chestnut Sided Warbler**, 2 **Northern Mockingbird**, 1 **Golden Winged Warbler**, 4 **Scarlet Tanager**, 1 **Bobolink**, 3 **Blackburnian Warbler**, 20 **Magnolia Warbler**, 2 **Blue Headed Vireo**, **Wood Thrush**, 2 **Hermit Thrush**, 3 **Field Sparrow** (in the Sparrow Fields!), 1 **Sharp Shinned Hawk**, 1 **Brewster's Warbler**, 2 **Yellow Bellied Sapsucker**, 6 **Great Crested Flycatcher**, 10 **Warbling Vireo**, 3 **Red Headed Woodpecker**, 1 **Yellow Throated Vireo**, 4 **Black Capped Chickadee**, 2 **Brown Thrasher**, 6 **Ovenbird**, 1 **Red Breasted Nuthatch** and 1 **Lincoln's Sparrow**.

When we finally returned to the Centre we noticed on the sightings board that a number of rare birds had been found. Twitcher mode engaged and off we dashed! The first birds we saw included a ♂ **Harris's Sparrow** at the De Laurier Trail buildings where we also found a **Carolina Wren** on territory 200yds down the track from the buildings. Next was a **Clay Coloured Sparrow** coming to the seed feeding area at the south end of the Black Willow Car Park.

11 May:

We decided to have a lie in after yesterday's long slog but we were still up and on our way to Pelee for 0800 hours. Our first good spot of the day was an adult **Bald Eagle** standing in a field between Wheatley and Pelee.

We decided to walk the Tilden Woods Trail near the centre this morning as we heard the Tip was fairly quiet. We spent 2 hours walking this 1-mile trail and noted the following species: 1 **Blue Winged Warbler**, 1 **Warbling Vireo**, 30 **Yellow Warbler**, 30 **Yellow Rumped Warbler**, 6 **Black Throated Blue Warbler**, 6 **Common Yellowthroat**, 10 **Nashville Warbler**, 15 **Black Throated Green Warbler**, 6 **American Redstart**, 4 **Cape May Warbler**, 4 **Bay Breasted Warbler**, 10 **Red Eyed Vireo**, 6 **Chestnut Sided Warbler**, 2 **White Eyed Vireo**, 3 **Northern Waterthrush**, 11 **Blackburnian Warbler**, 3 **Downy Woodpecker**, 10 **Rose Breasted Grosbeak**, 8 **Scarlet Tanager**, ♂ **Prothonotary Warbler** (finally!), 5 **Veery**, 15 **Magnolia Warbler**, **Wood Thrush** and a pair of **Northern Parula**.

But the lure of the Tip and possible rarities got the better of us by midday! A good selection of birds were seen and included: ♂ **Wilson's Warbler**, 15 **Magnolia Warbler**, 5 **American Redstart**, 3 **Chestnut Sided Warbler**, 15 **Palm Warbler**, 15 **Black Throated Green Warbler**, 10 **Eastern Kingbird**, **Grasshopper Sparrow**, 3 **Northern Parula**, 1 **Sharp Shinned Hawk**, 3 **Blackburnian Warbler**, 2 **Field Sparrow**, 2 **Swainson's Thrush**, 6 **Grey Cheeked Thrush**, 6 **Veery**, 1 **Yellow Bellied Sapsucker**, 2 **Cooper's Hawk**, **Osprey**, 2 **Yellow Breasted Chat**, 1 **Orange Crowned Warbler**, 2 **Northern Harrier**, 1 **Hermit Thrush**, 1 **Glaucous Gull** (overhead), 1 **Blue Winged Warbler** and 10 **Ovenbird**.

In the late afternoon / evening we decided to do something different so visited St Clair's Nature Reserve. This was about an hour's drive north of Wheatley. We weren't disappointed and managed to see: 6 **Black Tern**, 2 **Ring Necked Duck**, 15 **Forster's Tern**, 20 **Swamp Sparrow**, 1 adult plus 2 juvenile **Great Horned Owl**, 1 ♂ **Yellow Headed Blackbird** (the only bird in attendance this year), 1 **Pied Billed Grebe**, 3 **Least Bittern**, 3 **Marsh Wren**, 2 **American Coot**, 10 **American Golden Plover**, 60 **Black Bellied Plover**, 1 **Short Billed Dowitcher**, 60 **Dunlin**, 3 **Moorhen** (scarce here), 24 **Wood Duck**, 3 **Black Crowned Night Heron**, 2 **Sora Rail** and a roost of 200+ **Double Crested Cormorant**. We also heard **American Bittern** but didn't see it.

