



OHIO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY CONFERENCE: SHAWNEE STATE FOREST

April 29 – May 1, 2005

Day Field Trip Descriptions*

We think you'll enjoy Shawnee State Forest and our field trips will be a great way to sample some of the natural history that this 63,000-acre forest offers. This locale may harbor the richest biodiversity in Ohio, with about 1,000 species of vascular plants – many of them great rarities – well over 100 species of breeding birds, numerous reptiles and amphibians, fantastic butterfly diversity, and countless other organisms. Some of the best naturalists and scientists in Ohio have come together to lead these field trips, and make them a memorable learning experience. Of course, this is an Ohio Ornithological Society expedition, so birds always come first, although many of these trips have other focuses as well.

1. **Fantastic Flora and Birds – Jim McCormac, Kevin Bradbury, and Laura Kammermeier**

Shawnee is heavily influenced by a river we can no longer see – the prehistoric Teays River, which flowed north from the Carolinas and through Ohio millions of years ago. It brought with it Appalachian flora, some of which still survives to this day in Shawnee, and in some cases this is the only locale north of the Ohio River where these plants occur. We'll walk along an abandoned road surrounded by rich forests harboring the endangered Early Stoneroot, Yellow Lady's-slipper orchids, and many other fantastic plants. These woods abound with breeding birds, and we should accumulate a large list of many of the Shawnee breeders, in addition to whatever migrants are about.

2. **Rattlesnakes, Copperheads and Birds – Doug Wynn, Randy Rogers, & Peter King**

The Timber Rattlesnake, or *Crotalus horridus*, is a snake of true wilderness, and has become endangered in Ohio. Shawnee supports Ohio's best remaining populations, including many active den sites. The secretive Northern Copperhead is one of our other poisonous snakes, and while more common than the Timber Rattlesnake, is elusive and hard to find. We should see both of these species, and a number of other snakes species on this trip, as we'll be led by Doug Wynn, who knows how to find the snakes of this region better than anyone. No fears, either, as Doug is quite skilled in handling these beasts, and seldom loses any of his guests to snake bites. We'll also be in great birding habitat throughout this trip, and will find many species of birds.

3. **Forest Management 101 and Birds – Ben Hamilton, Greg Miller, & Dave Swanson**

We're fortunate to have Ben Hamilton to help guide this trip. Ben is the manager of Shawnee, and at 63,000+ acres, that's saying a lot! He probably knows this region better than anyone out there, and will be able to share what the Division of Forestry does to manage the timber resources of Shawnee to satisfy many different user groups, including birders. Ben is also an excellent naturalist, and co-leaders Greg Miller and Dave Swanson will complement his skills. As they'll be visiting many of the forest's most interesting spots, quite a bird list should be racked up on this adventure. While there are no guarantees, we'll make a special effort to find Ruffed Grouse on this one.

4. **Butterflies and Birds – Dave Parshall, Bernie Master, and Doug Overacker**

This trip is all about flying objects. Not only is Shawnee a fantastic place to find birds of course, but it also offers butterflies galore. On a good day in late April, it's possible to discover 25 or more species. There are some very interesting butterflies to be found here, and early spring fliers like the stunning Falcate Orangetip should be easily found. Other common butterflies should also be easy to see, and there is always the possibility of stumbling across something really unusual, like an Olympia Marble. While your binoculars will get a great workout looking at all of the birds that you'll see, they work just as well to get great looks at those butterflies! We'll have to hope for decent weather, though, as butterflies definitely prefer warm, sunny days.

5. **Birding 101 – Ned Keller, Dan Sanders, and Brad Sparks**

You couldn't have better teachers than the leaders of this excursion; so if you want to really sharpen your skills, sign on for this trip. The three leaders are all teachers par excellence and are exceptionally skilled in sharing their knowledge with others. Whether it's better learning how to separate those warblers and vireos, or how to begin learning songs, you'll come away with tons of new information from this trip. The emphasis will definitely be on learning, but nevertheless expect a big overall list by trip's end, as this adventure will visit some of the best birding locales in the forest.

6. **Natural History of Shawnee and Birds – Chris Bedel, Rob Harlan, and Ed Pierce**

Chris Bedel is without a doubt one of the most knowledgeable naturalists in all of southern Ohio, and he is especially familiar with the Shawnee region. Chris also has a gift for imparting knowledge of the natural world like no other. In addition to birds – of course! – this trip is about the “Big Picture”. The forest is a fascinating lesson in geological history, and this story is told through the rocks, topography, streams, and vegetation. You’ll come away from this one with a much better understanding as to why Shawnee Forest is the unique place that it is, and your bird list will be much bigger as well. And, with these leaders, it’s likely that some other odd bit of animal life will be discovered – maybe even a Gray Fox!

