

October 13-15, 2017 - Whitefish Point

Leader: Jeff Stacey

Whitefish Point is one of the premier birding spots for fall migration, so a small group of 3 birders drove to the top of the UP to experience it. While the official group was only three people, we met up with several friends from southeast Michigan while we were there.

While the drive up on Friday was long, we enjoyed the peak fall colors on the way. Upon arrival, the first place we checked was the bird feeders. Purple Finches, Rusty Blackbirds, and White-crowned Sparrows were feasting out in the open for us to see.

A short hike to the point led to the waterbird shack where the migration count occurs. Unfortunately, it was pretty slow that day. Some Horned Grebes were hanging around just off the shore and a Peregrine Falcon made a close pass to spice up the afternoon. We ended the abbreviated day with an unsuccessful trip to look for Red Crossbills on Vermilion Road.

We arrived back at the waterbird shack before dawn on Saturday (motivated by the desire to get parking spots before a bunch of runners showed up). Birds were migrating by throughout the day, with many Scaup, White-winged Scoters, and Red-breasted Mergansers. Other waterbirds seen in volume included Red-throated Loons, Red-necked Grebes, Redheads, and Long-tailed Ducks.

A group of Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs kept us company all day as did a pair of Black-bellied Plovers. A couple of Sanderlings and an American Pipit flew in later in the day.

Raptors were also visiting the point – Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagles, and a Merlin. The star of that group was easily a Northern Goshawk that flew close by affording great looks and photo ops.

Once the count was over, we drove some of the back roads looking for grouse. Ruffed Grouse were happy to comply, but the Spruce Grouse decided to stay hidden. The biggest surprise was a Lark Sparrow that we turned up near the Shelldrake dam. That was quite unexpected and generated a lot of excitement!

Sunday was a completely different story. We had planned to brave the heavy rain and high winds, but that idea lasted about two minutes after we went outside.

59 species

Canada Goose
American Wigeon
Mallard
American Black Duck
Northern Pintail
Green-winged Teal
Redhead
Greater Scaup
Lesser Scaup

Surf Scoter
White-winged Scoter
Black Scoter
Long-tailed Duck
Common Goldeneye
Common Merganser
Red-breasted Merganser
Ruffed Grouse
Red-throated Loon
Common Loon
Horned Grebe
Red-necked Grebe
Northern Harrier
Northern Goshawk
Bald Eagle
Rough-legged Hawk
Black-bellied Plover
Sanderling
Dunlin
Bonaparte's Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Blue Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Horned Lark
Black-capped Chickadee
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Hermit Thrush
American Pipit
Bohemian Waxwing
Lapland Longspur
Snow Bunting

Yellow-rumped Warbler
American Tree Sparrow
Lark Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
White-crowned Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Rusty Blackbird
Purple Finch
Pine Siskin