

Wallace Memorial Birdathon 2020

Pelton Nature Reserve - Paulette Hebert - 2020 May 21



The horizon was deep red as I hiked across the fields to the Pelton property for my third NLT Birdathon. This year's welcoming party consisted of Veerys, Wood Thrushes, and robins. They were interrupted occasionally by Wild Turkeys sounding like bursts of laughter in a concert hall. As I entered into the woods, a family of crows raised a ruckus in the distance, and I wondered what predator disturbed their peace on this fine morning. In the field next door, a Brown Thrasher started up a conversation of twice repeated phrases while a Rose-breasted Grosbeak tried to drown him out with his melodious whistling tune.

I quickly made my way to the wetland. Red osier dogwoods, still without leaves, formed a red carpet under the encroaching sunlight. Chickadees feasted in the tamaracks. The wetland rang with the songs of Yellow Warblers, Common Yellowthroats and Swamp Sparrows. After spending some time there, soaking up the sun, I followed the woodland trail through a dark cedar grove. It seemed Nashville Warblers were following me. The loud twittering song of a Winter Wren was like bursts of light in the dark woods and a Black-and-white Warbler foraging at the stream was too busy to even notice me. I looked for Blackburnian Warblers in a clearing surrounded by tall conifers where I had seen them in previous years, but they did not come to the party this year. Just then, a pair of Barred Owls began calling to each other as if to distract me from my disappointment. And I did eventually find a Blackburnian (photo to right) later in the day.



I made my way into the red pine plantation on the west side of the Pelton property. A pair of pine warblers were very agitated. Apparently, I was trespassing on their territory and they insisted I be on my way. I obliged, emerging in the field from where I could see five crows mobbing a red-tailed hawk. Eastern bluebirds and tree swallows came and went from nest boxes and a scarlet tanager sang from the hedgerow.

I walked the woodland trail again after dinner. It was peaceful, still, and quiet with no new birds for my list. When I was finished, there was still a bit of daylight left,

so I decided to walk the north edge of the woods one more time before dark. As I ducked into the woods, I startled two black bears coming from the opposite direction. Or should I say we startled each other. One bear dashed off across the field north of the property, the other went south into the forest and I retreated westward to the field from which I had come. There I had a good view of the field and the edge of the woods. My plan was to wait long enough for an American Woodcock to make his nightly appearance and be on my way. While I waited, I was startled once again. This time it was a gray treefrog (right) that called so loudly and suddenly from a branch above my head that I jumped. I recovered while watching a family of white-tailed deer grazing on the other side of the field until three new birds, Vesper Sparrow, Gray Catbird and Blue-winged Warbler, each made an appearance in the hedgerow where I stood, reminding me that I had a list to work on. The Barred Owls started up again and the American Woodcock finally went "beep!", marking the end of a most enjoyable day among the birds.



Here is my list of 50 species

1. American Bittern
2. American Crow
3. American Goldfinch
4. American Robin
5. American Woodcock
6. Barred owl
7. Black-and-white Warbler
8. Blackburnian Warbler
9. Black-capped Chickadee
10. Black-throated Green Warbler
11. Blue Jay
12. Blue-winged Warbler
13. Brown Thrasher
14. Canada Goose
15. Chipping Sparrow
16. Common Raven
17. Common Yellowthroat
18. Downy Woodpecker
19. Eastern Bluebird
20. Field Sparrow

21. Great Crested Flycatcher
22. Grey Catbird
23. Hairy Woodpecker
24. Mallard
25. Mourning Dove
26. Nashville Warbler
27. Northern Cardinal
28. Northern Flicker
29. Northern Waterthrush
30. Ovenbird
31. Pine Warbler
32. Purple Finch
33. Red-bellied Woodpecker
34. Red-breasted Nuthatch
35. Red-eyed Vireo
36. Red-tailed Hawk
37. Ring-billed Gull
38. Rose-breasted Grosbeak
39. Ruffed Grouse
40. Scarlet Tanager
41. Song Sparrow
42. Tree Swallow
43. Turkey Vulture
44. Veery
45. Vesper Sparrow
46. White-throated Sparrow
47. Wild Turkey
48. Wood Thrush
49. Yellow Warbler
50. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker