



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## AERIAL VIEW

### Despite lull in migration, area birding still rewarding - Aerial View

Thursday, July 03, 2008

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The standards by which we measure what's considered "good birding" fluctuate during the summer doldrums of June and July.

The spring migration ended a month ago, and the first wave of shorebirds heading southward won't pass through Northeast Ohio for another month.

So unless you're able to head for one of the coasts or Canada, like I did for two weeks recently, your local birding choices are limited.

Some of us choose to take a break from travel and relax in the back yard watching the cedar waxwings and gray catbirds loading up on serviceberries, or Baltimore orioles and American robins filling their beaks with food for hungry chicks.

Or you can do what my son, Bret, and I did last weekend, save some gas and head for a few of the old reliable spots closer to home.

One of my favorites is the Ledges Trail at the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. This picturesque micro-habitat in the old Virginia Kendall Park features a lush hemlock forest that's carpeted with ferns and as solemn as a church. It attracts several nesting species rarely found south of the Canadian border.

One bird is the winter wren, a stub-tailed sprite with a complex song of tinkling trills that echoes off the limestone ledges and seems to go on forever.

The notes of the melodic wren blend with the songs of black-throated green, ovenbird and hooded warblers, black-billed cuckoo, and thrush - wood and hermit. Kentucky warblers were heard a few weeks ago, but were silent while we were there.

The Acadian flycatcher's familiar "PEETsa" call is seldom out of earshot as it communicates with fledglings flitting nearby.

The expected woodland birds were there and vocal: red-eyed vireo, Eastern wood-pewee, Eastern phoebe, scarlet tanager and pileated woodpecker.

A five-minute drive to the south is the Wetmore Trail, which features more of a field and deciduous woods habitat, and a variety of birds to match.

We were surprised to spot a chestnut-sided warbler with its beak stuffed with nesting material.

Indigo buntings are abundant. Also there: field sparrow, common yellowthroat, yellow warbler, and a yellow-throated vireo. Last year, Bill Osborne reported hearing a worm-eating warbler singing, but no such luck this year.

On a troubling note, we were dismayed by the number of warblers observed feeding fledgling brown-headed cowbirds, nest parasites nearly twice their size.

Another solution for breaking the summer doldrums is to explore uncharted birding territory.

My friend Jim Burns, an environmental scientist, has worked on the Mud Brook Preserve, a wetland mitigation project co-owned by the Western Reserve Land Conservancy and the city of Hudson. The land off of Terex Road straddles the hike-and-bike trail just southeast of Ohio 303 and is open to the public.

Accessibility is another matter. Bret and I hiked through chest-high grass, scanning the trees and shrubs along the way as swallows strafed the air over our heads for flushed insects.

There were tanagers, vireos, warblers, catbirds and a wood thrush. But our hopes for a rail or a bittern were left unfulfilled, as we were unable to reach the soggy depths of the preserve and emerged with soaked pants.

This wetland offers potential birding rewards in the future once an access path is mowed or a boardwalk is laid.

#### Sightings

Dwight Chasar reported that national park officials have removed restrictions at the Station Road Bridge Trailhead in Brecksville, where a bald eagle chick recently fledged. The payoff was immediate as he found a singing Northern parula warbler at the south end of the swamp, plus the usual prothonotary warblers, redheaded woodpeckers and hundreds of great blue herons.

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