

## River Raptors Take On the West Twin River in Two Rivers – Nancy Nabak

Sumner Matteson and I launched our kayaks at 6:45 am, Monday, May 23 (temperature - 49 degrees and a southwesterly wind of 18 miles per hour, gusts of up to 28 mph), but we dressed for the weather and paddled with anticipation for what was in store. Our trip began at the Shoto boat launch and ended at Vets Park, our goal - to find at least 40 different bird species by river.

We were wisely advised to go upstream a bit and then head back down. As we paddled north, we came upon a shrubby little cove that was filled with singing and buzzing migrating warblers. Wilson's, Canada, Blue-winged, Chestnut-sided and more were flitting and bouncing on branches as we sat with binoculars focused. We also heard the beautiful upward-spiraling, flutelike song of the Swainson's thrush. True to its nature, it stayed out of sight, but it was nice listening to the "flute" as we watched other birds move about.

On the International Scale of River Difficulty, the West is slower than a "class 1 – easy" river. There are no rapids, no obstructions or difficult maneuverings that need to be made. She's built for a smooth ride.



We criss-crossed our way to explore the marsh, grass cover, then forest habitats and were successful in finding Northern Harrier, three of the four terns in Wisconsin (Common, Forsters and Caspian), spotted sandpipers, and a beautiful juvenile Bald Eagle who was nearly invisible until our kayaks were under the tree where it perched. We also discovered blue-winged teal, ruddy duck, green-winged teal, five types of sparrows and three types of wrens. (And who could forget the two spotted fawns lying in the grass on the riverbank)?



After five hours of kayaking on the West Twin, we had discovered 97 different bird species, well surpassing our goal. My partner feels the juvenile black-crowned night heron, spotted just 30 minutes before we finished, was the “bird of the day.” I argue that the yellow-bellied flycatcher was. But we both agree that the Eastern Meadowlark singing in an urban setting about a block east of Woodland Dunes was a complete surprise, proving once again, nature is excitingly unpredictable. We also agree that the West Twin River has more birds to share and we can’t wait to go out there and do it again next year!



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