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Spring Warbler Migration Guide

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Contents: This guide is an annotated list of the 44 species of warblers recorded in Ontario. It gives the best places and times to see the spring migration of warblers in southern Ontario, with a focus on Point Pelee. The guide provides information on identification, songs, call notes, habitat, behaviour, tips on finding rare and secretive species, and a migration table for Point Pelee.

Where To See Warblers: The best places to see warblers in spring are the migrant traps on the shores of the Great Lakes. Tree leaves emerge later at many peninsula and shoreline hotspots because the cold water of the Great Lakes chills the air, slowing growth and making for easier viewing when nearby inland areas are fully leafed out. Always take a warm coat, hat and gloves to Point Pelee in May because the temperature at the Tip is often much colder than the nearby Visitor Centre. *Lake Erie:* The best spots are Point Pelee, Pelee Island, Rondeau Provincial Park and Long Point. *Lake Ontario:* Cootes Paradise and Woodland Cemetery in Hamilton; Bronte Woods in Oakville; High Park, Toronto Islands and Leslie Street Spit in Toronto; Thickson's Woods in Whitby; Darlington Provincial Park, Presqu'île Provincial Park and Prince Edward Point. *Ottawa:* Britannia Woods in Ottawa's west end is a migrant trap surrounded by the city and Ottawa River. *Note:* The above locations are just some of the dozens of areas to watch spring warblers. Any woodlot or ravine in May will have migrant warblers to watch; one need not go to a hotspot to enjoy warblers. Every birder's car should carry a provincial highway map or the detailed *Ontario Road Atlas* by MapArt and Clive Goodwin's (1995) *Birdfinding Guide to Ontario* (University of Toronto Press) for directions to the best birding areas.

When To See Warblers: Spring warbler migration begins in early April with the return of Yellow-rumped and Pine Warblers and a few Louisiana Waterthrushes. During peak migration in mid-May, expect to see and hear at least 20 species of warblers in a day. The peak at Point Pelee usually is between the 10 and 15 May. In good years, birders can see over 30 species in a day at Point Pelee. Blackpoll and Connecticut Warblers migrate in

late May. Migration extends into early June, with late migrating first year females. These non-singing females are hard to see under thick leaf cover. See Table 1 on page 3 for peak abundance and early and late dates for 36 regularly occurring warblers at Point Pelee.

Best Time Of Day: The late Jim Baillie, ornithologist at the Royal Ontario Museum, said that the best time of day to see spring warblers is between 7:00 and 9:00 a.m. The sun rises early in May, but one must wait until 7:00 for the sunlight to warm emerging leaves and insects. Warblers sing more as it warms up. However, seeing warblers is not restricted to just early morning; migrating warblers are active almost any time of day, particularly if they are hungry during cold weather. At Point Pelee, late afternoons can be fantastic on calm days along the west beach.

Warbler Weather: *Fallouts* are mass groundings of migrants that come north with warm (often moist) airflows from the Gulf



Male Hooded Warbler by Peter Lorimer

of Mexico. Major fallouts occur during two types of weather conditions. First, when waves of migrants meet cold northwest winds that ground large numbers of birds. Some cold days in May, Point Pelee is swarming with warblers desperate to find insects to eat. These hungry and exhausted warblers often forage low and in the open. Birders will get incredible views, but be sure to stay on the marked paths and do not chase the birds. Many insect-eating birds starve during prolonged cold spells in May. Second, big waves also arrive on warm fronts with periods of light rain starting after midnight, which ground migrants. The following morning is often warm and cloudy with periods of rain, but the birding is fabulous. These migrants usually are not stressed because the weather is warm. Numbers then dwindle after fallouts; the second day is often 50-70%; the third day is 25-40% and then 10-20%, followed by a several days of low numbers before another big wave. There are many quiet days during the normal migration time in May. *Flyovers* are the opposite of *fallouts*. During periods of warm airflows from the south and clear night skies, northern warblers do not stop in large numbers at Point Pelee or elsewhere. They continue north on a wide front. Flyovers make for poor warbler watching, but they are better for the migrating birds, allowing them to arrive safely at their breeding grounds under ideal weather conditions.

Spring Overshoots: One of the best times to visit Point Pelee is in late April following a front of warm air from the Gulf of Mexico. These early warm fronts often bring southern specialties that have overshoot their breeding range, such as Yellow-throated Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Kentucky Warbler, and Hooded Warbler. Overshoot species and numbers vary from year to year, but these southern warblers are never common.

Warbler Numbers: We have all heard of huge numbers of warblers at Point Pelee, but these are unusual events. Some springs, thousands of migrants are grounded in southern Ontario by cold fronts or wet weather. Other springs, low numbers are seen because of good *flyover* weather.

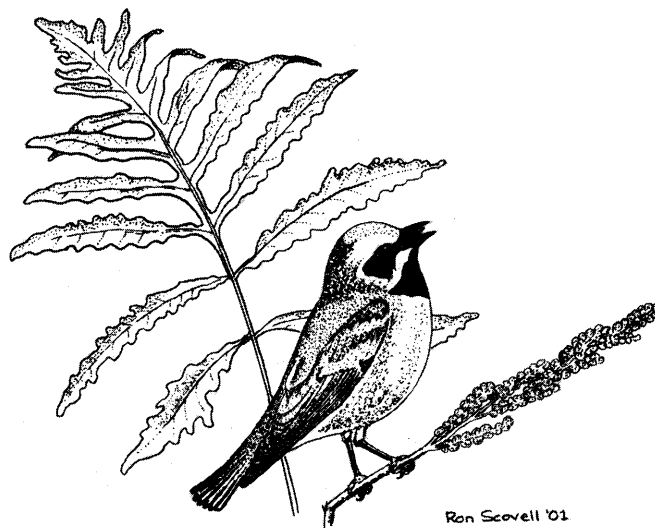
Reverse Migration: This spectacle at Point Pelee is worth seeing, but major reverse migrations happen only a few times each spring. Reverse migrations always occur against a light to moderate south wind, usually on sunny days. They normally begin about 7:00 a.m. and go to 10:00 a.m. or rarely until noon. Reverse migrations at the Tip offer a wonderful opportunity to learn flight ID of small landbirds and to watch for rarities. During reverse migrations at Point Pelee (and at the southern tip of Pelee Island), streams of small birds including warblers are seen flying south through and over the last trees at the Tip, before flying out over Lake Erie. Sometimes birds pause for a

moment in the last trees. Many small birds go out only a short distance over Lake Erie, returning to the Tip to try again several times. Other birds leave the Tip, appearing to head towards Pelee Island, but they often curve back northward to land along the west beach. Some birds probably reach Pelee Island and/or Ohio. One theory says this reverse migration comprises disoriented birds in early morning that are following the shoreline of Point Pelee to the Tip. Another theory says that some of the birds in reverse migrations have gone too far north (overshot) and are returning south. Lewis (1939) described a major reverse migration on 12 May 1937 at the southern tip of Pelee Island. At 7:00 a.m., Lewis noted that a fresh wind was blowing from the south at 15 miles an hour. The birds were flying into the wind out over the water toward the next island, Middle Island. He concluded that "many of the birds that were flying south from Pelee Island that morning, such as the Blue-headed Vireos, Magnolia Warblers, Cape May Warblers, Myrtle

Warblers, Bay-breasted Warblers, Blackpoll Warblers, and Pine Siskins, do not nest in the regions lying southward from the island and therefore were not heading toward the destination of their migration." However, a few species, such as Summer Tanager, may be "southern overshoots" that are returning south. The causes of reverse migrations at Point Pelee and Pelee Island remain speculative.

Warbler Species Record: The record for the highest number of warbler species recorded in one day at Point Pelee is 34 species (Wormington 1979). This record was set 9 May 1979, independently the same day by Tom Hince, Don Sutherland

and the late Dennis Rupert, making Point Pelee the warbler capital of North America. The Point Pelee Checklist has 42 warbler species of which 36 species are seen most years. Point Pelee, ironically, has only four regularly breeding warblers: Yellow Warbler, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, and Yellow-breasted Chat.



Male Golden-winged Warbler on Sensitive Fern by Ron Scovell

Annotated List of Spring Warblers

Warblers are listed in official checklist order. See Table 1 for best times to see species of regular occurrence at Point Pelee.

