



USA: 1-DAY NORTHWEST OHIO TRIP REPORT

05 May 2023

By Sarah Preston



*This charismatic male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was a favorite for sure!*

Overview

Jim and Traci from Colorado came to northwest Ohio for the beginning of The Biggest Week in American Birding festival. They were getting back into birding after a twenty-year hiatus and were excited to see the spring warbler migration as well as Ohio resident birds. They were introduced to the birds of the most popular hotspots in the area, hitting the Magee Marsh boardwalk and Metzger Marsh Woodlot in the morning and then Howard Marsh Metropark and Maumee Bay State Park boardwalk in the afternoon. We observed 66 species of birds on the day including ten warbler species! To see the eBird trip report click [here](#).



Scarlet Tanager, first stunner of the day!

Detailed Report

After picking Jim and Traci up at 6:30am at the Maumee State Park lodge, we headed for the world-famous Magee Marsh boardwalk as our first birding stop of the day. The boardwalk can be overwhelming for the uninitiated – so many birds flitting about and singing! We began at the east end and one of the first colorful birds we saw was a brilliant male **Scarlet Tanager**, singing above the boardwalk. The next birds we noted were tiny, adorable **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** and **Blue-grey Gnatcatchers**. We started to move on, but a loud, ringing song from below had us backtracking to look for a **Northern Waterthrush**, but he wouldn't reveal himself, so we moved on. **American Yellow Warblers** were abundant along the boardwalk this morning. An unusual call like a creaky gate allowed us to track down a gorgeous male **Rusty Blackbird** that should have already moved northward. Several times that morning we heard the prehistoric-sounding call of **Sandhill Cranes** and finally a group of three flew overhead. Looking up we saw a pair of **Wood**

Ducks high in the trees and the **Bald Eagle** nest with eaglets inside, stretching their wings and flapping.



*This cooperative **Black-throated Green Warbler** was close enough for cellphone shots.*

As the morning warmed up and we approached the western end of the boardwalk, additional warbler species were seen. We observed several **Black-throated Green Warblers** in one spot including one just above our heads. A couple of **Palm Warblers** worked the lower story, wagging their tails up and down constantly. A male **Myrtle Warbler** in fresh, bright breeding plumage flitted around pretending to be a flycatcher. A shy **Nashville Warbler** gave brief views. Like a little zebra, a **Black-and-white Warbler** foraged for insects up and down a tree trunk. We then took a small break from the warblers to admire a beautiful **Blue-headed Vireo** high up in a cypress tree, but fully out in the open. We kept trying to make our way out but had to stop and marvel at a **Cape May Warbler** and one of the highlights of the boardwalk, the **Prothonotary Warbler**, which was already on territory loudly singing, “Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet!”



*Although not a warbler, the **Blue-headed Vireo** is a beauty!*

After the Magee Marsh boardwalk, we headed to Metzger Marsh. We stopped at a couple of pullouts along the causeway to admire the **Trumpeter Swans** while **Common Terns** noisily flew overhead, and to carefully examine the shorebirds present when Jim excitedly said he saw a phalarope, which turned out to be a **Greater Yellowlegs**. It's always good to check because that's a real possibility here. We joked about phalaropes each time we saw a yellowlegs the rest of the day. The Metzger Marsh woodlot was quieter than it can be on big migration movement days, but we obtained our target that we went there to seek. Shortly after we arrived, we found a striking male **Hooded Warbler** intermittently singing and playing hide-and-seek. A **Baltimore Oriole** was very cooperative, singing out in the sun, his orange plumage practically glowing.

We had lunch at the nearby Blackberry Corners, famous among birders as a requisite stop for homemade "lifer pie." There were many lifers had that morning for Jim and Traci, so the pie was well-deserved.



*We enjoyed views of many **Trumpeter Swans** in the Metzger Marsh.*

After lunch we headed to Howard Marsh Metropark. Before we even got out of the car, we were fortunate to see the male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** strutting his stuff in the nearby grass, almost blending in with the dandelions. This was a species Traci was especially looking forward to seeing, so we made a beeline straight to him. Not far away, the female was also walking around in the grass obligingly. The next attraction was a **Black-necked Stilt** pair nesting only about 25 feet into the marsh in plain view. A total of three pairs were in the immediate area along with close-up views of **Dunlin**, **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs** (offering fantastic comparison looks), and **Blue-winged Teal**. The **Osprey** pair were on their nest platform and many **American White Pelicans** and **Caspian Terns** flew overhead.

Our next and final stop was the Maumee Bay State Park boardwalk. The time change and early start was beginning to affect the weary travelers, so we didn't stay long, but it was enough time to catch a handsome **Red-headed Woodpecker**, see a **Great Egret** fishing, and observe a few iridescent blue **Tree Swallows** checking out potential nest holes.



*We were lucky to see this **Black-necked Stilt** on a nest right out in the open!*

We had spent the day exploring four distinct and popular hotspots close to the Maumee Bay State Park lodge where Jim and Traci were staying, the perfect introduction to The Biggest Week in American Birding for their first of five days in the area.



***American White Pelicans** were a treat to see flying over Howard Marsh.*