



# THE PLAIN DEALER

**AERIAL VIEW**

## **Slow-down in migration brings out flurry of birds - Aerial View**

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**Plain Dealer Reporter**

On days like Sunday, a birder's first inclination is to pity the birds.

Swept by warm southern breezes into Northeast Ohio last week, the early spring arrivals were slammed on Sunday by alternating rounds of snow squalls and rain showers, temperatures in the mid-30s, and stiff Arctic winds - which brought the migration to a screeching halt.

But while the birds experienced only a brief interruption in their journey, and appeared unruffled by the weather, those birders who suffered the discomfort of the outdoors were rewarded with one of the most exciting flurries of ornithological activity in recent memory.

The dawn offered few clues of the excitement to come. At the Headlands Dunes Nature Preserve in Mentor, flocks of Bonaparte's gulls and red-breasted mergansers, a brown thrasher, yellow-bellied sapsuckers and Eastern towhees lost their attraction after a half-hour spent peering into a binocular-fogging mist.

At the Wake Robin Trail on the south side of the Mentor Marsh State Nature Preserve, my son, Bret, and I met Emil Bacik and Jerry Talkington, who earlier had discovered a LeConte's sparrow and American bittern along the boardwalk. Our luck was limited to a Northern harrier, hermit thrush and several fox sparrows.

Ray Hannikman was waiting for us at Veteran's Park in Mentor, where the birding was significantly better. The lawn by the pond was covered with yellow-rumped warblers and a few pine warblers. A high-pitched mix of kinglet and creeper calls filled our ears from the branches above, and a bright black-and-white warbler flitted and picked around an oak trunk.

Bacik mentioned the possibility of seeing a Louisiana waterthrush. Hardly were the words out of his mouth than Talkington spotted one of these shy and uncommon warblers stalking the shoreline. The chocolate-streaked skulker bobbed its tail and picked at insects, then delivered a sharp "pitch!" as it took off.

Feeling frosty and satisfied with our sightings, we began to work our way back to the parking lot and the warmth of our cars when Hannikman announced: "Audubon's warbler!"

Unfortunately, none of the rest of us had caught sight of this rare stray from the west. For 15 minutes we searched until it appeared again feeding on the dock. This time, everyone was able to admire the boldly plumaged black-and-yellow beauty, a western race of yellow-rumped warbler.

We would have been more than satisfied to end the morning right then if my cell phone hadn't sprung to life. It was Paula Lozano calling with the news that a Eurasian teal had turned up at the Station Road Bridge Trailhead of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

The European race of our resident green-winged teal rarely appears in North America, usually in Alaska. But this colorful male was dabbling in the pond south of the parking lot - a memorable bird on a surprisingly productive day.

## Sightings

Headlands Beach was hopping last week, as Hannikman spotted four harlequin ducks flying eastward, and four short-eared owls on the dunes. He also counted more than 40 hermit thrush at Mentor Lagoons.

John Pogacnik saw a harlequin duck swimming offshore from his lakefront home in Perry Township, Lake County. Other sightings there included surf scoter, Forster's tern, long-eared owl, common redpoll, Savannah sparrow and purple finch, and a Louisiana waterthrush at the Hell Hollow Reservation.

Gabe Leidy found a waterthrush at the Mill Stream Run Reservation in southern Cuyahoga County, and Lisa Rainsong discovered a singing waterthrush at Squire Valleevue Farm in Hunting Valley.

Jeff Wert spotted a flock of lesser yellowlegs in Granger Township, Medina County.

Birding the median on Shaker Boulevard in Beachwood, Julie West and Laura Gooch found yellow-rumped warbler, Eastern towhee, hermit thrush, both kinglets, fox and field sparrows.

Marian Kraus was surprised to find a long-eared owl in her Rocky River back yard.

Ring-necked pheasants are nesting in Paula Hadgis' back yard in Brunswick Hills.

A redheaded woodpecker has been visiting Linda Nader's feeders in Bay Village.

Kathy Mock's feeders in Barberton have been attracting purple finch, red-breasted nuthatch, chipping and white-throated sparrows.

Robert Jackson found short-eared owls, Wilson's snipe and Eastern meadowlark at the Coliseum grasslands in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

An American bittern was at Wildwood Park on Cleveland's East Side, Nancy Anderson reported.

Paula Lozano counted 193 Caspian terns on a dock at the Port of Cleveland.

Larry Rosche spotted an American bittern in Kent.

Naturalist Tim Fairweather reported new arrivals at the Sandy Ridge Reservation in North Ridgeville: sora, spotted sandpi- per, greater yellowlegs, Wilson's snipe, Caspian terns, hermit thrush, palm and pine warblers.

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