

SHOREBIRD BONANZA

By Bob Lane

Bob posted the first part of this narrative to Ohio-Birds on 25 Aug, 2012, and added further reflections in later notes to me. I took vicarious pleasure in his experience and I hope you readers do as well. I have edited his post to conform to the Cardinal's style sheet. — Ed.

Three of us, Jeff Harvey, my wife Denise, and I, were in search of shorebirds from 8AM to 4PM today, Saturday [25 Aug]. We started off at Pipe Creek State Wildlife Area near the entrance to Cedar Point Amusement Park, then on to the Duff Washa/Lemon Road area in **Ottawa**; next came the Crane Creek Estuary Trail in **Lucas**, and then a return to Pipe Creek. We were successful in finding 22 species of shorebirds. There was excellent habitat and an abundance of birds at all three locations. On our first visit to Pipe Creek, some of the birds recorded were a Red Knot, six Red-necked Phalaropes, a Snowy Egret, and three Little Blue Herons. Duff Washa provided another Red-necked Phalarope for the day. Crane Creek added a Whimbrel, a Black-bellied Plover, and two Buff-breasted Sandpipers. We then returned to Pipe Creek from 2PM to 4PM. The next two hours of shorebirding would rank right at the top of the most memorable birding any of us can remember. Upon our return to Unit B, we immediately saw a Buff-breasted Sandpiper nearby. A short time later, we found a second. The duo provided us with the opportunity to study these beauties at close range. Next came the six Red-necked Phalaropes, a single Wilson's Phalarope, and several Stilt Sandpipers, all hanging out together. What an unbelievable sight! Shorebirds were everywhere, including two Willets, a White-rumped Sandpiper, a Wilson's Snipe, and numerous Dowitchers, just to name a few. A Peregrine Falcon occasionally passed through disrupting the waterfowl and numerous shorebirds. Each time it would return to a perch at the top of a dead tree, across the way along Cedar Point Drive. What a remarkable day! I would like to add a point of interest; during the past week we have seen Red-necked Phalaropes at five different sites across the state; how amazing is that?

Now that I have had time to reflect on our afternoon visit to Pipe Creek State Wildlife Area's Unit B, I realize that what I considered a memorable experience was really the ultimate classroom for shorebird identification. Was yesterday

the peak day of the fall season for shorebirds at this site? Time will tell! The afternoon visit was obviously more rewarding than the early morning visit. I have been birding my whole life, and do not ever remember having such a concentration of sought-after shorebird species, in such abundance, up close for detailed viewing, all at the same time, from a single scope setup, creating a birding frenzy. Some of the afternoon learning moments that brought excitement were witnessing the Buff-breasted Sandpipers resting in the green grass, taking flight, and coming right at us several times, and seeing a new out-of-the-norm behavior for me, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper actually feeding in the shallow water, close by. Add roller coasters in the background, as the saying goes, priceless!!! How often are you lucky enough to be able to compare a Red-necked Phalarope to a Wilson's Phalarope? Side by side, and add a Stilt Sandpiper and a Short-billed Dowitcher in the same scope view. Wow! It is amazing when a couple of Willets do not even gather attention. The Peregrine Falcon actually sometimes added to the learning experience by flushing nearly all the visitors, who always seemed to return, giving a chance to check the birds out in flight. What are the chances of seeing a trio of big white birds: Great Egret, immature Little Blue Heron, and Snowy Egret, all standing together; it happened at Pipe Creek yesterday. The stories could go on and on, but it is time to move on. Will I ever duplicate yesterday's adventure? I hope so! But if not, I do have my birding moment memories to look back on.

Bob and Denise live in Mahoning County; he's been birding for most of his 64 years. They recorded 37 shorebird species in Ohio in 2012.