



THE PLAIN DEALER

AERIAL VIEW

With onset of spring, variety of birds on the go **Aerial View**

Thursday, March 20, 2008

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Spring is here at last - the season of daffodils popping up in our gardens, robins pulling worms from our lawns, and the ice breaking up on our great lake.

But mention spring to a birder and you're liable to hear more descriptions than an Inuit has words for snow.

In Northeast Ohio, we have early spring, midspring and late spring, with each subseason marked by subtle changes of the various arriving and departing species.

At the onset of spring, for instance, flocks of waterfowl can be found wherever there's open water. A half-dozen species of sparrows are visiting backyard feeders. Red-winged blackbirds are staking out nesting territories. Turkey vultures are soaring overhead. Northern cardinals are singing their merry morning tunes. Red-bellied woodpeckers are calling and drumming. And our familiar winter guests, such as dark-eyed juncos, red-breasted nuthatches and common redpolls, are winging northward.

All of these comings and goings made for an action-packed week of birding along the North Coast.

To the west, wherever the ice was melting, horned grebes and buffleheads seemed to be there. Sandy Ridge Park in North Ridgeville and the reservoirs in Oberlin and Wellington all hosted these handsome divers.

But there was plenty of variety, too. A Northern shrike struck an awesome pose at the tip of a tree upon entering Sandy Ridge. Jeff Wert encountered a second shrike hunting and calling at the Bath Nature Preserve.

Wellington was teeming with ducks: ring-necked, ruddy, redhead, canvasback, gadwall, hooded and red-breasted merganser, greater and lesser scaup, American wigeon and American black. Pied-billed grebes mixed it up with the horned grebes.

Many of the same species were at the Avon Lake power plant, Jen Brumfield reported.

A flooded cornfield south of Oberlin hosted a mixed flock of black and wood ducks.

The Westerly water treatment plant near Edgewater Park in Cleveland offered slivers of exposed lake, which were busy with bufflehead, common goldeneye, Northern shoveler, ring-necked, both scaups, gadwall and all three mergansers.

To the east, open water was tougher to find, the sightings were slimmer and the fog made all but the closest birds nearly impossible to see. Horned grebes plied the shoreline at the Eastlake power plant, where they have learned to avoid the webs of fishermen's lines and barbed hooks while diving for shiners.

After the fog cleared, the full splendor of the waterfowl was revealed: hooded merganser, American wigeon,

canvasback, both scaups, bufflehead, redhead and goldeneye, Nancy Anderson said.

Earlier last week, Jerry Talkington found a red-necked grebe at Eastlake and four snow geese - two whites and two blues - near Fairport Harbor.

Soon, white-crowned sparrows, common loons and Wilson's snipes will be here. Then Eastern phoebes, hermit thrushes and broad-winged hawks. Before you know it, the early warblers.

Birders need to stay vigilant or they'll miss some of the best days of the migration.

Sightings

Horned grebes, American wigeon, hooded and red-breasted mergansers, ruddy, ring-necked and bufflehead ducks, plus a tundra swan were at the Ira Road beaver pond in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park last week, Marie Morgan reported. By the weekend, blue-winged and green-winged teal, lesser scaup, wood and black ducks, and tree swallows had joined the show.

Killdeer aren't the only shorebirds here: Bret McCarty spotted an American woodcock in Lakewood, and Marty Leshner found one behind a barn in Olmsted Falls.

Clague Park in Westlake has hooded merganser, American wigeon and American black duck, per posts by Sam and Bev Walker, Jeremiah Roth and Mike Sandy.

Waterfowl on the Grand River in Perry Township, Lake County, include bufflehead, goldeneye, hooded and common merganser, American wigeon, black and wood ducks, James Eisenberg reported.

An escaped European goldfinch continues to visit feeders in Mayfield Heights, J. Kormos reported.

Fox sparrows are brightening back yards, with reports from Linda Paine in Kirtland, Inga Schmidt in Geauga County, the Canal Way Metropark in Cuyahoga Heights, and at Lisa Romaniuk's feeder where she works in Brecksville.

An Eastern towhee visited Penny Jeffrey's feeders in Parma Heights, and I saw a towhee with a flock of white-throated sparrows in Lakewood.

Cindy Blackburn of South Russell was amazed to witness two hawks raiding her suet feeders.

A Cooper's hawk has been picking birds off of Jennifer Lenhart's feeders in Lakewood.

Common redpoll numbers are dwindling but still showing up for Barb Natterer of Chatham Township in Medina County, at the Big Creek Park visitor center in Geauga County, the Carlisle Metro Park wildlife center, Kathleen Beard's in Chagrin Falls, and Sally Isacco's in Chardon.

Sunny Shaughnessy passed along a nice photo of a brown thrasher in her Euclid back yard.

Greg Cudworth arrived home from work last week to find 11 tundra swans in a pond.

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