12 May:

Again up at dawn and down to the Tip at Point Pelee. Birds were now becoming more repetitive in terms of species with only a handful of new species arriving daily. The highlights for the morning included a twitched **Henslow's Sparrow**, 3 **Red Headed Woodpecker**, 1 **Red Breasted Nuthatch**, 40 **Cedar Waxwing**, 2 **Black & White Warbler**, 1 **Cooper's Hawk**, 1 **Eastern Wood Pewee**, 4 **American Redstart**, 1 **Osprey**, 2 **Nashville Warbler**, 2 **Common Loon**, 5 **Magnolia Warbler**, 1 **Northern Flicker** and 6 **Palm Warbler**.

By mid morning we were back at Tilden Woods Trail. Birdlife was quiet for the first time (in relative terms!) on the trip but highlights here included: 1 **American Redstart**, 4 **Black Throated Blue Warbler**, 2 **Scarlet Tanager**, **Eastern Wood Pewee**, **Blue Winged Warbler**, 2 **Northern Waterthrush**, **Red Bellied Woodpecker**, **Grey Cheeked Thrush** and **Northern Harrier**.

We decided to try Wheatley Harbour after lunch but this produced very little besides 10 **Forster's Tern** and the usual Gull species.

We finished off at Kopegaron Woods, which was quieter than our first visit. Nevertheless a good selection of species was still present including **Hairy Woodpecker**, 3 **Great Crested Flycatcher** and 3 **Indigo Bunting** new for the site.



Male Downy Woodpecker on feeders at rear of Centre at Rondeau



Male Blue Winged Warbler, Point Pelee

13 May:

What we expected to be a fairly quiet trip to Rondeau Park were shattered in the first couple of hours at the Tulip Trail, which turned out to be a wonderful 2 hours. Highlights included: 2 **Eastern Wood Pewee**, 9 **Veery**, 20 **Blue Grey Gnatcatcher**, 6 **Red Eyed Vireo**, 15 **Magnolia Warbler**, 2 **Eastern Phoebe**, 2 **Northern Flicker**, 1 **Red Bellied Woodpecker**, 4 **Scarlet Tanager**, 2 **Black Throated Blue Warbler**, 1 flyover **Sandhill Crane** spotted by *Neil 'I called it first' Tovey*, 3 **Blackburnian Warbler**, 1 **Swainson's Thrush**, 1 **Canvasback**, 1 **Hooded Merganser**, 4 **Wood Thrush**, 2 **Canada Warbler**, 2 **Downy Woodpecker**, 4 **Ruby Throated Hummingbird**, adult **Bald Eagle** with fish in talons (overhead), 1 first year **Summer Tanager**, 1 **Tufted Titmouse**, 2 **Bay Breasted Warbler**, 1 **Hooded Warbler**, 1 **Chestnut Sided Warbler**, 1 **Yellow Billed Cuckoo** and **White Eyed Vireo**.

A quick hour break at the Centre Feeders produced: **Yellow Billed Cuckoo**, **White Eyed Vireo**, **Hairy Woodpecker**, **White Breasted Nuthatch** and **Red Headed Woodpecker**.

Another quick half hour at Bennett's Trail produced ♂ **Prothonotary Warbler** and 2 **Blackpoll Warbler**.

We decided to do something different and went to the North East Beach shore to see what we could find and this included: 4

Common Loon, 1 Lesser Black Backed Gull, 7 Eastern Kingbird, 1 Ruby Throated Hummingbird, 2 Magnolia Warbler, 2 Great Crested Flycatcher, Purple Martins (in nest boxes), 1 Caspian Tern and 4 Northern Rough Winged Swallow.



