

BIRDING AFIELD:

by Dan Kennedy

I got back from Ontario last evening (Friday, May 2) and thought that people might be interested in some of the birding highlights of my trip, particularly in view of the message from Point Pelee. I was at Point Pelee on Wednesday and Thursday and have to admit that it was a little disappointing. I did see some good birds but generally things are very quiet there at present.

I took a two hour guided walking tour with one of the park experts and, to quote him, "things are very quiet in the woods". On the up side we saw a Northern Mockingbird in the first five minutes of our walk, however we saw virtually no birds for the next 55 minutes. At about the mid-point of the walk we started to see Yellow-rumps quickly followed by Nashvilles and then Black-throated Greens. There were lots of all three species but no other warblers were around.

The next day I did see a Yellow Warbler at nearby Hillman Marsh. We also heard an Eastern Towhee and a Catbird. There were lots of White-throats and a Red-bellied Woodpecker landed on a tree about 10 feet away and at eye-level. That was pretty neat.

There were a lot of Lesser Scaup off the point as well as both Common and Red-breasted Mergansers. The most interesting thing at the point was a flock of about 40 Ruddy Ducks. I had never seen so many at one time. A bit of excitement was generated when I pointed out an immature Bald Eagle mixed in with all the Turkey Vultures flying over the parking lot at the Visitor Centre.

The highlight of my visit took place at the every end of the day when I was all alone on the Marsh Trail and a bird that I had never seen before jumped up out of the marsh right ahead of me then landed again not far away. I climbed the viewing tower and was able to locate and get a good view of the bird. It was a Green Heron, a lifer for me, and apparently the first one seen this year.

We visited the Pelee Wings Nature Store. Wow! The biggest selection of birding optics in Canada! Naturally I couldn't afford to do anything but lust after them. I did get the new Sibley Guide to Eastern Birds and the Peterson Warbler Guide.

I picked up another lifer the next day at Hillman Marsh, Forster's Tern. Dunlin and both Greater and Lesser Yellow-legs were present in the marsh. At Wheatley, Ontario, we saw three Great Egrets, a Pectoral Sandpiper and some Dunlin. Local birders told me that Rondeau Provincial park was much hotter than Pelee at the moment so I headed over there on Thursday.

Unfortunately, I could only spend an hour so didn't see anything dramatic. A Worm-eating Warbler had been seen there on the previous Sunday. A local birder told me that he has seen only seven species of warbler so far and had to work very hard to see that many. It seems that it is still about a week too early. The bird that was generating the most interest at Rondeau while I was there was a Willet.

A couple of other things of possible interest from other parts of the trip: several thousand Snow Geese seen while I was driving between through Quebec; a Wild Turkey at Bannister Lake near Cambridge, Ontario as well as a pair of Trumpeter Swans on the lake.

In total, I saw only 76 species while I was out of province and that includes the Surf Scoters (50+) and a single Common Eider at Cape Jour.

Anyway, that's my story, and now back to PEI birds.

NEWS FROM ABOUT:

compiled by Dan McAskill

The Canadian Nature Federation announced support for 31 community-based bird conservation projects across the country on May 10th - International Migratory Bird Day. Through its Important Bird Areas program, the CNF is helping local conservation groups across Canada to work in their communities to conserve bird habitat of global importance. The projects are as diverse as an Eagle Watch volunteer education program in Squamish, B.C., to a forest habitat assessment for birds at risk in southwestern Ontario. Over the last four years the Canadian IBA