

POINT PELEE BIRDS — ANNUAL SUMMARY FOR 2011

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This 2011 summary pertains to the official Point Pelee Birding Area, which is a standard 15-mile diameter CBC circle centred slightly north of Concession Road D. The area includes all of Wheatley and Wheatley Provincial Park to the northeast, and all of Seacliff and Leamington to the northwest.

It was an excellent year at Point Pelee, with many significant sightings to report. A total of 290 species was found, which is well above the long-term annual average of 280.4 species dating back to 1980 inclusive (n = 32). Remarkably it was the second-highest total ever attained at Point Pelee, exceeded only by the 301 species that were found during the remarkable year of 2005. In contrast the lowest annual totals were tallied in both 1989 and 1984, when only 271 species were found in each of those years.

The following short list pertains to species that were *not* recorded at Point Pelee during 2011, but are normally somewhat regular in occurrence. For example, they typically occur at least two or three times during a 5-year period. If anyone is aware of any of these species being observed at Point Pelee during 2011, please send me the details.

Eurasian Wigeon
Black Vulture
King Rail
Purple Sandpiper
Sabine's Gull
Short-eared Owl — *first time not recorded since 1983*
Cave Swallow

Detailed below are some of the more significant observations that were made during 2011. There were, of course, many other sightings of note including early and late migration dates, unusual wintering and summering records, breeding records, record-high counts, etc., but these are too numerous to be detailed here.

Thanks to everyone who regularly provided their sightings to me throughout the year, even if they could not be included in this summary.

— UPDATES / CORRECTIONS TO PREVIOUS ANNUAL SUMMARIES —

Annual Summary for 2009 — *The Egret* 26 (1): 3-11

Little Blue Heron — delete the entry for May 4-5, since the record was not accepted by the OBRC; this deletion does not affect the species total for 2009.

Annual Summary for 2010 — *The Egret* 27 (1): 26-33

Eared Grebe — add the following: May 5, one, west side of Tip (Len A. Jones, Russ J.L. Jones); this increases the annual total to 283 species for 2010.

Lesser Black-backed Gull — change to “Intermediate” Lesser Black-backed Gull, which is the correct common name for subspecies *intermedius*. “Scandinavian” Lesser Black-backed Gull refers to the nominate subspecies *fuscus*, which has not been recorded at Point Pelee.

— ONTARIO RARITIES at POINT PELEE in 2011 —

Listed below are provincial rarities as designated by the Ontario Bird Records Committee (OBRC). The final status of these records await decisions by that body, at least for those sightings that were in fact documented and submitted to the OBRC for review.

Pacific Loon

May 9-11 — one immature, Pelee Drive to west side of Tip (Robert Z. Dobos *et al.*)

Neotropic Cormorant

April 24-27 — one adult, Muddy Creek (Brandon R. Holden *et al.*)

- this represents just the second record for Point Pelee, Ontario and Canada; the first occurred at the same location (!) on May 3-6, 2005.

Little Blue Heron

May 6 — one adult, Muddy Creek (Faye E. Allin, Lance E. Allin)

Glossy Ibis

May 19 — one alternate adult, Sturgeon Creek (T. Sobat *et al.*)

May 23 — two alternate adults, Hillman Marsh to Onion Fields (Blake A. Mann *et al.*)

unidentified Plegadis (dark) ibis

May 17 — one, Tip (M. Brown)

Mississippi Kite

May 24 — one first-year immature, west side of Tip (Garry T. Sadler, Linda J. Sadler)



Immature Pacific Loon at Point Pelee on May 9-11, 2011 — Rhondda M. James.



Adult Neotropic Cormorant at Muddy Creek on April 24-27, 2011 — Alan Wormington.

Swainson's Hawk

May 7 — one light-morph juvenile, over Visitor Centre (Peter S. Burke, Karl R. Konze, Alvaro P. Jaramillo *et al.*)

unidentified Selasphorus hummingbird

August 9-10 — one immature male, Sturgeon Creek (Bahij Macksoud)

- this bird at a hummingbird feeder is only the third *Selasphorus* to be recorded at Point Pelee; only one of these was specifically identified as Rufous Hummingbird.

Bell's Vireo

May 13 — one nominate *bellii*, Tip area (D. Henderson *et al.*)

- this represents the 10th record for Point Pelee.

