

Favourite Birding Hotspots

Palgrave

by David Milsom

General Description. This excellent birding area of mixed forest, dry rolling hills and marshland is located west of Palgrave, north of Bolton, off Highway 50, and is about a 35 minute drive from the intersection of highway 401 and 400. As you enter the town of Palgrave, turn left off Highway 50 onto 25th (Patterson) Sideroad. Go 1.3 km to the next intersection and turn right onto the 6th Line (Duffy's Lane).

Time of Year. The best times of year are summer, spring, fall and winter, in that order.

The Birds. At the corners of 25th (Patterson) Sideroad and 6th Line (Duffy's Lane), (1) Belted Kingfisher and perhaps Spotted Sandpiper can be found in the creek. As you proceed along the 6th Line (Duffy's Lane), look for Ruffed Grouse, Black-capped Chickadee and Golden-crowned Kinglet. At .8 km (2) from the intersection, a small swamp on the right often produces Least Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, and many butterfly species in late spring and summer. Another .6 km on the left lie (3) open fields surrounded by pine plantations. Nesting here are Eastern Meadowlark, Indigo Bunting, Chipping, Field and Grasshopper sparrows, Pine, Magnolia and Nashville warblers, Rufous-sided Towhee and on the right, Wild Turkey.

At 2.0 km (4) is a path into a deciduous wooded area, excellent for Wood Thrush, Veery, White-breasted Nuthatch, Warbling and Red-eyed vireos, Cooper's and Red-shouldered hawks in summer. Spring flowers are widespread in early May. Lincoln's Sparrow nests at the beginning of this trail. Another .2 km brings you to a parking lot on the right side of the road. Walking past the gate along the path brings you to a swampy area (5) and a beaver dam. Birds breeding here include Broad-winged Hawk, Whip-Poor-Will, Northern Flicker, Downy, Hairy and Pileated woodpeckers, Wood Duck, Alder Flycatcher, Common Yellowthroat and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Continuing from the parking area along the dirt road brings you to another very productive swamp (6) for Green Heron, Black-and-White and Yellow-rumped warblers, Pileated Woodpecker and many species already mentioned. Walking this road from the parking area is suggested for maximum reward in all seasons. Further along, Purple Finch, Eastern Wood-Pee-wee, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Northern Oriole, Blue-winged Teal, Great-crested Flycatcher and

Belted Kingfisher breed. There are several more swamps (7) in this 1 km stretch between the parking lot and the next main cross road (Finnerty Sideroad).

In winter, the area is often productive for irruptive species such as crossbills, grosbeaks, redpolls, siskins and other finches. Dead trees are favourite haunts for several woodpecker species including Black-backed Woodpecker in recent winters. Cedar Waxwings are regular, as are Bohemian Waxwings in certain years. Good numbers of northern warblers migrate through in May and August/September. Hawk migration is often excellent.

Returning to Palgrave, about 2.2 km east of the village, lies Gibson Lake (8), reached by following Pine Avenue from the village to Mount Hope Road where you turn right. At this intersection, a series of open fields to the east yields breeding Grasshopper and Vesper sparrows. Proceed to Gibson Lake, a stopover for many duck species on migration, including White-winged Scoter. Breeding birds include Belted Kingfisher, Pied-billed Grebe, Brown Thrasher, Green Heron, Wood Duck, several swallow species, Swamp Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler and Northern Oriole. Nearby are colonies of Bank Swallows. Continue towards Bolton and look for Eastern Bluebird, Great Blue Heron, Eastern Kingbird, Red-tailed Hawk, Orchard Oriole and Cliff Swallows. I hope you enjoy the good birding this area has to offer!

