

January 25-27, 2019 – Upper Peninsula Field Trip

Leader: Don Burlett

This traditional field trip began on Friday morning with the usual harrowing drive up I-75 through Grayling and Gaylord. As usual, cold temperatures and wind from the northwest were driving the lake effect snow bands into full production. Perilous driving was finally rewarded when we go across the bridge and into the UP.

We began our work by driving through the field near Rudyard and Pickford where numerous Snowy Owls were ornaments on telephone poles. Quite a few of these were the very white adults. From Pickford, we headed north to visit the Dafter landfill before it closed for the weekend. There we met with the Seven Ponds Expedition only to find just Herring Gulls,



Common Ravens, Bald Eagles, a Red-tailed Hawk and some European Starlings, along with a stiff breeze and cold wind chill. We then headed to the Dafter Post Office, to be rewarded by both Pine Grosbeaks and Bohemian Waxwings. To finish this first day, we drove north to the Chippewa County Animal Control building and walked behind to survey a gravel pit area. As expected, the Northern Hawk Owl was holding his position atop a spruce tree, just distant enough to make good photos difficult. But he was there, as shown below.

We retreated to the hotel, got spiffed up and headed downtown to have dinner at the Antler's, a traditional visit for first-timers. A nice dinner ensued with lively discussion and some libations. Back to the hotel for rest for a cold next day.



Saturday began with some chilly temperatures. The official temperature was about -15°F but our cars were panicking with readings as low as -58°F. (Wimpy cars!!) Anyway, we were off right away looking around for the absent Great Gray Owl but our first feeder visit netted us our Sharp-tailed Grouse. One was up in a tree, making photos quite easy.



We continued around and found plenty of Pine Grosbeak, more Bohemian Waxwings, some very nice light phase Rough-legged Hawks, Ravens, Crows, a bunch of turkey, woodpeckers, chickadees, Red-breasted and White Breasted nuthatches and others. In Pickford, we found some Common Redpolls, not very common in the UP this year. We then



One of the Bohemian Waxwings that we found exemplifies the concept of shape for northern birds – that is, smaller surface area per unit mass. Round is best, as this guy shows very nicely.



Visited the Kinross Feeders to find them rather empty, of both feeders and birds. However, we did note a rare female Red-winged Blackbird at the feeders. That and an American Robin in

Pickford were rather rare. We also made sure those late arrivers on Friday saw all the birds we had seen on Friday except Gull and red-tail. We also got the elusive Northern Shrike (actually two) that made the leader's day.



As the day faded and we headed back north to get the Northern Hawk Owl for everyone, a bird darted across the road ahead of us. The shape, size and color led the leader to say it was a Gyrfalcon. No pictures, a brief look....and we left it at that.

Saturday night, 7 of the warriors took in a college hockey game at Lake Superior State University. The Lakers kept their Saturday home record clean with a 5-3 loss. That's 0-5-1 on Saturdays at home. Oh well, the beer was good.

Sunday some headed out early, the rest headed south in search of Evening Grosbeak which we got east of Pickford. Then we headed home, everyone experiencing the Beast that is I-75 in winter. The highway was closed twice on Sunday but we all avoided problems and arrived safely home.



Finally, there was one species of bird seen on Saturday night which we haven't yet identified. Maybe you can help us out with this one!!!



The count for the weekend was 31 species (or maybe 32?!). The list is below. Another good trip and just enough good stuff to encourage us for next year. And to hope for another Great Gray Owl.

- Snowy Owl (20+)
- Northern Hawk Owl
- Bald Eagle
- Rough-legged Hawk
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Herring Gull
- Bohemian Waxwing
- Pine Grosbeak
- White-breasted Nuthatch
- Red-breasted Nuthatch
- Black-capped Chickadee
- European Starling
- American Crow

Common Raven
Wild Turkey
Hairy woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Red-winged Blackbird
Sharp-tailed Grouse
Northern Shrike
American Goldfinch
American Tree Sparrow
Blue Jay
Northern Cardinal
American Robin
Mallard
Common Merganser
Common Goldeneye
Common Redpoll
Rock Pigeon
Evening Grosbeak
(Gyr Falcon?)