

# Ohio: The Biggest Week in Birding | Trip Report

## May 7-14, 2022 | by Bryan Shirley



With guides, Dan Donaldson & Bryan Shirley and participants Amy, Barrie, Bob, Bryan, Dan, Dana, Dondi, Edna, Jean, Kay, Mike, Paul, Ray and Sheila.



**Sat., May 7**

**Rocky River Nature Center | Wendy Park**

Our tour started today, and we started out our birding a few minutes' drive from the hotel at the Rocky River Nature Center. We were all excited to be birding, so a few minutes from the hotel the Rocky River Nature Center was perfect. The feeders held a few common species like Tufted Titmouse, Black-capped Chickadee, and Northern Cardinal. After checking out the exhibits inside the nature center we did a short walk. It wasn't super birdy, but we enjoyed good looks at our first Palm Warbler of the trip. From there we headed into downtown Cleveland and enjoyed a great dinner at The Harp – a popular Irish pub. After dinner we had a bit of time to explore the Cleveland waterfront at Wendy Park. We had our first Baltimore Orioles of the trip and enjoyed watching our only Bonaparte's Gulls of the trip as they worked up and down the mouth of the Cuyahoga River. A Northern Mockingbird was a pleasant surprise here – the only one seen on the trip.

**Sun., May 8**

**Cuyahoga Valley National Park | Maumee Bay State Park**

This morning we spent our time birding at Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Our first stop was at the historic Station Road Bridge. Our birding here started out with a bang when we a fellow birder alerted us to the presence of an American Woodcock hiding only a few feet from the trail. Soon we had our first Orchard Orioles and started seeing a few warblers. After we crossed the bridge, we heard our target here and after a bit of searching we all had great looks at a beautiful Cerulean Warbler. This area is also known for Yellow-throated Warblers, but they didn't appear today – one of our few dips of the trip. After a stop at the Great Blue Heron rookery, the scenic town of Peninsula provided a welcome break for drinks and lunch. Our next stop was the restored grasslands that were once home to the coliseum that was home to the Cleveland Cavaliers. We picked up a few grassland species here and then made the drive to Maumee Bay State Park – our home for the rest of the week.



## Mon., May 9

## Magee Marsh | Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge

Today was our first of several trip to the boardwalk at Magee Marsh and it didn't disappoint. We had only gone a few feet on the boardwalk when we were treated to a Yellow-throated Vireo. While admiring the vireo, many of us were lucky enough to have a Golden-winged Warbler land next to it for brief but wonderful views! It was slow going on the boardwalk due to the number of birds! We ended up with 15 species of warblers. On top of that it was fun to see the constant flocks of Blue Jays overhead and seeing a Bald Eagle nest with chicks was a treat. After lunch back at the lodge we visited Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge and did the auto tour loop. We added a few shorebirds to the list including both Yellowlegs, Dunlin, and Least. The highlight of the afternoon was the adorable Great Horned Owl chicks in a large broken off treetop.

## Tues., May 10

## Oak Openings Metropark

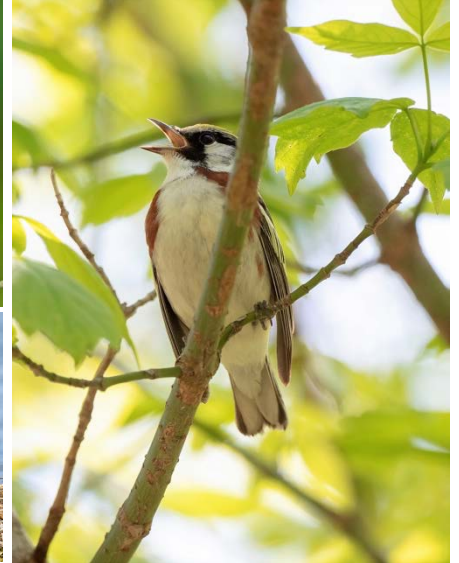
Today we decided to hit some new habitat and headed west to Toledo. Our destination was Oak Openings Metropark. Our first stop was at the nature center and as soon as we opened the van doors we were greeted by a variety of warblers and vireos calling. A Red-bellied Woodpecker visited the bird feeder, and we had our first Great Crested Flycatcher of the trip. The open areas along the Ridge Trail provided great looks of a couple of Yellow-breasted Chats and several Red-headed Woodpeckers were in the area. Later we visited a grassland area and added Lark Sparrows, a rare breeder in Ohio. Blue-winged Warblers were calling nearby but they were a bit far off the road and ended up as a "heard only". Lunch today was at the famous Tony Packo's in Toledo, then we headed back to Maumee Bay. We spent the evening on the boardwalk here. The boardwalk was pretty birdy – we had several Palm Warblers only a few feet off the boardwalk and added our first Blackpoll Warbler of the trip. We hoped to see Eastern Screech Owl but had no luck (they were observed earlier in a nest hole by part of our group). Watching a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher build a nest was a good consolation prize.