Male Red Bellied Woodpecker, Rondeau Centre feeders

14 May:

All trips have a bad day and this was ours - it rained for most of it. This enabled us to do some tourist shopping. This was followed by an unscheduled visit to Leamington Hospital when Martyn had a massive asthma attack. The ensuing costs exceeded \$500 - make sure you are fully insured! A quick injection of adrenalin and Martyn was flying back down the highway towards Point Pelee! We finally started birding 1700hours.

Arriving at the tip, highlights included: **Le Conte's Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Philadelphia Vireo, 2 Blackpoll Warbler, 2 Blackburnian Warbler, ♂ Hooded Warbler, 3 Eastern Wood Pewee, 60 Cedar Waxwing, 2 Willow Flycatcher, 1 American Redstart** and 2 **Orchard Oriole**.

On the way back on the tram we got off at Half Way to view an **Eastern Screech Owl**. This bird had apparently been using the same tree for the past 3 years. The actual site was near post 8 in Post Woods and is known to locals.

Final stop of the day was De Laurier Car Park at dusk for 3 **Common Nighthawk** that were very obliging, if not brief.

15 May:

Started off just after dawn and we were soon on our way to St Clair's where we hoped to catch up with **American Bittern**. Our gen stated that the best place to see the species was not at the reserve itself but in the reed beds on the opposite side of the river to the car park. After about 15 mins of searching **Paul 'Eagle Eye' Parsons** found one between the 2nd & 3rd rides in the reeds. The **Yellow Headed Blackbird** was still present about 150 yards into the reserve near the main path. Apparently this area was the bird's main territory this year.

We decided to visit the nearby Tremblay Beach reed beds and on our way we saw from the car: **Northern Harrier**, 6 **Turkey Vulture**, **Night Heron** and **Great White Egret**. Tremblay reserve itself had been burnt out and offered very little in the way of water birds and the sewage lagoons were again off limit. We decided to have a walk round anyway and managed to pick up a few good species and these included: ♂ **Wilson's Warbler**, 2 **Palm Warbler**, **Sora**, 2 **Forster's Tern**, **Cooper's Hawk**, **Magnolia Warbler**, 3 **Great Blue Heron**, **Green Heron**, 7 **Eastern Kingbird**, 2 **Common Yellowthroat** and 2 **Yellow Warbler**.

After lunch we returned to Point Pelee and caught the tram to the Point. Birds included: ♂ **Wilson's Warbler**, 4 **Red Eyed Vireo**, 21 **Dunlin**, 2 **Sanderling**, ♂ **Hooded Warbler**, 4 **Indigo Bunting**, 2 **Blackburnian Warbler**, 1 **Eastern Pewee**, 2 **Black Throated Blue Warbler**, 300 **Cedar Waxwing**, 3 **Eastern Kingbird**, ♂ **Canvasback**, 2 **Bay Breasted Warbler**, 5 **Magnolia Warbler**, 1 **Acadian Flycatcher**, 1 **Blue Winged Warbler**, 2 **Northern Parula**, 2 **Chestnut Sided Warbler**, 2 **Nashville Warbler**, 1 **Connecticut Warbler** (seen by Paul only as we had split up), 2 **Warbling Vireo**, **Veery** and 2 **Yellow Billed Cuckoo**. Neil also managed to see the first **Tennessee Warbler** of the trip in Post Woods.

To end the day we decided to visit the nearby famous Onion Fields in an attempt to twitch the reported Yellow Crowned Night Heron. We failed. We did however see 200 **Dunlin**, 15 **Short Billed** and 1 **Long Billed Dowitcher**, ♂ **Wilson's Phalarope**, 1 **Semi-Palmated Plover**, 2 **Lesser** and 4 **Greater Yellowlegs**. We also heard 2 **Virginia Rail**.

16 May:

Today we decided to visit Blenheim/ Rondeau again. Some flooded fields on the way there contained species such as: **Horned Lark**, 40 **Black Bellied Plover**, 2 **American Golden Plover**, 200 **Dunlin** and **Short Billed Dowitcher**. Fly-bys included 1 **Sharp Shinned Hawk** and 2 **Common Loon**.