Fish Crow

May 16 — two, Tip to West Beach (BRH, Eric W. Holden *et al.*)

May 17 — one, Wheatley Harbour (Dean J. Ware)

May 25 — one, Visitor Centre (Michael J. Nelson, Alan Wormington *et al.*)

Townsend's Solitaire

May 3 — one, NW Woodland Nature Trail (Linda J. Nuttall)

Kirtland's Warbler

May 6 — one first-year male, Post Woods to north of Visitor Centre (Martha L. Miller, Jack H. Alvo, Frances N. Alvo *et al.*)

May 8 — one definitive male, West Beach (Randal S. Heide, Karl T. Heide *et al.*)

May 10 — one female or first-year male, The Dunes to Sleepy Hollow (Robert J. Cermak *et al.*)

May 10 — one female, White Pine Picnic Area (many observers; finder not known)

May 11 — one, Concession Road E (A. Quenneville *et al.*)

May 13 — one female, Pioneer Beach (Ross Beatson, Andrea Beatson, Wendy J. Hunter *et al.*)

May 13 — one male, NW Hillman Marsh (Michel Striganuk, Chantale Ouellette *et al.*)

May 19 — one, Pioneer Picnic Area (John Beaumont, Bev Beaumont)

May 23 — one male (singing), Sanctuary Picnic Area (finders not known)

Lark Sparrow

May 2 — one, Northwest Beach (Cody R. Law, Thomas G. Thomas *et al.*)



First-year immature Mississippi Kite at the west side of the Tip on May 24, 2011 — Garry T. Sadler.



Juvenile Swainson's Hawk over the Visitor Centre on May 7, 2011 — Alvaro P. Jaramillo.



Bell's Vireo at the Tip on May 13, 2011 — Alan Wormington.



Fish Crow at the Visitor Centre on May 25, 2011 — Alan Wormington.

Henslow's Sparrow

May 7 — one, west side of Tip (Russ J.L. Jones, Shane D. Butnari)

May 14 — one, west side of Tip (MS *et al.*)

Western Tanager

May 21 — one female, flying south off Tip (Kenneth G.D. Burrell, BRH)

— ADDITIONAL RARITIES of NOTE (not OBRC) —

Greater White-fronted Goose

February 27 — one, Onion Fields (Richard P. Carr)

March 13 — one *frontalis* adult, Coterie Park (James T. Burk *et al.*)

Ross's Goose

March 18 — two white-morph adults, SW Hillman Marsh (AW)

March 18-20 — one white-morph adult, Concession Road E to Sanctuary Pond (AW *et al.*)

November 20 — three white-morph adults, flying east to west past Tip (AW)

Brant

October 3 — one immature, Wheatley Harbour (AW)

November 26 — one, Tip (RPC)

King Eider

April 9 — one (definitive) adult male, flying west to east past Tip (AW, RPC, Adam C. Pinch)

May 17 — one female, West Beach (Daniel R. Salisbury, John E. Black *et al.*)

November 13-15 — one immature male, Tip (AW, BAM, Marianne B. Reid, Stephen T. Pike *et al.*)

Red-necked Grebe

March 30 — one first-year immature, west side of Tip (AW, MBR)

November 13 — one, Lake Erie at NE Hillman Marsh (Kevin A. McLaughlin)

Eared Grebe

April 13 — one alternate adult, east side of Tip (Joshua D. Vandermeulen)

April 29–May 2 — one alternate adult, NW Hillman Marsh (MBR *et al.*)

American White Pelican

May 12 — seven, flying south over Sleepy Hollow (Sarah E. Rupert, Mark Robinson *et al.*)

Snowy Egret

April 24 — one, flying east over Pelee Marsh Boardwalk (JDV)

June 13 — one alternate adult, NW Hillman Marsh (DJW)

Cattle Egret

April 20 — one, NE Hillman Marsh (RJC)

American Avocet

April 26 — 27 alternate adults (flock), flying east to west past Tip (AW)

August 9 — one alternate adult, NE Leamington (Dwayne D. Murphy)

Red Phalarope

October 20 — one, flying west to east past Tip @ 8:55 a.m. (AW)

Black-legged Kittiwake

November 6 — one first-winter immature, west side of Tip (Cherise A. Charron)

December 1-4 — one first-winter immature, Concession Road D (AW *et al.*)

– this bird spent several days swimming around in a flooded soybean field!

December 19 — one first-winter immature, East Beach to Tip (Anna-Marie T. Cappelli, Albert Cappelli *et al.*)

December 27-29 — one first-winter immature, Sturgeon Creek Marina (RPC *et al.*)

– unfortunately this bird died, and the specimen is now at the Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto).



Immature Black-legged Kittiwake at the Tip on November 6, 2011 — Cherise A. Charron.



Immature Black-legged Kittiwake that was at Sturgeon Creek on December 27-29, 2011 — Alan Wormington.

Black-headed Gull

May 18 — one basic-plumaged adult, NW Hillman Marsh (Christopher H. Charlesworth *et al.*)

Laughing Gull

May 19 — one adult, Tip (Peter A. Read *et al.*)

Franklin's Gull

April 28 — one adult, fields @ Kopegaron Woods Conservation Area (Jerry S. Ball)

October 18 — one first-winter immature, Wheatley Harbour (AW)

November 19 — one first-winter immature, Coterie Park (JDV)

November 13–December 5 — one first-winter immature, Sturgeon Creek Marina (STP *et al.*)



Immature Franklin's Gull at Sturgeon Creek on November 13–December 5, 2011 — Alan Wormington.

Long-tailed Jaeger

October 13 — one intermediate-morph juvenile, flying W to E past Tip @ 9:05 a.m. (AW, KAM)

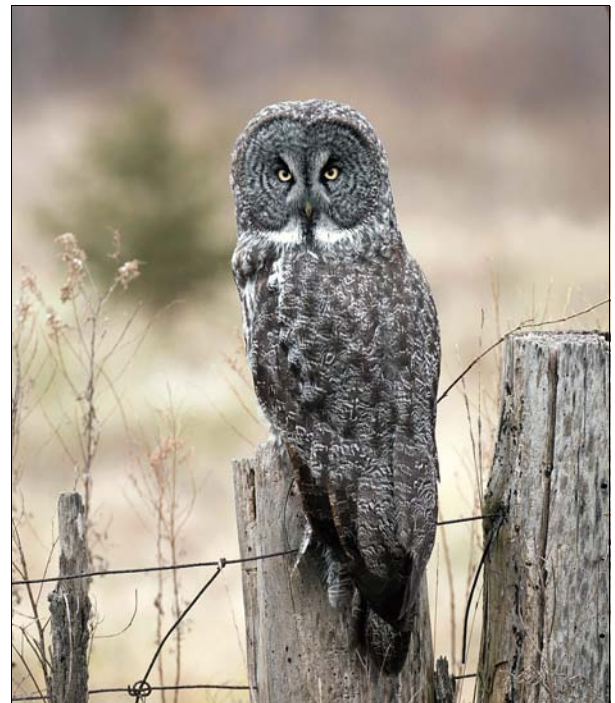
Snowy Owl

- There were multiple sightings at the Onion Fields, beginning with the first observation of one immature bird there December 4+ (RPC *et al.*). The maximum daily count was of five birds (4 immatures + 1 adult) on December 19 (AW *et al.*).

Great Gray Owl

December 7 — one, Concession Road E (Kenneth B. Cavanagh)

- A **NEW** species for Point Pelee — **#388**. The observer described this bird in detail, but photographer friends he met shortly after the encounter dismissed his sighting. What must have been the same Great Gray Owl — especially since no others were reported elsewhere in southern Ontario at the time — then appeared at two additional Essex County locations, both outside the Point Pelee Birding Area. The first was at Paquette Corners on December 21, where the bird was photographed (Al Lynch, Jenny Lynch). Then the bird backtracked to the west side of Kingsville, where it was present from December 23 to January 11, 2012 (Steve Branch *et al.*). Here it was enjoyed by thousands of observers, and its appearance was extensively covered by the media including a segment that appeared on the CBC National News with Peter Mansbridge.



The famous Great Gray Owl that was at Kingsville, pictured here on December 30, 2011 — Randy H. Holland.

Loggerhead Shrike

April 11 — one, Tip (AW)
September 17 — one, West Beach (Robert W. Stamp, Barry D. Jones, Richard G. Snider, James E. Heslop)
– these are the first Point Pelee records since 2006.

Common Raven

October 7 — one, flying south over DeLaurier Fields @ 12:50 p.m. (AW, MBR)
– this is only the third modern-day record of Common Raven for Point Pelee; the others were present on October 23, 1965 and October 4-11, 1970.



Loggerhead Shrike at the Tip on April 11, 2011 — Alan Wormington.

“Yellow” Palm Warbler (subspecies *hypochrysea*)

April 24 — one, east side of Tip (Paul D. Pratt)
May 8 — one, NW Hillman Marsh (STP, Justen Dralle, Zoe Brocklehurst)
October 29 — one immature, Concession Road E (AW)

Yellow-throated Warbler

April 23 — one *albilora* male, Post Woods (Ian M. Richards, Sandra Bateman *et al.*)
April 30 — one, NE Woodland Nature Trail (many observers; finder not known)
May 8 — one, Sanctuary Picnic Area (many observers; finder not known)
May 8 — one *albilora*, Sturgeon Creek (Jean H. Iron *et al.*)
May 8 — one, W of Visitor Centre (Mark W. Hubinger, Joanne A. Hubinger, Thomas A. Hanrahan)
May 8-10 — one, NE Woodland Nature Trail (many observers; finder not known)
May 11 — one, Tip (Michael McAllister)
May 23 — one male (singing), S of White Pine (Jeffrey H. Skevington, Richard P. Skevington *et al.*)

Le Conte’s Sparrow

April 27 — one, west side of Tip (Malcolm P. McAlpine)
May 1 — one, NE Tilden’s Woods (J. Michael Tate *et al.*)
May 21 — one, west side of Tip (J. Brett Fried, Erika K. Hentsch)
October 22-23 — one, Sparrow Field (STP *et al.*)



Le Conte’s Sparrow at the Sparrow Field on October 22-23, 2011 — Alan Wormington.

