



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## AERIAL VIEW

### New birds at sites such as Sandy Ridge Reservation a cause of delight

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The winds shifted over the weekend, and with them came a whole new mix of migrants.

The much-anticipated change in species was apparent without even having to look outside. Our open windows in Lakewood at dawn Sunday conveyed an eye-opening blend of high-pitched chip calls from white-throated sparrows, golden- and ruby-crowned kinglets and late fall warblers, plus the bubbling melody of a winter wren - our first of the season.

The sounds were like an alarm clock, shaking us from our slumber and stirring an impulse to get out and bird!

So as not to waste too much of the precious day behind the steering wheel, my son Bret and I headed for the nearest hot spot, which in our case was the Sandy Ridge Reservation in North Ridgeville. There we found the overnight winds from the north had delivered a variety of songbirds, sparrows, waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors.

Along the trail through the woods, we encountered several active mixed feeding flocks, including a phenomenon we had never witnessed before.

A cacophony of distress calls led us to a multitude of birds in full mobbing mode. Their behavior was typical of when birds attempt to drive away an owl or when master birder Larry Richardson whistles his dead-on screech owl mimic call - a magical whinny that never fails to attract a crowd.

But the object of the birds' distress wasn't a predatory bird. It was a raccoon curled up in a nest of leaves attempting to catch a few hours of sleep.

The mob was composed of eight species of warblers, including at least two Northern parulas, black-and-white, American redstart, magnolia, blackpoll and black-throated green, a red-eyed vireo, scarlet tanager, kinglets, downy woodpecker, chickadee and tufted titmice.

After about 10 minutes the hullabaloo subsided, the birds dispersed, and the raccoon resumed its nap.

The birding thrills were only beginning, and they weren't confined to Sandy Ridge.

As we emerged from the woods we noticed a hawk perched on a snag. When observed through the spotting scope, we realized it wasn't an ordinary red-tail, but was a young peregrine falcon with a boldly barred breast and a wary eye for the rough-winged swallows and palm warblers that periodically dive-bombed in an attempt to drive away the bird-eater. Eventually they succeeded, and the falcon moved on.

On Wednesday, parks naturalist Tim Fairweather's weekly morning bird walk had found a LeConte's sparrow and an American bittern on the ponds, but we weren't so fortunate.

On our return walk we encountered a bright male black-throated blue warbler and heard the resident great horned owls hooting back and forth in the woods.

While patrolling the meadows of blooming New England aster, goldenrod and ironweed, I received a call from Jen Brumfield, who was birding the nearby Lorain Impoundment. She was excited, having found a similar bounty of birds in the trees and wetland vegetation there.

#### Sightings

At Munroe Falls Metro Park in Summit County, Doug Vogus' sightings included blue-headed vireo, red-breasted nuthatch, winter wren, ruby-crowned kinglet, gray-cheeked, Swainson's and wood thrushes and warblers: black-throated blue and green, Blackburnian, bay-breasted and blackpoll.

Nancy Anderson found Wildwood Park in Cleveland busy with migrants, including four thrush: gray-cheeked, Swainson's, hermit and wood; brown thrasher, winter wren, blue-headed vireo, yellow-bellied sapsucker, both kinglets, brown creeper, junco, rose-breasted grosbeak, Lincoln's and white-throated sparrows and warblers: Tennessee, Nashville, black-throated blue and green.

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