Report on KBC Field Trip “Backroads of Geauga County”

2/19/22

AKA “Birding the Tundra”

by Matt Valencic, Field Trip leader

Most of us will never see Snow Buntings on their breeding grounds in the high arctic tundra, but on February 19th a group of intrepid birders came pretty close. I was leading a planned winter car-birding trip into Geauga  County for the Kirtland Bird Club, searching for those hardy birds that winter on the agricultural fields around Parkman and Middlefield. We planned the trip but not the weather! We woke to high winds (30-40 mph), below freezing temperature and icy roads. The large, flat fields on either side of Soltis Road in Parkman were partially obscured by blowing snow, yet hundreds of Horned Larks and Snow Buntings were flying, landing, and foraging, always pointed into the wind. It was very special to witness how well adapted these birds are to such severe conditions, and good fortune that they landed within binocular range so we could stay in our cars to watch them. Nature continues to amaze me!