



Pumpkin Point Viewing Platform Modification May 29, 2019

The two-tiered viewing platform at Pumpkin Point Marsh for many decades has been the go to place for both local and visiting nature enthusiasts. It offers not only a panoramic view of the extensive marsh but close up looks of the impressive number of wetland bird species that reside there or that stop to rest during spring and fall migration.

208 bird species have been recorded at the Pumpkin Point viewing platform hotspot on eBird (<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L763997>). It is one of the top birding locations within the Algoma District and is frequently visited by birders and nature lovers.

Here is some history on the viewing platform. Prior to the present day Pumpkin Point viewing platform, there was a small roofed, one level structure overlooking the marsh with plexiglass windows. Constructed in the mid-1980s, it served its purpose initially, but by the turn of the century, it had fallen into considerable disrepair.



Birding at Pumpkin Point – Val Walker



Virginia Rail – Carter Dorscht

Back in the late 1990s, an application was initiated by Bob Knudsen to the Great Lakes Heritage Coast project under the Ontario's Living Legacy initiative. As a result, in 2000, a \$30,000 grant was received by the Sault Naturalists Club for ten wildlife viewing platforms within the city, as well as points east. The funding provided capital to build and to maintain platforms, while labour was volunteered mostly by enthusiastic club members.

A partnership was initially formed with both the local OMNRF district office and Ducks Unlimited, which was instrumental in solving issues with landownership.

First on the docket was a rebuild of the Pumpkin Point viewing platform in 2002, primarily by club notables like Tony Walker, Don Wilshire and Jack Jones. The 30m boardwalk was replaced and the platform expanded with an upper level. Construction was completed in 2003.

Time takes its toll and there have been several club work parties making necessary repairs and



2015 repairs



2019 removing upper deck railing



2019 removing upper deck railing

modifications over the years using money from the fund. Despite this, the platform has continued to sink. As a result, the upper tier had a distinct tilt to the outside.

In 2019, the tilting was becoming more problematic and the structure less stable. After some thought, it was decided to remove the upper tier to stabilize the structure and make it safer for public use.

In May of this year, Chuck Miller spearheaded the mission with six volunteers, wielding pry bars, handsaws and a chain saw, and set out to dismantle the upper deck. With the removal of the stairs, the remaining lower platform has more space for observers.

Materials salvaged from the upper level were used to stabilize and enclose the viewing platform. The upper level bench seating is now on the lower deck. Surplus materials were hauled to the Laird landfill site.

The structure is now stabilized and safe for many more years of use by avid bird watchers and nature lovers.



2019 upper deck removal



2019 upper deck removal



2019 waste removal

The Sault Naturalists Club looks forward to its continuing partnership with the OMNRF, as well as the local support of the Township of Laird for any future improvements to this site. Thanks to all that have contributed over the years to keep this platform in good service.

Before



After



2019 work crew