Blue-winged Warbler: An uncommon migrant the first three weeks of May. Range is expanding north in recent years. Habitat is a mixture of usually dry overgrown weedy and shrubby fields, preferring to feed low in small aspens or birches. In spring, often investigates clumps of dry dead leaves still hanging on shrubs. Listen for the male's buzzy two-parted *beeee-bzzz* song with second part usually lower. Sings from a medium to high perch, not moving much, making it reasonably easy to find. *Note:* Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers

Point Pelee: Spring Migration of 36 Warblers of Regular Occurrence

Species	Peak Migration	Early and Late Dates
Blue-winged Warbler	First three weeks of May	Mid-April to early June
Golden-winged Warbler	Second week of May	Early-May to early June
Tennessee Warbler	Second and third weeks of May	Mid-April to early June
Orange-crowned Warbler	First two weeks of May	Mid-April to late May
Nashville Warbler	First three weeks of May	Mid-April to late May
Northern Parula	Second week of May	Late April to early June
Yellow Warbler	First two weeks of May	Mid-April to summer (breeds)
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Second and third weeks of May	Early May to mid-June (has bred)
Magnolia Warbler	Second to fourth week of May	Late April to mid-June
Cape May Warbler	Second and third weeks of May	Late April to late May
Black-throated Blue Warbler	Second and third weeks of May	Late April to early June
Yellow-rumped Warbler	Late April to third week of May	Late March to early June
Black-throated Green Warbler	First three weeks of May	Mid-April to mid-June (may breed)
Blackburnian Warbler	Second and third weeks of May	Late April to mid-June
Yellow-throated Warbler	Mid-April to mid-May	Early April to late May (very rare)
Pine Warbler	Mid-April to early May	Late March to late May (has bred)
Prairie Warbler	Late April to late May	Mid-April to late May (rare)
Palm Warbler	First week of May	Mid-April to late May
Bay-breasted Warbler	Second and third weeks of May	Early May to mid-June
Blackpoll Warbler	Third and fourth weeks of May	Early May to mid-June
Cerulean Warbler	Second and third weeks of May	Mid-April to early June (has bred)
Black-and-white Warbler	First three weeks of May	Mid-April to mid-June
American Redstart	Second week May to early June	Late April to summer (breeds)
Prothonotary Warbler	Throughout May	Late April to summer (rare, has bred)
Worm-eating Warbler	Mid-April to late May	Mid-April to summer (rare)
Ovenbird	Second to fourth week May	Late April to early June
Northern Waterthrush	First three weeks of May	Late April to early June
Louisiana Waterthrush	Second week April to third week May	Late March to summer (rare, has bred)
Kentucky Warbler	Throughout May	Mid-April to late May
Connecticut Warbler	Last week of May	Mid-May to early June
Mourning Warbler	Mid to late May	2nd wk May to mid June (may breed)
Common Yellowthroat	Throughout May	Late April to summer (breeds)
Hooded Warbler	Mid-April to early June	Early April to summer
Wilson's Warbler	Last two weeks of May	Early May to Mid-June
Canada Warbler	Last two weeks of May	Early May to Mid-June
Yellow-breasted Chat	Second week of May	Late April to summer (rare, breeds)

sometimes sing the song of the other species.

Golden-winged Warbler: An uncommon migrant during the second and third weeks of May. Before 1930, the northern limit of its range was extreme southwestern Ontario. Over the past 70 years, its range has expanded north and east to the Ottawa River and north shore of Lake Huron (McCracken 1994). Preferred breeding habitat is dry or moist overgrown fields, but found more often in wet alder thickets than the closely related Blue-winged. Male's song is a buzzy *bee bz bz bz* with first note highest. Song is reminiscent of a distant Clay-colored Sparrow. Singing male at a distance looks like a chickadee. *Note:* Increasing numbers of Blue-winged Warblers are spreading north into the range of the Golden-winged Warbler. Hybridization and habitat changes could eliminate Golden-winged Warblers in Ontario, unless some Golden-wings can maintain a separate breeding range (McCracken 1994). See Brewster's and Lawrence's hybrids below.

Brewster's Warbler (hybrid): Rare. This is the dominant first generation hybrid between Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers. Every spring, several are seen at Point Pelee and elsewhere in southern Ontario. Brewster's tend to sing more like Golden-wings. Most Brewster's have yellowish wingbars and a touch of yellow on the breast. Some Brewster's are pure white below.

Lawrence's Warbler (hybrid): Very rare. This is a much rarer recessive second or later generation hybrid between Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers. Usually one or two are seen each spring at Point Pelee. Lawrence's tend to sing more like Blue-wings. Female Lawrence's are duller than males, with gray throat and sides of head. A few variant Lawrence's lack the black or gray throat. *Caution:* the much larger first year male Orchard Oriole is often misidentified as a Lawrence's Warbler at Point Pelee (Hince 1999).

Tennessee Warbler: Common migrant in mid-May, usually seen medium to high in deciduous trees. Tennessees look like slim vireos, but their active movements and thin pointed bills should help avoid confusion. Distinctive song is a fast paced, loud, three-parted staccato *tip tip tip che che che ti ti ti ti ti ti ti ti* sounding like a sewing machine. Songs repeated quickly one after another. Suggests slower two-parted song of Nashville, but Tennessee is louder, faster and repeated more often. Often sings from inside the foliage, making it hard to see. *Note:* John James Audubon (1785-1851) saw only three Tennessee Warblers, indicating that large outbreaks of Spruce Budworm were probably rare in the uncut boreal forest of Audubon's time.

Orange-crowned Warbler: An uncommon migrant from late April to mid-May. This olive-green warbler prefers deciduous thickets and tall shrubbery about eye level. The orange crown patch is usually concealed. Look for a split eye-ring and blurry streaks below. Pishing brings it in quite well. Listen for nondescript and easily overlooked trilling song that rises or falls at the end.

Nashville Warbler: Common migrant during the first three weeks of May. Not secretive. Sometimes confused with Connecticut Warbler by beginning birders, but Nashvilles usually feed from medium to high up, often in the open. However, Nashvilles feeding low on cold days in May are a pitfall for those wanting to see a Connecticut. Nashville has a bold white eyering similar to Connecticut, but it also has a yellow throat and a whitish lower belly separating the yellow undertail coverts. Song is a slow two-parted *seebit seebit seebit ti ti ti*, differing from the faster and more staccato three-parted song of the Tennessee.



Male Chestnut-sided Warbler by Sam Barone

Virginia's Warbler: Extremely rare vagrant. Only three Ontario spring records for this warbler of the southwestern United States, two at Point Pelee and one at Pelee Island. Identify with extreme caution.

Northern Parula: An uncommon to rare migrant during the second and third weeks of May. Often first detected by its buzzy rising trill *zeeeeeeeeee-WIP*, ending abruptly louder. Alternate song, usually sung more on the breeding grounds, is also a buzzy rising trill *zh-zh-zh-zheeeee*. Usually sings and feeds from a medium to high perch near the tips of branches. Sometimes feeds by clinging upside-down, showing its greenish yellow back

patch.

Yellow Warbler: This abundant species arrives suddenly in numbers in early May. Prefers open willows and shrubbery near water. Males usually sing from exposed perches at medium heights. Song is a rapid lively *tseet tseet tseet tseet setta wee see*, somewhat like a Chestnut-sided without the emphatic ending. Both males and females fly around actively giving loud metallic *chip* call notes. On females, the diagnostic yellow patches on inner webs of tail feathers separate them from other "yellow" warblers.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: Common migrant during second and third weeks of May. Usually forages at low to medium heights in deciduous forest edges and openings. Famous primary song goes *pleased pleased pleased to MEET-you*, with a loud emphatic ending. This song is used on migration and to attract a female on the breeding range. Once paired, a more rambling second territorial song is given, which sounds like the Yellow Warbler's alternate summer song. On spring migration, both

species usually sing distinct songs. The two species are rarely found in the same habitat after migration when the alternate songs are more alike.

Magnolia Warbler: Common to abundant migrant from second to fourth week of May. Favours low to medium shrubs and trees, usually at eye level. Magnolias are not secretive, but they often feed behind the leaves. Listen for its short soft *weeta weeta weeta* or *mag mag maggie* song to rise at the end. Pish for it. Beware that female Magnolias are sometimes mistaken for the rare Kirtland's Warbler. Kirtland's wags its tail persistently whereas Magnolia does not wag its tail. A broad white basal tail band and broad black tipped tail (best seen from below) separates Magnolia in all plumages from similar species. Magnolia has a distinctive *tlep* call note.

Cape May Warbler: Fairly common migrant during second and third weeks of May. Breeding male is tiger-like with its chestnut face patch and bright yellow and black stripes below. Best field mark in all plumages is yellow patch on side of the neck. Not secretive but often feeds high in trees. Song is a high thin *seet seet seet seet* on the same pitch usually given from a high perch or treetop. Prefers conifers, especially spruces even in migration; often found in Red Cedars at Point Pelee. The Cape May is one of three main warblers whose numbers increase during large outbreaks of Spruce Budworm in the boreal forest. The other two warblers whose numbers rise and fall because of budworms are the Bay-breasted and Tennessee. See discussion on Budworm Warblers on page 8 under Notes and Remarks.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: Fairly common migrant during second and third weeks of May. Usually seen about eye level in understory of forest, but sometimes forages higher. Occasional males seen at Point Pelee and elsewhere have extensive black spotting on the back and black streaks on crown, suggesting overshoots of the Appalachian subspecies *cairnsi*, but they also may be variants of the nominate subspecies *caerulescens*, which breeds in Ontario. Sings a slow slurred *zuree zuree zuree zwee*, last note higher, louder and slurred upwards. Plain female is vireo-like, but has a very dark cheek patch and usually a diagnostic small white spot at the base of primaries. Call note is a smacking, junco-like *chip*, but softer.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: Most abundant Ontario warbler. Earliest spring warbler, with a few arriving in late March in southern Ontario, but surprisingly no more regular in late March at Point Pelee than elsewhere. Common from mid-April to mid-May in southern Ontario. Not a secretive warbler, it is easily seen. Prefers open woods and forest edges, usually feeding at medium heights, but also seen flycatching at the tops of trees. Some days in early May, Yellow-rumps and Ruby-crowned Kinglets are in every tree at Point Pelee, making the search for other species a chore. Song is a loose tinkling trill that rises or falls at the end. Learn its distinctive *chep* call note to identify flying birds. *Taxonomy:* Myrtle and Audubon's Warblers were lumped into Yellow-rumped Warbler by the American Ornithologists Union in 1973 because of interbreeding. Yellow-rumps in Ontario are the eastern Myrtle Warbler form which has a white throat, but an occasional western Audubon's Warbler form is seen with a bright yellow throat, more white in wingbars, different face pattern, and more white in the



Male Cape May Warbler by Sam Barone

outermost tail feathers (hard to see). Studies show that Myrtle and Audubon's Warblers are so closely related genetically that they are unlikely to be split back into separate species.

Black-throated Gray Warbler: Extremely rare vagrant in Ontario from western North America. Two fall, but no spring records for Point Pelee. Be sure you see the diagnostic yellow spot in front of the eye before naming this rarity in Ontario.

Black-throated Green Warbler: Fairly common migrant during first three weeks of May. Not secretive. Usually feeds at medium heights to high in trees. Two distinctive song types: primary song is a fast buzzy *see see see see SUZ-zie* with second last note lower; alternate song is a slower buzzy *zee zee zoo-zoo zee* heard more often on the breeding grounds.

Townsend's Warbler: Extremely rare vagrant from western North America. Late April and May records for Point Pelee (4 records), Rondeau and Thickson's Woods. ID with great caution. *Taxonomy:* Townsend's and Hermit Warblers hybridize commonly. This process of gene flow is called *introgression*, an example of evolution in action.

Hermit Warbler: Extremely rare vagrant from western North America. One record for Point Pelee 2-7 May 1981. This individual preferred Red Cedars. ID with great caution. Hermit or Townsend's Warblers seen in Ontario should be checked for evidence of hybridization.

Blackburnian Warbler: Fairly common migrant during second and third weeks of May. Usually a tree top warbler, but at Point Pelee and other spring migrant traps, they often forage and sing at moderate heights on nearly leafless deciduous trees. Beginners sometimes misidentify a female Blackburnian that is high in a tree as the rare Yellow-throated Warbler. Like many warblers, the Blackburnian has two main song types. Both

songs are extremely high pitched, often not heard by those over 65 years or even younger, a sad part of getting older. A common song type is a wiry *zip zip zip zeeeeee* ending on a very high note that is diagnostic. The other song heard more on the breeding grounds after pair formation is a slower two parted lisping *teetsa teetsa teetsa zizizizi*, ending on a slurred higher note.

Yellow-throated Warbler: Very rare early southern overshoot from mid-April to mid-May, occasionally later. Two subspecies occur in Ontario: the white-lored or Sycamore subspecies *albilora* is the usual race seen, but watch for the coastal yellow-lored subspecies *dominica* that has occurred a few times in Ontario. A slow moving warbler that creeps nuthatch-like along branches. It usually forages and sings from high in deciduous trees or pines. The typical song of interior *albilora* race is a series of clear doubled whistles *see-wee, see-wee, see-wee, see-wee, swee swee swee*, reminiscent of a soft Indigo Bunting song. No Ontario breeding record.

Pine Warbler: Uncommon early migrant from mid-April to early May. Except for a few late migrating first year birds, most Pines are on breeding territories by mid-May. Even migrants are most often seen in pines when available. Pine Warblers generally creep along high horizontal branches. Often detected by its breezy short trill (3 seconds) getting louder in the middle, decreasing at the end. Sings usually from top of a pine. Chipping Sparrow's trill is usually a longer 5 seconds. Bright adult male Pine resembles Yellow-throated Vireo, but Pine lacks vireo's distinct yellow eyering and has streaked sides. Yellow-throated Vireos rarely inhabit pine trees. At the other extreme, dull female Pines often stump birders. An extremely plain warbler (often no yellow) with wingbars in May is probably a first year female Pine, voted dullest spring warbler. Watch for its creeping behaviour as a clue. An unstreaked back confirms Pine. After seeing a dull Pine Warbler in spring, you will be better prepared for those confusing fall warblers.

Kirtland's Warbler: Endangered species in Ontario. Very rare migrant in mid-May at Point Pelee (extremely rare vagrant north to Toronto) en route to its breeding grounds in central Michigan. Usually feeds low, preferring conifers such as Red Cedar at Point Pelee. Kirtland's is a big warbler that habitually wags its tail. Sometimes confused with female Magnolia Warbler. *Note:* In the early 1900s, Kirtland's Warblers were fairly common and probably bred on the Jack Pine plains near Petawawa in Renfrew County northeast of Algonquin Park (Harrington 1939). Speirs (1984) documented the first breeding record for Ontario in 1945 near Camp Borden in Simcoe County. This record was accepted by the Ontario Bird Records Committee (James 1984). Occasional vagrants are seen and

heard in June in Jack Pine stands at Petawawa and the Bruce Peninsula.

Prairie Warbler: A rare early to mid-May migrant. Usually forages at eye level or higher in shrubby oaks, junipers and pines. A better name would be "Scrub Warbler." Sings a thin buzzy slurring song gradually ascending in pitch and volume, *zee zee zee zee zee Zee ZEE ZEE*, usually from an exposed perch or dead branch. It is often difficult to pinpoint due to its ventriloquist song.

Palm Warbler: Fairly common early migrant from mid-April to mid-May. Palms usually forage at eye level or near the ground in bushy fields and forest edges. Palms are not secretive. The bright yellow undertail coverts and habitual pumping of their tails make them easy to identify. Song is a buzzy trill on one tone, less emphatic than a Chipping Sparrow. Two well-marked subspecies are easily recognizable in the field in alternate (breeding) plumage (Pittaway 1995). The commoner

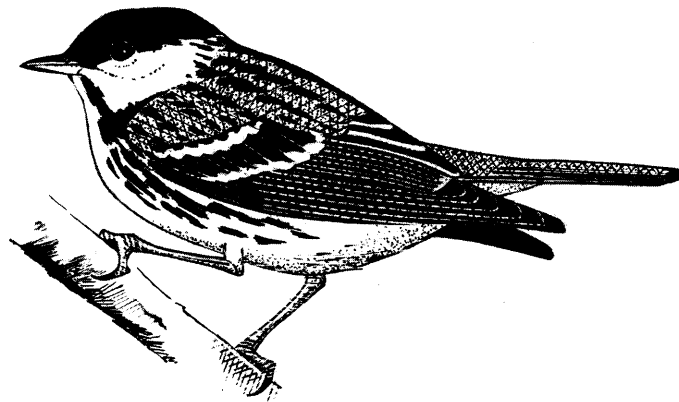
breeding subspecies in Ontario, the Western Palm Warbler, is yellow on the throat and undertail coverts with a distinct white belly. The eastern Yellow Palm Warbler is completely yellow below, but rare in Ontario. Yellow Palms tend to migrate earlier in spring than Western Palms; watch for them mid to late April. A few Yellow Palms may still breed in large bogs and fens east of Ottawa. Intergrades (intermediates) are uncommon.

Bay-breasted Warbler: Fairly common about the third week of May. A rapid

migrant, most of the population passes through quickly within a week. Unlike most warblers, Bay-breasted often migrate in small pure flocks. Male is distinctive and female always shows enough bay colour for easy recognition. Spring migrants prefer tall shrubby growth at medium heights. Short high *tees-teesi-teesi-see* song has the ringing quality of a Golden-crowned Kinglet's *see see see* call.

Blackpoll Warbler: Fairly common migrant, but less often seen because it arrives late after many of the leaves have grown. A few appear in mid-May, but most migrate in late May and early June. This late migrant is usually heard singing from inside a leafed out tree at a medium height. Singing males often stay still on the same perch making them difficult to spot in dense foliage. Its distinctive song is an extremely high-pitched staccato *tsit tsit Tsit Tist Tist TSIT TSIT Tsit Tsit tsit tsit* rising louder in the middle and falling off at the end.

Cerulean Warbler: Rare to uncommon migrant from early to mid-May. Usually sings from the treetops where it is hard to spot. Song is a fast buzzy *zray zray zray zreeeee* with last note higher and longer. Like all tree top warblers, it will forage much lower during cold spring weather.



Male Blackpoll Warbler by Michael King

Black-and-white Warbler: Common migrant during first three weeks of May. Not secretive. Seen creeping nuthatch-like along deciduous tree trunks and large branches at low to medium heights. Sometimes forages in dry or wet shrubbery. Learn its high-pitched squeaky “in and out” song *weet-see weet-see weet-see weet-see weet-see weet-see*.

American Redstart: Common mid to late May migrant in low and middle level shrubbery and forest edges. It flits brightly colourful wings and tail while actively flycatching. Adult males sing persistently. Songs are short and variable, high-pitched and often switched around. Three typical songs are *zee zee zee zee zee ZWEE* with last note higher or *tsee tsee tsee tsee-o* with last note lower or *teetsy teetsy teetsy* on the same level. First year males look like females, but have irregular dark spots on the head and belly. First year males sing like adult males.

Prothonotary Warbler: Endangered species in Ontario. Rare but regular throughout May at Point Pelee, Rondeau, Long Point and Hamilton. Look for it around the ponds in Tilden’s Woods at Point Pelee and along the Tulip Tree Trail near the Visitor Centre at Rondeau. Habitat is flooded woods and treed swamps. A cavity nester, it adapts well to bird boxes. Not secretive, it is active and tame, climbing on tree trunks, hopping on fallen trees, feeding at low to medium heights. It sometimes perches motionless. Listen for its clear loud *tweet tweet tweet tweet tweet tweet tweet tweet* song, given from a medium to high perch. A loud dry *chip* call helps locate birds that are not singing. Beginners sometimes mistake the bright yellow Blue-winged Warbler as Prothonotary, but Blue-wing has white wingbars and black line from bill to eye.

Worm-eating Warbler: A rare southern overshoot. A few are seen every spring at Point Pelee and elsewhere in southern Ontario. Look for it skulking on or near the ground in Tilden’s Woods at Point Pelee. It usually stays low, but sometimes is detected at medium heights when it rattles dead leaf clusters looking for insects. Males sing a rapid dry trill like a Chipping Sparrow in deciduous woods. Chipping Sparrows sing in more open habitats with scattered trees. No breeding record for Ontario.

Swainson’s Warbler: Extremely rare vagrant in southern Ontario. Two May records for Point Pelee. This secretive ground warbler should be identified with great caution.

Ovenbird: Common mid to late May migrant. A well camouflaged “hard-to-see” woodland ground warbler. Suggests a small thrush, but has striped instead of spotted breast. Walks on forest floor, often raising orange feathers on head. Found in drier woods and does not teeter like the waterthrushes. More often heard than seen. Distinctive “teacher” song is repeated 5-15 times, getting increasingly louder. Sings from a medium to high perch.

Northern Waterthrush: Common migrant first three weeks of May. Secretive around woodland pools, treed swamps and thick undergrowth along slow woodland streams. Learn its loud and rapid three-parted song *twit twit twit, sweet sweet sweet, Chew Chew Chew* with a distinctive ending. Often discovered by its sharp *clink* call note given in flight. The flight of both waterthrushes is direct, swift and low. Compared to Louisiana, the Northern is creamier yellow and more tiger-striped below,

reminiscent of a Cape May Warbler. The Louisiana is whiter and less streaked below with diagnostic tan flanks, brighter bubble gum pink legs, wider and whiter eyebrow stripe (supercilium) and larger bill. Waterthrushes walk instead of hop and teeter like Spotted Sandpipers. There is a fine behavioural difference between the two species: Northern bob the tail, while Louisianas bob both body and tail.

Louisiana Waterthrush: Rare early migrant from second week of April to third week of May. Very secretive. Easiest to find in late April at Point Pelee around the ponds in Tilden’s Woods and the ponds along the nature trail southeast of the Visitor Centre. Both species of waterthrushes occur in the same habitat on migration. Louisianas breeding in southern Ontario prefer running woodland streams and small waterfalls. Flight is fast and direct like a Northern’s; sometimes zigzags when pairs chase each other. Distinctive song begins with three loud ringing notes followed by a sweet, jumbled warble decreasing rapidly in intensity. Also gives a sharp *chink* call note in flight, which is subtly different from the Northern’s. See Northern above for fine plumage distinctions.

Kentucky Warbler: A rare southern overshoot. A few are seen every spring at Point Pelee, Rondeau and elsewhere in southern Ontario. Stays near the ground, often under leafy Mayapples. Look for it in Tilden’s Woods and along the nature trails south of the Visitor Centre at Point Pelee. Song is a rapid Carolina Wren-like *torry-torry-torry-torry*; the warbler is two syllables and the wren is three syllables. No Ontario breeding records to date.

Connecticut Warbler: A rare late migrant, usually found after 20 May. Migrates when most of the leaves have grown. More often heard than seen. Song is loud repeated phrases *sugar-tweet, sugar-tweet, sugar-tweet*. This extremely secretive warbler usually stays near the ground. Try walking slowly at an angle to a singing bird, stop and search every leaf with your binoculars. You might get lucky. I once hid inside a bush to see a singing male. Connecticut walks like an Ovenbird, unlike the hops of a Mourning Warbler.

Mourning Warbler: Late migrant with most passing through southern Ontario in late May and early June. Fairly common ground warbler, but heard more often than seen. Less secretive than the Connecticut Warbler. Sings its rolling *churry churry churry chory chory*, from a low perch in thickets and berry canes.

MacGillivray’s Warbler: One specimen record from Hamilton on 20 May 1890. The Ontario Birds Records Committee has not reviewed this controversial record. It is the western counterpart of the Mourning Warbler. Field identification of MacGillivray’s in Ontario is close to impossible.

Common Yellowthroat: Common throughout May in shrubby edges of cattail marshes and wet fields with thickets, sometimes in dry shrubby and weedy areas. It often cocks its tail wren-like. Song is a distinctive *whitchity whitchity whitchity witch*. Call is a husky *chip* note. Yellowthroats also give a rapid rattle call suggesting the song of a Worm-eating Warbler, but it is heard in the wrong habitat for Worm-eating. However, the yellowthroat’s rattle call is often identified as a Sedge Wren coming as it does from the appropriate habitat, but the warbler’s

Notes and Remarks



Male Canada Warbler by David Beadle

call is much harsher.

Hooded Warbler: A rare ground warbler after mid-April. Found in shrubby openings in mature woodlands. Population is increasing in Ontario. Migrants are seen at Point Pelee, Rondeau and north to Toronto, Presqu'île, and Prince Edward Point near Kingston. The breeding stronghold is large woodlots near Long Point. Song suggests a very loud Magnolia Warbler, *weeta weeta weete-o*, which is the key to finding a male Hooded. Also listen for its distinctive loud *doonk* call note. Watch for Hooded to fan and flash its diagnostic white tail feathers, the best field mark for females.

Wilson's Warbler: A late migrant after mid-May. Prefers moist shrubbery, particularly alders, dogwoods and willows. Song is a series of rapid chattering notes *chi-chi-chi-chi-chi-chi-chi-chet-chet* dropping off at the end. Wilson's sometimes can be detected in thick cover by its active kinglet-like wing flicking and gnatcatcher-like tail twitching (Pittaway 1989).

Canada Warbler: Late migrant in last two weeks of May. An uncommon ground to eye level warbler of damp scrub and understory woods. Distinctive jumbled song begins with an abrupt *chip—chupity-swee-ditchety-ditchety*. Same *chip* used as a call note.

Painted Redstart: One specimen record for Ontario from Pickering Township in Durham Region in November 1971.

Yellow-breasted Chat: Our largest warbler is uncommon and secretive. Regular from second week of May at Point Pelee, especially south of the DeLaurier Picnic Area. Prefers partly open dry fields with scattered trees, shrubs, thickets and vine tangles where it hides. Watch closely to see it. The chat is the spirit of the tangles, usually coming and going unseen, but not unheard. The spirit sings at night too, a weird song of varied laughs, cackles, cucks, quits, toots, whistles, mocks and harsh notes. Do not miss hearing the chat, day or night, at Point Pelee from May to July.

Songs and Calls: Most male warblers sing persistently on spring migration, long before reaching the breeding grounds. Despite their name, they do not warble, but have a variety of energetic, buzzy, lisping, trilling and musical songs. Many warblers have distinctive call notes that easily identify them. Start by learning the calls of the Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Yellowthroat and Northern Waterthrush.

Budworm Warblers: Spruce Budworm (*Choristoneura fumiferana*) is a native moth. The larvae eat conifer needles. Large outbreaks often cover hundreds of square kilometres. The larvae provide abundant food for many birds, causing large population increases in some species. Spruce Budworm actually prefers the needles of Balsam Fir, which is the target species in many outbreaks. Widespread spraying of DDT before 1970, past cutting practices taking spruce and leaving fir, and controlling forest fires have encouraged the growth of Balsam Fir instead of spruce in the Maritime Provinces and boreal forests of Quebec and Ontario. These unnatural forest conditions have caused outbreaks of "Balsam Budworm" to be more severe than in natural forests. Populations of the three dependent budworm warblers (Cape May, Bay-breasted and Tennessee) go up during outbreaks and go down after outbreaks. These population trends are often noticeable at migration stopovers such as Point Pelee, Rondeau and Long Point.

Pishing and Squeaking: Pishing and squeaking are two very effective techniques used to attract warblers and other passerines for close up viewing. Birds hidden in foliage will often show themselves. (1) Pishing is made by saying the word *pish* in a rapid series. Adding a few *chits* to your repertoire can vary pishing. Experienced pishers include a few Eastern Screech-Owl whinnies and Northern Saw-whet Owl toots for maximum effects. (2) Squeaking is making high pitched squealing sounds to attract curious birds in close. Squeaking is much harder to master than pishing. Moisten your pursed lips to make high pitched kissing and squealing sounds by sucking on the knuckles of your index and middle fingers when squeezed together. Use pishing and squeaking sparingly in heavily birded areas not to overly disturb birds and birders.

Warbler Neck: Looking up into the treetops for extended periods causes *warbler neck*. There are several ways to avoid neck strain: (1) use light weight binoculars with a wide soft neoprene strap; (2) see your high warbler first with the naked eye, then lift your binoculars to be in line with your eyes and the bird (try not to move your binoculars and neck at the same time); (3) stretch your arms high over your head from time to time and get regular exercise; (4) have a friend massage your neck and return the favour; (5) remember that many of the rarest warblers stay below eye level!

Warblers and Water: Woodland pools and streams are magnets for warblers. Search out wet thickets in May for hidden migrants.

Warbler Ethics: At popular birding spots, please stay on the

designated birding trails. Walk slowly, stop often to observe, and speak quietly to see more birds. Allow exhausted migrant birds time to feed and rest. Use pishing, squeaking, and taped songs in moderation.

Algonquin Warblers In June: If you miss the main warbler migration in May in southern Ontario, you cannot beat Algonquin Park in June to hear and see warblers on the breeding grounds. Along Highway 60, there are many short nature trails, each going through a different habitat for warblers. Early mornings from 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. are best before the bugs warm up to bite you. I recommend a commercial bug jacket, insect repellent and hat for maximum comfort.

Internet Migration Patterns: In the evening after dark and before dawn, check these radar sites to assess the volume of migration during the night for the next day's birding.

Buffalo Nexrad radar covers most of western Lake Ontario and eastern Lake Erie.

<http://www.intellicast.com/LocalWeather/World/UnitedStates/Northeast/NewYork/Buffalo/BaseReflectivity/>

Detroit Nexrad covers western Lake Erie and Point Pelee.

<http://www.intellicast.com/LocalWeather/World/UnitedStates/Midwest/Michigan/Pontiac/BaseReflectivity/>

Cleveland Nexrad covers western Lake Erie and Point Pelee.

<http://www.intellicast.com/LocalWeather/World/UnitedStates/Midwest/Ohio/Cleveland/BaseReflectivity/>

Recordings: The best warbler recording is the "Songs of the Warblers of North America" by D.J. Borrow and W.W.H. Gunn (1985) produced by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Federation of Ontario Naturalists. Two cassette tapes have 281 songs of 57 warblers and calls of 48 species. There are many examples of each species.

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Pileated Woodpecker: "Lord God, What a Bird!"

Jerome A. Jackson

A slow, rhythmic thumping, like an axe cutting into rotted wood, drew my attention. I quietly pushed my way through a shoulder-high blueberry thicket in the sandy pinelands of upstate New York. I couldn't see the source of the blows, and now they had stopped. I waited. All of a sudden the thumping resumed—from the opposite side of a vine-tangled stub less than 3 metres away. I froze. What was it? The slow thumping continued as I strained to see movement, a form, anything. Nothing.

Ever so slowly I edged around the stub, stopping as the thumping paused, moving centimetres at a time as it resumed, scanning, straining so hard to see the thumper that my eyes actually hurt. We saw one another at the same moment: Lord God, what a bird!

Those were my precise thoughts: "Lord God, what a bird!" And then I understood.

The year was 1966 and it was late August. I was en route from the American Ornithologists' Union meeting in Toronto and had stopped to explore the pinelands. This was my first close encounter with a Pileated Woodpecker and I immediately understood why Colonial naturalists and some people even today refer to this as the "Lord God" bird. This woodpecker is enormous!

Other colloquial names also offer insight into human associations with the Pileated. "Log Cock" not only suggests this woodpecker's frequent use of downed logs as feeding sites, but along with "Indian Hen" suggests a value similar to that placed on grouse—a chicken-like bird to be eaten. Pileated Woodpeckers have little in common with chickens, but they are as large as some chickens, they may feed on the ground, often pecking into it, and both Native Americans and early European settlers regularly ate them.

The Pileated Woodpecker is by far the largest woodpecker in most of North America and the largest ever known from Canada. In the southeastern United States the possibly-extinct Ivory-billed Woodpeckers were larger than the Pileated Woodpeckers that shared their forests, but probably not so much larger that one could tell the difference unless the two birds were side-by-side. As with other widespread birds, Pileated Woodpeckers from populations in colder climates at higher latitudes or higher altitudes are larger than individuals from populations in warmer climates. The largest race of Pileated Woodpeckers is the one found in Ontario, and some Ontario Pileateds are larger than some Ivory-bills.

A close view of a Pileated Woodpecker is always thrilling, but our vision is not the only sense this bird excites. Even at a distance, the loud cackling laugh of the Pileated or its incredibly resonant drumming on a spring morning are fanfares befitting a "Lord God" bird, far surpassing the simplicity of the tin-horn toot and double rap of the Ivory-bill.

In spite of their superficial similarities in appearance, the differences in vocalizations and mechanical sounds such as the Pileated's drumming and the Ivory-bill's double rap are

important evidence that these largest of woodpeckers are not close relatives.

In its loud, high-pitched *kuk-kuk-kuk-kuk-kuk* call, birders will immediately recognize the similarity of the Pileated's call to that of another widespread woodpecker, the Northern Flicker. Pileateds and flickers are more closely related to one another than either is to other woodpeckers. Other patterns of similarity are evident. Male Pileateds and flickers both have "moustache" marks leading back from the bill. Females of both species lack the moustache marks. Both Pileateds and flickers feed extensively on ants, and Pileateds often feed on the ground, a habit that is especially prominent in flickers.

The Ivory-bill is a food specialist, feeding extensively on the 3-4-inch-long, nearly half-inch-diameter larvae of wood-boring beetles. The taste for these large beetle larvae is likely one of the factors leading to its demise. Big beetles require big dead trees, and with the destruction of the virgin forests, the Ivory-bill's food supply was diminished. Specialization in a particular food maximizes foraging efficiency and the competitiveness of a species in a stable environment. If the environment changes, however, specialization can lead to extinction.

The Pileated Woodpecker, in contrast, is a specialist primarily in that it is a woodpecker and that it requires large trees in which to excavate its roost and nest cavities. Its diet is rather catholic, including an abundance of fruit in season and a great diversity of insects, spiders, centipedes, and other small creatures. The stout bill of a Pileated, like that of other woodpeckers, functions like a carpenter's wood chisel—or as a gardener's hoe. The Pileated, unlike the Ivory-bill, takes food where it can find it, often coming to the ground to dig into ant hills or to splinter downed logs or limbs. A Pileated strikes decaying wood at an angle—first from one side, then from another—splintering the wood to reach the tunnels of carpenter ants and other insects hidden within. A Pileated's tongue, like that of a flicker, is exceptionally long and ends in a hard, pointed, and barbed tip. Most woodpeckers have a similarly barbed tongue and its use is often described incorrectly. Woodpeckers *don't* spear their prey. Think about it. If they speared an insect with the barbed tip of the tongue, how would they dislodge the insect to swallow it? They extend the tongue past their prey and then withdraw it, using the barbs like the tines of a rake to retrieve food. Food capture is also aided by a coating of sticky saliva on the tongue. A Pileated Woodpecker may extend its tongue six inches or more into a carpenter ant tunnel.

Large size and elongate shape easily identify the feeding excavations of Pileated Woodpeckers. These vary from a few centimetres to more than a metre in length, depending on the size of the limb and the extent of the ant colony within. Such work has sometimes appropriately been described as "bathtub-shaped." The Pileated Woodpecker's large size, hefty chisel-shaped bill, long muscular neck, and stiff spring-like tail feathers all allow the Pileated to exploit food resources normally unavailable to smaller woodpeckers. As with other

woodpeckers, the stiff tail feathers serve not only as a prop, but act as a spring, helping to propel the bird forward with each blow.

Smaller woodpeckers benefit from these portals opened into the Pileated's pantry. Watch next time you see a Pileated excavating and you'll see that the blows attract the neighbors just as assuredly as grandmother's cookie baking attracts children. Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers often arrive with the first strong "thwumps" of a Pileated's bill. Chickadee, nuthatches, and others also appear. Once the door has been opened, these others take advantage of easier access and small morsels missed by their benefactor.

While Ivory-billed Woodpecker populations declined precipitously more than a century ago, the Pileated Woodpecker's numbers have increased in many areas, even moving into suburban subdivisions where large trees and a few dead stubs are left for them. At times Pileated Woodpecker behaviour leaves homeowners unimpressed—or worse—infuriated. Developers often remove big trees during construction and homeowners often remove dead stubs for safety or "aesthetic" reasons. At the same time, their aesthetic sense induces them to use rough-hewn wood siding to provide a "natural" look. Pileated and other woodpeckers divested of their natural habitat needs sometimes turn to rough-hewn wood siding in search of food or sites for cavity excavation. The excavations of the master carpenter are then not so much impressive as depressive!

