

# Looking for Warblers + Plus

*A report written by Jim Atack about a May 25, 2016 MVFN outing to the Westport area. Participants: Peter Blancher, Howard Robinson, Mary Robinson, Cecil DuBois, Ed Rohr, Blanche Gauthier, Michel Gauthier, Karen Thompson, Bruce Thompson, and Jim Atack (Organizer).*

First let me apologize. The bird lists were kept by our experts, Peter Blancher and Mary with Howard Robinson. I am far from an expert, but I have hung out with some excellent birders so I know some very good places for birding. I was also having some problems with my new binoculars and I have hearing problems, thus I did not see or hear much of what I am reporting. However, I did listen to what the others were talking about and from this and the birding lists I have done my best to reconstruct what was seen and heard where. This is intended as a work of non-fiction but if it wanders away from the mark, blame my memory.

The trip began in Almonte at 8:00 in the morning, with car-pooling into the Robinson's car and mine. Then we drove to the Beer Store parking lot in Westport to meet Karen and Bruce and pick up Peter and Ed. From there we went out the Westport-Godfrey Road towards Wolfe Lake, Fermoy and Canoe Lake Road. Along the way to the lake Bobolinks and a Meadowlark were seen together with Grackles, Turkey Vultures, Barn Swallows, Rock Pigeons and Crows. Our first stop was at Wolfe Lake where we were looking for Tree Swallows and Rough-winged. Every other time I stopped here we saw lots of Tree Swallows and at least one Rough-winged, although the very last time we almost missed the Rough-winged until just as we were getting into the cars to leave, I noticed a bird that had been sitting in a tree at the edge of the lake watching us all the while we were looking for it. This time was ominous for there were no swallows to be seen. Nonetheless we wandered along the road looking for, but mainly hearing, a Purple Finch, Indigo Buntings, a Pine Warbler, Robins, Great Crested Flycatchers, a Savannah Sparrow, Baltimore Orioles, Red-eyed Vireos, an Eastern Phoebe and a Goldfinch. As we left Wolfe Lake a Common Loon, a couple of Herring Gulls, a Red-tailed Hawk and a large number of Red-winged Blackbirds could be seen.

We went on to Fermoy and then started down Canoe Lake Road, making two stops near the north end of Canoe Lake. At the first stop, a sighting of three Golden-winged warblers and two Baltimore Orioles drew the most attention although a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Two Northern Flickers, a Great Crested Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, some Red-eyed Vireos, a Blue Jay, an American Crow, A Black-Capped Chickadee, some Robins, two Ovenbirds, a Black-and-White Warbler, a Brown Thrasher, several Common Yellowthroats, an American Redstart a Chestnut-side Warbler, three Song Sparrows, an Eastern Towhee, an Indigo Bunting and a Grackle could all be heard, and we did see an Eastern Kingbird. As we prepared to drive down the road towards the Hahn Farm, a Common Loon, an Osprey, a Belted Kingfisher, some Red-winged Blackbirds and – I almost forgot- a lone Ruby-throated Hummingbird were seen.

I have visited the Hahn Farm many times but always to buy Maple Syrup. When I talked to David on the phone about us coming in to look around he said he had a nice trail through the property and mentioned some of the interesting birds that had been found there, and so I allowed for a half hour stop there in my planning. When we got there he welcomed us all, told us the trail was 1.6 kilometers long and ended at a little private lake.

David had to go back to working alongside a crew working on one of his buildings and so we set off along the road/trail to explore on our own. Along the way most of the birds were in hiding in the canopy but they were not quiet. While a Turkey Vulture and a Red-shouldered Hawk flew overhead, an Eastern Phoebe, a Pileated Woodpecker, Great Crested Flycatchers, two Yellow-throated Vireos, three Warbling Vireos, nine Red-eyed Vireos, a Blue Jay, a Wood Thrush, Ovenbirds, a Common Yellowthroat, an American Redstart, a Grackle, a Chipping Sparrow, a Baltimore Oriole and an Eastern Wood-Pewee serenaded us along the way through the woods and by the ponds. As we got to the lake we were greeted with the sight of a small flock composed of several Tennessee and several Blackpoll Warblers. They moved together in the big trees. While

