

Wallace Birdathon 2013 - report by guest birder Roger Frost

This year, I decided to start my Birdathon at noon on May 25. However, my scouting over the previous two weeks had failed to find many of the rare and uncommon breeding species. In addition, the winds had been strongly out of the north for the past two days, making migrant landbirds scarce. I was not optimistic.

At noon on Saturday, I was in Candlewick Woods, hoping to find what migrants I could. As expected, they were few: a few American Redstarts, Magnolia Warblers and single Wilson's Blue-gray woodland for the bellied. About and Black-throated Blue Warblers. I did manage resident pairs of Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Gnatcatchers. I searched the mature sugar maple Red-headed Woodpeckers, but only heard Red-three-quarters of the way through the woods, I heard a call that sounded like a Red-headed. I stood and waited, but only heard more Red-bellied calls. Suddenly, I heard some odd calls from right over my head. I looked up and there was a pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers copulating! Shortly after, I heard a Pileated Woodpecker and saw a Great Horned Owl.



My next stop was Willow Beach Road. A pair of Northern Mockingbirds had been hanging around here all spring. The mockingbirds were cooperative and I also added an Orchard Oriole and a flyover Broad-winged Hawk.

On to Haskill Rd. to find Flycatcher. The sparrow was not. No problem. Presqu'ile.



Clay-colored Sparrow and Willow was singing loudly, but the flycatcher There should be lots of them at

I checked the Kellogg farm pasture to see if there might be any shorebirds, but only added Cliff Swallows. A drive down Cranberry Rd. produced the nesting ravens.

Port Hope Harbour was my next stop. Over the past few days, it had been very good for gulls and shorebirds. Before I got out of the car, I could see a Whimbrel on the breakwater. Unfortunately, there were few other shorebirds: a couple of

Dunlin and Semipalmated Sandpipers. The gulls were excellent, with six species present including Bonaparte's, Iceland and Lesser Black-backed.

It was now getting on to mid-afternoon. I decided not to go to Cobourg Harbour and head for Brighton and Presqu'ile. On at the Calnan Road pond to add Green else. A drive-by of Wicklow Beach produced and Northern Rough-winged Swallow (which missed in Port Hope.)



the way, I stopped Heron but little a Northern Harrier I had somehow

At Brighton, I first checked the marsh off the causeway to add Pied-billed Grebe and Common Gallinule. The sewage lagoons produced Lesser Scaup, Northern Shoveler, Blue-winged Teal, Gadwall and Least Sandpiper. In order to save time, I did not enter the Constructed Wetland, but added Osprey and Marsh Wren from the parking lot.

In Presqu'ile, I first birded the cottage road and added Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead and Purple Martin. At Bill Gilmour's feeders, I added Downy Woodpecker and Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Checking some of the park's woodlands produced a Golden-crowned Kinglet but few other birds.

Next it was on to Owen Point and the beach to find shorebirds. On arrival at the point, the 30+ km/h winds, which had been a problem all afternoon, were really miserable. The wind, waves and the low angle of the sun made viewing birds on the bay and the islands very and lake produced nothing beach were more Dunlin, Sandpipers and Killdeer. I difficult. Scanning the islands, bay new. The only shorebirds on the Semipalmated Sandpiper, Spotted couldn't even find a Willow Flycatcher along the trail. The only new species added here was a Yellow-billed Cuckoo that sang a few times.



It was now 7 p.m., so I headed for the marsh hoping that the wind wouldn't be as bad there. The wind was somewhat calmer, allowing me to hear a couple of American Bitterns and spot a flyover Great Egret.

With daylight running short, I headed for Lone Pine Marsh, picking up a couple of American Kestrels on the way. At Lone Pine, there was another American Bittern and Great Egret. The marsh did add two new species: Wood Duck and Virginia Rail.

Daylight was now really beginning to fade, so I headed for my Whip-poor-will spot on Dunbar Road. Along County Road 25 where the road crosses the Cold Creek wetland, I noticed that the water level on the west side of the road was much higher than usual. I stopped to give the area a quick look and was rewarded with a calling Least Bittern and Sora!



