

Oh, What a Spring It Was!

O.K., so you didn't see any warblers, thrushes, flycatchers, etc., etc., but you've seen all those before---haven't you?

But wouldn't you trade them just one time to see a Swainson's warbler, great-tailed grackle, three ruffs and one reeve, white-faced ibis, curlew sandpiper, Mississippi Kite and brown pelican? That was the trade-off this Spring as the dry, persistent Southwest winds moved the expected migrants through (or over) Ohio without delay while moving southern and western vagrants north and east of their expected range. The anomalous result was that you could have seen a majority of the above vagrants and yet still be looking for your first red-breasted nuthatch of the year.

Most of the action was in the northwest. Perhaps Crane Creek State Park and Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge get most of the coverage but the Lake does serve as a great bird trap. A forty-mile crossing when you don't know it will end must be inhibiting and in the Spring cause many birds to at least pause on its southern shores. But the chase really started in Columbus at the end of April when a cooperative Swainson's warbler was found. Rick Counts tells about it in this issue. If you heard about it Saturday night, a two hour early morning drive would have put you facing the bird at 7:00 A.M. on Sunday morning and back home in time for church.

After that weekend, each weekend presented a new vagrant adventure. Once you reached the perimeter roads by Davis-Besse all that was required of you was to find the lines of cars parked along any roadside to either see or hear about that weekend's rarity. It was also helpful to check with the maitre d' of the area, John Pogacnik, for full details. On May 5th, the ruffs: not just one but two and later three on May 11th: a curlew sandpiper in molting plumage was seen by many people; a Mississippi kite flew by four lucky birders near the entrance to Cedar Point NWR and was photographed (see this issue) and for those who missed last weekend's ruff, an orange reeve could be found in the grass at the beginning of the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (ONWR) entrance road. On May 18th: a white-faced ibis in breeding plumage complete with red lores gave the many viewers along the ONWR entrance road an identification treat. "Johnny on the spot" Pogacnik saw it first with Kirk Alexander in the early morning dimness as he opened the State Park. He trained a scope on what he knew was an ibis in a small pond near the ranger's office and waited for dawn to illuminate the species. After the bird was identified and photographed (see cover: the original slide is much clearer than our enlargement) the bird flew to the marshland/grassland along the Refuge entrance road where it remained the entire day. This is surely Ohio's second record for this species and maybe the first depending on a re-examination of the first record specimen at the Ohio State Museum. On May 25th: a tri-colored heron in breeding plumage at the Cedar Point division of ONWR, annually reported by John, but seen by few others, was viewed by a Columbus bird tour and later by many others.

Throughout the hectic weekends was the great great-tailed grackle chase. Eventually seen four different times between May 5th and

May 16th, by four different observers (see The Reports, in this issue), in the area of Davis-Besse, this prospective first state record always filled the idle interludes with what was for most fruitless searching. But each sighting, about a week apart, (see photo in this issue for one) kept the fever high.

Add to all this a brown pelican on the grass of the old Crane Creek State Park Parking lot and later on the Lake off the State Park Beach on May 1st (see The Reports) pointed out to our man on the spot by a curious park visitor, they were eventually the only two to see this prospective first Ohio record; one to four immature black-legged kittiwake (see The Reports) inland in the flooded cultivated crop fields in the same general area between Davis-Besse and the entrance to Crane Creek State Park as the other vagrants with one adaptable bird seen following a farmer's plow for his dinner; and four long-billed curlews on the beach at Cedar Point NWR on May 22nd; and you begin to agree that it was quite a Spring for no birds.

Although the unusual amount of standing water in the crop fields surrounding Route 2 in this area has now vanished and was largely responsible for such outstanding Spring shorebirding (see The Reports) and certainly aided the Big Day effort reported in this issue, the "fallout" of the southwesterly winds continued into the summer with new northern, lark sparrow and blue grosbeak locations being reported.

But that's a story for another issue.



Retraction: For all of you who said the picture on page two of Volume 7, No 4 (our last issue) was not a gyrfalcon but a snowy owl - CONGRATULATIONS! You are right. The editor would like to claim it was a photo quiz instead of the mistake it was but here really is a gyrfalcon at Crane Creek State Park beach on March 14, 1982 taken by Don Tumblin. By the way, where were the rest of you sharpeyes?