

## Point Traverse Daily Guided Walk Reports 2010 by Terry Sprague

**Saturday, May 08:** Despite predicted gale force winds and horizontal rain, this morning in the Point Traverse Woods at Prince Edward Point where daily 8:00 a.m. guided bird walks are taking place, started out under relatively calm conditions and misty rain. Twelve species of warblers were present with NORTHERN PARULA, YELLOW, YELLOW-RUMPED, BLACK-THROATED GREEN and BLACK-AND-WHITE being the most common. Other birds in the total of 49 species seen in the Point Traverse Woods included BLUE-HEADED VIREO, WILLOW FLYCATCHER, WOOD THRUSH and VEERY. By 10:00 a.m., winds had picked up significantly with the clearing skies, but birding was still good in a few rare protected areas where pockets of warblers could be found. Out in Prince Edward Bay where an Essroc Cement boat had wisely decided to seek shelter from the increasing winds, a scattering of LONG-TAILED DUCKS could be seen in amongst the rollers, and two pairs of COMMON MERGANSERS, caught up in a fierce tail wind shot past us like bullets.

**Sunday, May 09:** Windy conditions, heavy cloud cover, three degrees and a few flakes of snow greeted birders this morning at Prince Edward Point. Not surprisingly, only a handful of warblers showed themselves for this morning's 8:00 a.m. guided walk, including BLACK-AND WHITE, CHESTNUT-SIDED, YELLOW, NASHVILLE, BLACKBURNIAN, YELLOW-RUMPED, and BLACK-THROATED BLUE being the only warbler species tallied, along with WOOD THRUSH, GRAY CATBIRD, EASTERN TOWHEE and BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, to name just a handful of other species that showed themselves in the brisk temperatures. Other observers at the Point found SCARLET TANAGER, BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER, RED-HEADED WOODPECKER and SOLITARY SANDPIPER. The six HARLEQUIN DUCKS continue to hang out around the lighthouse. With each new day, there's fresh hope, as temperatures begin to climb. An ICELAND GULL was also present today at Prince Edward Point.

**Monday, May 10:** It's not often you get to have lunch beside 5 HARLEQUIN DUCKS while an adult GOLDEN EAGLE circles high overhead. The five HARLEQUIN DUCKS are still at Prince Edward Point for the 19th day and delighted many observers by remaining close to shore, and even clambering on the rocky shore itself. By 7:00 p.m., the HARLEQUINS had moved to the Point Traverse shoreline. The third day of the Prince Edward County Birding Festival, although a bit windy in the afternoon, fared a bit better today under sunny skies and warmer temperatures with 13 species of warblers present. Still a bit slow, but producing between 15 and 20 NORTHERN PARULAS and almost as many CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLERS. OVENBIRD, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, PALM WARBLER, NASHVILLE WARBLER, MAGNOLIA WARBLER and NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH were among some of the others seen.

**Tuesday, May 11:** The 5 HARLEQUIN DUCKS are still present as a bonus to those enjoying the Birding Festival this spring, and can be found most days along the shoreline between the lighthouse and Point Traverse. The 8:00 a.m. guided hike this morning in the Point Traverse Woods yielded several NORTHERN PARULAS, BLACK-AND-WHITE, BLACK-THROATED BLUE, BLACK-THROATED GREEN, and lots of YELLOW-RUMPED and YELLOW WARBLERS. Other observers reported AMERICAN REDSTARTS, GOLDEN-WINGED and BAY-BREASTED WARBLER, SCARLET Tanager, and RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD. Also seen were VEERY, RED-EYED VIREO, many ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS, EASTERN TOWHEE, RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS and LONG-TAILED DUCKS. The Point Traverse Woods area is located just prior to the sharp 90-degree corner, 1/2 km from the banding station and contains a network of groomed trails and benches. Access is from the corner or across from the outdoor privy at the roadside farther west. Still not a lot of activity for the binocular brigade, but hopefully this will change before week's end.

**Wednesday, May 12:** After some 21 days, the five HARLEQUIN DUCKS are showing no signs of moving on. In fact, today there were two males and five females near the banding station, and by 4:00 p.m. this afternoon, their numbers had burgeoned to an incredible nine, comprising six females and three males! I think this now constitutes a raft of HARLEQUINS! Except for the HARLEQUINS, the birding continues to be so poor at Prince Edward Point this week that even the resident sharp-shinned hawk has lost interest in the few migrants that are present. Today, there were 13 species of warblers present, with singles of NORTHERN PARULA, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, CHESTNUT-SIDED, BLACK-THROATED GREEN, YELLOW-RUMPED and a TENNESSEE being among the species tallied on the 8:00 a.m. hike. A GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER was present at 7:30 this morning just west of the Point Traverse Trails. WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS continue to be well distributed throughout the area, and scattered numbers of LONG-TAILED DUCKS are still present on Prince Edward Bay. At Kaiser Crossroad, SEMIPALMATED PLOVERS and PECTORAL SANDPIPERS were present.

**Thursday, May 13:** If this morning's guided walk in the Point Traverse Woods is any indication, things are looking really good for the last three days of this year's Birding Festival. Predictions are for a deluge of birds on the weekend with the forecasted southerly winds and higher temperatures. It will make a great finish to the celebrations that have so far been hampered by wind, rain, snow flakes and cool temperatures. The list today on the 8:00 a.m. hike was much better than yesterday, boasting some respectable numbers of migrants including BLACKBURNIAN, AMERICAN REDSTART, NORTHERN PARULA, OVENBIRDS, lots of YELLOW-RUMPED and YELLOW WARBLERS, BLACK-AND-WHITE and both BLACK-THROATED GREEN and BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLERS. A special treat was a BLUE-WINGED WARBLER and a YELLOW-THROATED VIREO. BALTIMORE ORIOLES, ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS, GRAY CATBIRDS, FIELD SPARROWS and HOUSE WRENS were in fine fettle as rare sunshine caused them to burst into song. EASTERN TOWHEES and BROWN THRASHER were at their appointed spots along the route, and a BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER was also seen. Those choosing not to take part in the guided hike, travelled a half kilometre more to the banding station where the HARLEQUIN DUCKS, now numbering nine in total, continue to delight visitors.

**Friday, May 14:** This was the day that birders dream about. Light south winds and a rainy evening dumped huge numbers of migrants at Prince Edward Point today. Bird banders were scurrying around trying to keep up, while in the Point Traverse Woods birders there were quite content right where they were. Eighty-two species of birds were tallied in and from this relatively small woods, among them 18 species of warblers. Very few of the warbler species were in numbers fewer than 25-30. Among the most common were NORTHERN PARULA, CHESTNUT-SIDED, BAY-BREASTED, YELLOW-RUMPED, AMERICAN REDSTART, YELLOW, BLACK-THROATED GREEN and BLACK-THROATED BLUE. Also present in lesser numbers were TENNESSEE, NASHVILLE, MAGNOLIA, BLACKBURNIAN, PALM and COMMON YELLOWTHROAT. OVENBIRDS were so numerous that many walked along horizontal branches beside us while calling repeatedly, and another was singing in inappropriate habitat across the road in a red cedar savanna. CERULEAN and GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER were reported by other observers. Other good birds during this morning's 8:00 a.m. guided walk included several SCARLET TANAGERS, INDIGO BUNTING, WOOD THRUSH, VEERY, RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER, WOOD PEWEE, several LEAST FLYCATCHERS, and GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER. In the distance, a COMMON RAVEN called several times. A LARK SPARROW was seen by other observers along Babylon Road early this morning.

**Saturday, May 15:** One of the first birds seen today on our 8:00 a.m. bird walk in the Point Traverse Woods was a first year male SUMMER TANAGER. And then it just got better after that ! While overall numbers of singing birds was not the absolute din it was yesterday morning at this time, the variety was excellent with 21 species of warblers seen on the walk and also reported by other birders in the area. Parking was at a premium this morning in this remote corner of Prince Edward County as birders tried for a repeat of yesterday. Among the warblers seen and reported from the Point Traverse wooded trails were both BLUE-WINGED and GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER, CERULEAN WARBLER, NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, BAY-BREASTED and CAPE MAY WARBLERS, but seemingly fewer numbers of OVENBIRDS, and NORTHERN PARULAS than what we encountered yesterday. Most birds were at the west end of the trail system where it was possible to stand in one spot with checklist in hand and just keep checking them off as they appeared. EASTERN TOWHEE, ORCHARD and BALTIMORE ORIOLES, SCARLET TANAGERS, and numerous Empidonax flycatchers were tallied as well as four species of vireo - WARBLING, RED-EYED, PHILADELPHIA and BLUE-HEADED. WILD TURKEY and RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER were two other species that were spotted by the plethora of birders this morning. The HARLEQUIN DUCKS, a bit boring by now, were last seen Friday. A HOODED WARBLER turned up this afternoon near the P.E. Pt. lighthouse.

**Sunday, May 16:** Today was the last day of the Prince Edward County Birding Festival and while the summer tanager was nowhere to be seen today, there were plenty of other birds to keep everyone happy today. Twenty-three species of warblers were tallied in the Point Traverse Woods and at the banding station, not quite reaching Friday's combined incredible high of 27 warbler species. Present today on the 8:00 a.m. guided walk were NORTHERN PARULA, GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER, TENNESSEE WARBLERS, CAPE MAY and BAY-BREASTED WARBLERS, BLACK-THROATED GREEN and BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLERS and AMERICAN REDSTARTS highlighting the most numerous species. A single BLACKPOLL WARBLER and another CERULEAN WARBLER turned up as well. INDIGO BUNTING, WOOD THRUSH, BLUE-HEADED VIREO and numerous WARBLING and RED-EYED VIREOS were also tallied. COMMON LOON and a scattering of LONG-TAILED DUCKS were present, but the HARLEQUIN DUCKS were last seen on Friday after a grand finale of no fewer than 9 individuals. However, an incoming e-mail confirmed that they had now moved to the rocky cliffs of Point Traverse and were seen there at 4:00 p.m. Our thanks to everyone from Toronto, Ottawa, Barrie, Haliburton, Peterborough, Hamilton, Tweed and Quebec, just to name a few of the place names that cropped up in conversation who supported the event this spring by their attendance. Nearly 80 birders joined us on the morning walks and hundreds of others were present who birded on their own. Although the Festival is over, the birding continues as long as there are birds present to find. The well worn trails are still available to the public and the benches will remain in the Point Traverse Woods until the first of June. Bird banding continues at the Observatory until the end of this month. It was a slow start to the season, but it ended in a cacophony of birds this past weekend, certainly the best birding that I have experienced in my 50 years of active birding.