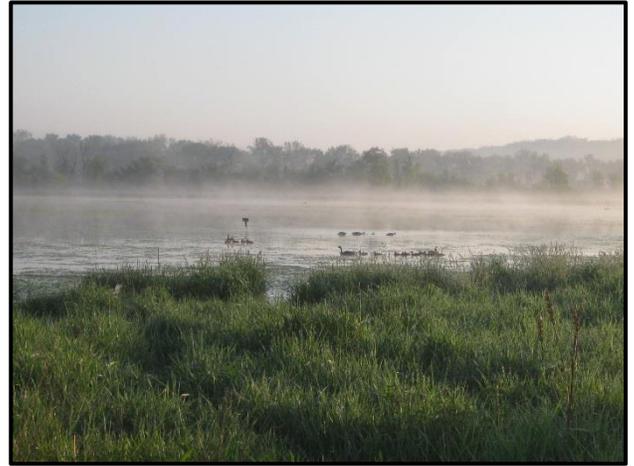


The Oregon Juncos, Greg Hottman and Diane Packett, convened at 6 AM on May 27<sup>th</sup>, a bit later than many Birdathoners would start. We wanted to demonstrate that a Birdathon doesn't have to be a mad 24-hour dash from place to place, but could be a relaxed, fun day of birding. Also, the captain is not an early riser. We had two goals for the day: find as many bird species as possible to raise money for the Anderson Park Friends and the Bird Protection Fund of the Natural Resources Foundation, and confirm more species in the Oregon CE priority area for the Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas.

We started at our respective houses in Oregon, where we laid down a good base of 13 species, including Wild Turkey, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Towhee, and Cedar Waxwing. Greg also visited Anderson Farm Park early to try to catch a Screech Owl in one of the boxes he donated to them, but to no avail. We then met at the Oregon Rotary Trail, a bike trail that cuts across several habitats, including grassland, marsh, open water, and forest edge. It was a misty morning on Swan Pond, and we saw families of Canada Geese, silhouetted pairs of Mallard and Wood Duck, and heard the calls of Pied-billed Grebe and Sandhill Crane.



Our first new passerine species there was Willow Flycatcher, calling "fitz-bew!" from the top of a shrub closely followed by the Ruby-throated Hummingbird Greg spotted as it zoomed by. We also got our first Breeding Bird Atlas confirmations: Tree Swallow in a nest box, and a Song Sparrow carrying food. As we walked the trail past the grassland and soybean field, we picked up Horned Lark, Sedge Wren, and Killdeer. Getting into the woods we got another breeding confirmation, with a Red-bellied Woodpecker looking out of a nest cavity. We hoped for rails or Swamp Sparrows in the adjacent marsh, and did hear the wonderful [whinny](#) of the Sora, but no sparrows. We were likewise disappointed that the Red-headed Woodpeckers, which have nested along the trail for several years, were nowhere to be seen. Birds always disappear on Birdathon day. How do they know?



We spent two hours along the trail, picking up a variety of edge-y species like Indigo Bunting, Eastern Kingbird, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak, one of my favorite birds to see. By this time the Red-winged Blackbirds had dissolved into background noise, and we heard the Alder Flycatcher advertising "free beer!". We also got a new nesting confirmation and a fun sight when a Baltimore Oriole flew into a nest. These bright orange and black birds build a hanging sack-like nest at the end of a branch, always somewhere near water. I'm amazed that birds can weave like that; just try using a thumb and forefinger, like a beak, to weave something with no hands!

Our next stop was Brooklyn Wildlife Area, where Greg had recently seen Yellow-breasted Chat, and where we could pick up some shrub-loving species and maybe some more woodland birds. We did get a nice Blue-winged Warbler and Brown Thrasher, and Yellow Warblers were everywhere. A song neither of us recognized led us to stake out a large honeysuckle shrub, where we finally found the unexpected singer: Canada Warbler, always a treat to see with their painted eyes and gaudy necklace. (Photo by Greg of a different bird). This late in May, migration is winding down, but we did still have a cooperative American Redstart dancing in front of us, and Least Flycatcher calling. Hearing the beautiful [flute song](#) of the Wood Thrush in one of the forest patches partly made up for the total absence of the Chat, the very bird we came for.





We drove back along Bellbrook Road, stopping at a grassland area where Greg had seen Savannah Sparrow, which we did finally get, along with the surprise “kettle-kettle-kettle” call of the Black-billed Cuckoo from a hedgerow. Further down the road we saw some swallows flying under the road where it passed over a small creek, and stopped to investigate. They turned out to be Cliff Swallows, with the white patch on the forehead, and they came swarming angrily out as we stood on the bridge—probable nesting observation! As we watched them, our friends Chuck and Delia, with Spree the dachshund, drove up, on their way back from one of their Breeding Bird Atlas blocks. This called for lunch at the

Firefly Coffeehouse in Oregon. Firefly is a team sponsor this year!

