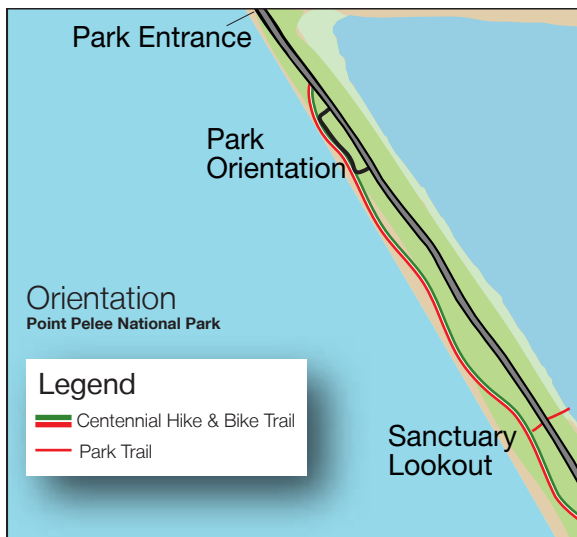




Hidden Birding Gems

Point Pelee National Park

During the Festival of Birds, demand for parking near the Visitor Centre is high. As the parking spots are filled, the lots will be closed and it will be necessary to spread out in the park. With restrictions on the number of people that can access some of the more popular/famous birding areas in the park, you may find yourself exploring some hidden gems. Here are some tips and tricks to get the most of your time spent in areas that may be new to you if the Visitor Centre and Tip areas are at capacity.



Park Orientation

Remember that there is limited parking at this location, so time your stay in this area accordingly. A boardwalk path from the parking lot will lead you out to a platform overlooking Pigeon Bay. Bring your scope and scan for loons, grebes and other waterfowl. Rarities like Western Grebe and Pacific Loon have both been spotted from this location.

Songbirds can concentrate in this area as it's the narrowest strip of forest in the park. A nice selection of warblers and other songbirds often frequent along the edge of the parking lot. You can pick up the Centennial T rail here and take it south. Cross the road to the Sanctuary lookout, a great spot to look for swallows and marsh birds.



Picnic Areas

All of the day-use picnic areas are attractive as they are surrounded by trees and great birding habitat. One of the most productive areas to try is the Madbin Jina – Sleepy Hollow – Dunes loop.

These three areas are connected by several different types of trails, the Centennial Trail, the West Beach Footpath and Seasonal Birding Footpaths. There is a little something for everyone. This section of the park is a great wooded alternative to some of the busier trails in the park. Start at any of the three picnic areas and make your way to the others, using any of the three trail options listed above. Switch it up, combine different trail types – it's all up to you.

The interior wooded areas are great for warblers, vireos and other songbirds. The grassy areas in the picnic areas, especially around the Sleepy Hollow picnic area shelter are great for observing sparrows. In addition, you'll find the habitat along the West Beach Footpath great for sparrows, towhees and Orchard Orioles. Make it an extended adventure by taking the West Beach Footpath all the way to Northwest Beach and then return on the Centennial Trail.

Northwest Beach and Area

With ample parking and washrooms available, Northwest Beach is a great location to start your exploration of the north end of the park. Hike north along the recently completed extension of the Centennial Trail towards Sanctuary.

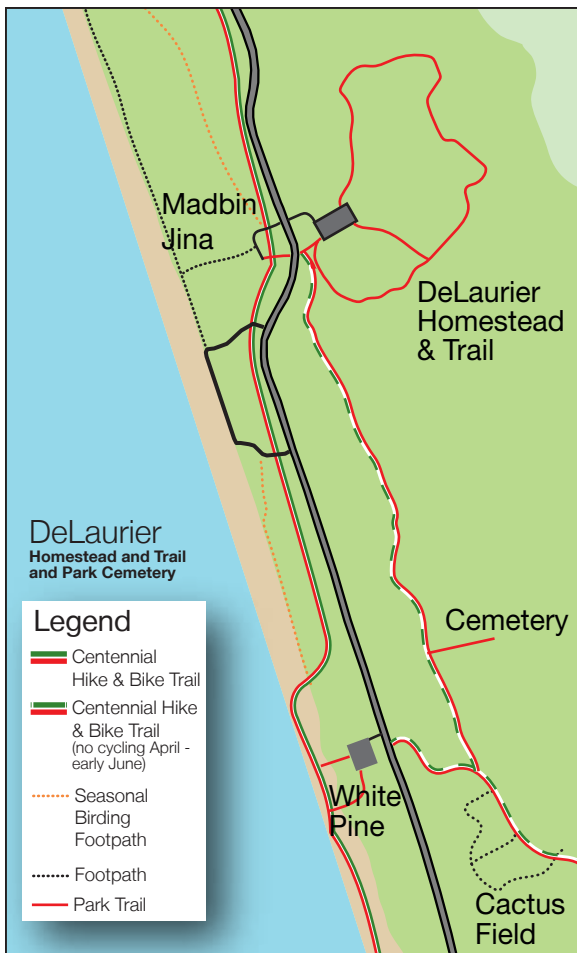
Once you reach Sanctuary, continue north through the dry forest area on the Seasonal Birding Footpath (that starts near the picnic shelter, see map) where it meets up with the Centennial Trail. You can loop back south to meet up with another Seasonal Birding Footpath that will lead you across the road to Blue Heron, where you can bird along the edge of the marsh. From there, it is just a quick hop back across the road to Northwest Beach where you started. Extend your walk by exploring parts of the Centennial Trail. Head to the trail head to the right of the Marsh Store, follow it back across the road and take the trail north across the old sand dunes via a boardwalk bridge. You'll emerge at the south end of Northwest Beach. Lots of great warblers, including Kentucky Warbler have been heard singing from this area, which is only recently accessible to the public.



DeLaurier Homestead and Trail and Park Cemetery

The DeLaurier Trail is one of the best for exploring a diversity of habitats. You'll find restored savannah, swamp forest, restored marsh edge and dry forest along the loop. This is one of the few reliable locations to find Black-capped Chickadees in the park, a common bird elsewhere, but often scarce within the park boundary. From DeLaurier, take the Centennial Trail south. At this time of the year, the traffic is restricted to foot only, so you won't have to worry about sharing this section of the trail with cyclists. The trail winds south, along additional savannah restoration sites, and areas where park staff has been restoring Yellow-breasted Chat habitat. Keep your ears open for their distinctive call. As the woods starts to surround the trail again, you'll reach the new stone entrance to the cemetery, a wonderful location for peaceful birdwatching. While there, take in some of the Indigenous history of the park. Visit in the evening to hear the Green Heron's bizarre croaking call.

Once you're ready to leave the cemetery, continue south to where the trail crosses over to White Pine Continue a little further south and loop through the Cactus Field Footpath, then head back on the main trail to cross the road to White Pine and follow the Centennial Trail north to Madbin Jina, where you can cross the road safely, returning to the DeLaurier parking lot. This section of the trail takes you through open wood and grassy shorelines. It is a great spot for both sparrows and warblers, including species like the Hooded Warbler.



There are so many trails to explore throughout the park. It is important to limit your time in high traffic areas. Remember to be courteous and take advantage of the area in which you find yourself as there are marvels throughout the park not just the Tip and the Visitor Centre.