## Wed., May 11

## Metzger Marsh

Today was everything you imagine when you think of Magee Marsh in May. We hit the boardwalk early this morning and it was hopping. Chestnut-sided, Yellow, Nashville & Magnolia Warblers seemed to be everywhere. We hadn't gone far when we heard about a Kirtland's Warbler being seen near the beach, so we all hurried there. No problem finding the spot thanks to the huge crowd, and we were rewarded with nice views of this rare migrant. Before we went back for lunch, we had recorded 22 warbler species this morning! After lunch and an





afternoon break, we headed to Metzger Marsh. On the drive in there were quite a few coots and gallinules in the marsh and we picked up our first Common Terns as they hunted near the road. The small forest patch at the end of the road was packed with warblers. In the short time we birded here we saw 14 warbler species. We also got brief views of our first Yellow-billed Cuckoo of the trip. Our next stop was at Howard Marsh. There had been reports of Yellow-headed Blackbird here, a rare species for Ohio. As soon as we parked the vans, we saw a pair of them feeding on the grass nearby. While we were watching them, we had a few Black-necked Stilts fly past and then eventually land so we could all enjoy them in the scopes. A couple of people had Horned Larks near the restrooms, but we were unable to relocate them with the rest of the group.

## **Thurs., May 12                      Kelley's Island | Glacier Grooves | Marblehead Lighthouse**

This morning we drove about an hour to the ferry terminal and took the short ferry ride across to Kelley's Island. Our first stop on the island was at the Glacier Grooves – huge grooves several hundred feet long carved by glaciers into the limestone. From there we took a short walk along the beach and into the forest bordering an old limestone quarry. We had a pair of Northern Rough-winged Swallows that appeared to be scouting out holes in the cement remains of the quarry and got brief views of a Canada Warbler. Carolina Wrens were calling along the trail and eventually we were rewarded with nice views as one sang loudly from high in a tree. Lunch was at the Village Pump, a local favorite. Afterwards we birded at a local private nature preserve called Jones Preserve. The birding was good here and we had a good mix of warblers, a few Chipping and other sparrows, and a Great Crested Woodpecker. Out at the beach there was a flock of 22 Red-Breasted Mergansers, but the highlight was checking out all the coral and various shell fossils here. Back on the mainland, we visited the Lakeside Daisy State Nature Preserve to view Ohio's rarest flower and then stopped for a few minutes at Marblehead Lighthouse. After an early dinner at a wonderful seafood place in Port Clinton we made the drive back to Magee Marsh. It was wonderful in the evening – fewer people on the boardwalk and very cooperative birds. We had Prothonotary, Black-throated Blue, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, and other warblers posing for photos only a few feet away. Once again left Magee Marsh feeling lucky to be birding in such a magical place.

## **Fri., May 13                      Final Morning Birding at Magee Marsh**

Our last morning of birding of course we wanted to be back at Magee Marsh. Most of the warblers were familiar to us by now and we moved quickly though the more common species searching for the few possibilities we still wanted to see. Due to the familiarity with the birds and the boardwalk after several trips, we all were pretty



spread out today. Some people walked quickly through most of the boardwalk and others were happy to enjoy the plethora of birds near the entrance. As a result, everyone saw some different birds, but as a group we got both Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos, Mourning Warbler, Ovenbird, Hooded Warbler, Canada Warbler, and lots more. After we left the boardwalk, we spent a bit of time drooling over the new gear at Optics Alley, then took a short walk behind the visitor's center at Ottawa NWR. Once again, we heard Blue-winged Warbler singing but were not able to get views of it. During the tour we had heard Wood Thrush a few times but finally got looks at it here. We returned to the lodge for lunch and spent the remainder of the afternoon relaxing and packing. Dinner was at The Betruit, a well-known Lebanese Restaurant. Back at the lodge we went through the checklist for the last time, then took one last walk on the boardwalk. It was already past sunset and getting dark and we were hoping to see the Eastern Screech Owl we missed earlier. Today we had better luck – the chicks were out of the nest now! There were 3 fuzzball chicks and eventually both parents appeared as well. Talk about a perfect ending to our tour!

## **Sat., May 14**                      **Departures**

We left the lodge early and made our way to Cleveland airport where we said our goodbyes and went our separate ways.

*Photo Credits: Baltimore Oriole (Doug Greenberg- DG), Orchard Oriole, Northern Mockingbird, Black-capped Chickadee (DG), Golden-winged Warbler (Tom Dove -TD), Red-bellied Woodpecker (DG), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (DG), Great Crested Flycatcher (MAHA), Black-necked Stilt, Black-throated Blue Warbler (TD), Red-Breasted Merganser, Chestnut-sided Warbler (DG), Eastern Screech Owl (DG)*