Dickcissel

May 6 — one male (singing), NW Woodland Nature Trail (KRK *et al.*)

May 11 — one, Sturgeon Creek (many observers; finder not known)

May 12 — one, flying over Tip (JBF)

May 16 — one, Tip (Alvan D. Buckley, PAR *et al.*)

May 19 — one, flying over west side of Tip (JDV)

May 22 — one, flying south off Tip @ 7:00 a.m. (BRH, KGDB)

May 22 — one, flying south off Tip @ 9:00 a.m. (BRH, KGDB, JHS)

May 25 — one, flying south off Tip (AW)

July 17-28 — two territorial males + one or more females, Onion Fields (AW *et al.*)

- on July 24 a female was observed carrying food into a thicket, presumably to a nest; these are the first summering (breeding) birds at Point Pelee since 2006.

October 14 — one immature, west side of Tip (KAM).

Western Meadowlark

May 1 — one, west side of Tip (AW *et al.*)

Yellow-headed Blackbird

May 8 — one, south of Northwest Beach (unknown observers)

May 15 — one female, SE Hillman Marsh (Michael A. Savino, Debra K. Savino)

June 6 — one male, Pelee Marsh Boardwalk (SER)

White-winged Crossbill

November 4 — one, flying south over DeLaurier Parking Area (AW)

December 12 — six, NW Leamington @ Ponds RV Park (AW)

December 19 — 20, Wheatley Provincial Park (Ann White, Ian C. Platt)

Common Redpoll

March 19 — one, DeLaurier Parking Area (BAM)

April 16 — one male, Post Woods @ main park road (AW)

Evening Grosbeak

May 16 — two, Tip (MB)

- what was presumably one of these birds was seen the following day, at the Visitor Centre.



Female Yellow-headed Blackbird at SE Hillman Marsh on May 15, 2011 — Debra K. Savino.

— SIGNIFICANT MIGRATION DATES —

With a history of bird study dating back to 1877, it seems remarkable that *any* new record-early or record-late date could be established at Point Pelee. Yet every year we continue to push the biological limits of these migration categories, even though the number of listings is slowly declining.

RECORD-EARLY SPRING:

Pacific Loon — one immature on May 9-11 (RZD *et al.*) — 4 days record-early

Snowy Egret — one on April 24 (JDV) — 1 day record-early

Ruddy Turnstone — one on April 29–May 1 (MBR *et al.*) — ties record-early

Eastern Kingbird — one on April 11 (AW) — 9 days record-early

Mourning Warbler — one male on May 2 at Visitor Centre (SER) — 1 day record-early

Mourning Warbler — one male on May 2-3 at Tilden's Woods (G. Tom Hince *et al.*) — 1 day record-early

Kirtland's Warbler — one first-year male on May 6 (MLM, JHA, FNA *et al.*) — 1 day record-early

Yellow-breasted Chat — one on April 22 (Margaret Murray, Amanda Smith) — 2 days record-early

RECORD-LATE SPRING:

Greater Scaup — two males on June 3-11 (AW) — 2 days record-late

Black Scoter — two (pair) on May 23 (AW) — 1 day record-late

Whimbrel — one on June 13 at NW Hillman Marsh (CAC *et al.*) — 4 days record-late

– one on June 11 at Wheatley Harbour (AW) might have been the same bird.

Clay-colored Sparrow — one male on May 28-29 (CAC *et al.*) — 5 days record-late

RECORD-EARLY FALL:

Brant — one immature on October 3 (AW) — 8 days record-early

Golden Eagle — one juvenile on September 24 (BAM) — ties record early

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher — one July 22 at Sparrow Field (AW, Robert M. Epstein) — ties record early

– relatively few pairs have nested within Point Pelee National Park during the past few years, and during 2011 none were apparently present in the Tip area; the species is known as a very early fall migrant.

RECORD-LATE FALL:

Black-legged Kittiwake — one immature on December 27-29 (RPC *et al.*) — 7 days record-late

Bobolink — one immature on November 8 (AW) — 6 days record-late

The Birds of Point Pelee

Point Pelee bird sightings (both current and historical) can be sent to:

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The Point Pelee database is used for multiple purposes: Annual Summaries (such as this current one for 2011); seasonal sightings that are published in *North American Birds*; and for a major publication which is currently in progress — *The Birds of Point Pelee*.