

Field Trip Report – UP Weekend Trip
February 10-12, 2023
Leader: Don Burlett

On Friday morning, our merry band of birds headed north in search of great winter birds. With just a bit of snow in the upper lower peninsula, we easily made it to the UP and celebrated with a picture at the Mackinac Bridge. We quickly got on our way and drove through St. Ignace in search of Bohemian Waxwings. We were greatly rewarded when we found a large flock of



between 100 and 200 of these wonderful birds, chattering noisily in the trees and moving from one tree to another. They weren't feeding but socializing near midday. A great start to our weekend. We also added a group of Red-winged Blackbirds that seemed to be out of place in the winter.

We then headed north to Rudyard and hoping to find Snowy Owls and Snow Bunting. However, the weather gods were set on foiling us. By the time we reached Rudyard (the "Snowy Owl Capital of Michigan"), the winds were howling and it was snowing enough to make visibility a problem. The wind is really a Snowy Owl problem, they don't like the howling wind. We barely found one young bird at 300 yards and barely ID'ed him. No Snow Bunting to be found. We did get a few ducks, a few Swans, some Wild Turkeys and a few raptors on the way. On our way north, we also got a nice group of Pine Grosbeaks at someone's feeders and spotted a Northern Shrike near Kinross.



We ended Friday by doing a traditional stop at the Antler's Restaurant, enjoying the many stuffed animals, making it an ID contest. Not cuisine but a fun time for all.

We stopped at the Dafter Dump later in the afternoon but blizzard-like conditions made it difficult. We did spot a couple of Glaucous Gulls in the mix of Ravens, Bald Eagles and Herring Gulls floating on the wild wind. We left and went to Dafter where things were pretty dead. We then finished the day by visiting the Ferry terminal for Sugar Island to find a few ducks and not much else. A tough first day but hope always prevails.



Saturday arrived with no snow and partly cloudy skies but the winds were calm at the beginning of the day as we headed to Paradise to hopefully see a Boreal Chickadee that was visiting a set of feeders. With only Pine Grosbeaks seen on the drive North (except for the always present Ravens), we got there and waited patiently for their arrival. While we were waiting, a group of Ruffed Grouse walked under the nearby trees and Blue Jays joined the foragers here. Finally, the Boreal Chickadee put in his appearance and everyone enjoyed this rare bird. We were hoping for a Canada Jay that had been there the day before but we didn't have all day for him. We have to thank Susan Saran for her hospitality as she welcomed us to her yard and helped us with spotting. We always enjoy visiting folks who want to share the birds. We then drove back to the east and tried the Rudyard loop again with no success – no Snowy Owls to be found. The howling wind was back and that curtailed their desire to sit out looking for prey. We did get a couple of Rough-legged Hawks but it was a very tough day for birding.



Saturday night was our visit to the Palace Mexican Restaurant, where we enjoyed cerveza and margaritas to celebrate our life birds for the day.

Sunday morning brought hope of better things. The weather was calm and we would get some sunshine to help with our cause. On our way to a traditional Sharp-tailed Grouse site, we thought we spotted a woodpecker on a tree but it turned out to be a Flying Squirrel that was flying between trees. A new mammal for many on the trip. We proceeded to the grouse spot and saw a number of them along the way. We then headed to another home with feeders that was reported to have Evening Grosbeaks and, indeed, there were several there. We missed an Eastern Meadowlark that was there but shortly, the homeowners came back home and honked at us and came out to shoo us away. The opposite of our Boreal Chickadee experience. We then headed to Rudyard with hopes of making up for the first two days and we were overjoyed to see almost a dozen of them out and about, perching on poles and buildings looking for their meals to make up for two hard days.



After that, we headed south toward home, having had a good weekend. The trips to the UP are always different and we just couldn't find any Crossbills, Siskins or Redpolls this year. But those birds we did see were worth the trip.

A complete list of species seen is listed below, Maybe next year there will be more treasures to discover. We'll see.

41 species observed:

Canada Goose
Trumpeter Swan
Mallard
American Black Duck
Common Goldeneye
Common Merganser
Red-breasted Merganser
Wild Turkey
Ruffed Grouse
Sharp-tailed Grouse
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Glaucous Gull
Cooper's Hawk
Bald Eagle
Red-tailed Hawk
Rough-legged Hawk
Snowy Owl
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Pileated Woodpecker
Northern Shrike
Blue Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Black-capped Chickadee
Boreal Chickadee
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
European Starling
Bohemian Waxwing
House Sparrow
Evening Grosbeak
Pine Grosbeak
American Goldfinch

American Tree Sparrow
Red-winged Blackbird
Northern Cardinal