

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER**

by M. Hendrick

Point Pelee is a triangular peninsula that juts into the western end of Lake Erie near Leamington and Windsor. Point Pelee National Park occupies the last 5.9 miles of the peninsula where the land narrows fairly rapidly to what one could describe as a point, and this area has become a mecca for birdwatchers.

The reason for this is the spectacular arrival and stopover of migrant birds. They come "in such numbers of species and individuals that it is almost unbelievable to people who have not seen them. One reason for this is the concentration of birds from a wide migrational front into the narrow funnel-like land area of the Point. This makes it one of the best places in Canada in which to observe birds. At the peak of the season in May one observer can tally over a hundred species in a single day". (The Spring Birds of Point Pelee National Park by George M. Stirrett PhD)

Members of the North Leeds Birdwatchers (NLB) decided that they too would migrate to Point Pelee to see this phenomenon for themselves. They realized that the birds arrive at Pelee in intermittent waves and if they missed a wave the number of birds seen could be disappointing, but they were willing to take the chance. They left on May 11, their destination being a motel in Leamington.

Shortly after dawn the next morning the group stood close to the end of the point overlooking

Lake Erie. It was unseasonably cold and as they shivered some wished they had thought to bring gloves. Scopes were set up and the group had views of Red-breasted Mergansers, various gulls and Ruddy Turnstones. There did not seem to be much more of interest there so people, relieved to be out of the wind, took to the woods. The dawn chorus at Pelee is usually an unforgettable experience, but that morning the birds were strangely silent. Was the trip going to be a washout? But slowly birds began to appear, and soon their numbers increased to the point that the novice birder had difficulty keeping up with their identification. Experienced birders, some of whom were complete strangers, tried to help the less experienced identify the birds at hand.

Later, Winona Barker created a stir when she identified a Hooded Warbler skulking in the underbrush. In a flash a great number of people wanted to know where it had been seen. When a "good" bird has been found at Pelee, news travels fast! Orchard Orioles, seldom observed here, were abundant. Many of the warblers, vireos, thrushes and other species seen were new to individual members of the NLB. In the afternoon Bill Cutfield identified a White-eyed Vireo and Annette Mess and a friend worked hard to see a noisy yellow-breasted Chat. It led them on a merry chase, yet never did show itself. The following morning several members watched

a Marsh Wren as it flew into the air, and while singing its heart out, displayed for the female. After 1 1/2 days of birding at Point Pelee and vicinity the NLB saw a cumulative total of 123 species. Not a bad number for a group of fairly new birders! The outstanding birding experience plus the camaraderie that existed among NLB members made the whole trip worthwhile. Mary Anne Leggett summed up the feelings of the group about the trip pretty well when she said, "I wouldn't have missed it for anything!"

By now everyone with a hummingbird feeder will have had visits from Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. The first reports were received from Elsie and John Goodman on May 14 and Leorene Hayes on May 15. The Killdeer nest in the cattle pasture that Elsie was worrying about last month did not get trampled and much to her delight the young fledged. They now follow the adult as they learn to search for food.

Cedar Waxwings are late nesters and at the time of writing (June 15) are still moving around in flocks. At least one pair have broken away and are nesting near Gladys Burt's home. Glen Hayes had an American Robin nesting on the frame of his basketball net. He kindly avoided using the net so the robins could raise their family in peace.

Winona Barker and Moreen Ready discovered a Red-headed Woodpecker near Clinton Halladay's home. Later on June 15 Dick and Mollie Ussher saw the bird in the same area. It is thought that

the woodpecker is one of the pair that nested there last year. With all the cold and rain, Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows seem to be having a difficult time this year raising young. Claire Mills' bluebirds had another problem, a House Sparrow that entered the nest box and killed the birds. The NLB checked the bluebird boxes put up by the school children on Cedar Valley Road and they discovered, among other things, 2 pairs of nesting bluebirds.

Dale Barnes saw what is thought to have been a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a melodious singer. The male bird often sings as he sits on the nest. Allan Balmer had a close look at a Common Snipe as it sat on a post near the road. As well, he and his wife Kay were fortunate to see a

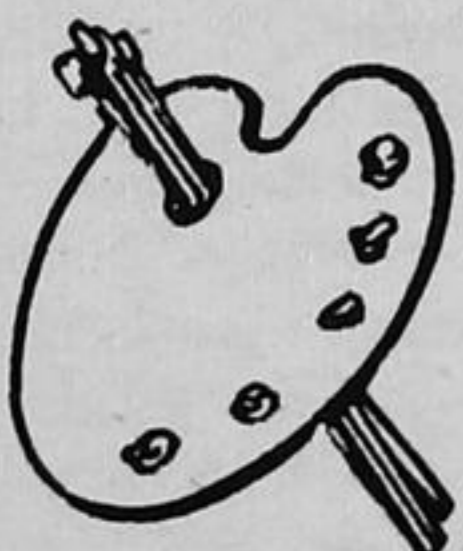
Loggerhead Shrike sitting on a wire by Highway 32. A Double-crested Cormorant surprised Bill Cutfield as it flew over him at Red Horse Lake. Black-billed Cuckoos, Scarlet Tanagers, Indigo Buntings, Virginia Rails, Upland Sandpipers and many other birds too numerous to mention have been seen.

By the time this is printed the birds will be fairly quiet as the nesting season will be nearly over. When you read this column next, fall migration will be underway.

The number to call with your sightings is 359-5178. Have a happy summer and until September

GOOD BIRDING!

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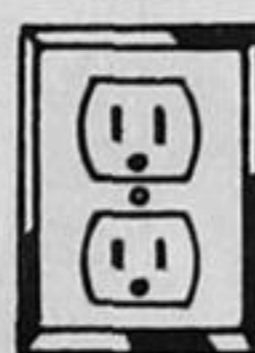
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