



# Hawk Migration Association of North America



## Brown Thrashers 2023 Raptorthon Report



*Team Brown Thrasher, Ross Bennett*

The Brown Thrashers had a spectacular 14<sup>th</sup> annual Raptorthon on Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup> at Pondicherry National Wildlife Refuge in Jefferson, NH. Before even parking at the trailhead for our event, we spotted a few species from our car as we entered the refuge. A pair of immature **bald eagles** perched along the roadside and a **broad-winged hawk** hunted from a dead spruce tree...a great start to our day!

The Brown Thrashers team (me, my husband Phil, daughter Laurel, son Alden, and new pup, Maggie) joined our friends, the Bennett family, along with 50 other birders that were gathering for the annual World Migratory Bird Day walk at Pondicherry. What a turnout to celebrate migration! Warbler song was bubbling up all around us as Pondicherry steward and trip

leader Dave Govatski introduced all the volunteer guides, providing me with the chance to talk about our Raptorthon event and HMANA. We couldn't have asked for better weather for birding - partly cloudy skies, mid 60's and cool with a nice breeze that kept the black flies down!

By 8:15am, our birding group made its way down the Pondicherry rail trail lined with all the varying shades of spring green. We moved slowly on account of all the warblers flitting around above our heads. This refuge is two hours north of our home in southern NH and nestled into the White Mountains, so it's as if we rewind the clock two weeks as we scanned the tiny, barely emerging leaves of aspens and birches. We enjoyed gorgeous looks at **magnolia**, **northern parula**, **black-throated**



*Cape May Warbler, Lori Charron*





Canada warbler, Lori Charron

**blue** and **Cape May warblers** and heard/felt the resonating beats of wings of **ruffed grouse** as we walked.

Alden and his friend Will were busy finding green frogs and egg masses in the ditches along the trail while Laurel and her friend Margaret hid behind trees making funny bird calls to confuse birders. The group spread out considerably, and Team Thrasher eventually made our way to Cherry Pond, the absolute gem of Pondicherry. There are few more beautiful views in NH than the view

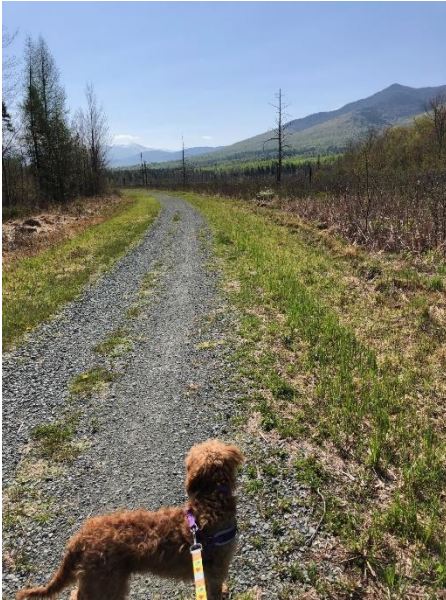
from the Tudor Richards viewing platform here. Looking out at snow-covered Mt Washington and surrounding peaks, we were in awe of the many shades of green bordering the darker spruce and tamarack. It takes my breath away every time we visit, no matter the season. Here we had our lunch while watching otters play, songbirds flit around the forest and wetland edge, and a **northern harrier** being



Blackburnian warbler, Lori Charron

pursued by a **sharp-shinned hawk**. There was also a huge garter snake that kept Alden and Will busy as they tried to catch it.

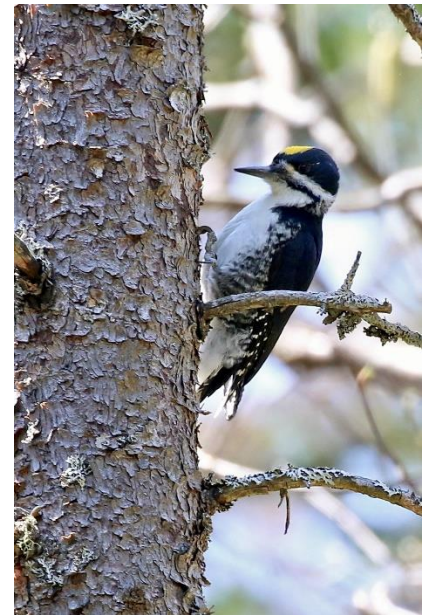
A walk to the bridge at Moorhen Marsh added some other boggy friends like **marsh wren, yellow and palm warblers, and common yellowthroat**.



