

NLT Birding Marathon 2024

Kennedy Nature Reserve - David Geale - 2024 May 16



NORTHUMBERLAND
LAND TRUST



I did my 2024 NLT Birding Marathon on May 16 at the Kennedy Nature Reserve. After doing a survey of its butterfly species over the summer of 2020, I hadn't returned often to Kennedy NR and I was excited to explore its forests and wetlands again.

I arrived before 5:00 a.m. and headed into the still-very-dark cedar grove to the sound of displaying American Woodcocks and awakening Wood Thrushes, and heard several other expected species on my way to the nearest cattail marsh. As I passed through the recently cleared pipeline right-of-way, I flushed a pair of Solitary Sandpipers from a muddy puddle - they were still there when I returned late in the day - and a Great Egret flew overhead. At the marsh, I encountered a cacophony of Swamp Sparrows, Common Yellowthroats and Red-winged Blackbirds, but not the hoped-for Least Bittern or any rails - the highlight was a Willow Flycatcher; through the rest of the day I heard several Alders, but this was my only Willow.

As the sun rose, I worked my way slowly south, struggling to see any colours or patterns in a warbler flock in the mostly coniferous trees high overhead. I heard and glimpsed several Cape May and Bay-breasted Warblers and one Wilson's among a few more common species, but I'm sure there were others there that I missed! I spent the rest of the morning working my deeper into the property, but water levels were quite high (probably normal for the date) and my hip-waders were not as waterproof as I would have liked, preventing me from getting too far south into the alder swamp.

I spent the early afternoon relaxing and reading a book in a few comfortable and potentially productive spots. This resulted in a Belted Kingfisher flying by, a Common Raven causing a ruckus among smaller birds, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo perched just above my head, and most notably a pair of noisy and almost-visible Virginia Rails. Several times through the day, I was frustrated not to get better looks at any duck that was not a Mallard - almost certainly I glimpsed a Wood Duck or two, but could never be sure. My late-day trek back north was - as expected - less productive, but I did track down a singing Blue-winged Warbler and heard a Bobolink singing in flight high above me. In the hopes of perhaps hearing an owl, I waited around until after dusk at the parking area, but was rewarded only with a loud pair of Trumpeter Swans (right) flying west low over the road and a Great Blue Heron much higher heading east. My final new bird for the day - as the woodcocks started displaying again - was a Field Sparrow singing just before dusk. This brought my day's total to 66 species.



The full list:

Canada Goose
Trumpeter Swan
Mallard
Wild Turkey
Ruffed Grouse
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Virginia Rail
American Woodcock
Solitary Sandpiper
Ring-billed Gull
Caspian Tern
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Green Heron
Turkey Vulture
Broad-winged Hawk
Belted Kingfisher
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
Alder Flycatcher
Willow Flycatcher
Least Flycatcher
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay

American Crow
Common Raven
Black-capped Chickadee
Cedar Waxwing
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Gray Catbird
European Starling
Eastern Bluebird
Veery
Wood Thrush^{SC}
American Robin
Purple Finch
American Goldfinch
Chipping Sparrow
Field Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Bobolink^T
Baltimore Oriole
Red-winged Blackbird
Common Grackle
Northern Waterthrush
Blue-winged Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Cape May Warbler

Bay-breasted Warbler

Blackburnian Warbler

Yellow Warbler

Chestnut-sided Warbler

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Wilson's Warbler

Northern Cardinal

Rose-breasted Grosbeak

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