

International Migratory Bird Day

Saturday, May 12, 2012

by May Martineau, OYBC Student Member



I got up at around 6:30 (which, compared to many other OYBC field trips I've been on, isn't very early) and drove 2 1/2 hours to Port Clinton and the Black Swamp Bird Observatory. The first thing we did as a group was go see some recently banded birds shown to us by Ken Keffer, two of which were gray catbirds. One of them was a first year bird. You can tell the difference, as we were told, from the color on the edges of their primaries. Our catbird had brown edges to its primaries. An adult catbird would have gray edges, just like the rest of its body.

The next two birds were Common Yellowthroat and American Redstart. We added these to our list of birds seen that day, as soon as they were set free. We were told about how the number on the bird's band was similar to one of our social security numbers, because there is no other one like it. We learned about how the birds with little body fat were most likely the residential birds because all the birds that would be migrating on would need the stored fat to continue.

After Ken's presentation, we went down the new trail at Black Swamp and it was pretty uneventful -- until we got to a very large group of people standing in the middle of the trail, for lack of any other space, all with their binoculars facing in the same general direction. After some asking around, I figured out that they were all looking at a Kirtland's Warbler, which I'm sure for many, if not all, of the OYBC members, this was a lifer. We continued on, racking up a Dunlin, a Dowitcher and a Great Egret.

When we got back to the parking area I was dehydrated, but extremely excited. My dad and I walked to the car and, when we got back to where we were going to meet back up with the group, everybody was gone. We caught wind of a Ruddy Turnstone down on the beach and figured that everyone had gone there; we hurried over. I don't know about everyone else, but I got another lifer! After our Ruddy Turnstone we took a walk down the beach. I wasn't actually paying attention to the birds during this walk (shame on me), but I'm pretty sure that most people got a Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

After our walk on the beach, we decided to eat lunch near the east entrance to the boardwalk. We ran to the car, made our lunch, and made our way to the east entrance. We sat eating pretty uneventfully until Nathan said he saw a green heron preening right by the boardwalk. There was another bird to add to the list.

Slowly, one by one, we finished our lunches and started walking on the boardwalk. The first thing we saw on the boardwalk was a Tennessee Warbler and the first thing we heard was a Common Yellowthroat (Witchety-witchety-witchety).

As we continued on, we met Greg Miller on the boardwalk and near the same place as we saw a Mourning Warbler and a mystery warbler. At first we thought the mystery warbler was a Swainson's Warbler, but later with a little more research, shot that down.

As we finished up our walk on the boardwalk we came out with a list of 98 species. Among them were: Mourning Warbler, Canada Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Philadelphia Vireo, Wood Cock, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Blackpoll Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Veery, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo, Blackburnian Warbler, and Bay-breasted Warbler.

Metzger Marsh was our next stop after the boardwalk. We collected 17 new bird species there in all. We ended the day with 5 species over our goal of 110, raising the total for pledges we will collect to benefit Columbus Audubon. Driving 5 hours round trip was more than worth it for 115 species and 18 lifers!



