

Northern Mockingbird, and Northern Bobwhite.

Still, it was only 10 a.m. and we had more than 134 species. We were well ahead of last year's pace. However, I didn't think we could miss so many "southerns" and still break the record. After about the fifth time I had listed off all these misses, everyone was just about ready to drive off without me.

Ignoring everyone's wrath, I suggested that we alter our route. Instead of shooting up Route 57 and to Riverdale Quarry before going on to Lake Calumet in southern Cook County, we should instead go back to Iroquois, and see if we could clean up Sedge Wren, mockingbird, and bobwhite before continuing on to the north. Even though we were already close to half an hour behind schedule, everyone agreed.

When we returned to Iroquois at 10:30 a.m., it was as much different than it had been nine hours earlier. The sun was up, the air was still, and it was getting hot. I didn't mind getting my feet wet as we walked into the tall, wet grass. Sedge Wrens were now chattering everywhere. Hoping to see one of the Northern Harriers that sometimes breeds in the prairie, we walked in farther. A sparrow flew up from just a few feet away. It was short tailed and had an orange cast.

"It's a LeConte's. I know its got to be a LeConte's," I yelled, waving my hand towards where it had gone down, deep into the grass. We quickly fell into formation and marched to the spot. It sputtered off again, this time choosing to land in the open up in a bush. We headed back to the van and north to where we had missed the mockingbirds earlier that morning. The mockingbirds were now singing away, joined by a bobwhite. Even though we were now over an hour behind schedule, we left Iroquois and headed off for Chicago feeling elated.

The elation, however, was short-lived. Steve thought the van was starting to drive funny and pulled to the side of the road. The rear left tire was going soft. We made it to the nearest gas station in Momence, near Kankakee, and filled the tire with air and the van with gas. Just before we were about to continue on, I saw Seb kneeling next to the vehicle.

"We've got a problem. There's a nice big nail stuck in the tire," Seb reported, managing to sound remarkably cheerful. We made it over to the garage down the road. Seb went in to negotiate, and the rest of us waited outside as we anxiously watched Chimney Swifts circle over head. By the time we got the tire fixed and were back on the road, we were two hours behind, and quite depressed. I made a list of all the birds I thought we still had an honest chance of getting and it did not add up to 175.

When we hit Lake Calumet at 1 p.m., we were really feeling down. The warm, sunny weather of the morning had given way to a damp cold. However, the Peregrine Falcon flying around the Port of Illinois grain elevator, just where it was supposed to be, helped lift our spirits; so did the pair of Northern Shovelers on Dead Stick Pond and the unexpected Northern Harrier. Managing to get through Lake Calumet in less than 25 minutes also made us feel better. The weather change was even more noticeable at Rainbow Beach. The beach was bathed in fog and it was downright chilly. As soon as we were out of the van, Bob got us all on an adult Thayer's Gull which was sitting in among the Ring-billed Gulls. We also added Sanderling and Ruddy Turnstone on the beach and Cape May Warbler and Clay-colored Sparrow in the vegetable garden.

When we got to Jackson Park in Chicago, Bob pulled the same trick as he had at Rainbow Beach. "There's a Hooded Warbler," he called out

before half us were even out of the van. The beautiful male Hooded Warbler climbing through the limbs overhanging the other side of the lagoon was certainly a good sign. For the first time on any of our big days, Wooded Isle was full of birds. The cold had brought many of the birds down from the tops of the trees, and the birding was delightful. Despite having already seen most of these birds down in Danville, we were still able to add a few species including Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Hermit Thrush, as well as our first Black-capped Chickadee and Black-crowned Night-Heron.

The hour long drive up to Lake County gave all of us — except for Steve, who was still at the wheel — a welcome opportunity to snooze. John totaled up the list. Lake Calumet and the lakefront had given us a number of birds left off the doomsday list I had made at the garage. We were now at 168! It was only 3 p.m. and we still had all of Lake County to go. We were now feeling pretty good, and were beginning to think we would really could pull off a record.

Our first stop in Lake County was Almond Marsh near Grayslake and Libertyville. We were there for only 10 minutes, but it was worth it. The addition of moorhen, Black Tern, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck, and Yellow-headed Blackbird quickly swelled the list to 173. Feeling even more energized, we headed for some flooded fields off of Route 60 near Mundelein. At the field, Steve picked out a Semipalmated Sandpiper and Seb a Semipalmated Plover. Bob refound the Willet he had seen while scouting a few days earlier and I spotted an American Widgeon skulking in the back. We had broken the record! We were ecstatic. Steve and I gave each other high-fives. Seb was all grin.

The celebration, however, was kept short. It was only 4 p.m., and we