

24 Great Hours of Birding

Enderis Park Birdwatching Club
Broughton-Sheboygan County Marsh
By: Joe Devereaux

However fun, entertaining, captivating, and rewarding birding by yourself can be, it is multiplied exponentially when you go out as a group. Having said that, it gets even better when you “bird” on a group camping trip. The weekend of May 18-20, 2007 was reserved for just such a special experience. Five intrepid families traveled north 59 miles (1 hour 6 min. approx.) to the bucolic campground at Broughton-Sheboygan Marsh in Sheboygan County, Wisconsin to congregate, relax, eat lots of good food, and of course; bird.

The Enderis Park Bird Watching Club decided to use this trip into the wild as a good excuse to socialize, recreate and participate in the Wisconsin Humane Societies Avian Odyssey contest. Put on the coffee and open the bird books. After a varied and interesting breakfast of yogurt, breads, cheeses, and blueberry muffins, the adults were ready to go exploring. With clipboard in one hand and the other on a pair of binoculars, the hearty group of EPBWC birders ventured forth into a stout southwesterly marsh wind, to see what we could see.

Here are the 42 species we ultimately listed:

Blackbird, Brewers	Blackbird, Red-winged	Bobwhite, Northern	Bunting, Indigo	Cardinal, Northern
Catbird, Gray	Chickadee, Black-capped	Cowbird, Brown-headed	Crane, Sandhill	Crow, American
Dove, Mourning	Flicker, Northern	Flycatcher, least	Goldfinch, American	Goose, Canada
Grackle, Common	Grebe, Pied-billed	Grosbeak, Rose-breasted	Gull, Herring	Harrier, Northern
Hawk, Red-tailed	Heron, Great Blue	Hummingbird, Ruby-throat	Jay, Blue	Killdeer
Kingfisher, Belted	Nuthatch, White-Breasted	Oriole, Baltimore	Phoebe, Eastern	Robin, American
Sparrow, Chipping	Sparrow, Swamp	Starling, European	Swallow, Barn	Swallow, Tree
Thrush, Wood	Vireo, Warbling	Vulture, Turkey	Warbler, Yellow	Woodpecker, Hairy
Woodpecker, Red-bellied			Yellowthroat, Common	

Overall, 16 people (8 adults and 8 kids) had a wonderful time camping, boating, eating, exploring and birding. The weather was extremely windy and cool at first then mostly sunny and windy until around 6:00 PM when a light rain came in. The wind then died and the temperatures plunged into the mid-30s overnight. The campers in their tents shared body heat, (when available) and snuggled deep into their sleeping bags otherwise, to keep from freezing to death in their sleep. (No, really it wasn't that bad, it just seemed like it). The food in the Marsh Lodge (Three Guys and a Grill) was fantastic! They even have New Glarus Spotted Cow on tap! Yum!

Sunday morning (May 20th) I watched through my binoculars in fascination and horror from the bridge over the dam at a standing deadfall, as a Red-bellied Woodpecker roused a Chickadee from its nest and devoured its eggs. The last egg was even delicately removed (via beak) from the nest cavity and eaten in front of the stunned Chickadee. There were two feeble counter attack attempts from the wee victim, but in the end, breakfast was served. I was reminded of the abduction of a baby Northern Cardinal I witnessed last spring, by a Common Grackle. I was on my way to the garage around 6:30 AM when I noticed a Male Cardinal out with its chick. The chick was standing on the back of a cedar Adirondack chair next to my pond when out of nowhere, the Grackle snatched the baby with its beak and carried it off several neighbor's yards away. I stood there stunned and watched the Male (father) flit around chipping, looking just as shocked. That's nature for you.

We all decided that it was much too cold to cook a final breakfast in the 36-degree wind, so (thankfully) someone started a “rumor” that we ought to just bag the cooking and eat at the restaurant again. We did. It was again a wonderful treat. We all decided we ought to do it again next year, but perhaps a bit later in the season. Brrrr.