

September 28-30, 2018 Whitefish Point

Leader: Jeff Stacey

Fall migration at Whitefish Point can produce a fabulous array of birds. It can also be cold, windy, and wet. We got a taste of both on our fall weekend trip up north. We also got to experience the beautiful fall colors on the drive up M-123.

Waterfowl were moving in small numbers on Friday, but all the usual suspects made an appearance. Plenty of White-winged Scoters and Red-necked Grebes along with a pair of Red-throated Loons flew by the point.

A few shorebirds were on the beach including a Dunlin, a pair of Sanderlings, a Least Sandpiper, and a ghostly-white Black-bellied Plover. Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs were also present but had an uncanny knack for disappearing into the sparse grass. American Pipits were flying around as well.

Late in the day, we made trips to Vermilion Road and Farm Truck Trail looking for Spruce Grouse. We found a pair of Vesper Sparrows, but no grouse.

First light on Saturday brought us back to Vermilion Road to enjoy the brisk 39-degree morning. At least that area was sheltered from the wind. We searched all through the spruce bog adjoining "the Slab" for the better part of an hour only to finally find a male Spruce Grouse on the side of the road not 200 yards from where we parked. It flew into a nearby tree and was feeding for a while, offering great looks.

The rest of the morning was spent in the woods around Whitefish Point, hoping to stay out of the strong wind and rain. We were mostly successful in that aspect, but the birding was terrific. A Purple Finch was at the feeders along with several Red-breasted Nuthatches. Warblers and kinglets were common sights, with the Palm and Yellow-rumped Warblers being the most common. Other warblers included Black-and-white, Magnolia, Nashville and even a Northern Parula.

Sparrows were however the group that showed best. We found seven species including Fox, White-crowned, and Lincoln's.

We hung out with the water bird counters in the afternoon. A couple of Peregrine Falcons and a Merlin kept us company while we waited for migrants. It was mostly the same species of birds as the previous day, with an American Golden-Plover as a notable newcomer. A Rusty Blackbird spent the afternoon zipping around near us, staying clear of the raptors.

Sunday morning was also cold, wet, and windy. Unfortunately, the woods were much less active. While we managed to find some Pine Siskins and a couple more warblers (Black-throated Blue and Green), it was time to head home. Despite the unfriendly weather, it was a great trip, and everyone enjoyed it.

The species count for the trip was 76 (listed below).

Canada Goose

American Wigeon

Mallard

Northern Pintail

Green-winged Teal

Redhead

Greater Scaup
Lesser Scaup
Surf Scoter
White-winged Scoter
Common Merganser
Red-breasted Merganser
Spruce Grouse
Red-necked Grebe
Black-bellied Plover
American Golden-Plover
Sanderling
Dunlin
Least Sandpiper
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Red-throated Loon
Common Loon
Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron
Turkey Vulture
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Bald Eagle
Red-tailed Hawk
Belted Kingfisher
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Blue Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Horned Lark
Black-capped Chickadee
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
Winter Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Swainson's Thrush
Hermit Thrush

American Robin
American Pipit
Purple Finch
Pine Siskin
Lapland Longspur
Chipping Sparrow
Fox Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
White-crowned Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Rusty Blackbird
Black-and-white Warbler
Orange-crowned Warbler
Nashville Warbler
American Redstart
Northern Parula
Magnolia Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Palm Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler