POINT PELEE BIRDS — ANNUAL SUMMARY FOR 2013

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This 2013 summary pertains to the official Point Pelee Birding Area, which is a standard 15-mile diameter CBC circle centred slightly north of Concession Road B. The area includes all of Wheatley and Wheatley Provincial Park to the northeast, and all of Seacliff and Learnington to the northwest.

It was an excellent year for birds at Point Pelee, with many significant sightings to report. A total of 293 species was found, which is well above the long-term annual average of 281.1 species dating back to 1980 inclusive (n = 34). Remarkably it was the second-highest annual total ever recorded at Point Pelee, exceeded only by the 301 species that were found during 2005, which was truly an exceptional year. 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 2013, but are normally somewhat regular in occurrence here. 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 2013, please send me the details.

Marbled Godwit — first time not recorded since 2006 Long-tailed Jaeger — first time not recorded since 2009 Cave Swallow Le Conte's Sparrow — first time not recorded since 2008 Western Meadowlark White-winged Crossbill — first time not recorded since 2007

Detailed below are some of the more significant observations that were made during 2013. 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 provide me with their sightings, even if they could not be included here in this year's summary.

— UPDATES / CORRECTIONS TO PREVIOUS ANNUAL SUMMARIES —

Additions for 2012 Annual Summary — The Egret 29 (1): 17 (2013):

Cattle Egret

May 13 — one adult, Concession Road B (Luke H. Berg, Gary Berg)

Yellow-throated Warbler

May 3 — one, Tip (Allyson B. Parker, Bruce A. Parker)

Deletions for **2012** Annual Summary — *The Egret* **29** (1): **17** (2013):

Townsend's Warbler — delete the entry for May 3, since the record was not accepted by the OBRC; this deletion reduces the number of species recorded at Point Pelee during 2012 to 292, instead of 293.

Dark-eyed "Pink-sided" Junco (*mearnsi* subspecies) — delete the entry for March 18, since the record was not accepted by the OBRC; this deletion does not affect the species total for the year.

— ONTARIO RARITIES at POINT PELEE in 2013 —

Listed in this category 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.

Green-winged "Eurasian" Teal (nominate

crecca subspecies) March 23 — one male, SE Hillman Marsh

(Dean J. Ware)

Pacific Loon

November 16 — one adult, flying east to west past Tip (Alan Wormington, Stephen T. Pike)

Neotropic Cormorant

August 16 — one (probable adult), flying east to west past Tip (AW, Henrietta T. O'Neill)

 this sighting represents the third record of the species for Point Pelee.



Neotropic Cormorant (far right) at the Tip on August 16, 2013. Note the small body size, and also the short, narrow wings in comparison to the Double-crested Cormorant at far left — Alan Wormington

Brown Pelican

July 7 — one first-summer immature, Learnington Marina (Bill Kerr)

August 20-23 — one first-summer immature, Wheatley Harbour (AW et al.)

September 25 — one first-summer immature, Wheatley Harbour (observers not known)

September 29 — one first-summer immature, Tip, Wheatley Harbour and Sturgeon Creek (Michael V.A. Burrell, Kevin A. McLaughlin, Tim Lucas *et al.*)

the above four occurrences pertain to the same bird, and this is the same Brown Pelican that summered along the Lake Erie shoreline in Ohio, mostly at Cleveland, where it was continuously present (more-or-less) from June 24 to December 9 inclusive — an incredible span of 170 days! For Point Pelee, this is the 4th local record (previous records were two in 2002, and one in 2012). For the July 7 observation, the bird was not seen in Cleveland after late morning, the appearance at Leamington was in the late afternoon, and the bird was not seen back at Cleveland until the late morning of July 8. For the August 20-23 record, the bird was last seen in Cleveland on August 18, and did not return there until 4:30 p.m. on August 23 (on that date the bird was last reported at Wheatley Harbour at 2:45 p.m.). For the September sightings, in Cleveland the bird was reported as "missing" from September 24-30 inclusive. The distance between Point Pelee and Cleveland is about 88 km (55 miles).



