

Block Busters

Tom Bartlett

Who you gonna call? Block Busters!

No, Dan Ackroyd and Bill Murray weren't there but over 50 Ohio birders assembled in Adams County, Ohio, on May 31, June 1st and 2nd to help the Ohio Department of Natural Resources survey breeding bird atlas blocks in this area.

Adams County is on the Ohio River and out of the way of most birders, except those who want to see some of Ohio's rarities. Since Dan Rice, the organizer/manager of this five-year project, could not find people to cover the census blocks in the area, he put together a block busting weekend and invited any birder who was working on the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas. Over 50 birders arrived to help cover the area. They slept in barns, cars, motels, tents, under the stars, and in a beautiful house on the edge of the Appalachia Nature Preserve system of the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History and The Nature Conservancy. Some of the participants were Dick and Jean Hoffman, Jerry Talkington and son, Bruce Peterjohn, Mary Gustafson, Larry Rosche, Tom and Paula Bartlett, Arden and Erdine Thompson, Steve McKee, Nancy Cherry, Charlotte Mathena, Jim Hill, Merrill Tawse, Town Peterson, Pete Whan, Eric Liebold, Rick Perkins, Esther Reichelderfer, Janet Palmer, Janet Hall, Betty Hardesty, Nevada Laitsch and Frank Renfrow.

Twenty blocks were covered during the weekend, most in Adams County and Brown County, but some also in Highland, Pike and Scioto counties. There were 13 groups, ranging from two to 16 people in a block.

The outcome was very good: 122 species were recorded for the 20 blocks including 16 asterick species (rare). Nineteen species were recorded as possible nesters (Po), 19 as probable nesters (Pr), and 84 (!) as confirmed nesting species (Co).

The unusual species included sharp-shinned hawk (Po), Cooper's hawk (Po), red-shouldered hawk (Po), chuck-will's-widow (Co), least flycatcher (Po), Bewick's wren (Po), hermit thrush (Po), solitary vireo (Pr), prothonotary warbler (Co), golden-winged warbler (Po), northern parula (Pr), black-throated green warbler (Pr), blue grosbeak (Co), dickcissel (Po), Henslow's sparrow (Co), and lark sparrow (Po). No loggerhead shrikes were found.

A census of singing chuck-will's-widows on June 1st yielded 75 birds in Adams County. The same census the night before recorded only 13 chucks so it was done again. This subsequent night was perfect weather: bright moon and windless night. The census area was Brush Creek and some of its tributaries up to Peebles, Ohio.

Red-shouldered hawk, solitary vireo, northern parula, blue grosbeak, dickcissel, and Henslow's sparrows were recorded by more than one group. The number of species per block ranged from 31 species ($\frac{1}{2}$ coverage by 1 person) to 94 species

(full day coverage by 6 people). The average was 66 species per block.

The block bust has shown to be very effective in gathering data for the atlas and will be used again. Plans are in the works for Ashtabula County next year. Contact Dan Rice, Division of Natural Areas & Preserves, Bldg. F, Fountain Square, Columbus, Ohio 43224, if you are interested.

The more people, the more eyes and ears. And, it's more fun!



Great-tailed grackle in area of Duff Washa Road and Route 19, Ottawa Co., Ohio on May 6, 1985 photographed by John Pogacnik.