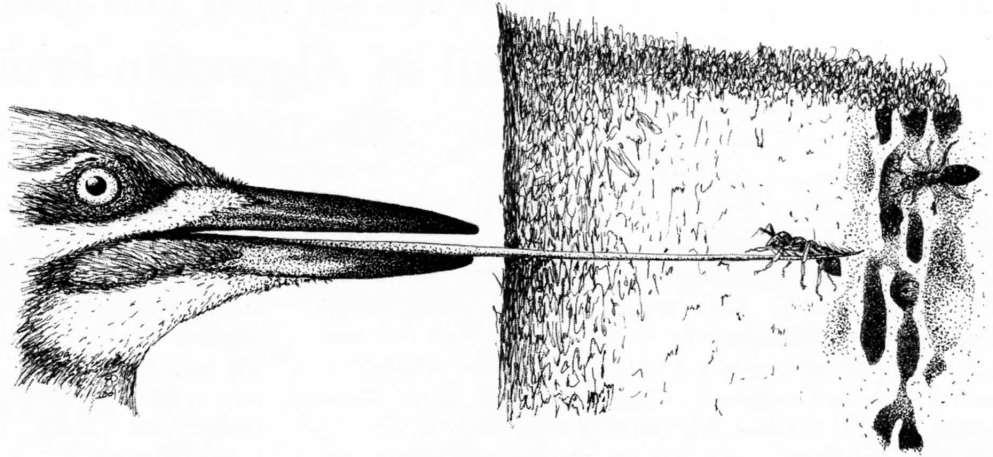
Pileated Woodpecker populations have increased in recent years as a result of the protection of forested parks and regrowth of forests cut a century ago. Their appearance in suburban areas reflects a preference for more open forested areas, the presence of larger trees, dead wood for foraging, suitable nesting stubs (sometimes older utility poles), and perhaps their use of suet at bird feeders.

As for damage done to the siding on your house? Perhaps the birds are doing you a favour and eliminating destructive carpenter ants. The best answer for dealing with the problem is to provide the birds with the older trees and dead stubs they need. You might even try "planting" a stub. Bring one in from the forest and erect it like a fence post in a secluded spot. In the short term, however, the Pileated and other "house-wrecking" woodpeckers can be discouraged by tacking a plastic sheet over the portion of the siding the bird is working on. The woodpecker can't get a foothold, and—with luck—will give up.

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Barbed tongue of Pileated Woodpecker with carpenter ant by Ross James

Jerry Jackson is Whitaker Eminent Scholar in Science, and Director of the Whitaker Center for Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education at Florida Gulf Coast University. Much of his career has focused on the study of woodpeckers, especially the endangered Red-cockaded and Ivory-billed Woodpeckers. Jerry co-authored with Evelyn Bull the Pileated Woodpecker account in *The Birds of North America* series (No 148, 1995). Jerry is currently President of the Association of Field Ornithologists, Chairman of the North American Banding Council, U.S. Representative to the Society of Caribbean Ornithologists, and Editor of *Florida Field Naturalist*. He is also co-host of a weekly television series called *Southern Outdoors* (now in its 14th year), and host of a daily public radio program, *Where the Wild Things Are*. He and his wife Bette (also an ornithologist and professor at FGCU) and their two sons live in Naples, Florida.



Pileateds at carpenter ant feeding holes by Christine Kerrigan

Favourite Birding Hotspot

Mizzy Lake Trail in Algonquin Provincial Park

Ron Tozer

Algonquin Provincial Park is famous for its diversity of breeding warblers and boreal birds, which occur because of the park's higher elevation (typically 200 metres above the surrounding country) and mix of southern broad-leaved hardwood and northern coniferous forests. The Park is a vast tract of forests and lakes covering 7,725 square kilometres, situated between Georgian Bay and the Ottawa River, about 250 km north of Toronto. Algonquin is most easily visited by birders via the Highway 60 Corridor, and one of the very best places to see birds there is the *Mizzy Lake Trail*.

The Wolf Howl Pond to West Rose Lake section of this trail has long been known to park naturalists as the "Golden Mile" for boreal birds and mammals. It is one of the most accessible and regularly successful locations for birders seeking Algonquin's northern specialties: Spruce Grouse, Black-backed Woodpecker, Gray Jay, Common Raven and Boreal Chickadee. The area is rich in breeding warblers and other "sought after" birds as well, especially during May and June.

The Mizzy Lake Trail is an 11 km loop which starts at the junction of the Arowhon Road and Highway 60, 15.4 km from the park's West Gate (see map). Brown signs with yellow letters mark each kilometre of the Highway 60 Corridor through Algonquin Park, from the West Gate (km 0) to the East Gate (km 56). The trail visits nine small lakes and ponds, and its theme is "Wildlife in Algonquin". No dogs are allowed on this trail because of their potential to disturb both wildlife and hikers. The Mizzy Lake Trail guide booklet (always available at the park gates, and at the trail entrance from April to October) suggests about six hours to do the trail, but birders can avoid this long walk and access the best section for northern species via the Arowhon Road and an old railway bed. This site guide will describe five good birding areas associated with Mizzy Lake Trail.

These sites can be productive at any time of the year, but birders are encouraged to purchase a copy of the Checklist and Seasonal Status of the Birds of Algonquin Provincial Park (\$1.50), which includes the relative abundance and a bar graph denoting dates of occurrence of each species found in Algonquin, to determine which birds are likely to be present at the time of your visit. This booklet and other publications are sold at the park gates, and can be ordered by mail (see below).

Arowhon Road

Set your vehicle's trip odometer to zero at the junction of the Arowhon Road and Highway 60, since locations mentioned in this site guide will be described in distances from this point. The Mizzy Lake Trail parking lot features the only washroom facilities on this entire route, so you may wish to take advantage of this opportunity. As you drive north on this narrow, winding and often rough gravel road with blind curves and hills, be alert to oncoming traffic. From spring through fall, this road provides access to three children's camps, a large lodge, and several leaseholds, so it can be busy. Pull well off to the side to park,

and stop only in areas with a clear view in both directions.

The Arowhon Road passes through mixed forests of spruce, balsam fir, poplar and white birch, as well as sections of sugar maple, yellow birch, beech and eastern hemlock. Have the windows down as you drive along in spring and early summer, and listen for Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireos, and warblers such as Northern Parula, American Redstart, Magnolia, Yellow-rumped and Canada. The hardwoods are home to Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Least Flycatcher, Brown Creeper, Scarlet Tanager, Ovenbird and Black-throated Blue Warbler, with Blackburnian and Black-throated Green Warblers in the patches of hemlock.

At km 2.5, the road passes by March Hare Lake (on the right). Stop carefully there and scan the lake quickly for possible Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe (rare in Algonquin) and Hooded Merganser. The road crosses Sims Creek at km 3.8. Watch for American Black Duck and Common Merganser there. Look and listen for Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee and Common Raven. The Arowhon Road curves to the right at km 4.1 as it passes through Sims Pit, which was a source of sand for constructing the nearby Ottawa, Arnprior and Parry Sound Railway through the southern portion of Algonquin Park from 1894 to 1896. Watch for Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee and red fox (often an active den with young) there.

Arowhon Road meets the old railway line at a point 4.8 km from Highway 60. Turn right and drive eastward on the railway bed (the rails were removed in 1959) for 0.6 km to a chain gate. Park there without blocking access through the locked gate; there is space for several vehicles. Walk past the gate and along the railway bed for about 20 minutes (1.5 km) to reach Wolf Howl Pond near Post #7 on the Mizzy Lake Trail. (Numbered posts along the trail are keyed to interpretive sections in the trail guide booklet.) In addition to looking for the numerous birds along the way, including all of the "northern specialties", watch for the tracks and scats of moose, deer, bear, fox, and wolves that regularly follow this travel corridor as well.

Wolf Howl Pond

The railway bed passes through a long, narrow rock cut just before reaching Wolf Howl Pond, named in the early 1970s when the boggy meadow bordering the northwest end of the pond was used by a pack of wolves for several summers. The water level in this bog pond has been raised by beaver dams, creating a classic "doughnut bog" formation (a central pond surrounded by a floating bog mat ring, with open water again around the outside). Watch for Wood Duck, Ring-necked Duck and Hooded Merganser on the pond. Olive-sided Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Boreal Chickadee, White-throated Sparrow and Lincoln's Sparrow nest here, and all are more likely to be heard before they are seen. Particularly in the case of Boreal Chickadee, you will need to know the wheezy, nasal *chick-che-day day* call in order to locate these inconspicuous birds.

Gray Jays, each marked with a unique combination of

coloured plastic bands and a standard aluminum band, readily come to the hand to be fed in this area. The birds are part of Dan Strickland's life history study of this species which has gone on for over 30 years in Algonquin Park.

Spruce Grouse regularly come to the railway bed near Wolf Howl Pond in search of grit and to display. Look and listen for these often hard-to-find birds just before the long rock cut, and around the tamaracks beyond Post #6. In the fall, tamarack needles are eaten by these grouse as a "transition food" during the switch from a summer diet of ground vegetation and fruit to the conifer needles of winter, and the weight and length of their gastrointestinal tract increase in the process. Playing a tape of the female's "aggressive calls" in spring or fall will often elicit a vocal response from females and "flutter flight" displays from males, which enhances your chances of locating them. Tape playing should be limited to the minimum necessary to find the birds.

On sunny days from spring through fall, you should see lots of basking Painted Turtles at Wolf Howl Pond, most of which have numbers painted on their shells for ease in recognizing individuals. These turtles are part of a long-term study by Dr. Ron Brooks and his students at the University of Guelph. Otter, moose and beaver are also frequently seen at Wolf Howl Pond.

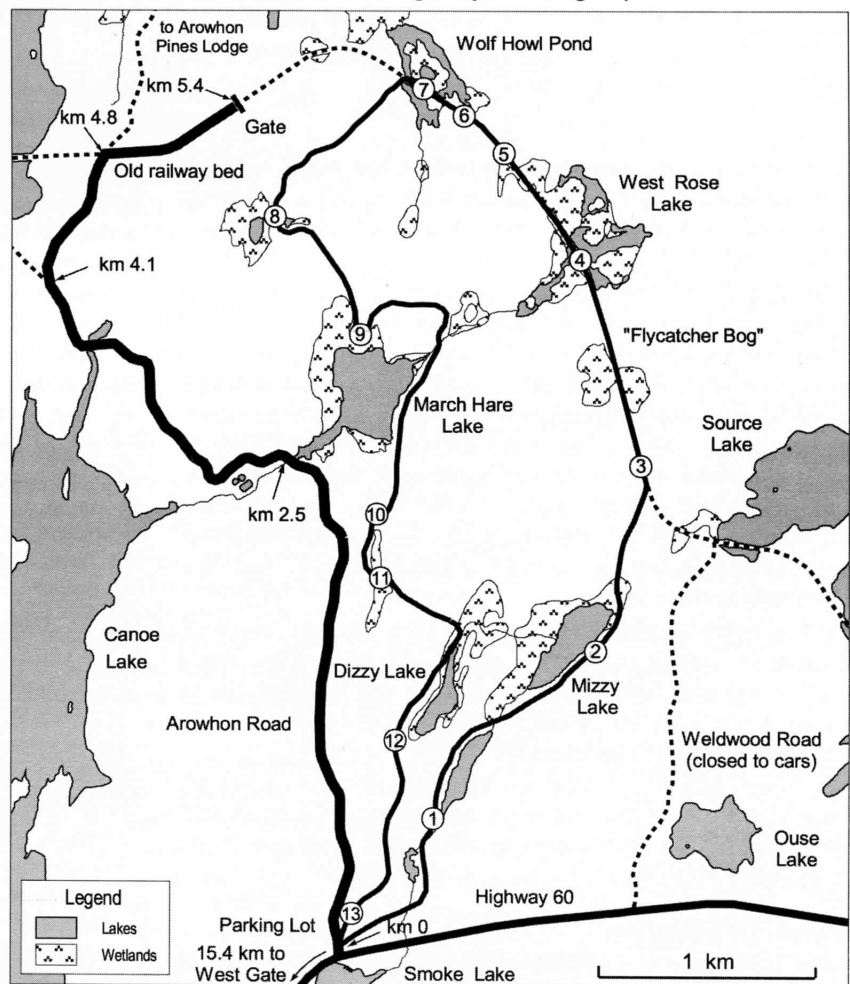
West Rose Lake

Another 15 minute (1 km) walk along the railway through mixed forest will bring you to West Rose Lake, an even larger boggy wetland. American Bittern, American Black Duck, Mallard (a scarce breeder in Algonquin), and Common Merganser are regular there. Listen for Common Yellowthroat, Swamp Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow and Savannah Sparrow in the sedge bog habitat. The latter species must have nested in sites like this before fields became common in southern Ontario. Black-backed Woodpecker and Tree Swallow nest regularly in the live and dead trees bordering the railway bed, the woodpeckers excavating their own cavities and the swallows utilizing them in later years. Yellow Warblers (an uncommon bird in Algonquin Park) may be heard from the brushy border of the lake. Rusty Blackbird (a formerly regular breeder in Algonquin that may be declining in the Park) is often present here in migration.

"Flycatcher Bog"

Continue eastward along the railway bed for another 10 minutes (0.5 km) to reach a section bordered by thick alders, black spruce, tamarack and white cedar, which I call "Flycatcher Bog". Watch for Spruce Grouse as you walk toward this area, as they are frequently seen between West Rose Lake and Flycatcher Bog. When you reach the bog, listen carefully for the distinctive *chelek* song or *per-wee* call of the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, which is a regular breeder there (nesting on the ground in the sphagnum moss) although often difficult to see in the thick cover. Alder Flycatcher and Olive-sided Flycatcher are regular there as well, making the site one of my favourites for

Mizzy Lake Trail - at km 15.4 on Highway 60 in Algonquin Provincial Park



Map by Andrew Jano

Algonquin flycatchers. You may hear Winter Wren, Swainson's Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Black-and-white Warbler, too.

Once you have enjoyed the birds of Flycatcher Bog, it is time to reverse direction and walk back to the locked gate and your parked vehicle. Don't worry if you have yet to observe all of Algonquin's northern birds; the return trip along the railway bed will give you another chance!

Weldwood Road and Ouse Lake

After driving back down the Arowhon Road to Highway 60, you may wish to turn left (east) and travel about 1.3 kilometres on the highway up the Smoke Lake hill to the unmarked Weldwood Road on your left, at km 16.7. This is an old logging road which is now closed and gated near its entrance. However, there is space to park a couple of vehicles in front of the gate, and you can walk along the old road through mature hardwood forest. This area has Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Great Crested Flycatcher, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Wood Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Scarlet Tanager.

A short portage trail off the Weldwood Road leads down to picturesque Ouse Lake, with its resident pair of Common Loons that usually nest on the island. Listen for Winter Wren, Common Yellowthroat and Song Sparrow singing from the

lake's tangled shoreline. The Weldwood Road area can be productive after dark for Northern Saw-whet Owl and Barred Owl, both of which may respond to your vocal imitations or taped calls.

Accessibility

When visiting Algonquin Park at any time of the year, you must have a permit (camping, daily, seasonal, or annual) and it must be displayed on your vehicle dashboard at all times. Permits may be purchased at the gates.

The Arowhon Road is normally open and passable from May to November. During winter, the entrance road for Taylor Statten Camps at km 3.3 along the Arowhon Road may mark the limit of plowed access, requiring the use of snowshoes or cross-country skis beyond that point. Do not block access if you park there in winter. In March and April, the Arowhon Road may be closed to public travel due to deterioration of the road surface during spring thaw. This winter (2000/2001), the Arowhon Road is being utilized for log hauling for the first time in many years; extreme caution is required if you intend to share this road with these huge trucks.

Visitors to Algonquin Park from late May through June may encounter swarms of mosquitoes and blackflies on some days, but repellants and light-coloured clothing can be effective in diminishing their impact. Avoid wearing blue and green apparel, which tends to attract blackflies.

Accommodation and food are available all year at various locations along both the eastern (Bancroft and Whitney) and western (Huntsville and Dwight) approaches to Algonquin Park, as is camping in the Park's Highway 60 Corridor.

Further Information

Further information about the park can be obtained at the official Algonquin Park web site <<http://www.algonquinpark.on.ca>>. Publications may be purchased at the park gates and bookstores, or ordered from The Friends of Algonquin Park, Box 248, Whitney, Ontario, K0J 2M0. Current birding information is available from park naturalists at the Algonquin Visitor Centre, located at km 43 on Highway 60 and open all year (weekends only during winter), or by phoning 613-637-2828 during business hours.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jean Iron, Ron Pittaway, Dan Strickland, Rick Stronks, Doug Tozer and Pat Tozer for their helpful comments. Andrew Jano kindly prepared the map.

2001 Breeding Bird Atlas

Mike Cadman

Nesting is already underway in a few select species (at least some Rock Doves and White-winged Crossbills at the time of writing), and squares are filling up. So, if you aren't already involved in the Atlas, it's time to contact your Regional Coordinator (RC) and start your preparations. RCs are listed on the atlas web page (<http://www.birdsontario.org>).

A series of atlassing workshops is planned for the coming months. The workshops will explain more about the project and provide training in collecting breeding evidence, song identification, doing point counts, entering and summarizing data on the web, and using GPS units. Hope you can make it to the workshop in your area.

For more information on the workshops (locations, directions, etc), check out the Atlas web page <http://www.birdsontario.org/atlas/atlasmain.html> or contact the Atlas office at 519-826-2092.

