



THE PLAIN DEALER

My birding resolutions for 2008 - Aerial View

Thursday, January 10, 2008

James F. McCarty
Plain Dealer Reporter

Every year at about this time, I like to arrange my birding priorities, set my goals for the coming year and put together a wish list, including a dream birding trip.

What follows are my 2008 Birding Resolutions. Some may help you come up with an idea you otherwise wouldn't have thought of, and that might help you become a better and more confident birder.

Consider it a menu: Choose what you like, and discard the rest.

First and most important: See more birds. What could be more obvious? For most of us, it's a primary tenet but easier said than done. It requires continuing to study and learn to polish our identification skills, attending symposiums and bird club meetings, participating in regular bird walks and field trips accompanied by birders who are more adept than we are and traveling to bird-watch in a variety of habitats.

Which leads to goal No. 2:

Broaden my horizons. Every birder needs a home base where he feels confident and comfortable that's conveniently located and sufficiently birdy. But the only way to improve skills and to see more varieties of birds is to explore new parks, woodlands, fields, beaches and wetlands from week to week.

With any luck, I'll see several new parks opened in 2008. For starters, wouldn't it be nice to throw open the gates at Dike 14 at the foot of Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in Cleveland? The soil tested sufficiently safe for public use. Now all we need is a government entity willing to step forward and assume responsibility for this potential birding jewel on the lakefront.

Two other parks with enormous potential are Wendy Park at Whiskey Island and Lake Abrams, a traditional migrant stopover that has remained practically inaccessible to birders for years. Cleveland Metroparks is building a boardwalk there that should open up this wetland near Berea.

Target birds I have never seen (and would probably chase if they showed up within a 12-hour drive of home): hoary redpoll, gyrfalcon, boreal chickadee, black-backed woodpecker, Ross' gull and ivory gull, for starters.

Make a dream trip to Manitoba, Canada. What a fabulous place for birders to explore, with vast grasslands and wetlands in the southern third, boreal forests and pure, cold lakes in the middle third and tundra in the northern third, capped by the coastal city of Churchill on the Hudson Bay.

Last, my pie-in-the-sky goal: To introduce the joys of birding to as many people of all ages in Northeast Ohio as I can possibly reach and to enrich the experiences of birders who have already discovered this rewarding and fascinating hobby.

Sightings

Birders are traveling from all over the state to witness the spectacular gull show at Gordon State Park in Cleveland. Warm water and enormous schools of fish have attracted thousands of gulls, including impressive numbers of desirable white-winged species. All birders should experience the excitement while it lasts, even if you're not confident in your gull identification abilities. Chances are good that other birders there will be glad to help you find and identify a glaucous, Iceland, Thayer's, lesser or great black-backed, Bonaparte's, herring or ring-billed gull.

As many as six long-eared owls are roosting at the Caley Reservation in the Lorain County Metro Parks.

The weekly common redpoll roundup includes sightings by Gary Gerrone at the Carlisle Reservation, Tim Colborn in North Olmsted, John Pogacnik in Perry Township, Hannah Lesiw in North Ridgeville, Lyn Miller in Auburn Township, Joel Szalc in Brooklyn Heights, Sheryl Young (who also had a flock of yellow-rumped warblers) in Sandusky, Tim Krynak at the North Chagrin Reservation Nature Center, Sally Isacco at Chardon, Chriss Fulton in Stow and Annette Webb in Wadsworth.

Pogacnik also spotted white-winged and black scoters, a long-tailed duck and a little gull from his lakeside overlook. At his feeders, he had pine siskin and white-winged crossbill.

Karin Tanquist and Patrick Coy twice spotted a juvenile Northern goshawk in their yard in Peninsula.

A black scoter was at Shipman's Pond in Lake County, Diane Skipper reported.

Pine siskins are regular visitors to Max Roha's thistle feeders in Brecksville, and a flock of more than 50 wild turkeys has been hanging around his property off Parkview Road.

Joe Wojnarowski spotted a turkey vulture in Brunswick, and Jeff Wert saw two at the Hinckley Reservation.

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter:

jmccarty@plaind.com, 216-999-4153

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