Blenheim was a little quieter than what we had experienced previously but still held: **1 Eastern Meadowlark**, ♀ **Wilson's Phalarope**, 2 **Greater Yellowlegs**, 1 **Lesser Yellowlegs**, 40 **Least Sandpiper**, 80 **Dunlin** and 4 **Redhead**. On the way to Rondeau 2 (**Wild?**) **Turkey** walked across the road in front of us just outside the reserve.

At Rondeau we started at the South Point Trail, highlights included: 2 **Eastern Peewee**, 2 **Red Headed Woodpecker**, a roosting **Common Nighthawk**, 10 **Eastern Kingbird**, 10 **Warbling Vireo**, 2 **Willow Flycatcher**, **Blue Headed Vireo**, 2 **Grey Cheeked Thrush**, **Goshawk**, 2 **Red Bellied Woodpecker**, 20 **Yellow Warbler**, 5 **Black Throated Blue Warbler**, 6 **American Redstart**, 20 **Magnolia Warbler**, 2 **Blackburnian Warbler**, 2 **Eastern Phoebe**, 2 **Ruby Throated Hummingbird** and **Eastern Bluebird**.

The Centre feeder was still producing good species and while having a bite to eat we logged up: 2 **House Finch**, 2 **Black Capped Chickadee**, **Red Headed** and **Red Bellied** & 2 **Downy** & 2 **Hairy Woodpecker**, 5 **Rose Breasted Grosbeak** and **White Breasted Nuthatch**.

Early afternoon we walked the Tulip Trail. Although quiet there were still some good birds to be seen and included: **Bay Breasted Warbler**, ♂ **Prothonotary Warbler**, 5 **Nashville Warbler**, 2 **Eastern Peewee**, **Green Heron**, **Grey Cheeked Thrush**, **Swainson's Thrush**, 4 **Wood Thrush** and **Eastern Phoebe**.

With plenty of daylight left we returned to Point Pelee and visited the Tip area and Loop Woods. New birds included: ♂ **Goldeneye**, **White Eyed Vireo**, 20 **Black Bellied Plover**, 1 **American Golden Plover**, 1 **Black Billed Cuckoo**, **Eastern Wood Peewee**, **Alder Flycatcher**, 2 **Northern Parula**, 2 **Chestnut Sided Warbler**, 4 **Magnolia Warbler**, 2 **Black Throated Blue Warbler**, **Palm Warbler**, **Bay Breasted Warbler**, 4 **Indigo Bunting**, 180 **Cedar Waxwing** and ♂ **Blackpoll Warbler**.

An hour before dark we visited Hillman's Marsh and picked up **Stilt Sandpiper**, **Semi-palmated Sandpiper**, **Semi-palmated Plover**, 400 **Dunlin**, 50 **Least Sandpiper**, 23 **Short Billed Dowitcher**,

White Rumped Sandpiper, 3 American Woodcock. Just before dusk we saw 4 **Night Heron**, 2 **Common Nighthawk** and a passing **Belted Kingfisher** (Martyn only).



Male Harris Sparrow, Point Pelee

17 May:

This was our last day around Point Pelee area, so we started off at the crack of dawn heading to the Tip. Just outside the park we had an **Eastern Screech Owl** in flight across the front of the car.

At the tip we followed the same route we had found most profitable over the past 10 days, namely 1st: the Tip, 2nd: the Tip Woods and 3rd: the Loop Trail Woods.

We amassed 114 species in 3hrs birding with the highlights being: 4 ♂ **Blackpoll Warbler**, 3 ♂ **Cerulean Warbler** (at last!), 1 **Eastern Wood Peewee**, 500 **Cedar Waxwing**, 3 **American Redstart**, 4 **Blackburnian Warbler**, 1 ♂ **Cape May Warbler**, 5 **Black Billed Cuckoo**, 7 **Yellow Billed Cuckoo**, ♂ **Canada Warbler**, Paul and Martyn finally caught up with a ♂ **Mourning Warbler**, 10 **Magnolia Warbler**, 2 **Bay Breasted Warbler**, 3 **Tennessee Warbler**, ♂ **Wilson's Warbler**, ♂ **Summer Tanager**, 1 **White Eyed Vireo**, and **Acadian Flycatcher**.

