

Field Trip Report – Hocking Hills Trip
April 26-28, 2024
Leader: Don Burlett

We last offered this trip back in 2019. We decided to revisit this trip and with the extremely kind help of both John Watts (formerly of Columbus Metroparks) and Heather Stehle of Crane Hollow, we were able to do this trip again. Heather is the Executive Director of the Crane Hollow Reserve and John, a former Director at the Columbus Metroparks.

10 intrepid birders headed south early Friday morning and we traveled with only a brief lunch stop to Pickerington Ponds Metropark, east of Columbus, Ohio. We went directly to the maintenance area where we were able to view a nesting Barn Owl sitting in the hole in a barn. Not great views because it was the middle of the day but it was definitely present.



Barn Owl on Nest (photo: Karen Kessler)

We continued on to Glacier Knoll within the Pickerington Ponds Metropark before we headed further south to Lake Logan. There we birded several areas of the lake (Evans Road, the Beach and the Dam) adding species as we rolled along. We then headed to Crane Hollow and then to dinner at the Millstone BBQ. Before bed, we enjoyed American Woodcocks displaying in the field just below the office building. For the first day, we tallied 63 species in essentially a half day of birding.



Off the Deck at Crane Hollow (photo: Dan Gertiser)

The glorious second day started birding the road at the office out to the main road. John did an amazing job helping us find all sorts of birds on the driveway. The Prairie Warblers were singing when we got up, White-eyed Vireos were on territory, Blue-winged Warblers calling from their roosts and many other great birds at this spot. Another highlight bird from this spot was the Yellow-breasted Chat calling and flying for all to see. We also had Carolina Chickadees, a Kentucky Warbler was heard, Veery and Wood Thrushes calling and more.



Prairie Warbler (photo: Karen Kessler)



Blue-winged Warbler (photo: Malissa Bossardet)

We then drove to Dupler Road and the Rockbridge Canal to look for Prothonotary Warbler. It was an elusive bird but we added him and we also got a Yellow-throated Warbler at this spot. We then headed to Clear Creek Metropark and we walked both the Neotoma Valley



Prothonotary Warbler (photo: Malissa Bossardet)



Louisiana Waterthrush (photo: Karen Kessler)

trail and the Lower Hemlock trail in search of other elusive species. The Neotoma Valley trail was great and a couple of great birds were seen here. Louisiana Waterthrush was found here, bouncing around up in the trees. We also found a Worm-eating Warbler as we travelled the trail. Both these birds are not every year birds and a few lifers were noted here for some of the folks. We added a Cerulean Warbler back along the main road and later added a Common Merganser that breeds in the creek there. By the end of the day, we had notched 13 warblers for the trip and were at 90 species for the weekend.



Looking for the Prothonotary Warbler (photo: Dan Gertiser)

Dinner that night was joyous at the Hocking Hills Lodge, as we celebrated our tremendous day with warblers and life birds. After dinner, we visited Old Man's Cave and enjoyed some scenery before heading back to the Hollow.



Relaxing after Dinner (photo: Dan Gertiser)



Old Man's Cave (photo: Dan Gertiser)

Sunday morning, we again birded the road to the office, seeing old friends before we departed. We then head to Darby Creek Metropark to bird Watts Marsh (dedicated to our host leader). We added a few marsh birds, including Sora and Virginia Rail and a few sparrows (Savannah, Vesper and Henslow's). After that, we visited the Prairie Oaks Metropark for a last bird before heading home very satisfied with our effort.

All totaled, we managed 102 species on the weekend and a large number of lifers for the participants. A list of all the species observed by some or all of the participants is provided below. This was such a nice trip, we are truly considering not waiting 5 years to go back for more!

102 species observed:

Canada Goose
Mute Swan
Wood Duck
Mallard
Common Merganser
Ruddy Duck
Wild Turkey
Pied-billed Grebe
Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Green Heron
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Osprey

Bald Eagle
Cooper's Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Virginia Rail
Sora
American Coot
Killdeer
Spotted Sandpiper
Greater Yellowlegs
American Woodcock
Ring-billed Gull
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Barn Owl
Barred Owl
Eastern Whip-poor-will
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
Eastern Phoebe
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
White-eyed Vireo
Yellow-throated Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Purple Martin
Tree Swallow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch
Carolina Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Eastern Bluebird
Veery
Hermit Thrush
Wood Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird

Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
Ovenbird
Worm-eating Warbler
Louisiana Waterthrush
Blue-winged Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Prothonotary Warbler
Kentucky Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Hooded Warbler
American Redstart
Cape May Warbler
Cerulean Warbler
Northern Parula
Yellow Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Yellow-breasted Chat
Yellow-throated Warbler
Eastern Towhee
Chipping Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Henslow's Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Scarlet Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark
Common Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Baltimore Oriole
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow