

that I had been seeing once a week since spring, had seen just two days prior, and saw again singing loudly the following day. Night was creeping up on us so we passed on driving to Rend Lake and opted for a second trip through Giant City State Park and Makanda instead. The Chuck-will's-widow and Louisiana Water-thrush we hoped for were not to be

found at Giant City. The vultures known to roost in Makanda hadn't made it back yet so we failed at the chance for a Black Vulture. Even the nighthawks normally filling the skies over downtown Makanda weren't out this evening.

Our day ended as we topped the 100 mark with Barred and Eastern Screech-Owls at Cathie's place at 10

p.m. We reached 101 species, much lower than I had hoped for but still respectable for an extremely humid, 90 degree day in July. Our total beat what we understood to be the summer record of 87 species achieved 34 years earlier on 21 July 1963.

— Rhonda S. Monroe
Carbondale, IL
rsmonroe@siu.edu

DuPage County Team Sets New Big Day Record - 132 Species

by Joe Suchecki

A team of three DuPage Birding Club members – Denis Kania, Jack Pomatto, and I set a new Big Day record for DuPage County on 17 May 1997. Starting at 4 a.m. and finishing at 8:45 p.m., we counted 132 species within DuPage County during the 17-hour birding marathon. The previous record was 123 species set by Eric Walters several years ago.

The new DuPage record was not a chance occurrence but the result of careful planning by the team and a little bit of luck. We mapped out a strategy that concentrated on warblers and other woodland birds in the early morning to catch as many species as possible when birds are most vocal. In the afternoon, we checked spots for shorebirds, waterbirds, and grassland species. That strategy worked out very well: we tallied 75 species by 7:30 a.m. and broke 100 by 9:30 a.m.

The luck came from the birds. Timing was critical to ensure a good total for the day and a run at the record. Although the team planned the day to coincide with peak spring migration, birders know that there can be very quiet days – even during May. As it happened, the weather was good and there was a great fall-out of migrants on count day. Large numbers of warblers, vireos, and other

migrants were present.

Luck was also in our favor when searching for specific birds. In mid-afternoon, we were walking along the edge of a marsh when a Virginia Rail, a needed species, flushed and flew out in the open for about 30 seconds – more than long enough for all team members to see. We also flushed a woodcock out of a woodlot at midday after early morning attempts to locate the species in known breeding locations were not successful.

In breaking the record, we hit many of the good birding spots in the county including Elsen's Hill, McDowell Grove, Fermilab, Illinois, Benedictine, Maple Grove, Hidden Lake, Springbrook Prairie, and Pratts-Wayne Woods. Birding at Elsen's Hill and McDowell Grove early in the morning yielded a great start and the majority of the species. Later in the day, specific locations were visited for target birds such as titmouse and Black-throated Blue Warbler at Maple Grove, Vesper Sparrow at Fermi, Grasshopper Sparrow and Sedge Wren at Springbrook, Western Meadowlark at DuPage Airport, and Sandhill Crane at Pratts-Wayne Woods. Among the more unusual birds found during the day were Prothonotary Warbler, Black

Tern, Forster's Tern, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Osprey. The team also saw a magnificent Brewster's Warbler (as a hybrid, it is not counted in the total).

The Osprey we saw at 4 p.m. at the Eola Road Marsh was the 124th bird for the day and resulted in breaking the previous record. Screech-Owl was the first bird recorded and Sandhill Crane was the last. The team missed several common birds including Hairy Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Harrier, and Belted Kingfisher. The team met Kate and Jim Frazier who had just seen a kingfisher, but we never saw it.

What's next for us? After recovering from our major DuPage birding adventure, we are not content to rest on our record. We're planning for 1998 to see if we can reach the 140 mark. Although we don't expect to top recent high totals in Cook or Lake counties with their important Lake Michigan habitat, we believe that the new mark is achievable for land-locked DuPage County.

There are always challenges ahead in birding – always more birds to see.

— Joe Suchecki
2416 Kingsley Drive
Naperville, IL 60565