



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## AERIAL VIEW

### Young birders clean up, then get great sightings

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Lake Erie gives a tremendous amount of joy to birders, offering its bounty of aquatic insects to sustain migrating songbirds, and its fish to hungry gulls and waterfowl.

A special group of birders gave something back to the lake over the weekend with an inspirational display of volunteerism and sacrifice.

And, oh, what a sacrifice it was to give up the better part of a day of birding at one of Ohio's premier and rarely explored Eden, the 2,445-acre Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge in Lucas County. The park contains the largest marsh on the stateside coastline and remains closed to the public, except for fishermen in the summer.

For nearly eight hours Saturday, 10 members of the Ohio Young Birders Club scoured the park's beaches. Led by Eddy Pausch, assistant refuge manager at the nearby Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, the teenage girls and boys collected bottles, tires, broken Styrofoam coolers, plastic bait containers, rope, fishing lures and lines, milk jugs, beer cans, boat seats and bumpers.

They also picked up what seemed like a half-million empty shotgun shells - a small price to pay, I guess, considering the land was donated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by the Cedar Point Shooting Club in 1964.

By the time they were done, the youths had amassed enough garbage to fill a dump truck.

Only then were they free to begin to fully enjoy this fabulous habitat.

Their first stop was a muddy cove teeming with shorebirds, including good numbers of long-billed dowitchers, greater and lesser yellowlegs, sanderlings, Wilson's snipe, semipalmated Plover and pectoral and semipalmated sandpipers.

Out on the lake, large flocks of Bonaparte's gulls fluttered and chattered at the bald eagles that occasionally soared by. Northern harriers coursed over the marsh grasses, sending the wood ducks and waders into a frantic tizzy.

In a fitting reward for their labor, the birder cleanup crew pitched tents in the sand on the beach, gathered driftwood for a raging bonfire and feasted on coal-cooked hamburgers, hot dogs and Pausch's specialty, fruit-filled hobo pies for dessert.

The first light of day found the birders out of their tents and on the trail, discovering what migratory surprises had arrived on the northwest winds overnight.

The cottonwoods, willows and cherry trees were alive with red-eyed and Philadelphia vireos, red-breasted nuthatches, Eastern wood-pewees, dark-eyed juncoes, white-throated sparrows, Swainson's thrush, ruby-crowned kinglets, cedar waxwings and warblers - Canada, blackpoll, yellow-rumped, chestnut-sided, black-

throated green, common yellowthroat, Wilson's, Cape May, Tennessee and American redstart.

The birds were nice, no doubt. But the young birders' best reward was the sense of pride and gratification they felt from being able to repay nature for such a wonderful gift.

### Sightings

Young birder Phil Chaon had a big migration day in his Cleveland Heights yard last week, logging good numbers of warblers, including mourning, Canada, Blackburnian and Cape May; gray-cheeked and veery thrush, purple finch, rose-breasted grosbeak, bobolink and swamp sparrow. Early Saturday, before joining the Ohio Young Birders outing, he spotted Hudsonian godwit and Baird's sandpiper at the Cedar Point Causeway.

Ray Hannikman reported that Headlands Dunes State Nature Preserve experienced another phenomenal event last week, with a massive movement of thousands of terns and gulls, including a Sabine's gull, two little gulls and three black terns. Jerry Talkington found a barred owl (see photograph).

Northeast Ohio's exciting red-breasted nuthatch invasion just keeps going and going. Lyn Miller had two in her Auburn Township back yard in Geauga County, plus a rose-breasted grosbeak. John Pogacnik counted seven at one time at his feeders in Perry Township, accompanied by larger numbers of white-breasted nuthatches and tufted titmice.

A family of six trumpeter swans were at the pond at the Caley Reservation in Lorain County, Matt Vosniak reported.

Forty-eight birders found 107 species at the Cuyahoga Valley National Park fall census, Dwight Chasar reported. Notable sightings included the census' first sedge wren and Connecticut warbler, the first American black duck in 11 years and the first sora since 1998.

At Wildwood Park in Cleveland, Nancy Anderson reported blue-headed, Philadelphia and red-eyed vireos, rose-breasted grosbeak, Lincoln's, swamp and white-throated sparrows and a pine warbler.

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