



**CANADA: POINT PELEE, NIAGARA FALLS, AND  
ALGONQUIN – BOREAL BIRDS AND MAMMALS**

**5 – 16 MAY 2020**



**Blackburnian Warbler** is one of the many warbler species we should encounter on this trip

Point Pelee must be the most famous site in North America for the spring migration of songbirds, including 35 wood warbler species as well as brightly-colored tanagers, orioles, and many others. Across the border in Ohio, USA, the “Biggest Week in American Birding” at the Black Swamp Bird Observatory is impressive to say the least, but the Canadian side here at Point Pelee is just as good, if not even better. On the American side the birds fatten up and wait for the right weather conditions before crossing Lake Erie into Canada. On arrival they are wary and hungry. The warblers are spectacularly colorful – **Blackburnian Warbler**, **Chestnut-sided Warbler**, **Magnolia Warbler**, the very unique **Black-throated Blue Warbler**, and a host of others always entertain us. Also we always try to pick out the rare ones, including the rarest of all, the highly sought-after **Kirtland’s Warbler**. A “fallout” is always hoped for, which makes the already spectacular migration event even more exciting! We also spend time at Algonquin Park, seeking Boreal specials in the form of **Black-backed Woodpecker**, **Spruce Grouse**, **Boreal Chickadee**, and other desirables.

We’ll also have time for a few other sites, where we may find waterbirds, **Bobolink**, and many others, along with otter, moose, and other mammals. Even wolf is possible on this tour, although it needs a large amount of luck.

### Itinerary (12 days/11 nights)

#### Day 1: Arrival in Toronto

Your flight arrives in Toronto, and in the evening we all plan to meet to discuss the tour.

Overnight: Toronto

#### Day 2: Toronto to Lake Ontario onto Lake Erie and Point Pelee

We hope to already start seeing some of the more common **Warblers**, such as the spectacular **Blackburnian**, the equally beautiful but absolutely different **Chestnut-sided**, and the plainer (more “subtly beautiful”) **Nashville**.

Lake Ontario might hold **Long-tailed Duck**, **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Red-necked Grebe**, and others.

After breakfast and birding we’ll drive to the incredible Niagara/Horseshoe Falls, which we won’t ignore, but we’ll certainly also search for some quality birds as well. **Northern Cardinal**, **Blue Jay**, and **Red-bellied Woodpecker** are usually easy to find, but **Tufted Titmouse** requires some effort to see. **Fish Crow** and **Black Vulture** may also be seen here, both are now permanent residents in the area.

Overnight: Pelee

#### Days 3 - 5: Birding the world-famous Point Pelee

We always hope for a fallout, which brings even greater birding excitement than usual! But even a steady breeze from the USA side of Lake Erie to our side probably means that the next “batch” of migrants is about to appear. A fallout often occurs when poor, confused, tired, and hungry birds arrive on the Canadian side at the same time that a storm or front sets in overnight. The tiny land area of Point Pelee then gets flooded with large numbers of birds, which are very easily observed by birders. Although one can feel sorry for the birds, photographic opportunities are brilliant, and this is also a good opportunity to look at and photograph rarities. There is little more exciting in the birding world than when large numbers of birders hear about a **Kirtland’s Warbler** at Point Pelee – the atmosphere is electric, and the tension is high until everyone has seen it.

We won’t spend all our time on warblers – there are also good numbers of shorebirds, **Bald Eagles**, terns, and many others to look at. Hillman Marsh Provincial Park will also be visited,

which often harbors migrant shorebirds such as **American Avocet**, **Marbled Godwit**, and **Willet**, which are regular vagrants to the marsh.

Overnight Leamington for two nights, then Ridgeway for one night

### Day 6: Birding Rondeau

Rondeau Provincial Park is actually considered to be as good as Point Pelee by many a discerning birder. **Prothonotary Warbler** is one of the main targets here, but we'll also look for the beautiful **Baltimore Oriole**, **Red-headed Woodpecker**, and **Wood Thrush**. And, with luck, rarer migrants sometimes also pitch up here. These have even included species like **Swallow-tailed Kite**, **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher**, various **Warblers** such as **Worm-eating** and **Kentucky**, and also **Blue Grosbeak**.

