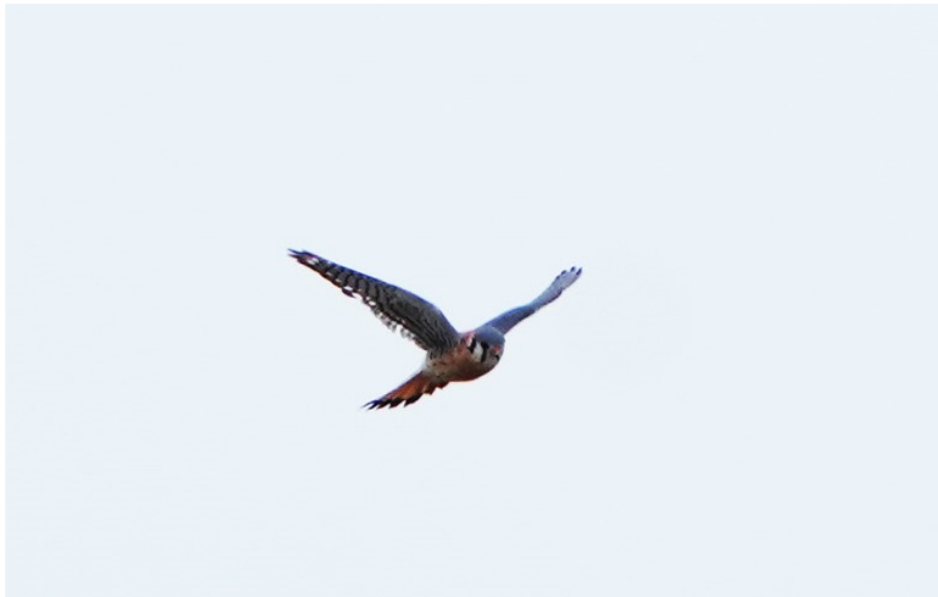


Field Trip Report – Berrien County Trip

May 3-5, 2024

Leader: Don Burlett

Just last week, I led a trip to Hocking Hills, which I last led back in 2019. This weekend, I led a trip to Berrien County, which I last led back in 2017. Such nostalgia shows how fast has been flying. Six loyal birders joined this excursion, and we began early on Friday and drove west to Berrien County. The weather was mostly cloudy with a breeze and temperatures in the 50's. Our first stop was to the farm fields of Buffalo Road, south of Three Oaks, in search of either or both of Brewer's Blackbird and Smith's Longspur. As luck would have it, we only saw the Brewer's Blackbirds. However, we did get to see a bunch of Wilson's Snipe along with an American Woodcock, Trumpeter Swan, Horned Lark, a Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, and a few other species.



American Kestrel (photo: Maneesh Rajvanshi)

After a lunch stop, we visited the Three Oaks Water treatment ponds where we nabbed some ducks (Wood Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup and ruddy Duck) along with a Lesser Yellowlegs, Greater Yellowlegs, Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers. We also added a collection of swallows at this site including Tree, Barn, Northern Rough-winged, Bank and Cliff Swallow and Purple Martin. After this stop, we headed to Warren Dunes where we parked at Floral Lane and tried to walk a few trails like the Yellow Birch Trail. The trails were very wet, as it had rained heavily on Thursday. We didn't get to bird much of the Yellow Birch trail as it was submerged and impassable. Other birds seen or heard here included Eastern Phoebe, Swainson's Thrush, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Red-breasted White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, and some warblers (Northern Waterthrush, Black-and-white, Orange-crowned, Nashville, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Bay-breasted, Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Pine, Yellow-rumped and Black-throated Green). We also added some sparrows (Chipping, Field, Savannah, Song, White-throated and White-crowned). All totaled for the first day, we logged 90 species of birds. That was an amazing start to the weekend and spurred us into overdrive the rest of the weekend.



Swallows (Bank, Tree, Cliff, Bank, Tree (imm.), Tree, Tree, Tree (imm.), Tree (imm.)
(Photo: Maneesh Rajvanshi)

On Saturday, the weather was foggy to start but quickly cleared of and sunny skies prevailed. The temperature reached the mid-70's and the winds were minimal all day. We began at New Buffalo beach where there wasn't much except a few Spotted Sandpipers and an American Pipit. From the beach, we headed to W. Forest Lawn Road, south of Three Oaks. This road is always worth walking and includes the Kesling Nature Preserve. The birding was particularly good, and we added a bunch of new birds here including the following warblers: Louisiana Waterthrush, Blue-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Cape May warbler and Palm Warbler. We also added Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, Wood Thrush, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Wood-pewee, Ringed Kingfisher, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Great Egret and more.



Group at Kesling Nature Preserve (photo: Maneesh Rajvanshi)



Scarlet Tanager (photo: Maneesh Rajvanshi)

After lunch, we headed to the Galien River Township Park and the canopy walk. Things were calm, but we did add Eastern Kingbird and Sora. After this stop, we added another 24 species of birds, bringing our two-day total to 114 species. Outstanding.

Overnight, some storms and more rain came, just adding to the difficulty with walking trails already submerged. Also, the temperature had dropped, and we didn't reach the mid-50's for most of the day. Cloudy and a bit breezy made life tough. We began Sunday by visiting Gran Mere Sate Park. The one trail we tried to hike was submerged after a bit, but we did add Mute Swan, Peregrine Falcon, American Coot, Yellow-throated Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Common Loon, and a Least Flycatcher. After this stop, we moved on to Saret Nature Center. We hoped to catch up with a Yellow-breasted Chat but didn't have any luck. We did, however, add a Virginia Rail along the way. Then we read a report that the Yellow-breasted Chat was seen at Brown Sanctuary and since this was not far away, traveled there. We succeeded in finding this bird. After the Chat, we ended the weekend of birding and reached a nice round number of 124 species for the weekend. We also logged a respectable number of warbler species – 22.



Black-throated Green Warbler (photo: Maneesh Rajvanshi)



Least Flycatcher (photo: Maneesh Rajvanshi)

One thing this trip demonstrated was the value of knowing bird calls and chip notes. This was absolutely crucial to the count for the weekend. Between the use of Merlin to confirm some suspicions and the good ears of Terri Chapdelaine and good eyes of everyone else, we went home satisfied that we had done an excellent job for an early spring weekend.



One Happy Group of Birders (Photo: Don Burlett)

The entire bird list is provided below.

124 species:

Canada Goose
Mute Swan
Trumpeter Swan
Wood Duck
Mallard
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Lesser Scaup
Ruddy Duck
Ring-necked Pheasant
Wild Turkey
Common Loon
Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Green Heron
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Virginia Rail
Sora
American Coot
Sandhill Crane
Killdeer
Spotted Sandpiper
Solitary Sandpiper
Greater Yellowlegs
Lesser Yellowlegs
Wilson's Snipe
American Woodcock
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Red-headed Woodpecker

Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
American Kestrel
Peregrine Falcon
Eastern Wood-pewee
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Horned Lark
Purple Martin
Tree Swallow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Bank Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
House Wren
Carolina Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Eastern Bluebird
Swainson's Thrush
Wood Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
European Starling
American Pipit
Ovenbird
Louisiana Waterthrush
Northern Waterthrush
Blue-winged Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Orange-crowned Warbler

Nashville Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
American Redstart
Cape May Warbler
Northern Parula
Magnolia Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Palm Warbler
Pine Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Yellow-breasted Chat
Eastern Towhee
Chipping Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Scarlet Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Red-winged Blackbird
Brewer's Blackbird
Common Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Baltimore Oriole
House Finch
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow