

Magee Marsh Ohio and the Piney Tract of PA
12-19 May 2012
With Lynn Jackson and Bill and Naomi Murphy

12-May-2012 – Lynn came to my house and left her car in my garage and we went to get the Bill and Naomi, leaving their house around 7am. We headed up the Northeast Extension of the PA to Route 80 to Ohio Route 57 to Ohio Route 2. We made a couple stops on route to stretch our legs and arrived at Magee Marsh Wildlife Area around 3:20. As we drove in to the parking area at the boardwalk there was a steady stream of cars leaving. A steady, steady stream of cars leaving Magee Marsh. Today was the last full day of the BIGGEST WEEK OF Birding and if this was any indication of the number of people in attendance, we all were glad we missed the number of people in attendance.

As we got out of my car a person asked if we were just arriving and if so had we seen the Kirtland's Warbler yet. Yes, we just were arriving and therefore, No, we had not seen the Kirtland's yet. Where was it being seen? After gathering directions and a quick pit stop, we were off in search of the Kirtland's Warbler. This Kirtland's was currently being seen from the trail from the far west end of the parking lot and off we went to find the handful of people in search of it. The big mob was on Thursday when an earlier Kirtland's was seen. We found the group looking but no warbler but there were a few Yellow Warblers, a couple American Redstarts and a Wilson's Warbler in the area. After 15-20 minutes we decided to head back to the boardwalk but on the way, we came upon a group of birders who had headed back ahead of us and they had re-found the Kirtland's Warbler. YE HA!! Eye-to-eye views, binoculars not required. 430+ miles in a car were well worth it.

So we headed to the boardwalk and enjoyed views of warblers as advertised: Cape May, Blackpolls, more Wilson's, Prothonotary, Chestnut-sided, Tennessee, Mourning, and Northern Waterthrush. Today was a slower day since we were only on the boardwalk from 4:15-6:30 so we maybe had 18 species. We also had Veery, Gray-cheeked and Swainson's Thrush. Since it was a long day and we still had to check into our motel, we left and headed into Oregon, Ohio toward the Comfort Inn. Rather than have to go out again, we just stopped at a Pizza Hut for dinner in Oregon before checking into the motel.

13-May-2012 – We met for breakfast at 7 and were going to head for the Oak Openings Preserve and then go to the Ottawa NWR. Today was the only day the auto route would be open during our visit. Although we knew the birding at Ottawa could be marginal, we also know the impoundments there would be some of our only chances for ducks and shorebirds so we figured we had to take advantage of this opportunity. We also had been a bit put off by all those cars leaving Magee and since we had 5 days here thought we didn't have to go to Magee today as it was the last day of the festival.

We arrived at Oak Openings a round 8. We quickly found Yellow-breasted Chat, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Lark Sparrow. These are all a couple of the targets for this area. We didn't have much luck with Blue Grosbeak or Summer Tanager. We then ran into Adrian Binns and his tour group and he lead us to an area where there was Acadian Flycatcher and Hooded Warbler. As we left the area we ran into another birder who had some sparrows along Sager Road, which we were able to confirm as Grasshopper sparrows. We also found Eastern Meadowlarks here.

Lunch was back in Oregon at the Tim Horton's before we went to Ottawa NWR. We found a few shorebirds, Hooded Mergansers, Common Gallinule and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird coming to one of their feeders. As we completed the auto route and were pulling back onto Route 2 (all these birding areas except Oak Openings are near each other off of Ohio Route 2), 4 American White Pelicans were soaring overhead. We then went to Metzger Wildlife Area (our first visit) and found American Coots before heading to the Blackberry Corners Tavern (5975 N. Elliston-Trowbridge Road, Martin OH 43445) for dinner

14-May-2012 – Breakfast was at 7 and then we were going to head to Magee to catch the morning on the board walk. On the way to Magee, we figured we would check Krause and Stange Roads for field birds since late in the day on the 13th an Upland Sandpiper was seen on Stange. Along Krause at the wet area we found Lesser Yellowlegs and in the fields we found a few Horned Larks. Along Stange Road, we did find the Upland Sandpiper way out where it was reported. We spent the better part of the morning along the boardwalk. We had 20+ warbler species today, Black-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Screech-Owl and Great Horned Owl. The Black Swamp Bird Observatory reported on its blog that while first time visitors to Magee Marsh would be impressed with the species diversity currently on the boardwalk, the number of individual birds was below average. Well, I do know we were not experiencing a fallout but I also know with time and patience we were seeing 18-20 species of warbler easily including multiple Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, Cape May, Wilson's, and Tennessee daily. Prothonotary and Yellow-rumps were in your face. And then there were Orange-crowned, Mourning and Canada to find. This was our experience.