watching, the sounds of a Magnolia Warbler, a couple of Cerulean Warblers, and a Bay-Breasted Warbler could be heard. Also, a few Red-winged blackbirds were seen along the way and, at one of the ponds, a Blue Heron, and, at the lake, a Canada Goose. Although we hated to leave such a beautiful setting, we realized we were going to be late for our reservation at the Cove in Westport, so we had to rush back to where the cars were parked. When we got back there we treated to the sight of an Indigo Bunting in plain view and a Scarlet Tanager. I found out we were out of cell-phone range so I had to head off quickly to go back along the road and find somewhere I could contact the Cove and warn that we were behind schedule, leaving the others to follow and look down one trail for Waterthrushes that were not there.

After a delightful lunch break at the Cove, Karen and Bruce left us to carry on with their camping holiday and we proceeded up the Maberly Road to the Porter Road. This is a special place for birding because it curves around a large area of wetlands. This time it seemed to me to be somewhat disappointing, until I looked at the number of species heard and/or seen- 44. We made many stops along the way to the end of the road and back. For many of the stops, the drivers went back and brought the two cars on ahead of the walkers so that they could peer and hear what was in the woods and the wetlands. This allowed those with sharp ears to hear many species and see a few: a Wilson's Snipe, a Northern Flicker, a couple of Eastern Phoebes, several Great Crested Flycatchers and several Eastern Kingbirds, Blue Jays, Crows, a Black-capped Chickadee and a White Breasted Nuthatch, a Wood Thrush, many Robins, a two Gray Catbirds, an American Redstart, many, many Yellow Warblers, a couple of Chestnut-sided Warblers, a Pine Warbler, White-throated, Song and Swamp Sparrows, a couple of Towhees, two Common Yellowthroats, a Scarlet Tanager, five Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, many Grackles, a couple of Orioles, an American Goldfinch and, of course, Ovenbirds. In the open water of the wetlands, it was possible to see a Wood Duck, a Pied-billed Grebe and some Canada Geese and in the reeded areas Red-winged Blackbirds, but a Virginia Rail was most elusive: close enough to the road that one might have seen him without binoculars, but even with all of us trying with binoculars from different angles, all we could do was listen to him railing and railing.

Where the township road ends, a soggy logging road carries on through a different type of wetland, covered with Water Arum and shrubbery. This trail added many species to our list, a Northern Waterthrush being the most notable. If we had had more time to go further along the trail it we would probably have found many more, but we had to start back. The turnaround where we had parked the cars proved to be very productive and we added an Alder Flycatcher, Warbling Vireos, a Red-eyed Vireo and a half dozen Veeries to our list. Working our way back we startled a large family of Canada Geese with young ones and goslings striding along the roadside. They turned around and headed back to the shore and then on the water back out to safety. When we came to the intersection where a road goes off down a steep hill to the north shore of Wolfe Lake, two Great Blue Herons flew overhead along with a pair of Turkey Vultures and a Red-tailed Hawk. Our almost final stop was beside an old farm where, among others, we added Barn Swallows, an Eastern Bluebird and a Starling to our sightings. The owner came out and greeted us. She was very proud that the farm was organic and had been pesticide free for over 50 years – the reason, she felt, there were so many interesting species around. She said there was a pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers nesting in her old barn. At that point in time we could see a small bird in the distance perched on a wire. She said it was the Gnatcatcher but it was too small and too far away to make a positive identification so we could not add it to our list. As we watched it flew off towards and possibly into, the old barn. Next time we come here we will have to allow more time and seek the owner's permission to go into her fields where I am sure there would be many unusual species.

Another stop brought us back to the main road and the end of our tour. We headed back to Almonte and Clayton, arriving around 5:30. All in all, we saw and/or heard 71 different species, not a bad result for a day spent hiking and birding!