

Birding Pelee

By Benjamin Di Labio



Kirtland's Warbler at Point Pelee in May, 2008 Photo, Bruce Di Labio

For the past three years, I've been going down to Point Pelee National Park with my dad, Bruce Di Labio. I started going down with my dad when I was 8 years old. I have seen many great species there. Some of the species are Mississippi Kite, Mottled Duck, Worm-eating Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Laughing Gull and many more.

My all time favourite bird seen at Pelee was the Kentucky Warbler because when I was checking the sightings book at the Visitor's Centre at Pelee, I saw that a female Kentucky Warbler was seen on Sanctuary Trail. I told my dad we had to go and take a look. To my surprise, we not only found the female Kentucky Warbler, we found the male as well!

The joy about waking up in the morning at Pelee is to try to be the first person at the point. It is kind of like a mini competition with all birders to get to the point first and find the best birds. Of course, it is all in fun.

On my first trip with my dad, we got to the point first for the five days we

were there. One of my greatest finds on that first trip was the adult male Black-bellied Plover in breeding plumage. The black and white contrast on the front and belly and the mottled black and white back really stood out against the rocky shoreline.

Since my first trip to Point Pelee, in 2006, I've noticed that the point is getting shorter. On my dad's first visit in 1974, Point Pelee was nearly half a kilometre long. Over the years it has gotten shorter and shorter. I have noticed a big change in its length over the past few years too. It has gotten so short that most of the point is under water.

Over the three years, the second year was the best year for warblers. We had 34 species of warblers in the park. But the best year for rare birds was this year. We had a Mississippi Kite, Mottled Duck (1st for Canada) and Laughing Gull.

The best part of Pelee of course, is always the birds. But a second best is that I get to take a week off from school to bird with my dad. We get to spend a lot of time together doing

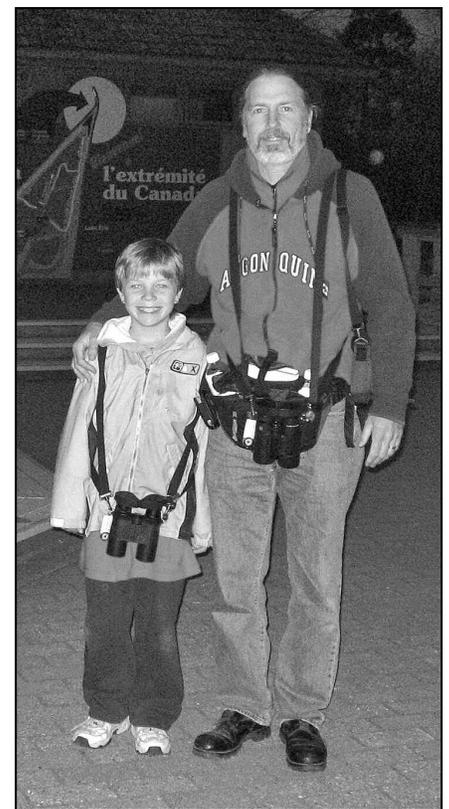
something we really like to do.

But my teachers don't let me get off the "homework" hook. When I got back to school, my mom and I put together a computer presentation on Pelee using Microsoft 'Photostory'. I think I may have convinced some of my friends that birding is really cool!

Ed Note: Ben composed this article with minimal coaching from mom and dad, reflecting his excitement on visiting one of Ontario's premier birding hotspots.

At age 11, he is now a budding birder that has inherited his dad's enthusiasm for the sport. Under Bruce's expert instruction he has come a long way in developing his birding skills and will no doubt be a force to reckon with down the road. Bruce says that he has already noticed his son's quick eye.

Bruce pointed out that he was 16 when he made his first trip to Point Pelee. Ben has already been there three times!



Ben and Bruce at Point Pelee at dawn on May 1, 2006, Ben's 9th birthday Photo, Henrietta O'Neil