Walk to Moorhen Marsh, Julie Brown

Next, it was down the old railroad tracks to the Little Cherry Pond trail. This favorite of our family's is traversed by thick tamarack bog bridges that wind through a lush, mossy, and boggy northern forest

complete with unique vegetation such as pitcher plants, creeping snowberry, and an unraveling stand of spruce and fir. No sign of the northern goshawks that used to nest along this trail years ago, although some birders were lucky enough to spot a pair of them flying over the pond. We sadly couldn't count them on our official tally for the day.



Black-backed woodpecker, Lori Charron

A few hundred yards short of reaching Little Cherry Pond, the kids stopped and spotted something fascinating...a garter snake slowly eating a green frog! A little sad to witness but also very cool. On our hike out from the pond, we were thrilled to have a nice long look at a **black-backed woodpecker** that Phil spotted, one of the most sought-after species at Pondicherry! Upon returning



to the trailhead after 6 miles of walking, the kids were exhausted but still smiling. Black-billed cuckoos were calling which was a treat. We finished our Raptorthon with a quick scan from Airport Marsh, which produced a perched **merlin** and another northern harrier, this time a beautiful gray adult male – the perfect bird to end the day on.

Overall, the Thrashers tallied **71 species of birds** for the day including **eight raptors**. We were all quite satisfied with this effort and the results. During our long drive home, we picked 33 ticks off Maggie, our bernedoodle! She thought it was totally worth it, though. She loved the adventure.

Thank you so much for supporting the Brown Thrashers with a donation. Thanks to you, we raised \$1,360 for raptor conservation! Your gift supports our community science database, HawkCount.org, which is the foundation of the Raptor Population Index, allowing us to gauge raptor populations across the continent. Your support also makes grants possible for hawk

watch sites to purchase optics for kids, train new volunteers, and create interpretive signs. You are helping make HMANA's work possible to advance scientific knowledge and promote the conservation of raptor populations through the study, enjoyment, and appreciation of raptor migration.

Thank you so much for your support! The Brown Thrashers are already looking forward to next year's event!

Gratefully,

Julie, Phil, Laurel, Alden and Maggie



*Margaret, Laurel, Will and Alden at Cherry Pond, Julie Brown*



*Birders Laurel and Margaret holding this year's World Migratory Bird Day poster, Julie Brown*

## Brown Thrasher Species List – Pondicherry National Wildlife Refuge

Jefferson, NH - May 13, 2023

Canada Goose	4	American Robin	3
dabbling duck sp.	1	Purple Finch	5
Ruffed Grouse	4	American Goldfinch	4
Black-billed Cuckoo	1	Chipping Sparrow	1
Chimney Swift	1	White-throated Sparrow	10
Spotted Sandpiper	1	Savannah Sparrow	1
Ring-billed Gull	2	Song Sparrow	2
Common Loon	1	Swamp Sparrow	5
<b>Turkey Vulture</b>	<b>3</b>	Baltimore Oriole	1
<b>Osprey</b>	<b>1</b>	Red-winged Blackbird	6
<b>Northern Harrier</b>	<b>1</b>	Common Grackle	4
<b>Sharp-shinned Hawk</b>	<b>1</b>	Ovenbird	12
<b>Bald Eagle</b>	<b>1</b>	Northern Waterthrush	3
<b>Broad-winged Hawk</b>	<b>3</b>	Black-and-white Warbler	8
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	Tennessee Warbler	1
Black-backed Woodpecker	1	Nashville Warbler	10
Hairy Woodpecker	1	Common Yellowthroat	4
Pileated Woodpecker	1	American Redstart	1
<b>American Kestrel</b>	<b>1</b>	Cape May Warbler	1
<b>Merlin</b>	<b>1</b>	Northern Parula	7
Eastern Phoebe	2	Magnolia Warbler	1
Eastern Kingbird	4	Bay-breasted Warbler	2
Blue-headed Vireo	3	Yellow Warbler	1
Blue Jay	8	Chestnut-sided Warbler	6
American Crow	1	Blackpoll Warbler	1
Common Raven	2	Black-throated Blue Warbler	5
Black-capped Chickadee	4	Palm Warbler (Yellow)	2
Tree Swallow	6	Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle)	12
Barn Swallow	2	Black-throated Green Warbler	4
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	2	Northern Cardinal	1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	3	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	2
Red-breasted Nuthatch	3		
Brown Creeper	1	Hooded Merganser	3
Winter Wren	2	Least Sandpiper	3
Gray Catbird	1	Solitary Sandpiper	1
Veery	1	Bobolink	2
Hermit Thrush	3		