

HMANA Raptorthon Summary
Pondicherry National Wildlife Refuge
May 14, 2011
By Julie Brown



Our Raptorthon was a huge success! Thank you for your support!

I conducted my Raptorthon Challenge on Saturday, May 14th in honor of International Migratory Bird Day at Pondicherry National Wildlife Refuge in Jefferson, NH. Each year my husband, Phil, and I help lead a bird walk here and are always amazed with the bird diversity so we decided this was the perfect day to combine it with our Raptorthon Fundraiser.

The Pondicherry Refuge is 6000 acres of northern hardwood and boreal forest, black spruce bogs, wetlands and ponds with the area's best views of NH's largest mountains, the Presidential Range of the White Mountains. It's a stunning place, and it also has the highest nesting bird diversity in the state.



This year I decided not only to focus on raptors but to count all bird species seen or heard during the day. **A total of 88 species** were tallied by me and Phil during our 8.5 mile walk from 7AM to 4PM. Unfortunately, due to the dreary weather it wasn't a very good raptor day. We counted only **five species of raptors**, but quality over quantity, and the day was full of many exciting sightings.

It was chilly and overcast but the rain held off for most of the day. A yearling moose greeted us at the trailhead at 7am, a welcome start to our day! We met up with the group leader, Dave Govatski, and a record crowd for this hike of 60 other people(!), all excited to see birds in celebration of International Migratory Bird Day.

Our first stop was Airport Marsh. We watched our first raptor of the day make a very brief appearance; a **Merlin** in hot pursuit of a Least Sandpiper right over our head! As that excitement winded down, we turned our attention to a vocalizing and displaying **American Bittern** in the marsh and singing **Grasshopper Sparrow** from the fields - a rare find for northern NH.

We then entered the refuge and split up into smaller, more manageable sized groups. We were immediately surrounded by warbler song; **Blackburnian, Canada, Bay-breasted, Tennessee and Blackpoll Warbler** to name a few. Over the course of the day we heard or saw 19 species of warblers, not unusual for Pondicherry in May.

We stopped at the viewing platform at Cherry Pond and watched Common Loons and Ring-necked Ducks. A female **Northern Harrier** cruised over the water, heading toward her nest site in the bog. **Turkey Vultures** and two **Broad-winged Hawks** struggled to find lift over Mount Madison.

Julie scans for raptors at Cherry Pond. Photo by Phil Brown



From there, we followed the trail to Little Cherry Pond weaving us through a lush landscape of Balsam Fir, Black and White Spruce, Leatherleaf, Rhodora and Bog Rosemary. Most of the bog species were right on the verge of blooming, at least a week behind our bog plants back in Southwestern NH. Just as we reached the pond, a **Northern Goshawk** began calling! We knew right away that this was one of the adults currently nesting off the trail a few hundred yards away. This was certainly the highlight of my day!

Other notables in the afternoon included three kettling American Bitterns over Moorhen Marsh, listening to the eerie chorus of winnowing Snipe and the incessant

drumming of Ruffed Grouse in the young forests.

We ended the day with a walk through a Northern white cedar swamp to Mud Pond Bog where we had a chance to see the newly constructed boardwalk and observation platform. Just as we were wrapping up our day and the rain was starting, a **Black-backed Woodpecker** buzzed across the pond. A perfect end to our day! It may have been a slow raptor day but it proved to be a very exciting birding day. It's never a letdown birding at Pondicherry!

Thank you to everyone that supported my Raptorthon event. I was thrilled to see so many people sponsor this event. You helped me raise a grand total of **\$1000** for raptor conservation! Half of these funds will go towards managing HMANA's HawkCount.org database as well as the Raptor Population Index Project. The other half will go into our new HawkWatch Fund, to provide grants to assist watchsites looking for support.

Thanks to your help, we are able to continue our important work, raising awareness of raptor conservation issues and the importance of supporting local hawkwatching efforts.

Sincerely,

Julie Brown

Monitoring Site Coordinator - Hawk Migration Association of North America



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and sapsuckers
Photp by Len Medlock



Walking trails at Pondicherry. Photo by Phil Brown

**HMANA Raptorthon
Species List
Pondicherry NWR
May 14, 2011**

Canada Goose X
Wood Duck 2
American Black Duck X
Mallard X
Ring-necked Duck 3
Hooded Merganser X
Common Merganser 1
Ruffed Grouse 8
Common Loon 2
American Bittern 4
Great Blue Heron X
Turkey Vulture 1
Northern Harrier 1
Northern Goshawk 1
Broad-winged Hawk 1
Merlin 1
Killdeer 4
Spotted Sandpiper 4
Solitary Sandpiper 4
Least Sandpiper 4
Wilson's Snipe 4
Mourning Dove 2
Ruby-throated
Hummingbird 1
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker X
Hairy Woodpecker X
Black-backed Woodpecker
1 Mud Pond
Northern Flicker (Yellow-
shafted) X
Pileated Woodpecker X
Least Flycatcher 3
Eastern Phoebe 1
Great Crested Flycatcher 3
Eastern Kingbird X
Blue-headed Vireo 2
Red-eyed Vireo 1
Blue Jay X
American Crow X

Common Raven 2
Tree Swallow X
Bank Swallow X
Barn Swallow X
Black-capped Chickadee X
Red-breasted Nuthatch 3
Brown Creeper 2
House Wren 1
Winter Wren X
Golden-crowned Kinglet X
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 3
Veery 1
Hermit Thrush 4
Wood Thrush 1
American Robin X
Gray Catbird X
Brown Thrasher 1
European Starling X
Tennessee Warbler 1
Nashville Warbler X
Northern Parula X
Yellow Warbler X
Chestnut-sided Warbler X
Magnolia Warbler 4
Black-throated Blue
Warbler X
Yellow-rumped Warbler
(Myrtle) X
Black-throated Green
Warbler 4
Blackburnian Warbler X
Palm Warbler (Yellow) 3
Bay-breasted Warbler 1
Blackpoll Warbler 1
Black-and-white Warbler X
American Redstart X
Ovenbird X
Northern Waterthrush 6
Common Yellowthroat X
Canada Warbler 2
Chipping Sparrow X
Savannah Sparrow X
Grasshopper Sparrow 1
Song Sparrow X

Lincoln's Sparrow 1
Swamp Sparrow X
White-throated Sparrow X
Scarlet Tanager 1
Rose-breasted Grosbeak X
Bobolink X
Red-winged Blackbird X
Common Grackle X
Baltimore Oriole X
Purple Finch X
American Goldfinch X



Chestnut-sided Warbler. Photo by Len Medlock