

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc.

**POINT PELEE & KIRTLAND'S WARBLER
May 13 - 21, 2006**

Leader: Kim Eckert

Since leading this tour beginning in the late 1980s, I kept hearing about this Crane Creek place and how wonderful it was for warblers. Even better than Pelee, they'd say. But it was in Ohio, on the other side of Lake Erie, certainly too far away, wasn't it? Finally last year, I looked at the map, and there it was: not that far east of Toledo, only an hour's drive or so from the Detroit hotel where the tour meets! (I guess you could say I'm a slow learner.)

So it was decided to add Crane Creek State Park (a.k.a. Magee Marsh Wildlife Management Area) to the itinerary and drop a day at Point Pelee, gambling that we could comfortably go there and back in a day and get by with less time at Pelee. I went a day early to scout and found plenty of warblers.

I returned with the tour group on Sunday. We had 23 species in just a single morning; during more time at Pelee the next couple of days, we would find 25 species of warblers. In all, after observing Kirtland's and other warblers on their Michigan breeding grounds, we finished up with our target of 30 species, plus a leader-only Orange-crowned at Crane Creek.

Not only was nothing really missed with a day less at Point Pelee, but there was time to bird Rondeau Provincial Park east of Pelee, time I was not sure we'd have. As always, Rondeau was worthwhile, with Red-headed and Pileated woodpeckers, our only Prothonotary Warbler and Field Sparrow, and on our return we found an out-of-range Mockingbird, our best shorebird spot, and enjoyed a brief look at a Little Gull.

Our day at Rondeau also included the first sunny weather we saw after three cool days of occasional but chronic rainfall. Rain and cold returned the next day along with north winds as we headed north to Michigan, and north winds kept high temperatures in the 40s on our Kirtland's Warbler day. So, don't spring fallouts of warblers and other migrants result when birds encounter precipitation and north winds? Not always—not if the birds are still bottled up farther south, with the northeastern quarter of the U.S. cold and rainy for much of May, with too few migrants able to arrive on time.

When you're in Michigan looking for breeding birds like Kirtland's Warblers, the last things you want are cold, wind, and rain. Indeed, the day before our arrival, our local guide was unable to show anyone a Kirtland's due to the weather, and on our appointed day it took a couple of hours to show everyone a singing male atop a jack pine, braving the wind and cold. But there is much to look for in Michigan besides this endangered warbler, and our three windy days there did not disappoint.

American Bitterns and Yellow-headed Blackbirds braved the weather at Nyanquing Point, and a Barred Owl flew in and hooted high overhead in the virgin pines and hemlocks of Hartwick Pines State Park, while Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Sedge Wren,

Golden-winged and Pine warblers, Louisiana Waterthrush, and others were all found singing on territory. And high winds could not deter a cooperative Henslow's Sparrow from appearing next to us in the grass on the last afternoon. This highly sought specialty was literally the final addition to our tour birdlist.

ITINERARY:

May 13: arrival in Detroit.

May 14: all day at Crane Creek State Park / Magee Marsh WMA, Ohio.

May 15: drive to Leamington, and most of day at Point Pelee National Park; rainy post-dinner attempt to see woodcock next to the Pelee Day's Inn.

May 16: morning return to Point Pelee; afternoon at Leamington's harbour and Hillman Marsh; successful return to see woodcock in display.

May 17: all-day trip to Rondeau Provincial Park, including stops en route back to Leamington at Erieau, Erie Beach, a Hwy 3 shorebird field, and Wheatley's harbour.

May 18: brief morning visit to Holiday Beach Provincial Park, followed by all-day drive to Grayling via stops at Indian Springs Metropark, Bay City State Park, and Nyanquing Point.

May 19: morning Kirtland's Warbler tour southeast of Grayling, Hartwick Pines State Park, and afternoon drive to Tawas Point State Park.

May 20: return to Detroit via back roads west of Houghton Lakes and Sharonville State Game Area.

May 21: departure for home.

KEY:

O = seen/heard in Ohio (primarily Crane Creek/Magee Marsh)

C = seen/heard in Canada

M = seen/heard in Michigan

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

BIRD LIST:

Canada Goose OCM (too many with young)
Mute Swan OCM (more seen each year, unfortunately)
Wood Duck C
Gadwall C
American Wigeon C
Mallard OCM
Blue-winged Teal CM
Northern Shoveler C
Northern Pintail C
Green-winged Teal M
Long-tailed Duck M (unexpected late pair at Tawas Point)
Bufflehead M
Red-breasted Merganser CM
Ruffed Grouse M (heard-only)
Wild Turkey M
Common Loon M (3 brief fly-bys only)
Pied-billed Grebe OC
Double-crested Cormorant OCM
American Bittern M (2 at Nyanquing Point)
Great Blue Heron OCM
Great Egret OC
Green Heron O
Black-crowned Night-Heron O
Turkey Vulture CM
Osprey OC
Bald Eagle OCM
Cooper's Hawk C (nest in Tilden Woods)
Red-shouldered Hawk M (heard-only at Hartwick)
Broad-winged Hawk CM
Red-tailed Hawk M
American Kestrel M
Merlin M (trying to steal a kestrel's prey)
Peregrine Falcon C (best view at Erieau with unknown prey)
Virginia Rail M (heard-only)
Sora M
American Coot OC
Sandhill Crane C (3 fly-bys at Rondeau)
Black-bellied Plover C
Semipalmated Plover C
Killdeer OCM
Solitary Sandpiper C
Spotted Sandpiper C
Upland Sandpiper M (in the usual field near Hartwick)
Ruddy Turnstone C
Semipalmated Sandpiper C
Least Sandpiper C
Dunlin C
Short-billed Dowitcher C