The immature Brown Pelican at Wheatley Harbour on August 22, 2013 — Alan Wormington

unidentified Plegadis ibis

September 21 — one, NW Hillman Marsh (Joshua D. Vandermeulen)

Swallow-tailed Kite

May 4 — one, Wheatley Provincial Park to Onion Fields to Woodland Nature Trail (MVAB, Erica P. Barkley *et al.*)

 this bird was first seen at Port Alma in *Chatham-Kent*, where it was followed into the Point Pelee Birding Area; the same bird had earlier been present at nearby Chatham on April 29 and May 2-3.

Mississippi Kite

May 4 — one adult, Sturgeon Creek to Sanctuary Picnic Area (Jeremy M. Bensette *et al.*)

Snowy Plover

November 1 — one juvenile, Tip (Brandon R. Holden *et al.*)

a NEW species for Point Pelee — #390.
 This represents the 9th record for Ontario but is the first for fall, since all previous records pertained to birds that were found during spring migration.



Swallow-tailed Kite soaring over the Visitor Centre on May 4, 2013 — Brandon R. Holden



Snowy Plover at the Tip on November 1, 2013, a new species for Point Pelee — Brandon R. Holden



Juvenile Piping Plover at the Tip on November 24, 2013 — Jeremy M. Bensette

Piping Plover

May 12-13 — one first-year (banded), Tip (Ross M. Mackintosh *et al.*)

 based on the coloured bands that it was wearing, this bird hatched in 2012 at North Manitou Island in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore on Lake Michigan, Michigan.

November 24 — one juvenile (unbanded), Tip (STP, Richard P. Carr *et al.*)



One of three Black-necked Stilts that arrived at NW Hillman Marsh on May 5, 2013 — Jeremy M. Bensette

Black-necked Stilt

May 5-8 — three (May 5) and two (May 6-8), NW Hillman Marsh (William G. Harris *et al.*) – this represents the second record for Point Pelee; the first was on May 22, 2007.

Least Tern

September 20 — one juvenile, flying west to east past Tip @ 8:40 a.m. (AW, J. Michael Tate)

this is only the second record of Least Tern for Point Pelee, with the first at Wheatley Harbour on June 9, 1993; for Ontario as a whole, this is the 6th provincial record.

Eurasian Collared-Dove

May 10 — one, NW Hillman Marsh (BRH, David M. Bell et al.)

May 29 — one, flying south off Tip @ 8:20 p.m. (JMB)

July 2 — two (pair), Pelee Drive (Michael D. Cadman)

September 27 — two (pair?), Pelee Drive at Concession Road D (Ross W. Wood, Barbara N. Charlton)

these are the 3rd through 5th records for Point Pelee, assuming that the same two birds were seen on July 2 and September 27. The birds on July 2 were at the feeders of "The Fish Place" restaurant; here one bird was displaying to the other, indicating that they were probably a mated pair.

Chuck-will's-widow

May 3 — one male (singing), Tip (Kenneth G.D. Burrell, Alvan D. Buckley *et al.*)

May 8 — one male (singing), West Beach (RPC, Mark H. Dorriesfield, Christopher G. Earley et al.)



Female Kirtland's Warbler at West Beach on May 18, 2013 — Brandon R. Holden



The elusive Henslow's Sparrow at the west side of Tip on April 30, 2013 — Alan Wormington



Painted Bunting at Sturgeon Creek (Pelee Wings Nature Store) April 29-30, 2013 — Alan Wormington

Kirtland's Warbler

May 15 — one first-year male, Northwest Beach (DMB, BNC *et al.*) May 18 — one definitive female, West Beach (BRH, Eric W. Holden *et al.*)

Henslow's Sparrow

April 30 — one, west side of Tip (Jack Fenton, JDV, DMB *et al.*) June 1 — one, west side of Tip (AW)

Painted Bunting

April 29-30 — one first-year female type, Sturgeon Creek (Maris P. Apse *et al.*) – this represents the 4th record for the Point Pelee Birding Area.