We left Magee and had lunch down the road at the Barnside Creamery before going to Maumee State Park to check the lakeside and walk the boardwalk trail until 3:30 before calling it an early day before having dinner at the Real Seafood Co (22 Main Street, Toledo OH 43605). We had run into Edie Parnum and a group of friends at Magee Marsh and they recommended eating here and they were quite right as dinner was most excellent.

15-May-2012 – Breakfast today was at 6:30 as we hoped to find the elusive Virginia Rail at Metzger en route to Magee this morning. Today was not the day to see it. We also did our morning swing through Krause and Stange Roads. The wet area had 3 American Pipits and several Savannah Sparrows at separate stops so we made it a point to always make a quick scan as we went by. For good measure stopped at the Boss Unit off of Benton-Carrollton Road for another shorebird option. In all our stops at the Boss Unit, we had wonderful studies of Dunlin and we added White-rumped, and Least Sandpipers to the other shorebirds we found at others shorebird stops. We also learned about a group of Black-bellied Plover on Krause Road during one of our stops here. We found people were always willing to share information in the field and along the boardwalk.

We finally arrived at the Magee Marsh Boardwalk and had the usual 20+ species mix of warblers. The numbers of individuals may have been slightly down from Saturday when we arrived but the diversity was still high and today we even got an even much better look at a Mourning Warbler. So if this was a lower than average year and we definitely had not encountered a fallout, one can only imagine what a fallout or above average year would be like. Every day on the boardwalk we had Black-billed or Yellow-

billed Cuckoo and at least one day we had both. Lunch was again back at the Barnside Creamery. It was quick and convenient. We had decided not to pick up lunch and bring it with us as there were places nearby and we were happy to maintain a low keyed approach to this trip. After lunch we made a return trip to Oak Openings in hopes of finding Blue Grosbeak and Summer Tanager. Well we did add Yellow-breasted Chat, Ovenbird, Blue-winged and Pine Warbler to the days Wood Warbler list making this a 25 or 26 species day, easily our single day best. We then went to the Nature Conservancy Kitt-Todd property in search of the Karner Blue butterfly that had been reintroduced to the area. We found some volunteers who told us that we needed to search another area of the property that was a ways away on foot and in was hot (mid-80s) and we had been on our feet all day, so we decided discretion was the better part of valor. However, we did find Vesper Sparrows here. Rather than have to go out again, we just stopped at a Buffalo Wild Wings for dinner in Oregon before getting back to the motel. It had been a long hot day. There was a chance of a cold front coming through during the night. Besides bringing more amenable temperatures, if it would arrive at the right time it could bring migrants.

16-May-2012 -- -- Breakfast today was at 7:00 as we hoped to find the elusive Virginia Rail at Metzger en route to Magee this morning. Today was still not the day to see it. We also did our morning swing through Krause and Stange Roads and the Boss Unit before arriving at Magee. While at Metzger we had to out wait a 20 minute rain shower. We finally arrived at the Magee Marsh Boardwalk and had the usual 18-20 species mix of warblers. The numbers of individuals was down from Saturday when we arrived but the diversity was still high and with patience you still got great looks at everything. Also the number of people was down from the weekend. There still were a couple Woodcock to find and Thrushes to sort through. For lunch we went to the Crazy Lady Saloon (22645 Front Street, Curtice OH 43412). We would definitely recommend this local waterhole for a meal. They also were sponsoring a bus trip to an upcoming Tigers-Indians game that for \$50 was a steal of a deal and seats were available.

