

FALL WARBLERS SYMPOSIUM, September 8 & 9, 2007

Field Trip Sites

Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge

This section of Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge is normally closed to the public, and offers extraordinary birding opportunities. The centerpiece is a massive wetland; the best remaining marshland ecosystem along the Ohio shores of Lake Erie. As this part of the refuge juts out into Lake Erie, songbirds funnel along the brushy wetland margins, and on a good fall day the bushes can be dripping with birds. The wetlands can always produce exciting finds, too, as can the open waters of Lake Erie and the beach along the western margin of the refuge. Many interesting plants occur, such as the now rare Wild Rice and Deer-tongue Arrowhead, and dragonfly abundance and diversity can be out of this world.

East Harbor State Park

Sometimes overshadowed by better known birding locales in the vicinity, East Harbor is a bit of a hidden jewel. The park contains excellent woodland and shrubby thicket habitats hard up against the shore of Lake Erie, and these habitats can be filled with migrant birds in fall. There are also some marshlands, and large open harbors, not to mention the offshore waters of Lake Erie. A large bird list can be compiled here, and rarities such as Western Tanager have been found. There are also beaches, and these can produce some great gulls, terns, and shorebirds. One of the beaches is largely undisturbed, and has many interesting and rare beach plants, including disjuncts from the Atlantic Coastal Plain like Seaside Spurge and Sea-rocket.

Lakeside

Participants won't have to travel far for this trip – the grounds of the conference location, Lakeside, can provide outstanding birding. Large trees coupled with a Lake Erie shoreline location mean plenty of birds. Just strolling the quaint streets in this charming and very quiet community is sure to produce a nice diversity of migrants, including many warblers.

Magee Marsh Wildlife Area

An undisputed legend among North American birding locales, the famous "bird trail" boardwalk ranks high on many birders' lists of favorite places. This trail and the seven-acre patch of woods that it winds through have produced a ridiculously big list of species over the years, including many mega-rarities. One just never knows what might turn up along the trail, and the opportunities for studying birds are outstanding as they often are at your fingertips. But there's more. The surrounding marshlands are some of the best along Lake Erie, and routinely produce great birds. Driving down the causeway road which bisects the marsh can be a challenge, because anything from an American Bittern to a Black-necked Stilt might appear.

Marblehead Lighthouse Woods

Like any habitat along the shores of Lake Erie, this area of rocky shoreline and scruffy woods can and does produce plenty of good birds in migration. Not only will songbirds be found in the trees, but interesting waterbirds might be found offshore. Ruddy Turnstones and other shorebirds often occur along the shore. Plus, there is the added benefit of having Ohio's most scenic – and most photographed – lighthouse as a backdrop.

Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area

Always an exciting site to bird, 2007 has been one of the best on record at Metzger. The 500-acre+ marsh have had low water levels, producing outstanding numbers and diversity of shorebirds. Other rare waders like Glossy and White-faced Ibis also appeared, and one just never knows what will show up on in these wetlands. Songbird migration can be great, especially in the tiny patch of scruffy woods along the shore of Lake Erie. Even though this woodland is small, it can be absolutely packed with migrants. Sometimes, 15 or 20 species of warblers can be present at once, and they will generally be close at hand and available for excellent looks.

Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge

Spectacular birding is almost assured at Ohio's only national wildlife refuge. The vast and sprawling marshes are interspersed with woodlands and thickets, which are often filled with migrant songbirds. This will be a good place to look for Connecticut Warbler, one of the most coveted of eastern warblers. Because of the diversity of habitat at Ottawa, big day lists are the norm, and will include many other groups of birds besides warblers. Outstanding rarities have been found here on a regular basis, such as Fulvous Whistling-Duck and Vermilion Flycatcher. Butterfly enthusiasts will also be distracted by a good diversity of these winged jewels, which are sometimes augmented by incursions of the rare – for Ohio – Dogface butterfly.

Quarry View

Just a stone's toss from Lakeside, this area is amongst the massive limestone quarries of the Marblehead Peninsula. As with any site on the Marblehead archipelago, birding can be wonderful in fall migration. This trip also includes the Lakeside Daisy State Nature Preserve, a tiny 19-acre reserve set aside to protect one of North America's rarest plants, the federally threatened Lakeside Daisy. While the daisies won't be in bloom, plenty of other odd and spectacular botanical beauties will, adding another element of interest to this trip.

Navarre Marsh Banding Station

This trip will be a very special treat. The Navarre marshes are in the shadow of the cooling tower of the Davis-Besse power plant, and are normally off-limits to the public. Nestled within the marsh is the site of the Black Swamp Bird Observatory's long-term banding station, where the group has engaged in bird banding research since the early 1990's. And spring of 2007 was their best year ever, with several thousand birds captured and banded, including large numbers of warblers. Odd rarities have turned up, too, including Swainson's Warbler. Observing a banding operation is fascinating, and allows up close and personal study of birds in a way simply not possible through binoculars. And there'll be plenty of birds in the trees, in addition to those that fly into the mist nets.

Sheldon Marsh State Nature Preserve

Located along the shoreline of Lake Erie, just east of Cedar Point amusement park, Sheldon can provide awesome birding in fall. There is a diverse mixture of mature woodlands, and dense shrubby thickets, providing habitat for many species. Nearly 300 species of birds have been found within Sheldon Marsh's 465 acres. Warblers can be plentiful in fall, and there are many reports of rare species like Golden-winged Warbler. Eventually, participants will make their way out to Lake Erie and the biggest remaining barrier beach in Ohio waters. Lots of interesting birds routinely appear on the open sands, including at least 32 species of shorebirds over the years. The wetlands behind the barrier beach are also outstanding, particularly in fall when water levels often drop and create yet more excellent shorebird habitat.