

Wooded Island Bird Walk Report for Saturday, November 30, 2013

Hello to All,

A full day of birding was on the schedule for today. The morning walk in Jackson Park was good exercise with a few fun birds around. The *White-breasted Nuthatch* was seen by all as it worked the tree trunks and limbs of the cottonwoods west of the Japanese Garden. The *Monk Parakeets* have not forsaken Jackson Park after all. A few were seen and others were heard.

A group of *Canada Geese* in the Outer Harbor have learned an interesting bathing technique. Several actually dived and remained under the shallow water near the east wall. They would then pop up to the surface and rotate upside down, with wings splashing and webbed feet to the sky. Karin D. brought this behavior to our attention. It seemed as if their internal gyroscopes were broke. They are learning from the diving ducks in the Harbors.

At the end of our morning walk I checked for IBET posts and read that a *Snowy Owl* was seen this morning on the 87th St. breakwater. We looked for a Snowy Owl on the 63rd St. pier but none was seen. We decided to stop at the new Park 523 on our way to Jasper Pulaski Wild Life Refuge (WLR) to see the *Sandhill Cranes* that now number over 20,000.

Fast forward to 12:30p.m.: With Karin D., Jennie and Rick in the car, we drove south on Rte. 41. At 87th St. the newly open portion of Lake Shore Drive, on the grounds of the former steel mill, took us to the edge Lake Michigan. Well, not so easy. At the intersection of Lake Shore Drive and 87th, the road east was blocked off with barriers and "Road Closed" signs. Karin D. encouraged me to overcome my inhibitions about going around barriers, and lucky for us that she did. At the end of the new road, after driving on the northern most open lane, we came to upon a sign "Park 523."

Beyond it was a strip of land and a path, and then the Lake in all its glory. A scope was called for and Rick brought it over from the car. A *Horned Grebe* was in the water close by. With slow scanning of the breakwater, it was not long before a white clump on the north breakwater, turned its head and opened its yellow eyes. YES!! We had our *Snowy Owl* in sight. She was basking in the sun and paid no heed to the boatman that would zoom near her on their way to and from the ore dock channel.

Now this may sound more than a bit boastful and competitive, *but as of Sunday evening, the number of South side Snowy Owl is up to five, perhaps six!* There were *five Snowy Owls* at one time along the 87th St. breakwaters. Paul Clyne and Eric Ginsburg saw the return of a Snowy Owl to the 63rd St. pier. The number of North side Snowy Owls: 0 as in Z-E-R-O. Even in the last showing of Snowy Owls along the lakefront a few years ago, the total up North was two, perhaps three. Granted, we are in the early stage of Snowy Owl season, but for now, the Southsiders are far in the lead.

At Jasper Pulaski WLR crane viewing platform, we met up with Maddie and Raman. It was great for us all to spend a couple of hours in the company of cranes. They would fly into the pasture in small family units, or several families together. They land like a dropping parachutist. There was drinking and talking and dancing and matchmaking going on among the cranes.

Jennie Strable planned the trip for us, including supper in the small town of Westville, Indiana, on our way home. We had a great meal at *Olga's Place*, a family owned and operated restaurant belonging to the Pecanac family. They came to the US in 1994 from war torn Yugoslavia. Olga, the daughter, was our waitress. Ilija, the mother, was our cook. The food was fresh, delicious and bountiful.

We returned, safe and happy, back to the south side of Chicago – Snowy Owl Land.

BIRDERS: 13 Jennie, Mark W, Jennette, Linda from the western suburbs by way of Alaska, Laurie and Marilyn, with David and Frances, Karin D. and Pat. Birders to Jasper Pulaski were Jennie, Rick, Karin D. Maddie, Raman and Pat.

TIME: 8:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. – Jackson Park
1:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. - 87th & Lakefront – Jennie, Karin D. Rick & Pat
3:30 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. - Jasper Pulaski WLR, Indiana – Jennie, Karin D, Rick,
Maddie, Raman and Pat (photos)

PLACES: Jackson Park,
87th and Lakefront, east of the new section on Rte. 41 with sign “Park 523”
Jasper Pulaski Wild Life Refuge, Medaryville, Indiana

WEATHER: Sunny. Temperature 31 – 43 F. in Chicago and up to 58 F in Indiana. Winds were from the SSW 15 – 20 mph. Lagoons are frozen.

TOTAL SPECIES COUNT: 29

X = commonly seen and/or not counted.

This is a group report, with many birders contributing to the list. Most of the birds were seen by a least several or all the birders.

Mark Webster provided his list for Jackson Park birds.

1. Canada Goose – X
2. Mallard – 21 +. Found in the West Lagoon along the western shore, the Marina and Harbors.
3. Redhead – 4. Two males & two females in the Outer Harbor.

4. Lesser Scaup – 80+ Outer Harbor.
5. Bufflehead – 26+. Harbors and a solo female in the Marina.
6. Common Goldeneye – 11. One male and ten females in the Outer Harbor.
7. Hooded Merganser – 7. A male and three females in the Outer Harbor. A male and two females in the Marina.
8. Red-breasted Merganser – X in the Harbors. Two females in the Marina.
9. Horned Grebe – 1. 87th and Lakefront.
10. American Coot – X. Outer Harbor.
11. SANDHILL CRANES – X. Jasper Pulaski WLR, Indiana.
12. Ring-billed Gull – X. Harbors and Marina.
13. Herring Gull – 6. Outer Harbor.
14. Monk Parakeet – X. Three were seen in the Museum East lot by Mark W. and another flock was hear along the west bank of the West Lagoon.
15. SNOWY OWL – 1. 87TH & Lakefront. On North breakwater.
16. Downy Woodpecker – 1. Along the shoreline of Soccer Field.
17. American Crow – 8+. Jackson Park. Two were seen “skating” on the lagoon ice.
18. Black-capped Chickadee – 4.
19. WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH – 1. Working the limbs of the tall cottonwoods west of the entrance to the Japanese Garden.
20. BROWN CREEPER – 1.
21. EASTERN BLUEBIRD – 6. Jasper Pulaski WLR. Reported by Maddie & Raman. Seen on their tour of the WLR.
22. Hermit Thrush – 1. Likely a Hermit. Reported by Mark on Wooded Island.
23. American Robin – 11. A small flock was seen on the north side of the Soccer Field.
24. European Starling – X.
25. American Tree Sparrow – 1. Bobolink Meadow. Reported by Mark.
26. White-throated Sparrow – 2. Wooded Island.
27. Dark-eyed Junco – 6.
28. Northern Cardinal – 4. In m/f pairs.
29. American Goldfinch – 2.

Corrections, additions and comments are welcome.

This report will be recorded on eBird as a group report for the Wooded Island Bird Walks.

The Walks are free and open to one and all. They are held year round. Birders always show up on Darrow Bridge at the start times. Newcomers are warmly welcomed.

The Walks start at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, and at 7:15 a.m. on Wednesday.

Birders gather on Darrow Bridge, which is located south of the Museum of Science and Industry. Ample parking is available east of Darrow Bridge and is accessible from South Lake Shore Drive at 58th Street (labeled Science Drive on a small blue street sign). There is a Stop Light at 58th Street. Make a turn at the Stop Light towards the Museum. Turn Left (south) at the intersection of Science Drive and Columbia Drive. Go through the parking lot to the west end near Darrow Bridge.

Best of Birding to All,

Patricia Durkin

Chicago Audubon Society Representative

Wooded Island Bird Walks