

May 2013: Bird-a-thon at Magee Marsh

by Aaron Tayal (OYBC Central Chapter)

The Early Birders recorded 127 species during our 2013 Bird-a-thon day, completely blowing away our original goal of 116 species and roaring past last year's 115 species mark!

It was 9:00 in the morning and we were driving into Magee Marsh Wildlife Area. Right away we saw two things: birds and people. Even as we drove in we saw egrets and orioles. Then we saw three giant parking lots filled up with cars. The license plates told us that the birders had come from far and wide to see the "warbler capital of the world."

I found my advisors and fellow OYBC members, and then we headed onto the boardwalk. We had some excellent guides to help us, including Chris Wood & Jessie Berry (Cornell Lab of Ornithology), Victor Emanuel (Victor Emanuel Nature Tours), Rob Ripma (Indiana Young Birders Club), Ryan Steiner (BSBO Education & Research Intern), and Wyatt Miller (BSBO Intern).



Right away, we were adding check marks to our bird list. I got great views of a Nashville Warbler, a Black-and-white Warbler, an

Ovenbird, and a Northern Waterthrush. Warbling Vireos were all around us. I learned the song of a Black-throated Blue Warbler. We had to thread our way through the hundreds and hundreds of people. If a crowd gathered in one place, then someone had probably spotted an uncommon bird like a Mourning Warbler. Finally we got to the other side of the boardwalk. This was the best part of the trip, in my opinion. At any one moment in time, our group could see four different species

of warblers. In a tree beside the parking lot we saw a Common Nighthawk.



Photos by Elijah Martineau.

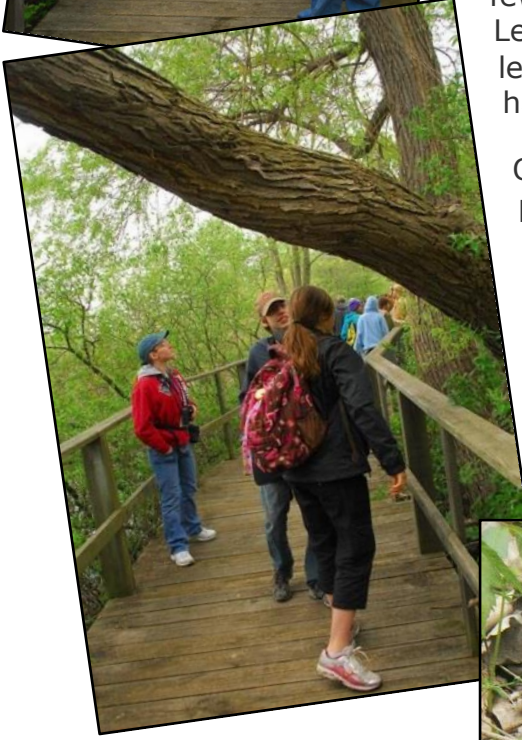
Then we ate lunch on the beach, which turned out to be a very aromatic experience. The smell of rotten fish was, in a word, disgusting. I had fun skipping rocks into the lake.

After lunch, when I was walking across a parking lot, I saw a taped-off stretch of grass. Someone near me said there was an American Woodcock nest. Where was the nest? I looked and looked again, but I saw nothing. Then I saw the blink of an eye! The female woodcock was sitting perfectly still on top of the nest. She was basically invisible in the tall grass.



We decided to walk the same trail where we saw a Kirtland's Warbler last year, in hopes of the same good luck. We didn't see a Kirtland's, but I saw a Cape May Warbler and a Canada Warbler. We also saw Common Terns, Bonaparte's Gulls, and a Scarlet Tanager. On our way back, someone spotted a small raptor flying past. It was so small that it looked like a pigeon to me. We recognized it as a Sharp-shinned Hawk, because its tail was squared at the end.

It was nearing the end of the day. OYBC had already beaten last year's bird count. We drove by Ottawa Wildlife Refuge and Metzger Marsh to spot a few more birds. We saw Lesser Scaup and learned that these birds have squarer heads than their Greater Scaup relatives.



Our bird count was 127! Our fundraising efforts were going to pay off. The money that we collected for the Bird-a-thon would benefit Columbus Audubon. Some of this money would be used to fund more great OYBC trips! I said goodbye to my friends, and I looked forward to the next trip to Magee.

Bird photos below by Elijah Martineau.



*The following complete species list includes a few non-avian "species" at the end;
compiled by Joey Tomei, a member of the OYBC Central Chapter.*

Merlin	Hairy Woodpecker	Cape May Warbler
Marsh Wren	Northern Flicker	Northern Parula
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Pileated Woodpecker	Magnolia Warbler
Lesser Scaup	Least Flycatcher	Bay-breasted Warbler
Snowy Egret	Eastern Phoebe	Blackburnian Warbler
American Kestrel	Great-Crested Flycatcher	Yellow Warbler
House Sparrow	Eastern Kingbird	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Canada Goose	Yellow-throated Vireo	Blackpoll Warbler
Mute Swan	Blue-headed Vireo	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Trumpeter Swan	Warbling Vireo	Palm Warbler
Wood Duck	Red-eyed Vireo	Pine Warbler
Gadwall	Blue Jay	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Mallard	American Crow	Black-throated Green Warbler
Blue-winged Teal	Purple Martin	Canada Warbler
Hooded Merganser	Tree Swallow	Wilson's Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Eastern Towhee
Double-crested Cormorant	Bank Swallow	Chipping Sparrow
Great Blue Heron	Barn Swallow	Field Sparrow
Great Egret	Black-capped Chickadee	Song Sparrow
Green Heron	Tufted Titmouse	Lincoln's Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	White-breasted Nuthatch	Swamp Sparrow
Osprey	Carolina Wren	White-throated Sparrow
Bald Eagle	House Wren	White-crowned Sparrow
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Winter Wren	Scarlet Tanager
Cooper's Hawk	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Northern Cardinal
Red-tailed Hawk	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
American Coot	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Indigo Bunting
Sandhill Crane	Eastern Bluebird	Red-winged Blackbird
Killdeer	Veery	Eastern Meadowlark
Greater Yellowlegs	Swainson's Thrush	Common Grackle
American Woodcock	Wood Thrush	Brown-headed Cowbird
Bonaparte's Gull	American Robin	Orchard Oriole
Ring-billed Gull	Gray Catbird	Baltimore Oriole
Herring Gull	Northern Mockingbird	Purple Finch
Common Tern	Brown Thrasher	House Finch
Forster's Tern	European Starling	Pine Siskin
Rock Pigeon	Ovenbird	American Goldfinch
Mourning Dove	Northern Waterthrush	
Great Horned Owl	Black-and-white Warbler	<i>Non-avian flying sightings</i>
Common Nighthawk	Prothonotary Warbler	<i>included:</i>
Chimney Swift	Tennessee Warbler	
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Orange-crowned Warbler	One helicopter near Magee Marsh
Red-headed Woodpecker	Nashville Warbler	(make/company is probably Bell)
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Common Yellowthroat	Several Cessna 172s
Downy Woodpecker	American Redstart	One Douglas Cargo Plane