



NORTHUMBERLAND
LAND TRUST

NLT Birding Marathon 2024

Bonebakker Nature Reserve - Marina Scassa, with Kris Ito - 2024 May 19



On Sunday, May 19, I was joined by Kris Ito (right) and Tyne Bonebakker, as we undertook the massive challenge of birding the Bonebakker Nature Reserve. This beautiful property is huge, and hilly, but spectacular and a wonderful haven for birds.



The forecast had predicted fog in the early morning, so we started a bit later than usual, at 6:15, but of course, the prediction was incorrect and there was no fog. We began by walking Wilson Road into the forest, and then joined one of the trails. Tall trees are beautiful, but when birding, they can be a challenge, especially when the canopy is full. We didn't see much but we could hear some birds calling or singing, like Eastern Wood Peewees and Scarlet Tanagers. We heard an occasional warbler, such as Ovenbird, Pine, Nashville and Black-Throated Green. Surprisingly we did not find nuthatches or Downy or Hairy Woodpeckers, but we did get Pileated, Red-bellied, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker!

Exiting the forest, we then crossed the pipeline and entered the meadows. We were greeted by the beautiful sounds of the Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, and Eastern Bluebirds. Also, throughout the field and along the hedgerow, we could hear the calls of several sparrow species: Grasshopper, Savannah, Field, and Song. We paused for some photo ops with the bluebirds, as they posed nicely.

Swallows, both tree and barn, performed their acrobatics above the fields, while we continued our trek into the cow pasture. With lots of trees and wildflowers in bloom, there were many bees and butterflies to be seen. We located a Clay-coloured Sparrow singing proudly, and then off in the distance we heard a cuckoo. We followed the sound and were lucky to find not one, but two Black-billed Cuckoos tucked into a grove.

Continuing our clockwise tour of the property, various birds made their presence known: Indigo Bunting, Baltimore Oriole, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak, to name a few. Competing for airtime were Brown Thrashers (right) and Gray Catbirds, who, with their mimicry, made us work for our auditory bird identification. We were actually quite surprised at how many thrashers we saw and heard. They were everywhere!



Other warblers that we picked up along the way included Black and White, Blackburnian, Common Yellowthroat, Magnolia, Yellow, and American Redstart.

Checking the bird boxes, we found 6 that were occupied: 4 by bluebirds who were actively feeding chicks inside, 1 by Tree Swallows, and 1 by chickadees.

Always keeping an eye on the sky for any flyovers, Kris used her eagle eyes to spot a juvenile Bald Eagle, a Broad-winged Hawk and a Northern Harrier. And there were the requisite Turkey Vultures, as well.

It's always a pleasure to visit the Bonebakker Reserve. It is a stunning piece of property. Our bird count was a bit lower than last year, but all in all, we tallied 66 species.

The full list:

Canada Goose	Tree Swallow	Nashville Warbler
Wild Turkey	Barn Swallow	Common Yellowthroat
Rock Pigeon	Cedar Waxwing	American Redstart
Mourning Dove	House Wren	Magnolia Warbler
Black-billed Cuckoo	Gray Catbird	Blackburnian Warbler
Killdeer	Brown Thrasher	Yellow Warbler
Ring-billed Gull	European Starling	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Eastern Bluebird	Pine Warbler
Northern Harrier	Hermit Thrush	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Bald Eagle	Wood Thrush	Black-throated Green
Broad-winged Hawk	American Robin	Scarlet Tanager
Red-bellied Woodpecker	American Goldfinch	Northern Cardinal
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Grasshopper Sparrow	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Northern Flicker	Chipping Sparrow	Indigo Bunting
Pileated Woodpecker	Clay-colored Sparrow	
American Kestrel	Field Sparrow	
Great Crested Flycatcher	Savannah Sparrow	
Eastern Kingbird	Song Sparrow	
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Eastern Towhee	
Eastern Phoebe	Bobolink	
Warbling Vireo	Eastern Meadowlark	
Red-eyed Vireo	Baltimore Oriole	
Blue Jay	Red-winged Blackbird	
American Crow	Brown-headed Cowbird	
Common Raven	Ovenbird	
Black-capped Chickadee	Black-and-white Warbler	

*[Editor's note: Species At Risk are in **bold** and underlined. Superscripts denote the risk category: E = Endangered; T = Threatened; SC = Special Concern]*