

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc.

POINT PELEE & KIRTLAND'S WARBLER

May 14 - 22, 2005

Leaders: Kim Eckert & Brennan Mulrooney

Of all the spring migration traps I visit on tours, Canada's Point Pelee National Park would probably rank as my favorite. One reason for this is that even without any weather with fronts or precipitation around to ground the warblers and other birds into view, there always seems to be a good variety of migrants to be seen at Pelee on a given day, birds that often weren't there the day before. As interesting as the Dry Tortugas' Fort Jefferson or High Island's Boy Scout Woods are, the birding there on many spring days can be on the dull side, especially when the weather is too pleasant.

This year's Point Pelee tour was a case in point. For the most part, the weather was relatively uneventful with nothing close to a fall-out while we were there. Still, with help from sites we birded in Michigan with warblers on their breeding grounds, we managed to see a respectable total of 30 warbler species. At Pelee itself, the likes of Chestnut-sideds, Magnolias, Black-throated Greens, Blackburnians, Bay-breasteds and others were almost routine, while it took a bit longer to make sure the entire group saw things like the Cape May, Cerulean, and Canada.

But Pelee and vicinity means much more than warblers. Quite unexpected were the two adult male Harlequin Ducks we saw in flight rounding The Tip at Pelee. Equally surprising was the Glossy Ibis in a roadside ditch, much farther north than it should have been. We also had great views of two adult Little Gulls at Hillman Marsh not far from Pelee, where a drawn-down pool was the main reason we were able to tally an above-average total of 20 shorebird species during the tour. Present again this year only a half block away from our Leamington hotel were American Woodcock doing their amazing flight display. And in the woods at Pelee itself, complementing all the warblers, were close views of Eastern Screech-Owl, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Philadelphia Vireo, Gray-cheeked Thrush, and many other special birds.

This tour also spends the better part of three days in Michigan, and the birding there this year certainly didn't disappoint. En route to our two-night stay in Grayling, there was time to add Blue-winged Warbler to our list near Pontiac and to witness a modest but nice wave of warblers at Bay City State Park. The next day in Grayling not only began with excellent views of singing male Kirtland's Warblers, but that morning we had very nice views of Golden-winged and Mourning warblers, two species which had eluded us at Pelee. There were also marshes to bird. At one spot we lured a Virginia Rail into view just a few feet away, but far more amazing at another marsh was our mid-afternoon Yellow rail experience. It never did quite come into view, but for some reason it called incessantly as if it were nighttime, and it approached within 20 or 25 feet away of the boardwalk we were standing on!

Our final day in the field in Michigan was equally interesting. In one area, two Black-billed Cuckoos came into view, both Golden-winged and Blue-winged warblers sang across the road from each other, another Mourning Warbler posed next to our vans, and a strange Willow Flycatcher was seen and heard singing an entirely atypical song. And back in Detroit, the tour's birding literally ended with a male Cerulean Warbler posing over our heads at Pontiac Recreation Area – not everyone in the group had seen this handsome warbler back at Point Pelee.

ITINERARY:

May 14 / arrival in Detroit.

May 15 / morning at Holiday Beach Provincial Park en route to Leamington; afternoon in Point Pelee National Park (Northwest Beach, Sanctuary Woods, and Sleepy Hollow).

May 16 / most of day at Point Pelee, birding from The Tip to the Visitor Centre, at Tilden Woods, and Black Willow picnic area; afternoon visit to Hillman Marsh, and a post-dinner woodcock display next to the Pelee Day's Inn.

May 17 / all-day trip to Rondeau Provincial Park, including stops en route at an eagle nest and on the way back at Erieau and Erie Beach.

May 18 / final day at Point Pelee: morning birding from The Tip to the Visitor Centre and Tilden Woods, and late afternoon stops between the entrance and White Pines; early afternoon optional return to Hillman Marsh.

May 19 / brief morning return to Pelee (Blue Heron, DeLaurier and Tilden Woods), followed by all-day drive to Grayling via stops at Pontiac and Bay City State Recreation Areas.

May 20 / morning Kirtland's Warbler tour in east-central Crawford County, followed by back- roads birding in northern Roscommon Co. (including the Yellow Rail marsh) and at Hartwick Pines State Park and vicinity.

May 21 / return to Detroit via back roads in northwestern Bay Co., Nyanquing Point, Indian Springs Metropark, and Pontiac State Recreation Area.

May 22 / departure for home.

KEY:

O = seen/heard only in Ontario

M = seen/heard only in Michigan

(species not annotated with O or M were found in both areas)

Species in **boldfaced type** are significant highlights of the tour, either as unexpected rarities or as the specialties of this tour.

BIRDLIST:

Canada Goose (too many of them with babies)

Mute Swan (more than usual, unfortunately)

Wood Duck

Mallard

Blue-winged Teal O

Northern Shoveler O

Green-winged Teal M

Redhead O (Hillman Marsh option)

Lesser Scaup O

Harlequin Duck O (two totally surprising males flying by The Tip)

Red-breasted Merganser O

Ruddy Duck M

Ring-necked Pheasant

Wild Turkey M (I don't want to discuss it!)

Common Loon O

Pied-billed Grebe M

Double-crested Cormorant O

Great Blue Heron

Great Egret
 Green Heron
Glossy Ibis O (a close adult near Erieau; quite unusual here)
 Turkey Vulture
 Osprey M (including a few nests)
 Bald Eagle (including a nest near Leamington)
 Northern Harrier
 Cooper's Hawk M
 Broad-winged Hawk
 Red-tailed Hawk
 American Kestrel M
Yellow Rail M (heard-only – but heard birds count, especially in this case!)
 Virginia Rail M (close and excellent views)
 Sora M (heard-only)
 American Coot M
 Sandhill Crane (including one posing in a cemetery)
 Black-bellied Plover O
 American Golden-Plover O
 Semipalmated Plover O
 Killdeer
 Greater Yellowlegs O
 Lesser Yellowlegs O
 Solitary Sandpiper O
 Spotted Sandpiper
 Upland Sandpiper M (5 or 6 in the same field north of Hartwick)
 Whimbrel O (Hillman Marsh option)
 Ruddy Turnstone O
 Sanderling O
 Semipalmated Sandpiper O
 Least Sandpiper O
 White-rumped Sandpiper O (good study at Hillman Marsh)
 Dunlin O
 Short-billed Dowitcher O
 Wilson's Snipe M
American Woodcock O (displaying again by the Pelee Days Inn)
 Wilson's Phalarope O (Hillman Marsh option; = 20 shorebird species)
Little Gull O (great views of two adults at Hillman Marsh; plus two immatures two days later)
 Bonaparte's Gull O
 Ring-billed Gull
 Herring Gull O
 Great Black-backed Gull O
 Caspian Tern O
 Common Tern O
 Forster's Tern O
 Black Tern
 Rock Pigeon
 Mourning Dove
Black-billed Cuckoo M (two unexpectedly good views)
 Yellow-billed Cuckoo O (briefly at Tilden Woods)
 Eastern Screech-Owl O (seen well on the second try at Tilden Woods)
 Common Nighthawk O (flying by the woodcock lek)
 Chimney Swift
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird
 Belted Kingfisher
 Red-headed Woodpecker O (best at Holiday Beach)

Red-bellied Woodpecker
 (Yellow-bellied Sapsucker / leader-only fly-by)
 Downy Woodpecker
 Hairy Woodpecker
 Northern Flicker
 Pileated Woodpecker O (heard-only at Rondeau)
 Eastern Wood-Pewee
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher O (great study at De Laurier Trail)
 Acadian Flycatcher M (singing males at Indian Springs)
 Willow Flycatcher M (best at Nyanquing and another singing an odd song in Bay Co.; also two unidentified and silent "Traill's")
 Least Flycatcher
 Eastern Phoebe
 Great Crested Flycatcher
 Eastern Kingbird
 Blue-headed Vireo
 Warbling Vireo
 Philadelphia Vireo O (several good looks)
 Red-eyed Vireo
 Blue Jay
 American Crow
 Common Raven M
 Horned Lark
 Purple Martin
 Tree Swallow
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow
 Bank Swallow
 Barn Swallow
 Cliff Swallow
 Black-capped Chickadee
 Tufted Titmouse M (Indian Springs)
 Red-breasted Nuthatch (several unexpectedly late migrants in Ontario)
 White-breasted Nuthatch
 Brown Creeper M (Indian Springs)
 Carolina Wren O
 House Wren
 Sedge Wren M (in the Yellow Rail marsh)
 Marsh Wren M
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet O
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (including one imitating – and chasing – a titmouse)
 Eastern Bluebird
 Veery
 Gray-cheeked Thrush O (great view at Tilden Woods)
 Swainson's Thrush
 Hermit Thrush M (heard-only)
 Wood Thrush
 American Robin
 Gray Catbird
 Brown Thrasher
 European Starling
 Cedar Waxwing O
 Blue-winged Warbler M (three singing males)
 Golden-winged Warbler M (two beautiful singing males)
 Tennessee Warbler O
 Orange-crowned Warbler O (unexpected late migrants)

Nashville Warbler
 Northern Parula
 Yellow Warbler (singing everywhere)
 Chestnut-sided Warbler
 Magnolia Warbler
 Cape May Warbler O
 Black-throated Blue Warbler O
 Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Black-throated Green Warbler
 Blackburnian Warbler
 Pine Warbler (late at Pelee; singing males in Mich.)
Kirtland's Warbler M (two seen well and close in the scopes, plus two others heard)
 Palm Warbler O
 Bay-breasted Warbler
 Blackpoll Warbler
Cerulean Warbler (mostly brief views at Pelee; much better at Pontiac at trip's end)
 Black-and-white Warbler
 American Redstart
 Prothonotary Warbler O (only seen briefly by Laura and Lloyd at Rondeau)
 Ovenbird
 Northern Waterthrush
Mourning Warbler M (two exceptional views of unexpected singing males)
 Common Yellowthroat
 Wilson's Warbler
 Canada Warbler
 Yellow-breasted Chat O (singing in flight at DeLaurier; = a total of 30 warbler species)
 Scarlet Tanager
 Eastern Towhee
 Chipping Sparrow
 Field Sparrow
 Savannah Sparrow
 Song Sparrow
 Lincoln's Sparrow O
 Swamp Sparrow M
 White-throated Sparrow
 White-crowned Sparrow
 Dark-eyed Junco M
 Northern Cardinal
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak
 Indigo Bunting
 Bobolink (a male at Pelee's Tip and several singing in Mich.)
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Eastern Meadowlark M
 Yellow-headed Blackbird (close looks by all at Nyanquing; also seen by Lloyd at Paula's)
 (Brewer's Blackbird / leader-only fly-bys)
 Common Grackle
 Brown-headed Cowbird
 Orchard Oriole
 Baltimore Oriole
 Purple Finch M
 House Finch O
 Pine Siskin M
 American Goldfinch
 Evening Grosbeak M (Hartwick Pines)
 House Sparrow

ALSO SEEN:

Eastern Cottontail

Eastern Chipmunk

Gray Squirrel (mostly black morphs)

Fox Squirrel

Red Squirrel

Muskrat

Raccoon

Mink

White-tailed Deer

American Toad (heard)

Spring Peeper (heard)

Gray Treefrog (heard)

Blanding's Turtle (nice look near Erieau)

Painted Turtle