

## **Field Trip Report – UP Trip**

**February 7-9, 2025**

**Leader: Don Burlett**

Our group of 9 birders headed north on Friday, managing to avoid disaster as we drove the upper Lower Peninsula snow belt. Once we were in the UP, our first stop was the Rudyard Loop, site of most Snowy Owl sightings. We managed to see four Snowy Owls the first afternoon. We then headed to the Kinross Feeders where we enjoyed views of Wild Turkeys, chickadees, American Goldfinch and a couple of crows. Wedged into the group of crows was a Common Grackle, not often seen there this time of year. We then headed to the Dafter Dump where Bald Eagles, Common Ravens, American Crows and European Starlings abounded. The only gulls we noted were Herring Gulls. After a quick stop at the Dafter Post, it was obvious that many of the typical sites were not going to be very productive this year. As there have been few reports of Siskins, Redpolls and other birds usually found there, we had our work cut out for us.



Immature Bald Eagle Photo by Kim Johnson

Saturday, we were out early and drove south in search of the Sharp-tailed Grouse. After trying a couple of roads near Pickford, we found them near 23 Mile Road. We ran into three groups, one group allowing us to watch males strutting their stuff. Always a fun bird to find, we enjoyed that very much. We also nabbed a Northern Shrike on the drive to the first site visited.



Photos by Karen Kessler



Photo by Karen Kessler

After the grouse viewing, we continue back in Pickford looking for other birds. We found a feeder there where an Evening Grosbeak was joining a group of American Goldfinch. It was a single bird and was typical of finding some winter species.



Photo by Karen Kessler

We then drove north to Dunbar Forest to see if any other birds were round. Since the feeders are not maintained there anymore, expectations were low. However, we were surprised, first by a singly male Pine Grosbeak singing in a tree right near the road. Then, we discovered three Ruffed Grouse hanging out in the evergreens along the road. Such a nice surprise based on expectations.



Photo by Karen Kessler

After a few more stops, we had some ducks at the Sugar Island Ferry spot and some other species typical to the area. It snowed lightly all afternoon, putting a damper on bird activity.

The next morning we drove around to a number of sites but the snowy weather was making it rather unlikely that more additional species would be found.



Photo by Don Burlett

After a long weekend of dealing with snow/ice covered roads and many species being very difficult to find, we headed home. The one thing about these weekend trips that is always satisfying is the camaraderie amongst the group, exhibited at dinner here Saturday night.



Photo by Don Burlett

The entire bird list from the trip (36 species) is provided below.

Canada Goose  
American Black Duck  
Mallard  
Long-tailed Duck  
Common Goldeneye  
Common Merganser  
Red-breasted Merganser  
Ruffed Grouse  
Sharp-tailed Grouse  
Wild Turkey  
Bald Eagle  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Herring Gull  
Rock Pigeon (feral)  
Mourning Dove  
Snowy Owl (4)  
Downy Woodpecker  
Hairy Woodpecker  
Pileated Woodpecker  
Northern Shrike  
Blue Jay  
American Crow  
Common Raven  
Black-capped Chickadee  
Red-breasted Nuthatch  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
American Robin  
European Starling  
Snow Bunting  
American Tree Sparrow  
Dark-eyed Junco  
Northern Cardinal  
Common Grackle  
Pine Grosbeak  
Purple Finch  
American Goldfinch  
Evening Grosbeak