We will also bird the nearby Blenheim's Sewage Treatment Plant, which is a hotspot for migrant shorebirds as well as all five eastern swallows and **Purple Martin**. From here we continue our journey east toward Long Point, where we will be spending the next two days.

Overnight: Simcoe

### Days 7 - 8: Birding the Long Point area

North America's oldest bird observatory (see <http://www.birdscanada.org/longpoint/>) finds its home here, which is of course no coincidence: This is one of the top sites for migration. We often use the help of volunteers at the bird observatory, who provide us with current gen regarding the whereabouts of some of our more difficult targets. There are a great many species we'll be looking for, including **Blue-winged**, **Cerulean**, and **Hooded Warblers**, the stunning **Scarlet Tanager**, **Louisiana Waterthrush** (with luck), **Great Crested Flycatcher**, **Yellow-throated Vireo**, **Blue-grey Gnatcatcher**, **Carolina Wren**, **Eastern Kingbird**, **Least Bittern**, and various ducks in the bay. If conditions are right we will visit the Old Cut Field Station to see what migrants may have pitched up overnight. Big Creek Marsh will also be visited. Here we will be targeting **Least Bittern** and **King Rail** as well as a host of other waterbird species.

After our second morning of birding we'll pack up and head north.

Overnight: Orillia

### Day 9: Birding the Carden Plain

We continue northwards to the nesting areas of many of the species we will have seen on migration. The limestone, thin soils here are not conducive to agriculture, meaning that the natural vegetation is left around the Carden Plain. This makes it a great area for many good birds, such as a host of **Sparrows**, including **Savannah**, **Vesper**, **Field**, and **Grasshopper**. **Golden-winged Warbler** is quite possible, and the stunning **Eastern Meadowlark** and beautiful **Eastern Bluebird** are often encountered. **Upland Sandpiper**, **American Bittern**, both **Marsh Wren** and **Sedge Wren**, **Western Osprey**, **Northern Harrier**, **Bobolink**, **Loggerhead Shrike** (an Endangered [ESA] subspecies), and **Eastern Kingbird** will also be looked for.

Overnight: Dwight

### Days 10 - 11: Birding Algonquin Provincial Park

This is one of the best places for wildlife in Canada! Habitats are very varied, as large tracts of broad-leafed forests more typical of the south encroach on the more typical Canadian habitats (e.g. Boreal forest and moss-filled bogs) here. Warblers abound and can include **Canada Warbler** and **Northern Parula**. **Purple Finch**, **Hermit Thrush** with its wonderful song, **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, and **Blue-headed Vireo** often put in an appearance here. **Spruce Grouse** is one of the main targets, but we might also see **Ruffed Grouse**. Displaying

**American Woodcock** is almost always seen. The sought-after **Black-backed Woodpecker** and **Boreal Chickadee** also lurk here. The humungous **Pileated Woodpecker**, **Two-barred Crossbill**, and **Red Crossbill** are also often seen (the crossbills are nomadic, irruptive, and unpredictable, though).

As if the birds were not good enough, mammals are absolutely fantastic here. The main problem is that many of them are quite elusive, but things like wolf, pine marten, river otter, black bear, and red fox might be seen. Moose is less elusive, thankfully.

Overnight: Dwight for one night and then Toronto for the last night

### Day 12: Flights leave Toronto

You are welcome to book a flight home from Toronto for any time today.

*Please note that the itinerary might change due to various factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information, road or weather conditions. The itinerary above is therefore only a guide and cannot be guaranteed.*

<b>Duration:</b>	12 days
<b>Limit:</b>	4 - 12 (We have a higher limit for this than for most tours.)
<b>Date:</b>	5 – 16 May 2020
<b>Start:</b>	Toronto
<b>End:</b>	Toronto
<b>Price:</b>	TBA, plus 13% Harmonized Sales Tax for Canadians, 6.5% for non-Canadians
<b>Single supplement:</b>	TBA

### Price includes:

All accommodation while on tour  
 Breakfasts and lunches  
 Bottled water  
 Private transportation  
 Guide (1 guide for 4 – 8 participants, 2 guides for 9 – 12 participants)  
 Park entrance fees  
 Guiding fees

### Price excludes:

Flights to and from Toronto  
 Evening meals  
 Insurance  
 Visa  
 Drinks  
 Tips and items of a personal nature (such as gifts and laundry)