I arrived at Dunbar Rd. just before dark and was treated to 3 Whip-poor-wills and a Woodcock, but no Common Nighthawk. With the loss of the sun, it had turned quite cold, so I was not surprised that there were no nighthawks. I checked a few more spots for nighthawks, but only heard more woodcock and another Whip-poor-will.

It was now completely dark so I focused on trying to find Wilson's Snipe and Eastern Screech Owl. I checked several wetlands for the snipe, with no luck. My luck with the owl was no better. While my Barred Owl imitation is reasonably good, my Screech Owl is rather pathetic.

It was now about 10:30 p.m. and I should be home trying to sleep. I drove towards home in the bright light of a full moon. That's when it hit me. Why not try to see the nesting Trumpeter Swan at Campbell Rd. by the light of the moon? It would be easy: big bright moon, big white bird. It took a little searching, but I did see the swan on the nest.

Time to go home, or was it? Perhaps I would try Screech Owl one more time. At the south end of Grist Mill Road, I stopped and whistled more for a Screech Owl. This time, much to my amazement, answered back!



once
one

I arrived home, ate a late supper, and tallied up my list. So far, it held 119 species.

The alarm went off at 3:45 a.m. I pulled myself from bed, dressed, ate a bowl of cereal and made lunch. After gassing up the car, I headed out for the Northumberland Forest. On arrival at the Beagle Club Rd. parking lot, the sky was already beginning to brighten in the east. However, it was still windy and cold. I could hear a distant Whip-poor-will and another woodcock, but no nighthawk. I checked a few other spots around the western end of the forest with no luck. The only new species was a Field Sparrow.

I headed for the Webb View Marsh, stopping at several places along the way, adding a few common birds and a Winter Wren. At Webb View, I was greeted by a singing Willow Flycatcher, a bird I had missed along the lakeshore the previous afternoon. Scanning the marsh, I picked up a Great Blue Heron and Black Tern. I was hoping to see Hooded Mergansers here, but was unable to find them.



Wren. At Webb View, I was greeted by a singing Willow Flycatcher, a bird I had missed along the lakeshore the previous afternoon. Scanning the marsh, I picked up a Great Blue Heron and Black Tern. I was hoping to see Hooded Mergansers here, but was unable to find them.

Next, I headed for Alderville, picking up a Horned Lark along the way. Along Sandercock Road, I searched for Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers. Here, it was cold and windy with very few birds singing. However, I did hear a Blue-winged Warbler song. Since I had not seen a Blue-winged Warbler for the year, I decided to try and pish the bird in. The bird cooperated very nicely and showed itself to be a hybrid "Brewster's" Warbler. Since "Brewster's" Warbler is not a real species, it cannot be counted on a Birdathon. Next year, I will just tick off Blue-winged and be done with it.

Thinking that I might be able to return to this area later in the morning, I headed for Bull Road adding a Ring-necked Pheasant along the way. Bull Road produced most of its target species including Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, White-throated Sparrow, Canada Warbler and Purple Finch.



Pheasant along the way. Bull Road produced most of its target species including Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, White-throated Sparrow, Canada Warbler and Purple Finch.

Next was Dunbar Road in the eastern end of the Northumberland Forest. Here, I added Least Flycatcher, Pine Warbler and Blue-headed Vireo. On the whole, the forest was very quiet. The cold and the wind were really affecting bird song.

On the way to Peter's Woods, I added Scarlet Tanager. In the woods, the birds were again quiet, but I added White-breasted Nuthatch. In the Woods, I added a singing Northern Hawk. On my way back through both a Cooper's Hawk and a Barred Owl.



Blackburnian Warbler and wetland beyond Peter's Parula and a Red-shouldered Peter's Woods, I scared up

It was now mid-morning and I thought I had better make another effort for Blue and Golden-winged Warblers in the Alderville area. On the way, I stopped at the Macklin Road marsh to look for Hooded Merganser and snipe. I had no luck with either species, but did add a singing Blackpoll Warbler.

I checked a few spots for Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers with no luck. By now, the wind even quieter than more species:



had become even stronger and bird song was it had been earlier. I did manage to add two flyby Pine Siskin and Hooded Merganser.

It was now after 10 a.m., so I decided to try and track down a Yellow-rumped Warbler. I spent the better part of an hour birding conifer plantations in the western end of the Northumberland Forest without any luck and adding no new species.

