

MIDWEST SPRING BIRDING MAY 2022

Joe Morlan and I left San Francisco on May 10 and flew non-stop to Detroit. We spent our first night in a Comfort Inn near the airport. The next morning we took the hotel shuttle back to Hertz to pick up our rental car. We drove directly to Oak Openings Preserve Metropark in Swanton, OH. We birded the feeders at the Conference Center for an hour or so, familiarizing ourselves with the common birds. Joe photographed Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Black-capped Chickadees and White-breasted Nuthatches. We then drove around the preserve and had a wonderful encounter with singing Indigo Buntings. The eBird list is here

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S109679540>

About 1:30 we drove east to Maumee Bay State Park and registered for the **Biggest Week in American Birding Festival**. We then headed to our motel, the Sleep Inn in Oregon, OH. The desk clerk was able to change our room to the first floor for about half the price of our reservation. If you plan to go in May, it's best to reserve months in advance to get good room choices. By 4:30 we were at the nearby Applebee's Restaurant, just in time for ½ priced appetizers and wine. It became our go to place for dinner as the food is inexpensive and very well prepared. The weather had been sunny all day and about 85 degrees.

The morning of May 12 we arrived at the east end of the boardwalk at Magee Marsh about 8AM. We spent over 6 hours on the boardwalk and the estuary trail, where a male Kirtland's Warbler was being seen. Joe got great photos and his battery died so he took the one from my camera for the rest of the day. We saw 17 species of warblers that morning, including 25 Yellow Warblers and 9 Chestnut-sided Warblers. The eBird lists with Joe's photos are here:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S111093034>

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S111093022>

Our next stop was at Maumee Bay State Park and we had fried cod and fries for lunch in the restaurant. Then we drove over to the Nature Center and checked out the feeders, which attracted a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Baltimore Oriole. We were fortunate to find our friend Bruce W. here as he knew of a nesting red morph Eastern Screech Owl nearby. We followed Bruce to the parking area further along the boardwalk and were lucky to see the adult poking its head out of the nest hole. Another birder pointed out a roosting Common Nighthawk on a tree limb. As we returned to our car, we spotted a pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers building a nest about ten feet off the walk. Our eBird list for Maumee Bay State Park, with Joe's photos, is here:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S109795294>

On the way back to the motel, we stopped at Howard Marsh Metropark around 3:45PM to look for a couple of Yellow-headed Blackbirds that had been reported. We were lucky to see them in the grass right near the parking lot. The checklist is here:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S109802595>

I dropped Joe off at the Sleep Inn and went shopping for grocery supplies at Meijer, a large store like Target. We had a microwave and a small refrigerator in our room, just enough space for lunch fixings and some microwave dinners, which we ate in our room. The day had been unseasonably hot and sunny again. The three-hour time difference made it difficult to fall asleep since 10PM in Oregon was 7PM to us. Similarly, 7AM the next morning still felt like 4AM. It would take a few days to adjust.

On Friday, May 13 we returned to the Magee Marsh Boardwalk by 8AM and started on the east end so the sun would be at our back. In the 15 years since Joe and I had been here, there had been a tremendous amount of destruction due to a fierce windstorm. Many of the taller trees toward the west had been blown down and the understory was thick with vines and branches. Views of warblers were often more obscured and the sun was quite strong. The weather was in the mid-eighties every day so far. It was a day of many Bay-breasted Warblers and a male Black-throated Blue Warbler showed well in the four hours we were there. A pleasant surprise was a chance meeting with our friend Lily D. from the Central Valley of California. Our eBird list is here:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S109881694>

For lunch we drove a couple miles for a picnic at a stakeout spot for three Glossy Ibis. About 1PM we arrived at Ottawa NWR, stopping at the nature center for Joe to photograph the Purple Martins nesting in artificial gourds. We drove part of the tour loop and enjoyed views of nesting Trumpeter Swans and soaring Bald Eagles. We returned to the Sleep Inn to rest and have dinner at Applebee's again. We had a field trip that evening to see American Woodcocks display at Maumee Bay State Park. We did hear two and one landed in the short grass but too dark for photos. We were unable to pick them out in flight.

Joe and I decided to explore other areas on Saturday and Sunday as it was the last weekend of the **Biggest Week in American Birding** and we knew the boardwalk would be packed with people. By 8AM on Saturday we parked at Pearson Metropark lot 4 and one of the first birds we heard was a loudly drumming Pileated Woodpecker. It was at the top of a 50-foot snag and Joe was able to get great photos. The Black Swamp Trail was not very birdy, so we checked out the "Windows on Wildlife" room with large windows, feeders and a water feature. The most surprising observation was a groundhog which hung out under the feeders for about 20 minutes. A female Ruby-throated Hummingbird came to the feeder just long enough for a picture. Our eBird list is here:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S110023969>

By 12:30 that afternoon we arrived at Metzger Marsh, birding along the causeway and the stand of trees at the edge of Lake Erie. We saw 11 species of warblers and enjoyed the antics of a couple of Eastern Kingbirds. Here is the checklist:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S110071863>

On Sunday, May 15, we began the day at the Maumee Bay State Park Nature Center. It was a lucky choice as there was a female Kirtland's Warbler in the trees out front near the pond. It's wonderful that the Kirtland's Warbler numbers have increased to the extent that it is now off the endangered species list. Photos on our eBird checklist are here:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S110223211>

About 11AM we began our three-hour tour of the Ottawa National Wildlife refuge, which is open limited days so do plan ahead. Highlights of our 47 species were Trumpeter Swans on nests, 10 Bald Eagles and 3 Great Crested Flycatchers. The checklist is here:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S110290464>

We stopped by Maumee Bay to check on the Eastern Screech Owl and saw an adult and one owlet. Then off the dinner at Applebee's and a good night's rest.

Monday, May 16 began with showers, so we waited until about 8:30 to drive to the boardwalk at Magee Marsh. It was cloudy and in the 50's but it warmed up soon. Close to the east end of the boardwalk a crowd of birders was listening to a Mourning Warbler singing. We barely caught a glimpse as it was across the channel in heavy vegetation.

As the day got warmer, Joe went back to the rental car to leave his coat. Unfortunately, he put it in the trunk and closed it, not realizing the car keys were in the trunk. His Camry would have sounded an alarm to prevent him from locking the trunk, but this Kia Forte had no such failsafe. Aghast, Joe called my cellphone and explained. I met him in the parking lot and offered to wait for AAA to arrive. Joe was so upset and I knew I could manage without him. Within an hour AAA arrived and unlocked the car to release the trunk latch. Disaster averted. We continued birding the boardwalk until about 1PM. Here's the eBird list with 14 species of warblers and an illustration of why Wood Ducks got their name:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S110390051>

In the afternoon we drove around Howard Marsh again and the Yellow-headed Blackbirds were still there. An early dinner at Cousino's Restaurant in Oregon was delicious with huge portions of local freshwater fish. The night was very windy after the rain showers.

May 17 was our last day of birding, so we returned to the boardwalk at Magee Marsh and spent about 6 hours walking back and forth. We had spectacular views of a male Blackburnian Warbler and a Black-throated Blue warbler was stunning and cooperative. Great views of

Scarlet Tanager and Indigo Bunting are always a treat. We parked on the side of the causeway to eat lunch and had a flyover Sandhill Crane. Our eBird list is here:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S110493818>

In the afternoon we checked Metzger Marsh once again, but the wind was fierce. We did get brief looks at a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird. On the way back to the Sleep Inn we spent a short time at Pearson Metropark and a Swainson's Thrush obliged outside "Windows on Wildlife". The groundhog was also still hanging around.

After seven days of hardcore birding we were ready to fly home. Spring migration in Ohio is wonderful and we enjoyed our trip tremendously.