We returned to the Park Centre for a snack in the car park where we witnessed some reverse raptor migration overhead. In 20 minutes the totals included: 17 **Turkey Vulture**, 1 **Bald Eagle**, 1 **Red Tailed Hawk**, 1 **Red Shouldered Hawk**, 1 **Sharp Shinned Hawk** and 1 **Cooper's Hawk**.

With nothing major on the notice boards we decided to go and try to find the only sparrow we hadn't seen, **Vesper Sparrow**, at Kingsville Sewage Lagoons. Yet again on arrival we were greeted with No Entry signs.

However the birds had been reported in the fields around the complex. About 200yds further west on the main road we came across an old Railway Line converted into a Walkway. These ran along side the site for a short distance. We decided to give it a try and within 5 minutes we had a fine singing male bird in our scopes.

The last hours of daylight were spent at Hillman's Marsh - where it had all started for us. Highlights included: ad **Laughing Gull**, **Stilt Sandpiper**, **Bald Eagle** and **Great White Egret**.

18 May:

We decided to visit the Long Point area on our way back to Toronto to break the journey up. A number of sites were visited, including the Old Cut Banding Woods, Big Creek Marsh Viewing Platform, Port Rowan Pond & Harbour and Hastings Road.

After finding digs for the night (\$90 for the room), we paid a visit to the banding (ringing) station at Old Cut Street. The banding was in full swing. We saw some fine birds that included: 2 **Blue Headed Vireo**, 1 **White Eyed Vireo**, ♂ **American Redstart**, ♂ **Wilson's Warbler**, 3 **Magnolia Warbler**, imm. **Bald Eagle** (overhead), 2 **Grey Cheeked Thrush**, **Lincoln's Sparrow**, 2 **House Finch**, 1 **Pine Siskin** (displaying) and a **Cattle Egret** on the front lawn of a house.

Next stop was the Port Rowan area. A small pond on the way into town produced: 9 **Gadwall**, 2 **Greater Yellowlegs**, 1 **Short Billed Dowitcher**, 10 **Least Sandpiper** and 30 **Dunlin**. At the harbour itself there was a colony of 40 **Cliff Swallow**.

After food at the Harbour Restaurant (recommended) we went to Hastings Road where we patiently waited for **Sedge Wren**. We could here them but it took us an hour to actually see one, also seen were 3 **Indigo Bunting** and 2 **Eastern Wood Peewee**.

One hour before dusk we plonked ourselves on the Big Creek Viewing Platform and waited for the cranes to come to roost. We weren't disappointed, a party of six and one lone **Sandhill Crane** fly into the marsh. Other birds seen included 6 **Black Tern**, **Northern Harrier**, 10 **Swamp Sparrow**, 30 **Wood Duck**, **Red Tailed Hawk**, **Least Bittern**, 3 **Marsh Wren**, 2 **Caspian Tern**, **Black Billed Cuckoo**, ad **Bald Eagle** (at nest) and 3 **Blue Winged Teal**.

19 May:

From Long Point we decided to do our tourist bit and stop off at Niagara Falls on the way back to Toronto. Just outside Welland Port Neil spotted a shrike on the wires. We screeched to a halt, turned around and the bird turned out to be a fine **Loggerhead Shrike**, well south of it's breeding range so could have been a late migrant. Also seen on the journey were 15 **Turkey Vulture**, **Red Tailed Hawk** and **Red Shouldered Hawk**.

A couple of tourist hours at Niagara Falls produced only 2 **Magnolia Warbler**, **Great Cormorant**, **Peregrine**, **Red Shouldered Hawk** and **House Finch**. Our final leg of the journey saw Paul spotting a **Belted Kingfisher** flying between the QEW Highway and Lake Ontario near Grimsby, Hamilton.

Arriving at Toronto airport our last birds of the trip turned out to be 2 **Horned Lark** and a **Killdeer** on the runway fields. The return trip to Cardiff took 1 hour less than the outbound journey - thanks to the jet stream. We finished on 212 species with about 135 being ticks for all of us.



They say everyone has a double!!

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