

## Field Trip to Magee Marsh Highlights Migrants

*Sherry Courtney, Field Trip Coordinator*

“They call it The Biggest Week in American Birding!” said Joe Kubal when he contacted me last October to ask about planning a DBC trip to Magee Marsh, Ohio. He had heard about the marsh at a DBC Book Club meeting, when Mike and Karen Warner shared about their trip last spring.

Magee Marsh along with Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge occupies the largest area of coastal wetlands in Ohio. The “Magee Boardwalk” winds through seven acres of woodland between Lake Erie and expansive marshes and is a perfect for the migrants to stop on their way north, making it possible to see them up close.



So, on May 7, after months of planning, and talking to members who had been there, 21 DuPage Birding Club members, trip coordinators and leaders all trekked to Ohio for what became a grand four-day adventure.



For our first stop, Joe had arranged an introductory visit to the Black Swamp Bird Observatory, and then we were onto the Estuary Trail at Magee Marsh for a walk with our expert guide, Gautam. Among many others we watched a Prothonotary Warbler pose for us for a full five minutes, the sun illuminating his bright yellow head. (Matt Crisler refers to these as “Sunshine.”) It was only the beginning.

The cold and wind of the next day didn’t stop us from finding the group’s most sought-after target bird, the Blackburnian Warbler, as well as a plethora of warblers many of us had never seen.



*Blackburnian Warbler. Photo by Helen and Franklin Chow*

One of the highlights of the trip was when Kristine got an alert that a Kirtland's Warbler happened to land in the marsh on its way from Bermuda to its breeding ground in Michigan. We all felt the excitement of chasing the rare Kirtland's warbler and watching Matt run down the beach to get to the spot where it was sighted. (We followed but did not run!) No luck.

The next day, a group of us went back, and *voila!* Our illusive warbler came very close to the path, offering various poses for the cameras, everyone clicking away like paparazzi, as he made his way to the top of a leafy tree branch, stopped, looked at us all, turned and flew out of sight. The group broke out in applause, and "Bravos!" as he disappeared into the trees. What a performance, and a joyous shared experience for all of us.



*Kirtland's Warbler. Photos by Helen and Franklin Chow*

Another highlight was seeing a Least Bittern and American Bittern at Metzger Marsh. It took a while for some of us to get our eyes on them. Howard Marsh had its own show with Dunlin repeatedly performing a chorus line, a Black-Necked Stilt showing off those **bright** pink legs, and Osprey on the nest.

Over our 4 days there we spotted 119 species. Altogether, we visited Magee Marsh, Howard Marsh, Metzger Marsh, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, and Oak Openings Preserve.

Our special thanks to Matt Crisler, our enthusiastic leader, for making this trip unforgettable. Matt's passion for finding the fun birds was infectious. Thanks to everyone for help spotting birds, and all of the fun, laughs, and camaraderie. What a great group of birding enthusiasts!