7. **Neotropical Jewels: Warblers! – Bill Thompson, Su Snyder, and Dave Riepenhoff**

Spring is many a birder’s favorite time, and with good reason – wood warblers! No “confusing fall warblers” here: everyone will be decked out in festive spring colors, and the testosterone-filled males will be singing like crazy. Shawnee is THE PLACE for them this weekend, too, as just about all of the resident species will be on territory, the first arrivals at Ohio latitudes. At least 17 warbler species breed here, too, and coveted species like the Worm-eating Warbler and Northern Parula are common. We’ll really focus on learning about their ecology, and getting good looks at them. Plus, there’ll be many migrants passing through, so quite the warbler list could be compiled.

8. **Salamanders below, Birds above – Ralph Pfingsten, Mark Zloba, and Greg Links**

A great many fascinating little beasts lurk in the leaf litter, under rocks in streams, and below rotten logs, but it takes experience to find them. Well, we’ve got plenty of that on this trip, and if you’ve got little experience in the domain of secretive amphibians, expect to grow your salamander life list by quite a few species. Some of them are nearly as colorful as a Baltimore Oriole, and all of them have interesting life histories. Twenty-six species are known in Ohio, and at least half of them can be found in Shawnee. Besides, the habitat favored by these little creatures is also stellar for birds, and there’ll be lots of those seen as well.

9. **Bird Songs 101 – Micki Dunakin, Tom Hissong, and Steve Landes**

The hills will literally be alive with the sound of music – bird music! There just is no better time of year to learn about bird songs and calls than spring, when the males are busily attempting to attract mates and mark territories. And, learning their songs is really not nearly as difficult as some might believe, particularly when you’re with excellent teachers. Of course, we’ll not avoid getting looks at things here, but the main focus will be about songs and how to recognize them. Some are easy, some are hard, but after this trip, we think you’ll have a much better basic understanding of bird language.

10. **Spiders: Not Just Bird food – Rich Bradley, Bill Whan, and Jay Lehman**

True, Carolina Wrens have a passion for our eight-legged friends, but unfortunately not too many humanoids do. Forget that movie “Arachnophobia”, spiders are actually harmless and have some of the most interesting behaviors of any group of animals – even birds! A great diversity of spiders lurks in Shawnee, and we’ll just about guarantee that you’ll see many that you never knew existed, and learn things that you never would have believed. Besides, they’re very easy to view – much easier than that Cerulean Warbler that will be singing in the treetops at some point! Everyone should come away with a much deeper appreciation for the role that spiders play after experiencing this trip

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Evening Field Trip Descriptions*

Creatures of the Night – Jenny Richards, Bob Scott Placier, and Paul Knoop

At Shawnee, birding isn't just good during the day – lots of interesting birds are out and about by night, too. This walk will be through the forests and hollows near the lodge, where many noteworthy nocturnal species lurk. We'll be trying primarily for owls, particularly Eastern Screech-Owl and Barred Owl, which should be no problem to lure in for observation. But, it's surprising what else can be found in the dark, and no creature will be ignored. Amphibians can be especially vocal this time of year, and can often be found and viewed under the beam of a flashlight as they sing away. In addition to the common frogs, we'll try and find the much more limited Mountain Chorus Frog.

Astronomy 101 – Tim Hamilton and Brad Sparks

For this one, we'll hop in a bus and head over to nearby Portsmouth and Shawnee State University. On the way, we'll take a slight detour to view one of the artistic marvels of the region – the famous Scioto River floodwall murals! If you haven't seen these, you haven't fully experienced Portsmouth! Then, it's on to the University and their state-of-the-art planetarium, where Director and astronomer Tim Hamilton will teach us about the night skies of southern Ohio, and how to identify the constellations. This is one of the best planetariums in the Midwest, and we're truly fortunate to have a private show.

Rare Goatsuckers: Chuck-will's-widow! – Chris Bedel, Pete Whan, Mark Zloba, and Rich McCarty

The conference just wouldn't be complete without a trip to see our largest and rarest goatsucker, the Chuck-will's-widow. For this trip, we'll take a bus – or two – to the neighboring county of Adams, home of the sprawling Edge of Appalachia mega-preserve, owned by The Nature Conservancy and the Cincinnati Museum. This is long-famous locale for finding the Chuck, and indeed, is the first place they were ever found in Ohio, back in 1932. No birder's Ohio experience is truly complete without making this pilgrimage. The birds are certainly easy to hear, but definitely not so easy to see, but we'll try. Whether they're seen or not, though, hearing Chuck-will's-widows in the gorgeous Ohio Brush Creek valley is a must-do, and we're fortunate to have the most knowledgeable guides there are along to show us Chucks and other evening sights and sounds in one of the most significant eco-regions of Ohio.

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