

BAILLIE BIRDATHON RESULTS

Date: Friday, May 22, 2009 4:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Number of Species: 125

Team members: Terry Sprague, Borys Holowacz, Cathy Felkar, Mike Burge

I had already made up my mind that this year's Birdathon would not be the marathon that it was last year, and that we would simply do the best we could in the time that we could afford to spend on the endeavour. Having delivered a presentation in Kingston the previous night, I was content to start birding at 4:00 a.m., and basically end when I started dozing off later in the day! It was an optimistic beginning when a black-billed cuckoo started singing in my own yard, followed by the bugle calls of our sandhill crane two fields away and an American bittern in one of the same fields as we started on our way.

Our first major stop was Kaiser Crossroad where our arrival coincided that day with a major influx of dunlins in eastern Ontario. We found 130 feeding in the flooded fields, where we also added both lesser and greater yellowlegs, Baird's sandpiper, black-bellied plover, semiplumbeated plover, semipalmated sandpiper, least sandpiper and short-billed dowitcher to our growing list. Canada goose, Gadwall, blue-winged teal, wood duck, American wigeon and mallard were present, and lesser scaup, white-winged scoter, both common and red-breasted merganser and four late buffleheads were present in Lake Ontario at the end of Kaiser. Long-tailed ducks were thoughtfully lingering for us at Point Traverse and subsequently added to our list before they moved on north.

In the Point Traverse Woods, we were able to start building up our list of warblers and vireo species for the day, but missed the white-eyed vireo and golden-winged warbler seen by another team the same morning. This was not a competition, we reminded ourselves. Scarlet tanagers were present here as were a whole herd of Swainson's thrushes.

We had to wait only three minutes for two red-headed woodpeckers to arrive at their nesting site at Sandbanks. A pileated woodpecker was seen by our driver, who made a six-point turn in the narrow road in an attempt to re-locate it, the woodpecker thoughtfully spending some time on another tree before it flew off across the field.

Here and there we picked up new species - purple martins at our house, clay-colored sparrows singing along Gorsline Road, red-breasted nuthatches at Victoria Road and Prince Edward Point (more dunlin there too !) vesper sparrow singing along Whattam's Road where we also stopped to watch a cruising northern harrier, one of four hawks species tallied during the day. There was an osprey near an osprey platform of all things along County Road 8, house finches at Fry Road (but no eastern bluebird where it has been faithfully every day), pied-billed grebe calling in the Big Island Marsh. And so it went all day with a single sora calling for us at Kaiser Crossroad, hairy woodpecker at a feeder, ovenbirds at Macaulay Mountain, indigo bunting at Point Traverse, black tern at East Lake, and a pine siskin at a Victoria Road feeder.

We finished the day with "refreshments" at the Waring House Barley Room Pub where a couple of us celebrated with a meal of pan seared calve's liver prepared with onions, mushrooms and Madeira wine demi-glaze ! It's sort of a tradition with me to celebrate momentous occasions with liver at a restaurant, as my wife doesn't like to prepare it.

Thank you to everyone who cooperated in this venture, especially to my cohorts, the staff at Waring House who tolerated our celebratory laughter, and especially to all of you who sponsored me in this endeavour. Some donations have yet to arrive, but is expected to exceed \$1,400. This revenue will go a long way in supporting the efforts of the Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory.

Terry Sprague