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Haven near Wellington is paying dividends - Aerial View

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Blue jays, Baltimore orioles, cardinals - baseball and birds seem to go hand in hand.

Being a big fan of both, a line from "Field of Dreams" carries special meaning for me:

"If you build it, they will come."

The movie theme revolved around building a baseball field in Iowa that attracted baseball greats from the past. But the message could be applied to birding, too, as Dr. Dane Adams can attest.

Adams is a retired dentist and a birder who has turned 170 acres of reclaimed farmland outside of Wellington, Lorain County, into a haven for wildlife.

He has preserved grasslands, forest and scrub and carved three ponds out of the center of the property. His list of yard sightings is at 182 species and counting.

The newest of the ponds Adams built has shallow water and lots of mud along the shoreline - ideal shorebird habitat.

Last week, they came.

The first e-mail note from Adams arrived May 10, with a photo attached of a female red-necked phalarope in breeding plumage - a wonderful shorebird, to be sure and a rare spring visitor to Northeast Ohio, having stopped on its journey to its tundra nesting grounds.

The second Adams e-mail with the fuzzy photo attachment arrived three days later and made me jump: a black-necked stilt, one of the prettiest waders in North America, had shown up at his pond.

The stilt was the first of its kind found in the state in more than 12 years and only the third inland sighting of a stilt in the past century, according to Bruce Peterjohn's "The Birds of Ohio." It had never before been documented in the seven-county area, per Larry Rosche's "Birds of the Cleveland Region."

Adams is more than an architect of inviting habitat. He is a gracious host and invited me and my son, Bret, to his property to view this special guest that had come to bless his home. We arrived shortly after 7 p.m. with no guarantee that the stilt he had discovered four hours earlier would still be present.

But it was there, and what a beautiful bird it was, with bold black-and-white plumage and bright red legs.

We admired the stilt through Adams' spotting scope for as long as the light would allow. Lesser yellowlegs, solitary and spotted sandpipers and a semipalmated plover were also there.

We strolled his acres, which were teeming with Eastern bluebirds. The calls of wood thrush, scarlet tanager and Eastern towhee echoed from the woods. Barn and tree swallows darted about. Chipping and field sparrows sang from the scrub, and a Northern mockingbird crossed the grassy field.

Through the years, I've noticed a common attribute among a majority of birders that sets them apart. When an unusual species lands on their property, the host birders typically will welcome other birders to their homes to see the rarity - and Adams was no exception.

Too bad the stilt was a "one-day wonder."

But knowing Adams and his inviting habitat, it won't be long before another rarity lands in his yard, and more people will have the opportunity to experience this Eden in the country.

Sightings

While warblers dominated the scene at Headlands Beach State Park in Mentor over the weekend, a Northern saw-whet owl was the surprise of the day Sunday. Jerry Talkington and Emil Bacik discovered the tiny owl being harassed by songbirds.

A golden-winged warbler and Philadelphia vireo were at the West Creek Reservation in Parma, Gabe Leidy reported.

Larry Rosche found a singing olive-sided flycatcher on Nicodemus Road in Shalersville, Portage County.

At Springfield Lake in Akron, Gregory Bennett spotted a flock of 16 black terns and a common nighthawk at Lakemore Elementary School.

Shorebirds at the Lorain impoundment included two short-billed dowitchers, Matt Vosniak reported.

John Pogacnik's lakefront birds included Franklin's gull and black tern.

A molting young summer tanager has been dining at Elizabeth Terry's suet feeder in North Royalton.

A rose-breasted grosbeak and indigo bunting brightened up Kathy Siemon's Medina County back yard.

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