February 26, 7 pm, **Thunder Bay**, Lunan Hall, St. Paul's United Church, 349 Waverly St., Contact: Nick Escott, tel: 807-345-7122, e-mail: escott@norlink.net

February 27, 7-9 pm, **Kenora**, Contact: Leo Heyens, tel: 807-345-7122, e-mail: leo.heyens@mnr.gov.on.ca

March 6, 7:30-9: 30 pm **Sault Ste. Marie**, Great Lakes Forestry Centre, Room A103, Contact: Chris Sanders, tel: 705-759-6216, e-mail: csanders@NRCan.gc.ca

March 8, 7-9 pm, **Sudbury**, Contact: Charlie Whitelaw, tel: 705-969-4797, e-mail: c.whitelaw@sympatico.ca

March 9, 7-9 pm, **North Bay**, Contact: Dick Tafel, tel: 705-472-7907, e-mail: rtafel@sympatico.ca

March 25, 10 am-3 pm, **Owen Sound**, Contact: Cindy Cartwright, tel: 519-389-2585e-: pom@bmts.com

April 7, 1-4 pm, **Hamilton**, Contact: Wolfgang Luft, tel: 905-681-2276, e-mail: rprice@icom.ca

April 8, 1-4 pm, **London**, Longwoods Conservation Area, Contact: Dave Martin, tel: 519-269-3262. E-mail: dave.martin@odyssey.on.ca

April 14, 1-4 pm, **Toronto**, Kortright Centre, Contact Nicole Kopysh, tel: 519-826-2092, e-mail Nicole.Kopysh@ec.gc.ca

April 22, 1-4 pm, **Ottawa**, Fletcher Wildlife Garden, Prince of Wales Drive, Contact: Christine Hanrahan, tel: 613-798-1620, e-mail: vanessa@magma.ca

April 28, **Midland**, Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, Contact: Bob Bowles, tel: 705-325-3149, Email: bowles@bconnex.net

April 29, 1-4 pm, **Presqu'ile Provincial Park**, Contact: Margaret Bain, tel: 905-373-1202, e-mail: mjcbain@sympatico.ca

2001

OFO Annual General Meeting Point Pelee National Park 29 and 30 September 2001

Mark your calendars now to enjoy this great weekend of fall birding. Experienced OFO birders will lead field trips and focus on bird identification. Join Gavin and Ian Platt, Paul Pratt, Pete Read, Ron Tozer and Alan Wormington to explore Point Pelee and nearby hotspots.

We will come together on Saturday evening at the Leamington Dock Restaurant for a banquet and special presentation on *Hawk Migration and Hawk Identification* by Allen Chartier. The program includes the OFO Distinguished Ornithologist Award and *Birds of the Gulf of Mexico* by Alan Wormington.

Future OFO Trips

April 28 (Saturday) Algonquin Provincial Park. Leader: Ron Tozer.

Meet at **9 a.m.** at the WEST GATE of the park. Park entrance fee. Spruce Grouse, Black-backed Woodpecker, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee.

April 29 (Sunday) Minesing Swamp and Area. Leader: Dave Milsom. *NEW TRIP*

Meet at **8:30 a.m.** at the Tim Hortons in Angus on Simcoe County Road 90 west of Barrie. Waterfowl and early spring migrants.

May 5 (Saturday) Rondeau Provincial Park. Leader: Allen Woodliffe.

Meet at **8:00 a.m.** at the Visitor Centre. Park entrance fee. Spring migrants.

May 19 (Saturday) Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area. Leader: Terry Sprague.

Meet at **8 a.m.** in the Canadian Tire parking lot on Hwy 33 just west of Picton. Motels in Picton and Belleville. Spring Migrants.

May 26 (Saturday) Opinicon Road Area North of Kingston and Amherst Island. Leader: Ken Kingdon.

Meet at **6:30 a.m.** in the parking lot of Denny's Restaurant next to the Days Inn just south on Division Street, Kingston (exit 617 from Hwy 401). In the morning, breeding birds, e.g. Golden-winged and Cerulean Warblers, Yellow-throated Vireo, Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoos. The afternoon on Amherst Island for shorebirds, ducks and more. Ferry charge of \$3.50.

May 27 (Sunday) Bike Hike to Kingston Area Prairie Warbler Colonies. Leader: Ken Kingdon. *NEW TRIP*

Meet at **7:30 a.m.** at the same place as Saturday for a morning-long "Birding by Bike" ride on a fine trail north of Kingston through the Opinicon Forest to the heart of the Prairie Warbler breeding colonies. An easy 12 km ride on an abandoned rail line with gravel surface suitable for most bikes. Bring a snack and water bottle for this half-day outing.

June 1 (Friday) and June 2 (Saturday) Rainy River. Leader: Dave Elder.

Tel: 807-597-2008 or <melder@atikokan.lakeheadu.ca>. Meet at junction of Worthington Road #3 and Hwy 11, which is about 10 km east of Rainy River (3 sideroads east of town) at **7:00 a.m. local (Central) time**. American White Pelican, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Yellow Rail, Marbled Godwit, Western Kingbird, Sandhill Crane, Black-billed Magpie, Connecticut Warbler, Le Conte's Sparrow. **Please note:** those intending to participate MUST register with Dave by May 1, if there is insufficient interest the trip will be cancelled.

June 2 (Saturday) Leslie Street Spit. Leader: John Carley. *NEW TRIP*

Meet at **8 a.m.** at the base of the Spit parking lot near the intersection of Leslie Street and Unwin Avenue. Late migrants, breeding birds and butterflies.

June 3 (Sunday) Carden Alvar, Victoria County. Leader: Ron Pittaway.

Meet at **9 a.m.** in Kirkfield at the parking lot of Lady MacKenzie School on the right on County Road 6 about 1/2 km north of County Road 48. Grassland birds: Loggerhead Shrike, Sedge Wren, Upland Sandpiper, Grasshopper and Vesper Sparrows.

June 9 (Saturday) St. Clair Wildlife Reserve and Pelee. Leader: John Miles.

Meet at **7 a.m.** at the parking lot of the St. Clair Refuge off Townline Road about 18 km west of Chatham. Breeding birds: Yellow-headed Blackbird, Least Bittern, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, rails.

June 16 (Saturday) and June 17 (Sunday) Bruce Peninsula. Leader: John Miles.

On Saturday meet at **7 a.m.** at the entrance to Spirit Rock Conservation Area, about 1.5 km north of Wiarton on the east side of Hwy 6. On Sunday meet at **7 a.m.** in the parking lot of the Tobermory airport, west of Hwy 6 on Warner Bay Road. Possible park entrance fees. *Accommodations on the Bruce can be difficult in the summer, so it is strongly recommended that participants arrange their lodgings early.* The Bruce birds and flora: Brewer's Blackbird, Common Raven, Virginia Rail, Clay-colored Sparrow, Sandhill Crane, Upland Sandpiper, breeding warblers. Also wild flowers and ferns.

Taverner Cup Birding Competition 26 May 2001

To enter a team, Contact Jeff Harrison:
514-486-4943, e-mail: dha@videotron.ca
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Point Pelee Natural History News Published by *The Friends of Point Pelee* Editor: Alan Worrington

This new publication will focus on the natural history of Point Pelee and immediate area. Contents will include feature articles and notes (with photographs), seasonal summaries of bird observations, an annual summary of butterfly observations, miscellaneous reports (CBC results, etc.), a listing of upcoming natural history events at and near Point Pelee, letters to the editor, and much more.

Four (4) issues per year, starting April, 2001. Subscription fees per calendar year only, Canada CAN\$15 (one year) or \$30 (two years), International US\$15 (one year) or \$30 (two years)

Send subscription and e-mail address (optional) to:

The Friends of Point Pelee, 1118 Point Pelee Dr., Leamington ON N8H 3V4 Canada

Notes From the OBRC

Bob Curry

The Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC) examined approximately 120 reports submitted during 2000. Some of these are older reports from previous years, which means that the number of submitted reports for 2000 birds is somewhat down. Secretary Kayo Roy still requests submissions for some rarities reported to Ontbirds or to other publications. Please submit these as soon as possible. This can be done by e-mail to Kayo, kayoroy@niagara.com. The Committee will hold its annual meeting to finalize decisions on difficult reports at the Royal Ontario Museum on Saturday 24 March.

The Annual Report for 1999 accepted a report of an Ash-throated Flycatcher from Port Stanley on 24 November 1999 as Ash-throated/Nutting's. This decision was based upon the possibility of the very similar Nutting's, which had not been eliminated by the description. Consultation with other records committees in eastern North America has led the OBRC to change its decision. Feedback unanimously agreed that Nutting's has no history of long-distance vagrancy and that when an individual of this species-pair occurs in the East, it is treated as Ash-throated. Thus the Port Stanley bird will be changed to Ash-throated Flycatcher. Observers should, of course, always endeavour to distinguish these two.

The members for 2001 are as follows: Margaret Bain, Dave Beadle, Peter Burke, Rob Dobos, Nick Escott, Kevin McLaughlin, Alan Wormington, and Secretary, Kayo Roy.

Please send rare bird reports to:
Kayo Roy, OBRC Secretary
13 Kinsman Court
Fonthill ON L0S 1E0
E-mail: kayoroy@niagara.com

Bob Curry and Ron Pittaway complete their three-year terms at the March 2001 OBRC meeting. The OFO Board of Directors thanks Bob, chair for the past two years, and Ron for their hard work serving the birders of Ontario and OFO.



White-tailed Deer have learned to eat at bird feeders in the Dorset and Dwight areas of Haliburton and Muskoka. They stand on their hind legs to lick the seeds. Many feeders are knocked over by deer. About 2:30 p.m. on 31 December 2000, Ron Tozer watched a deer near his feeder in Dwight when suddenly a wolf burst out of the bush to chase the deer, a possible solution to the problem. Above photo taken near Dorset in December 1999 by Dale Burk Saunders.

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