

The Biblioloons, representing Madison Audubon, ran our Birdathon on Saturday May 18. This was a change from our original plan to run it on Sunday the 19th, incorporating the Baxter's Hollow field trip as part of it. Since I postponed the field trip (likely to the first weekend in June,) due to the dicey forecast, we changed things up a bit this year and decided to incorporate a trip to Wyalusing St. Park instead.

Pat Ready rode along as an "honorary" spotter (and self-proclaimed referee) and found probably half our birds. Thanks, Pat! Otherwise, the team these days consists of Peter Gorman and myself. Pat and I got to Peter's house in Mt. Horeb about 6:15 a.m. (we're not hardcore, obviously.) Our first stop was Thomson Prairie south of Blue Mounds, where we got our target, Upland Sandpipers (actually in a plowed field east of the prairie.) Also picked up other common grassland birds, then headed back to 151. We made a slight detour to look for a Harris's Sparrow that had been eBirded a few days earlier north of Mineral Point. Whiffed on the sparrow, but picked up a bunch of other birds there, so a worthwhile stop. We headed up to Hwy 18 and got a E. Collared Dove at a farm east of Edmund. Then west to Wyalusing. We unfortunately whiffed on Yellow-throated Warbler, but got nearly all of our other targets there, including Kentucky, Cerulean and Prothonotary Warblers. Also

Acadian Flycatcher and Red-headed WP (strangely, on a tree up the closed road off Long Valley, which is where we had the Kentucky.) About the only other expected thing we missed there was Louisiana Waterthrush.

We decided to head for Gov. Dodge St. Park, which turned out to be a goldmine. Next year, we'll skip Wyalusing and make that our main warbler spot, probably. We opted not to hike down the Stephens Falls trail for the Louisiana Waterthrush, but found the hotspot at the outflow cascade below the Cox Hollow Lake dam. Many birds were flycatching over the rushing stream, including another Prothonotary, two Canada Warblers, Wilson's Warbler, and a whole bunch of American Redstarts. Biggest surprise was an Olive-sided Flycatcher down at the bottom of the cascade. On the drive back to the entrance, we stopped at the picnic area with the big pines, since I thought I heard a Pine Warbler there. We did find it, along with two or three Orchard Orioles.

Next stop was Spring Green Preserve, where we got our targets, Lark and Grasshopper Sparrows. Next, we went west on G and then Mercer Rd. Steve Thiessen had been out there a couple days before and gave me some tips. We got Brewer's Blackbirds in a flooded field, a singing Dickcissel on an overhead wire, and multiple calling Soras in the wetland at Mercer and Peck. Right after that, we ran into Mike Mossman and his wife Lisa. Peter was filling him in on what we were looking for and mentioned that we still needed Bay-breasted and both waterthrushes. Just down the road, we stopped to look for shorebirds that Pat had spotted while we were talking to Mike. There were also two warblers in a clump of shrubs around a willow tree next to the road - a Northern Waterthrush and a Bay-breasted. It was such a bizarre coincidence, we just laughed.

Bakken's Pond was absolutely dead. The water is extremely high, so all the marsh is flooded. There were no ducks, and not much else. Only interesting thing was a flock of Common Nighthawks hunting low over the water. We headed for Arena Boat Landing, where we finally heard our first Chickadee of the day! This was around 7:00 p.m. We also finally picked up a House Finch in Peter's neighborhood back in Mt. Horeb. Trying for nocturnal species wasn't going to appreciably increase our rather paltry total of

112 species. We did very well on warblers - 25 species, plus a Golden-winged that only I saw. Other than our target Yellow-throated and Louisiana Waterthrush, the only glaring miss was Nashville. We did poorly on waterfowl (four species) and shorebirds (five, two of which are more cropland/pasture birds anyway.) Most glaring misses were probably Least Flycatcher, Kestrel and Red-tailed Hawk (weird). We saw a few Empids that unfortunately never vocalized, so we may have missed a couple species there.

All in all, a better weather day than we had expected, with the only rain coming while we were in transit. The lack of sun may have held our numbers down, though. We'll be going back to a more geographically compact route next year. Just too long a haul to Wyalusing, as fun as it was.