After lunch we checked back at the Boss Unit, and then we walked the woods at Ottawa NWR and a short visit to the boardwalk at Magee to see if anything had picked up this afternoon from the morning. It was more of the same. It was a windy morning off of Lake Erie so we knew birds would still be in the woods. Unfortunately, the timing of the front had not resulted in a fallout. We then made a trip to Metzger on the way back to Oregon. Except for Oak Openings all these refuges and wildlife areas are truly next door neighbors. This trip we were rewarded with 3 White-faced Ibis which are rather rare birds in northwestern Ohio. Dinner was at the Oregon Inn (6067 Bayshore Road, Oregon OH 43618).

17-May-2012 – Breakfast at 7am and we stopped at Metzger but today we saw the Virginia Rail (we had heard it most of the other days we stopped, we just hadn't seen it). Today we by-passed Krause-Stange Roads and went right to the Boss Unit. We finally arrived at the Magee Marsh Boardwalk. Driving in today we heard Willow Flycatcher for the first time along the 2.5 mile drive from Ohio Route 2 to the parking area by the boardwalk. In the parking lot, Bill heard a Red-headed Woodpecker and we tracked it down before walking along the boardwalk. Today the number of birds seemed more reduced to me but in keeping with the first Willow Flycatcher, we also had our first Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. We ran into 2 guys we had seen most days and who I had shown a Wilson's Warbler to which he had needed at the time. So he told me he owed me and I told him I wanted a Mourning or Connecticut Warbler at payback. Well I already had 2 Mourning Warblers so whenever we passed each other on the boardwalk

we smiled and he joked that he was working on the Connecticut. Well this morning he told us that he had had a Connecticut, earlier along the beach trail from the eastern most corner of the auxiliary parking lot. So back to the car we went and to the spot we went where the Connecticut Warbler was no longer in view. Such is birding and such are Connecticut Warblers. Lunch was back at the Oregon Inn, so that gives you an idea of what we thought of dinner.

From there we went back to Maumee State Park to find out specific information on the Mallard Club and while we were there we learned that the Least Tern was being seen along the beach in the State Park. Danna, the state park "ranger" is a birder and she gave us the details on the tern and Sedge Wren at the Mallard Club. So off we went to find the tern (got it). It was apparently only the 20th state record or thereabouts. While looking for the tern, we observed Bank and Cliff Swallows.

At the Mallard Club, we did find Sedge Wrens from the parking lot nearest Cousino Road, as Danna described it. We called it a day and headed back to the Comfort Inn. Dinner was at El Vaquero (24 Main Street, Toledo OH 43605). This was a very nice dinner as well and next door to Real Seafood Co. There is a small restaurant complex there along the waterfront. There was also an Italian restaurant and a 4th place that looked American Bistro.

18-May-2012 – We decided to up and leave and head straight to the Piney Tract near Clarion Pa. Having Breakfast at 7 and leaving when we were done and the car was packed. We picked up lunch at a Panera Bread at one of the rest areas in Ohio. We arrived at the intersection of Elliot and Mt Zion Roads a little before noon. Bobolinks, Meadowlarks, Bluebirds, and Grasshopper Sparrows were all still active. We heard one or two Henslow's and had distant backlit views but that was hardly satisfying. We ran into another birder who used to live in Clarion, he advised us that first thing in the morning would be much better. He also gave us lots of directions for Clay-colored Sparrow and more current grassland birds than was on the Seneca Rocks Audubon Society web page. The information there is generally correct but his information sounded like he had been there this year.

We had to go to the second spot for Clay-colored Sparrow in Curllsville to find one along with Prairie Warbler but the targets for the Piney Tract were falling into place. We decided that it was mid-afternoon on a warm sunny day and it would be best to just try again in the morning now that we had all the places marked on our GPSs. So we headed to the Comfort Inn. Dinner was at the RRR Roadhouse in the Clarion Mall, Clarion, PA.

19-May-2012 – Breakfast was at 7 and we checked out of the motel and headed back to the intersection of Elliot and Mt Zion Roads. Sure enough there were multiple Henslow's Sparrows calling on either side of the road. These were much better and they just sat there allowing us to put the scope on the and zoom way up. From here we went in search of Upland Sandpipers and found one playing king of the hill from the top of the transformer on the power line going across the farm fields. We also had Meadowlarks, Bobolinks and a Northern Harrier. Our last new bird was a White-eyed Vireo.

Even though it was still early morning, there really wasn't much else new to see here so we just headed for home.