

David's

Long Point, Ontario



Report

12-13 May 2011

Ricky and I have participated in Bird Studies Canada's Baillie Birdathon for each of the past 35 years, usually accompanied by our son Jeremy. In recent years, Ricky has been sponsored to support Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory (as well as BSC), Jeremy has come along to help spot birds and I have acted as driver. This year the fourth member of our party was Mike McMillan, the official counter for the Norfolk Field Naturalists' Club. Our territory is the Long Point area in Norfolk County, Ontario, and we try to find as many species as possible in 24 hours in May.



Bald Eagle flying away

With the advent of **RAPTORTHON**, I decided to add a little spice to the challenge by sponsoring myself for the number of raptors I could find during our Birdathon. We know from long experience that this territory is far from raptor-rich in May, so I was not expecting a big list and I was satisfied with the five I did see. And I had a great time seeing, hearing and keeping track of all the other birds we found during our Birdathon.

Every Birdathon is different and each usually offers a few surprises. We decided to start our 24-hour count at 6 p.m. on Thursday 12 May. An hour before our start we heard a report that a Kirtland's Warbler had been seen in a group of pines around Campsite 419 at the far end of the Long Point Provincial Park. The park road was closed so we walked the ½ mile out to 419 to start our count there. No KIWA was to be seen but there was a nice group of warblers and other migrants in the pines to keep us happy and my first raptor, a **Turkey Vulture**, swooped low as I was checking off an Eastern Kingbird on the nearby dune. After half an hour we were about to move on when Jeremy spotted our bird, a beautiful male Kirtland's Warbler – a first for our Birdathons, of course.

Kirtland's Warbler is globally rare and endangered and it is extremely rare on migration. Long Point Bird Observatory has only 3 previous records in the last 50 years. This one was seen by many observers. Oddly enough, I got record #3 on 29 May last year at LPBO's Breakwater station: a female that I observed for at least 5 minutes foraging in a group of pines (again), but unfortunately it was seen by nobody else despite an intensive search.

Later on Thursday evening I got my second raptor, a distant view of a **Northern Harrier**, seen from the dyke in the Big Creek marsh. It was on the ground, flapping its wings, apparently trying to lift a prey item, perhaps a turtle that was too heavy for it.

We were out at 5.30 next morning, and my 3rd raptor was a brief glimpse of a **Cooper's Hawk**, better observed by the rest of the party, in the Rowanwood Sanctuary, a known breeding site.

Having thoroughly covered the Long Point area, with a list of around 100, we were in need of waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, and terns (and raptors!), so we headed east along the Lake Erie shore. We had checked out a distant Bald Eagle nest earlier at Big Creek but did not see the birds, so we were happy to find an adult **Bald Eagle** perched in a tree on the far side of the boat channel at Turkey Point. It looked like a good opportunity for a photo, but with my little camera I needed to get closer. I thought there would be no problem if I approached to the edge of the boat channel—but no, all I got was a distant shot of it flying away.

Kestrels are scarce breeders in Norfolk County, but if you drive around enough you will usually see one on the telephone wires, and we were lucky to find one as we were driving to our final destinations, the Jarvis and Townsend sewage lagoons. So **American Kestrel** was my fifth and final raptor. I was unfortunate to miss a Red-tailed Hawk seen briefly by Ricky and Mike driving in another car. Red-tailed Hawk is usually one of the most reliable raptors for our Birdathons, but not this time. Other possibilities that we have seen one or more times include Sharp-shinned, Red-shouldered and Broad-winged Hawks, and Northern Goshawk. Surprisingly, Ospreys don't breed at Long Point and by mid-May most migrants have gone through. Merlin and Peregrine would be lucky sightings of late migrants. Among the owls, Eastern Screech, Great Horned, and Barred are the most likely, but by mid-May most have stopped calling regularly.

My five species of raptors sets the Ontario Raptorthon bar low for someone to challenge next year.

Our group had a great day of birding and together we found 137 species of which I got 121 (I miss some of the songs that Ricky and Jeremy can hear and identify). Ricky was the champion birder with 134 species, but Mike raised the most money, about \$4,000 for the Norfolk Field Naturalists. Ricky was sponsored for around \$1,000 for Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory. As for me, I did not actively seek sponsors, so thus far I have raised a mere \$50 to support the good work of the Hawk Migration Association of North America. **But it is not too late to sponsor my efforts on behalf of HMANA! Go to: <https://hmana.ejoinme.org/?tabid=197318> . Click on my name on the list of participants and follow the instructions.** Thanks to those who add their support at this late stage.

David Hussell,
15 May 2011

DAVID'S



CHALLENGE

Species List

**May 12-13, 2011.
Long Point and vicinity,
Ontario**

Raptors: 5

Others: 116

Total: 121

Pied-billed Grebe
Double-crested Cormorant
Least Bittern
Great Blue Heron
Green Heron
Turkey Vulture
Mute Swan
Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Mallard
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Gadwall
Green-winged Teal
Canvasback
Redhead
Ring-necked Duck
Greater Scaup
Lesser Scaup
Bufflehead
Hooded Merganser
Common Merganser
Red-breasted Merganser
Ruddy Duck
Northern Harrier
Cooper's Hawk
Bald Eagle
American Kestrel
Wild Turkey
American Coot
Sandhill Crane
Killdeer
Lesser Yellowlegs
Spotted Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Short-billed Dowitcher
Ring-billed Gull

Herring Gull
Caspian Tern
Black Tern
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Whip-poor-will
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
Blue-headed Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Horned Lark
Purple Martin
Tree Swallow
N. Rough-winged Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
Red-breasted Nuthatch
Carolina Wren
House Wren
Marsh Wren
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Eastern Bluebird
Veery
Swainson's Thrush
Wood Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
Cedar Waxwing
European Starling
Nashville Warbler
Northern Parula
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Magnolia Warbler
Black-thr. Blue Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-thr. Green Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Kirtland's Warbler

Palm Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
American Redstart
Ovenbird
Common Yellowthroat
Hooded Warbler
Wilson's Warbler
Canada Warbler
Scarlet Tanager
Eastern Towhee
Chipping Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Bobolink
Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark
Common Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Baltimore Oriole
House Finch
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow