

Field Trip Report – Summer UP Trip

August 22-24, 2025

Leader: Don Burlett

A summer trip to the UP is always a joy, especially late in the summer when migrants are headed south but it's still warm (generally speaking). This trip had an added factor in that we were doing a joint field trip with the Laughing Whitefish Bird Alliance on Saturday at Seney NWR. As with many trips of this type, there was a focus on a specific species that participants were interested in – Black-backed Woodpecker.

The plan was an early start on Friday to get to the UP to search for our target bird on Friday. To find these woodpeckers, it is typically a good idea to find recent burned areas of pine, which these woodpeckers like for feeding. I obtained a 2024 prescribed burn map from Elliott Melson and used this to find several areas to look at. Unfortunately, the map provided was for planning and most of the spots shown did not have burns. The first few spots were west of Raco (north and south of M28) and were not helpful. We went west of Seney, found some small patches of burns but nothing solid. The result of the first day was utter frustration and no woodpecker.

On Saturday, we began by meeting the Laughing Whitefish Bird Alliance group at Seney National Wildlife Reserve and we drove the Marshland Wildlife Drive, including the Fishing Loop. There were 15 people from Laughing Whitefish and five from Oakland in this group. While waiting to get cars and carpooling sorted out, a Black-backed Woodpecker was heard calling nearby. It never showed but was a pleasant surprise for those that heard it. As usual, Common Loons were soon found and even gave a few calls to excite the group. A few groups of warblers mixed with red-breasted nuthatches were always a great moment. Of course, fall warblers are always fun to sort out. We also added a Red-necked Grebe and some other marsh and lake birds.



Groups at Seney NWR
Photos by Don Burlett, Karen Kessler

By mid-afternoon, our group headed to Grand Marais to see if anything interesting was present on the shores of Lake Superior. We were pleasantly surprised to find a Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Baird's Sandpiper mixed in with the Semipalmated Plovers and Sandpipers. It was quite windy on Saturday and Lake Superior was doing its best to let us know how rough it can get.



Baird's Sandpiper



Buff-breasted Sandpiper

Photos by Melanie Mitchell, Karen Kessler



Grand Marais Beach
Photo by Don Burlett

On Sunday, we rose early and headed to Whitefish Point to see if anything exciting was happening. When we arrived, the mosquitos were out in full force, but nature was still active. We observed several Merlins working along the shore and watched one Merlin capture a bat as it was arriving over the shore. Bad for the bat but good for the Merlin! Things were a little quiet, so we checked the harbor area. A few swallows were working the area and pestering the Merlins as they flew around. An American White Pelican was resting on the break wall and a Hooded Merganser lolled in the water.



Whitefish Point



American White Pelican

Photos by Don Burlett, Melanie Mitchell

Finally, we drove to the Munuscong Wildlife Management Area (Potholes) in search of a LeConte's Sparrow but there was none to be seen or heard. We did get a handful of nice birds including warblers. Overall, the entire weekend was fun and exciting with new birds to be seen. It was a fun group, and we enjoyed seeing or hearing 78 species on this trip. The bird list is provided below.



Enjoying dinner
Photo by Don Burlett

List of Species seen or heard:

Canada Goose	Turkey Vulture
Wood Duck	Bald Eagle
Mallard	Northern Harrier
Hooded Merganser	Red-tailed Hawk
Common Merganser	Sandhill Crane
Wild Turkey	Semipalmated Plover
Common Loon	Spotted Sandpiper
Pied-billed Grebe	Ruddy Turnstone
Red-necked Grebe	Sanderling
Double-crested Cormorant	Semipalmated Sandpiper
American White Pelican	Baird's Sandpiper
American Bittern	Buff-breasted Sandpiper
Great Blue Heron	Ring-billed Gull

Herring Gull
Caspian Tern
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Black-backed Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
American Kestrel
Merlin
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Eastern Kingbird
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Barn Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
Red-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
American Robin
Gray Catbird
European Starling
Cedar Waxwing
Ovenbird
Black-and-white Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
American Redstart
Cape May Warbler
Magnolia Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler

Black-throated Green Warbler
Wilson's Warbler
Chipping Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Bobolink
Red-winged Blackbird
Common Grackle
American Goldfinch