

## **Field Trip Report – Upper Peninsula Weekend Trip**

February 13-15, 2026

Leader: Don Burlett

Our annual visit to the UP in winter began gloriously, with sunshine and dry roads. We stopped in Mackinac City for lunch and it all changed. Suddenly, we were in a snow squall and that lasted for almost an hour. From there forward, it was cloudy with a breeze on both Friday and Sunday.

Our first stop was in St. Ignace, where the snow and lack of open water resulted in almost no birds. We then drove to Rudyard and drove the “loop” in search of Snowy Owls but none were to be found. WEe then drove down a short side road at the corner of the loop to check out a feeder where we found some Pine Grosbeaks and a Dark-eyed Junco that look particularly different from our normal subspecies. Pictures were necessary for documentation of this bird. The particular subspecies is yet to be defined.



Junco Photos by Kim Johnson, Malissa Bossardet



Junco Photo by Bhakbhoom Suppasri (BB)

We then headed to the Dafter Dump to check the gulls and other birds. Sadly, we only found Herring Gulls along with Ravens, Bald Eagles, European Starlings and a single Red-tailed Hawk. A quick stop at the Dafter Post Office was unfruitful and we then drove to the Sugar Island Ferry area to check for ducks. Common Goldeneye, Mallards and one female Hooded Merganser. So, our first day was not as good as hoped so we headed to the hotel and then dinner at the Antlers.

Saturday began with a short chase after we heard that a Great Gray Owl had been seen on a small sideroad. We were there early but it was foggy and we never caught a glimpse of the bird. We tried later on Saturday and on Sunday but to no avail. We then headed south toward Stirlingsville where a couple of feeders were active, providing views of Pine Grosbeak, Evening Grosbeak and a variety of other small birds. We visited Pickford that morning but saw almost no birds. The Sharp-tailed Grouse population appears in good shape as we observed a number of these birds. Some at the feeders we visited and some in the fields in the area. We then headed back to the Rudyard loop because we heard the Snowy owl had been seen. It turns out he was high atop a cell tower, where we had never considered looking. Additionally, it was an adult male, all white and atop a white part of the cell tower at the top. Not optimal but a Snowy Owl nonetheless. (Later, a second Snowy Owl was found by one of the group after the majority were headed home.)



Snowy Owl Photos by Kim Johnson

We then headed back to the Dafter Post Office in search of waxwings and were rewarded by views of Bohemian and Cedar Waxwings. We also visited Ashmun Park in search of a Red-necked Grebe and found the bird, a first winter bird. A difficult ID but we felt good about the ID.

Sunday, we revisited the Dafter Post Office and some surrounding roads to finish our list of primary targets. We were rewarded by nice looks at a Northern Shrike, a species that Kim Johnson got on her after venture for another target.



Sharp-tailed Grouse and Bohemian Waxwing Photos by Malissa Bossardet



Northern Shrike (Kim Johnson) and Red-necked Grebe (Malissa Bossardet)

Overall, it was a good weekend. A little frustrating that we couldn't catch up with the Great Gray Owl but we enjoyed our time driving the snow-covered roads, looking over high drifts along the road and the completely snow-covered farm fields. Overall, we netted 36 species on the trip and the list is provided below. Next year, we may expand this trip to four days to allow a day to explore Sugar Island?

American Black Duck  
Mallard  
Common Goldeneye  
Hooded Merganser  
Red-breasted Merganser  
Sharp-tailed grouse  
Wild Turkey  
Red-necked Grebe  
Bald Eagle  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Rough-legged Hawk  
Herring Gull  
Rock Pigeon  
Mourning Dove  
Snowy Owl  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Downy Woodpecker  
Hairy Woodpecker  
Pileated Woodpecker  
Northern Shrike  
Blue Jay  
American Crow  
Common Raven  
Black-capped Chickadee  
Red-breasted Nuthatch  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
European Starling  
Bohemian Waxwing  
Cedar Waxwing  
American Tree Sparrow  
Dark-eyed Junco  
Northern Cardinal  
Pine Grosbeak  
American Goldfinch  
Evening Grosbeak  
House Sparrow