— ADDITIONAL RARITIES of NOTE (not OBRC) —

Greater White-fronted Goose

The spring of 2013 saw an exceptional influx of this species into the Point Pelee Birding Area, starting with the arrival of four very early adults on January 31 that were flying south off the Tip (AW, RPC). Subsequently there were numerous sightings, including the following maximum counts:

February 13–March 9 — 17, SE Hillman Marsh (RPC et al.)

February 18 — 34, SE Hillman Marsh (AW)

March 7 — 42, SE Hillman Marsh (AW)

March 23 — 47, SE Hillman Marsh (Blake A. Mann, Kory J. Renaud)



A flock of 34 Greater White-fronted Geese at SE Hillman Marsh on February 18, 2013 — Alan Wormington

Ross's Goose

February 12 — two white-morph adults (pair), fields south of Hillman Marsh (AW)

February 12-15 — two white-morph adults (pair), fields south of Hillman Marsh (AW et al.)

- the above four birds were briefly observed together on February 12.

December 6 — one white-morph adult, Sturgeon Creek (RPC)

- what was undoubtedly the same bird was then seen at the Jack Miner Sanctuary in Kingsville, where it was present from December 8-January 1 (KJR et al.).

Eurasian Wigeon

March 14–April 8 — one male, Sanctuary Pond to NW Hillman Marsh (RPC et al.)

March 16-31 — one male, Concession Road E to NW Hillman Marsh (BAM et al.)

- both of these birds remained at Concession Road E to March 23, with one still there on March 31; the first observation at NW Hillman Marsh was on March 23, and both birds were seen together there on March 31.

King Eider

April 30 — one female, west side of Tip (JDV, DMB) December 6 — one female, Lake Erie @ SE Hillman Marsh (Marianne B. Reid, Rosemary A. Reid)

Red-necked Grebe

October 5 — one adult, flying west to east past Tip (RPC, STP, AW)

Eared Grebe

January 3 — one, flying east to west past Tip (AW, RPC)

May 10-13 — one, Lake Erie at Wheatley Provincial Park (Luke H. Berg et al.)

November 15 — one, flying east to west past Tip (AW, JDV, RPC)

November 15 — one, at Tip (AW, JDV, RPC et al.)

November 16 — two singles, flying east to west past Tip (AW, JDV, STP)

Snowy Egret

May 13 — two singles, flying south off Tip (DMB, BRH)

- these represent two different records, since the birds were not together and there was a considerable time gap between the two sightings.

Cattle Egret

October 29 - one, Mersea Road 7 southwest of Goldsmith (MBR)

November 1-8 — one, fields west and north of Wheatley Harbour (BRH *et al.*)

American Avocet

April 22 — 17 (flock), NE Hillman Marsh (DJW *et al.*) August 1 — one alternate-plumaged adult female, Seacliff Beach (Karen S. Neufeld *et al.*)

September 2 — two (male + female), Tip (Stephen M. Adult female American Avocet at Seacliff Beach Brauning, Sandra M. Brauning)



on August 1, 2013 — Alan Wormington

Purple Sandpiper

November 3 — one, Wheatley Harbour (MBR)

- November 3 two, Tip (JMB *et al.*)
- November 5 one, Tip (RPC)
- this bird might be one of the two individuals that were present on November 3.

November 17 — one, Tip (Hugh Kent, Liz Kent et al.)

Ruff

April 7 — one basic-plumaged male, NW and SW Hillman Marsh (AW *et al.*)

Red Phalarope

September 6 — one, flying S at West Beach (KAM) September 20 — one, flying W to E past Tip (JDV)

Black-legged Kittiwake

January 3 — one first-winter, Tip (RPC, AW) November 16 — one first-winter, flying east to west past Tip @ 10:17 a.m. (AW, JDV, STP, JMB) November 16 — one first-winter, flying east to west past Tip @ 10:34 a.m. (JDV, AW, STP, JMB)



A juvenile Purple Sandpiper at the Tip on November 17, 2013 — Joshua D. Vandermeulen



A first-winter immature Black-legged Kittiwake at the Tip on January 3, 2013 — Alan Wormington

Sabine's Gull

September 15 — one juvenile, flying west to east past Tip @ 8:40 a.m. (AW, Michael J. Nelson)

September 18 — one juvenile, flying west to east past Tip @ 8:27 a.m. (AW, MJN)

- these are the first Point Pelee records of Sabine's Gull since 2010.

Black-headed Gull

May 28-29 — one first-summer immature, Wheatley Harbour (28th) and Tip (29th) (AW) June 16-23 — one basic-plumaged adult, Tip (AW, STP *et al.*)



Black-headed Gull in first-summer plumage at Wheatley Harbour on May 28, 2013 — Alan Wormington



Adult Black-headed Gull at the Tip that remained from June 16-23, 2013 — Alan Wormington

Laughing Gull

April 29 — one adult, Concession Road E @ Pelee Drive (Lev A. Frid, Marina Lachtchenko)

May 6 — one adult, Tip (BAM *et al.*)

May 16 — one adult, Tip (Peter S. Burke *et al.*)

June 5 — one second-summer immature, Wheatley Harbour (Cherise A. Charron) September 7-15 — one juvenile, West Cranberry Pond and Lake Pond (STP *et al.*)

September 27–October 5 — one juvenile, NW Hillman Marsh (Denys R. Gardiner, Peter A. Read *et al.*)



Juvenile Laughing Gull at West Cranberry Pond (Pelee Marsh) on September 7, 2013 — Stephen T. Pike

 the two September records might pertain to the same juvenile bird, but there is no direct evidence to consider them as such.

Franklin's Gull

March 18 — one adult or second-winter immature, SE Hillman Marsh (JMB)

May 16-17 — one first-summer immature, Wheatley Harbour (STP, Mike Sacopulos, John Foulkes *et al.*)

May 23 — one first-summer immature, Tip (Sarah E. Rupert, Geoffrey Cattrall)

- the two May sightings probably pertained to the same bird, but this would be difficult to confirm.

June 5 — one first-summer immature, Wheatley Harbour (CAC)

September 14 — one basic adult, Learnington Pier (RPC)

September 18 — one first-winter immature, flying west to east past Tip (AW, MJN)

September 27 — one first-winter immature, Wheatley Harbour (Ethan L. Kistler et al.)

September 28 — one first-winter immature, Seacliff Beach (RPC)

October 5 — one first-winter immature, Tip (AW, RPC, STP et al.)

October 20 — one first-winter immature, East Beach (BRH)

Pomarine Jaeger

November 9 — one dark-morph juvenile, east side of Tip (RPC, STP, AW, BAM, MBR, KAM)

Snowy Owl

There were multiple fall migrants reported, starting with one immature in the Onion Fields (Concession Road C) on November 30–December 1 (AW *et al.*).

Pileated Woodpecker

May 7 — one, flying south over NW Hillman Marsh (MVAB)

- this is only the 3rd modern record for Point Pelee; previous occurrences were in 1963 and 2003.

Western Kingbird

May 29 — one, flying south off Tip (AW)

- this is the first Point Pelee record of the species since 2005.

Loggerhead Shrike

May 4 — one, Sturgeon Creek (MBR *et al.*) May 8 — one, West Beach to Sparrow Field (Alexander B. Bloss *et al.*)

Bohemian Waxwing

January 13 — one, west side of Tip (Peter R. Bondy)

 this bird was alone, with no other waxwings present in the area.

November 16-17 — one, Old Maintenance Compound (STP, JDV *et al.*)

Loggerhead Shrike at West Beach on May 8, 2013 — Alan Wormington

"Yellow" Palm Warbler (hypochrysea subspecies)

May 2 — one, flying south off Tip (BRH, DMB, JBF)

Yellow-throated Warbler

April 28 — one, Tip (DJW *et al.*) May 4 — one, west side of Tip (BRH, EWH, STP *et al.*)

May 10 — one, Tip (Langlois family)

May 16 — one male, Sleepy Hollow to The Dunes (Joshua R. Bouman, Michael P.J. Bouman *et al.*) May 16-17 — one, Blue Heron Picnic Area to Northwest Beach (Mac P. McAlpine, Martin P. Schoots– McAlpine *et al.*)

May 19 — one, Wheatley Provincial Park (Stanley R. Kornelsen)

Lark Sparrow

May 3-7 — one, Black Willow Picnic Area to north of Visitor Centre (JF *et al.*) May 31 — one, west side of Tip (RPC, AW, PRB)

Nelson's Sparrow

May 14 — one male (singing), west side Tip (John B. Schmelefske, Mike Jaber, James W. Hunt et al.)

Dickcissel

April 30 — one, West Beach (EWH) May 22 — one male, west side of Tip (STP, Vern S. Bothwell) June 22+ — eventually 2+ breeding territories at NW Hillman Marsh (BAM *et al.*)

Yellow-headed Blackbird

May 7 — one, Sparrow Field (Pat Hogge) May 16 — one female, flying south off Tip (AW, RPC)

May 17 — one female, SW Hillman Marsh (Nancy Silacci, Karen O'Neil, Stephen Burk)



One of the breeding Dickcissels at NW Hillman Marsh on June 30, 2013 — Joshua D. Vandermeulen

Brewer's Blackbird

December 16 — one male, NE Hillman Marsh (SER *et al.*)

December 29 — five males, Concession Road E (Robert Curry, AW)

December 30 — four males, E end of Concession Road C (JMB *et al.*)

- two of these birds were still present at the same location on December 31.
- these are the first Point Pelee records for Brewer's Blackbird since 2008, and marked a significant influx of wintering birds that continued here into 2014.



One of five male Brewer's Blackbirds at Concession Road E on December 29, 2013 — Alan Wormington

- SIGNIFICANT HYBRIDS -

American Wigeon X Mallard

April 24 — one male, NW Hillman Marsh (JDV)

Tufted Duck X scaup (probably Lesser Scaup)

January 10 — one male, Lake Erie @ NE Hillman Marsh (AW *et al.*)

Lawrence's Warbler

May 8-9 — one male, Visitor Centre (Paul A. Martin, A. Michelle Martin *et al.*)



Tufted Duck X scaup hybrid (right rear) on Lake Erie at NE Hillman Marsh on January 10, 2013 — Alan Wormington

- 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 (as to be expected).

RECORD-EARLY SPRING:

Ross's Goose — two white-morph adults on February 12 (AW) — 9 days record-early
Ross's Goose — two white-morph adults on February 12-15 (AW et al.) — 9 days record-early
Cackling Goose — one on January 19 (JMB) — 9 days record-early
Cackling Goose — two (pair) on January 19 (AW et al.) — 9 days record-early
– one or both of these birds remained to January 22.
Canada Goose — 14 on January 12, flying very high and north over Tip (AW) — 10 days record-early
Swallow-tailed Kite — one on May 4 (MVAB, EPB et al.) — 2 days record-early

Mississippi Kite — one on May 4 (JMB *et al.*) — 1 day recordearly

Killdeer — one on February 2 (JDV, KJR, JMB) — 2 days record-early

- this bird at SE Hillman Marsh was flying around and calling constantly, typical behaviour for an arriving spring migrant.

Franklin's Gull — one adult or second-winter immature on March 18 (JMB) — 10 days record-early

Peregrine Falcon — one adult on March 1 (AW) — 16 days record-early

Gray Catbird — one on April 20-21 (Shirley Getty et al.) ties record-early



Record-early Franklin's Gull at SE Hillman Marsh on March 18, 2013 -Jeremy M. Bensette

RECORD-LATE SPRING:

Common Loon — one adult on June 8 (BAM) – 3 days record-late

- immature (one-year-old) birds often summer at Point Pelee, but most adult birds have departed by early June at the latest.

Green Heron — three on June 8, flying south over Tip (BAM) — 2 days record-late

- this species apparently no longer nests within PPNP, thus birds seen can be considered migrants. Wilson's Snipe — one on May 23 (Lucas J. Foerster) — 5 days record-late

- Hermit Thrush one on June 17, on road south of Visitor Centre (AW, PRB) 22 days record-late
- this peculiar record is difficult to categorize, but presumably the bird was a very late spring migrant; alternatively it might have been a non-breeding summer visitor, but the vast majority of all passerines do breed in their first year.

Northern Mockingbird — one on June 22, at Tip (BAM) — 1 day record-late

RECORD-EARLY FALL:

Ruddy Turnstone — one alternate-plumaged adult on June 30 (PRB) — *ties record-early*

Great Black-backed Gull — one alternate-plumaged adult on June 25-August 11 (AW et al.) - 2 days record-early

- adults of this species arrive as fall migrants surprisingly early at Point Pelee, and most years small numbers are present by late July; immatures regularly summer at Point Pelee, but adult birds do not. This bird was at Sturgeon Creek Marina and had an injured wing, which is the reason for its long presence; undoubtedly someone was The long-staying adult Great Black-backed Gull at probably feeding the bird as well.



Sturgeon Creek Marina, which arrived record-early (as seen here) on June 25, 2013 — Alan Wormington

Northern Rough-winged Swallow

- 14 on July 2, at Tip (AW) - 2 days record-early

Bank Swallow — three on July 3, flying south off Tip (AW) — 1 day record-early Barn Swallow — four on July 3, flying south off Tip (AW) — 3 days record-early

RECORD-LATE FALL:

Northern Shoveler — one male on January 11 (RPC, AW) — 4 days record-late Surf Scoter — 30 on January 14 (JMB) — 1 day record-late Black Scoter — one male on January 10 (RPC, Jeremy L. Hatt) — 4 days record-late Ruddy Duck — one male on January 22 (KJR, JMB) — 11 days record-late Horned Grebe — two on January 17 (AW) — 5 days record-late Eared Grebe — one on January 3 (AW, RPC) — 22 days record-late Piping Plover — one juvenile on November 24 (STP, RPC et al.) — 12 days record-late Black-legged Kittiwake — one first-winter immature on January 3 (RPC, AW) — 5 days record-late

— THE NEXT 10 NEW SPECIES FOR POINT PELEE —

With the discovery of a Snowy Plover at Point Pelee during 2013 (see details above), a total of 390 species has now been recorded here. Since Point Pelee seems to average about one new species per year, one could easily predict that 400 species should be reached by the year 2023 or so.

What follows is what I consider to be the most likely new species (10) to be found at Point Pelee, with the most likely listed first. For this exercise I created an original list of about 56 potential species, then reduced it to the ten mostly likely to occur. This was a difficult task indeed, since many deleted species could certainly make an appearance here before those that are actually on the final list. If nothing else, it demonstrates that there is still a huge pool of potential species that could occur at Point Pelee.

Here are my top ten candidates for new species at Point Pelee, along with a few notes:

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck — May or June; most likely to appear at NW Hillman Marsh Say's Phoebe — spring or fall Green-tailed Towhee — spring, fall or winter Violet-green Swallow — November; most likely during a Cave Swallow "event" Magnificent Frigatebird — July to October inclusive; most likely associated with a hurricane Crested Caracara — spring or summer; likely to be seen flying over PPNP Golden-crowned Sparrow — spring, fall or winter; possibly at a birdfeeder MacGillivray's Warbler — late fall, especially November Black-throated Sparrow — spring or fall Hooded Oriole — spring or fall

The Birds of Point Pelee

Point Pelee bird sightings (both current and historical) can be sent to: wormington@juno.com

The Point Pelee database is used for multiple purposes:

- Annual Summaries (such as this current one for 2013)
- Seasonal sightings that are published in the journal *North American Birds*
- For a major publication which is currently in progress The Birds of Point Pelee