

## **Burrell Baillie Birdathon: May 10, 2011**

We woke at 5:00 a.m. to the rumble of thunder, the flash of lightning and the patter of rain on the cottage roof. This was really putting Ken's theory of reverse migration to the test; SE winds, low pressure and warm temperature. This was going to be a great birding day! By the time we had breakfast and got to Fish Point (the most southerly spit on Pelee Island) the birds were heading out over the lake.

We spent 4 hours glued to our location identifying and counting birds. Blackbirds, Orioles, Tanagers, Warblers and Vireos were coming down the spit and heading out over Lake Erie. As well, the usual loafers were on the very tip. There were Caspian Terns, Herring Gulls, and Ring-billed Gulls. A few nice treats were three Lesser Black-backed Gulls, a flock of Black-bellied Plovers, Sanderling and Dunlin.

By the time we headed north we already had an impressive list, including 21 warbler species! The highlight of the day came at 8:55 am when we spotted a beautiful Kirtland's Warbler about 30m north of us. It didn't stay long before heading out and disappearing out over the lake. Presumably this bird circled back as a Kirtland's appeared back beside us at 9:35 am. for a few minutes before it headed south over the lake.

As we headed back to our car, we pushed other birds ahead of us. These included Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, White-crowned Sparrows, Swainson's Thrush, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird. I was already tired! Fortunately, Carol had a hearty breakfast waiting. Over this we discussed strategy for the remainder of the day.

Our next stop was Sheridan Point (the NW corner of the island). Here, with Carol's help, we were able to find Blackpoll Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, Hermit Thrush and Veery. We were doing really well.

We next headed for the SW corner to do a little lazy birding along McCormick Road. We were not disappointed. Here we spotted Prothonotary Warbler and Mourning Warbler. There was lots of bird activity in this area.

A few stops along the way as we headed for supper were also productive. We saw 2 Bald Eagles at a nest as well as 2 Great-horned Owls in a nest. Short-billed Dowitchers and Semipalmated Plover were feeding in a field. We found an Acadian Flycatcher active along another road.

After supper, we headed back to Fish Point. The wind was very strong and cold but we were able to add Red-headed Woodpecker and Marsh Wren. Ken had to make his daily entry at Pelee Island Bird Observatory (his home while on the island and his main duty), so Mike and I continued walking. This yielded us American Kestrel.

We headed back to our cottage to tally up. None of us expected what happened next. As we turned into our drive, a Grey Fox ran across the road and stopped to watch us. It

turned out that she had a den with 6 kits under our garage. What pretty little animals they were!

Our day ended with a total of 143 species seen and counted. Much higher than we expected on the Island!

Thank you for sponsoring us on this annual fundraiser. Bird Studies Canada is the beneficiary of your pledges.

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Again, thank you for your support. We will be asking again next year.

**The Burrells (Ken, Mike and Jim)**