With less than an hour to go, I decided my best bet would be to head back to Port Hope Harbour to see if there any more shorebirds. The drive to Port Hope produced nothing new. On arrival at the harbor, it was obvious that there was no big grounding of shorebirds. However, on the east jetty was a Semipalmated Sandpiper and a Ruddy Turnstone, for the last species of the day. As it turned out, I should have gone to Cobourg Harbour instead. That afternoon, an American Avocet was found there. When I went at 7:30 p.m., I saw the Avocet as well as

Black-crowned Night Heron, American Black Duck and White-winged Scoter, all species I had missed.

In the end, I tallied 151 species, which was an amazing total considering the conditions. I missed very few of the regular breeding birds. The worst misses were Yellow-rumped Warbler, Wilson's Snipe, Common Nighthawk, Blue-winged Warbler and Golden-winged Warbler. I did manage to find a few migrants despite the weather. I did reasonably well with raptors and lingering ducks, both difficult groups. Overall though, I was very lucky to find as many species as I did. The full list is below.

Pied-billed Grebe	Rock Pigeon	Gray Catbird
Double-crested Cormorant	Mourning Dove	Northern Mockingbird
American Bittern	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Brown Thrasher
Least Bittern	Eastern Screech-Owl	European Starling
Great Blue Heron	Great Horned Owl	Cedar Waxwing
Great Egret	Barred Owl	"Brewster's" Warbler
Green Heron	Whip-poor-will	Nashville Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Chimney Swift	Northern Parula
Canada Goose	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Yellow Warbler
Mute Swan	Belted Kingfisher	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Trumpeter Swan	Red-headed Woodpecker	Magnolia Warbler
Wood Duck	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Gadwall	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Black-throated Green Warbler
Mallard	Downy Woodpecker	Blackburnian Warbler
Blue-winged Teal	Hairy Woodpecker	Pine Warbler
Northern Shoveler	"Yellow-shafted" Flicker	Blackpoll Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Pileated Woodpecker	Black and White Warbler
Lesser Scaup	Eastern Wood-Pewee	American Redstart
Bufflehead	Alder Flycatcher	Ovenbird
Hooded Merganser	Willow Flycatcher	Northern Waterthrush
Red-breasted Merganser	Least Flycatcher	Mourning Warbler
Osprey	Eastern Phoebe	Common Yellowthroat
Northern Harrier	Great Crested Flycatcher	Wilson's Warbler
Cooper's Hawk	Eastern Kingbird	Canada Warbler
Red-shouldered Hawk	Blue-headed Vireo	Scarlet Tanager
Broad-winged Hawk	Warbling Vireo	Eastern Towhee
Red-tailed Hawk	Red-eyed Vireo	Chipping Sparrow
American Kestrel	Blue Jay	Clay-colored Sparrow
Ring-necked Pheasant	American Crow	Field Sparrow
Ruffed Grouse	Common Raven	Vesper Sparrow
Wild Turkey	Horned Lark	Savannah Sparrow
Virginia Rail	Purple Martin	Grasshopper Sparrow
Sora	Tree Swallow	Song Sparrow
Common Gallinule	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Swamp Sparrow
Killdeer	Bank Swallow	White-throated Sparrow
Spotted Sandpiper	Cliff Swallow	Northern Cardinal
Whimbrel	Barn Swallow	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Ruddy Turnstone	Black-capped Chickadee	Indigo Bunting
Semipalmated Sandpiper	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Bobolink
Least Sandpiper	White-breasted Nuthatch	Red-winged Blackbird
Dunlin	Brown Creeper	Eastern Meadowlark
American Woodcock	House Wren	Common Grackle
Bonaparte's Gull	Winter Wren	Brown-headed Cowbird
Ring-billed Gull	Marsh Wren	Orchard Oriole
Herring Gull	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Baltimore Oriole
Iceland Gull	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Purple Finch
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Eastern Bluebird	House Finch
Great Black-backed Gull	Veery	Pine Siskin
Caspian Tern	Hermit Thrush	American Goldfinch
Black Tern	Wood Thrush	House Sparrow
Common Tern	American Robin	
		Total Species:151