Wilson's Snipe M (only 1 distant displaying male)
American Woodcock C (great views on our second try)
Little Gull C (uncooperative immature at Wheatley)
 Bonaparte's Gull C
 Ring-billed Gull OCM
 Herring Gull OC
 Great Black-backed Gull C
 Caspian Tern CM
 Common Tern C
 Forster's Tern CM
 Black Tern M
 Rock Pigeon OCM
 Mourning Dove OCM
Black-billed Cuckoo CM
 Eastern Screech-Owl C (Tilden Woods)
Barred Owl M (quite a show at Hartwick)
 Common Nighthawk OC
 Chimney Swift CM
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird OC
 Belted Kingfisher CM
 Red-headed Woodpecker C (great views at Rondeau)
 Red-bellied Woodpecker CM (nest at Bay City State Park)
 Downy Woodpecker OCM
 Hairy Woodpecker M
 Northern Flicker OCM
 Pileated Woodpecker CM
 Acadian Flycatcher OM (best at Indian Springs)
 Willow Flycatcher C (in the spotlight!)
 Least Flycatcher OCM
 Eastern Phoebe CM
 Great Crested Flycatcher OCM
 Eastern Kingbird CM
 (White-eyed Vireo C / leader-only, heard-only)
 Yellow-throated Vireo M (Indian Springs)
 Blue-headed Vireo OCM
 Warbling Vireo OCM
 Philadelphia Vireo C (close view near the Tip)
 Red-eyed Vireo OCM
 Blue Jay CM
 American Crow CM
 Common Raven M
 Horned Lark C
 Purple Martin CM
 Tree Swallow OCM
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow CM
 Bank Swallow CM
 Barn Swallow OCM
 Cliff Swallow CM (especially at Tawas Point)
 Black-capped Chickadee

Tufted Titmouse M (unexpected by the Holiday Inn)
 Red-breasted Nuthatch C (late in Tilden Woods)
 White-breasted Nuthatch M
 Brown Creeper M
 Carolina Wren OC (nesting at the Tip's tram stop)
 House Wren OCM
 Sedge Wren M (excellent close views!)
 Marsh Wren CM
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet OC
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher OCM
 Eastern Bluebird CM
 Veery OCM
 Swainson's Thrush OC
 (Hermit Thrush M / leader-only, heard-only)
 Wood Thrush OCM
 American Robin OCM
 Gray Catbird OCM
Northern Mockingbird C (again, curiously, near Erie Beach)
 Brown Thrasher CM
 European Starling OCM
 Cedar Waxwing CM
 Blue-winged Warbler C (seen twice)
 Golden-winged Warbler OM (singing males in Mich.)
 Tennessee Warbler OCM
 (Orange-crowned Warbler O / leader-only)
 Nashville Warbler OCM
 Northern Parula OM
 Yellow Warbler OCM
 Chestnut-sided Warbler OC
 Magnolia Warbler OCM
 Cape May Warbler OC
 Black-throated Blue Warbler OC
 Yellow-rumped Warbler OCM
 Black-throated Green Warbler OCM
 Blackburnian Warbler OCM
 Pine Warbler M
Kirtland's Warbler M (scope views by all of a singing male)
 Palm Warbler OC
 Bay-breasted Warbler OC
Cerulean Warbler C (singing male at the Tip)
 Black-and-white Warbler OCM
 American Redstart OCM
 Prothonotary Warbler C (close singing male at Rondeau)
 Ovenbird OCM
 Northern Waterthrush OCM
 Louisiana Waterthrush M (Indian Springs)
Mourning Warbler OC
 Common Yellowthroat OCM

Hooded Warbler C (1 singing male at Pelee)
 Wilson's Warbler OCM
 Canada Warbler OC (best view at Holiday Beach!)
 Yellow-breasted Chat C (= 30+ warbler species)
 Scarlet Tanager CM (males at Tawas Point)
 Eastern Towhee CM
 Chipping Sparrow CM
 Clay-colored Sparrow M (in the Kirtland's area)
 Field Sparrow C (Rondeau)
 Vesper Sparrow M
 (Savannah Sparrow C / leader-only)
 Grasshopper Sparrow C (close view near the Tip!)
Henslow's Sparrow M (great views at Sharonville Game Area)
 Song Sparrow OCM
 Lincoln's Sparrow OM
 Swamp Sparrow CM
 White-throated Sparrow OCM
 White-crowned Sparrow OCM
 Northern Cardinal OCM
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak OCM
 Indigo Bunting C
 Bobolink M (again near Hartwick)
 Red-winged Blackbird OCM
 Eastern Meadowlark M
 Yellow-headed Blackbird M (Nyanquing Point)
 Common Grackle OCM
 Brown-headed Cowbird OCM
 Orchard Oriole CM
 Baltimore Oriole OCM
 Purple Finch M
 House Finch OCM
 American Goldfinch OCM
 Evening Grosbeak M (Hartwick)
 House Sparrow OCM

ALSO SEEN:

Eastern Cottontail
 Eastern Chipmunk
 Gray Squirrel (mostly black morphs)
 Fox Squirrel
 Red Squirrel
 Raccoon (asleep in the road at Holiday Beach)
 Woodchuck
 White-tailed Deer
 Painted Turtle
 American Toad (heard)
 Spring Peeper (heard)
 Gray Treefrog (heard)