Fortified and caffeinated, we headed back out, picking up Ruddy Ducks at Lake Barny, and at Lerner Conservation Park a pair of Red-tailed Hawks and a pair of Sandhill Cranes that bugled noisily as we approached—maybe they had a colt hidden somewhere in the grass? We also saw four Great Egrets in a small pond named Leopold Marsh (because you have to name every other feature in Wisconsin after Aldo Leopold). Our next stop was Oregon Town Park, where we hoped we would get more forest birds. Unfortunately, it was approaching 2 o’clock and heating up, and the forest was almost completely silent. We couldn’t decide where to go next—Stoughton and the Yahara River, or back to Lerner Park? Diane was also beginning to think longingly of an afternoon nap, so we split up for the rest of the day so we could cover more ground. Yes.



A bit later, Diane ~~trespassed~~ visited a large private woodlot near her home to add a singing Scarlet Tanager to the list, as well as Hairy Woodpecker, that had been mysteriously missing from the suet feeder in the morning. Greg and wife Melanie headed to Stoughton where they found Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Osprey, Green and Great Blue Heron, and the Great Horned Owls and owlets that Greg has been photographing (photo below by Greg).



Passing through Lerner Park on the way to Anderson Farm Park to close out the day, Diane found more Cliff Swallows nesting in a culvert under a road—not a new Birdathon species, but a nice new confirmation for the Atlas block.

Diane didn’t find any new species in Anderson Farm Park—there were still no Screech Owls in Greg’s boxes—but did get to see all the progress the work crews have made this spring. New Leopold benches are along the trails and piles of brush from cutting invasive species are stacked up ready for burning. The prairie restoration in a former farm field was impressive—too bad it was too early for most prairie flowers. There’s a lot of work still to do:

large stands of garlic mustard and dame’s rocket carpet the forest floor, but the amount of native wild geranium and Jack-in-the-pulpit show that the spring ephemerals are there, just waiting to be released. We can’t wait to come back and see what the Friends have accomplished. Thank you for donating to the Oregon Juncos Birdathon to support the Anderson Park Friends and the Bird Protection Fund!



Full species list, 2017 Great Wisconsin Birdathon (not in precise taxonomic order):

1. Canada Goose
2. Pied-billed Grebe
3. Wood Duck
4. Ruddy Duck
5. Mall
6. Blue-winged Teal
7. Sora
8. Great Egret
9. Green Heron
10. Great Blue Heron
11. Sandhill Crane
12. Killdeer
13. Great-horned Owl
14. Wild Turkey
15. Turkey Vulture
16. Osprey
17. Cooper's Hawk
18. Red-tailed Hawk
19. Red-bellied Woodpecker
20. Red-headed Woodpecker
21. Hairy Woodpecker
22. Northern Flicker
23. Tree Swallow
24. Barn Swallow
25. Cliff Swallow
26. Mourning dove
27. Rock Pigeon
28. American Crow
29. Blue Jay
30. Horned Lark

31. Ruby-throated Hummingbird
32. Chimney Swift
33. Least Flycatcher
34. Willow Flycatcher
35. Alder Flycatcher
36. Eastern Phoebe
37. Eastern Wood-pewee
38. Great-crested Flycatcher
39. Eastern Kingbird
40. Black-billed Cuckoo
41. Scarlet Tanager
42. Gray Catbird
43. Brown Thrasher
44. Red-eyed Vireo
45. Warbling Vireo
46. Cedar Waxwing
47. American Robin
48. Eastern Bluebird
49. Wood Thrush
50. Black-capped Chickadee
51. White-breasted Nuthatch
52. Tufted Titmouse
53. Blue-grey Gnatcatcher
54. House Wren
55. Sedge Wren
56. Yellow Warbler
57. Blue-winged Warbler
58. American Redstart
59. Canada Warbler
60. Common Yellowthroat
61. American Goldfinch
62. House Finch
63. Northern Cardinal
64. Rose-breasted Grosbeak
65. Indigo Bunting
66. Eastern Towhee
67. Chipping Sparrow
68. Savannah Sparrow
69. Field Sparrow
70. Song Sparrow
71. Brown-headed Cowbird
72. Dickcissel
73. Common Grackle
74. Baltimore Oriole
75. Eastern Meadowlark
76. Red-winged Blackbird
77. European Starling
78. House Sparrow