

SEEDATHON 2014

This year's Seedathon was held on Sunday, August 24, 2014. Greg's story about our day and a list of the birds we found follows; he's previously tapped into classical music (twice? I believe) and Shakespeare; this year it's the Hebrew Bible (also known as the Old Testament):

It was 4:33 am, and "darkness was over the surface of the deep" (Gen 1:2), or more precisely the surface of Constance Creek, which was admittedly not all that deep. A curious sight was seen, our first bird of the day, one of the resident Osprey perched on a wire. Thus began Seedathon 2014, as Bernie Ladouceur, Bob Cermak and Greg (formerly known as Kim) Zbitnew began the marathon. Given the success of last year's route, again we chose to start in the Dunrobin area. The pre-dawn began well on the Carp ridge, with spectacular performances from three species of Owl: Long-eared, Great Horned and Barred. Next, Common Nighthawks thought that it was spring, calling and booming, and at least 12 Whip-poor-wills competed for our attention. Gradually, to paraphrase Gen. 1:4, light was separated from darkness, and the species count rose. Included were Field Sparrow and Eastern Towhee; 2 birds we missed last year.

A long stop at Constance Creek was next on the agenda. As said in Gen. 1:20, "...and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.", and in fact flying birds caused some initial confusion. Those three flying birds we saw were not Purple Martins, but Merlins! An American Kestrel and American Bittern were also flying, two birds seen only here.

A second round on the Carp ridge gave us six critical birds, and finally it was time to move on. We had received a report that Shirley's Bay had no shorebirds, so our next stop was Britannia. As we arrived, we received a report of two Yellow-Bellied Flycatchers. With the assistance of a mysterious, intelligent and generous stranger, PJM [an angel, maybe? -Bernie], one of these birds was relocated. Despite adding ten birds here that we did not find elsewhere, overall Britannia disappointed us despite our best efforts. As stated in Proverbs 1:17 "For in vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird", so maybe the birds were watching us and eluding us.

At this point, I was flagging, and the day was not even half over. We would have done well to be inspired by Isaiah 40:33 "...they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." Instead we went to Andrew Haydon Park, where we roasted in the sun and gained no reward. At least the next stop, Moodie Drive pit, yielded Ring-necked Duck and Broad-Winged Hawk for our troubles.

The next planned stop was the traditional sparrow fields south of the airport. Our route to get there was new for us, via the recently opened Strandherd bridge over the Rideau River. Incidentally, this is a magnificent bridge with its arched spans that practically beg one to cross over. I highly recommend a visit! It was a great time

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saver for our day.

Given our wasted effort last year on High Road, we wanted our time spent at the airport well spent. We went only to the area that had a high concentration of the critical species during the breeding season. Our efforts were rewarded with both Grasshopper and Clay-Colored Sparrows within ½ hour.

Now it was time to head for the Eastern Lagoons. We had high hopes, especially at the Chrysler/ St. Albert lagoons, which had been so good just a few weeks ago. It was a disappointment, both in the numbers and variety, although the habitat at the Chrysler lagoon was still extensive and excellent. Still, these lagoons as well as the nearby Chrysler falls did give us some needed birds; this stop was essential and could not have been dropped. The same could not be said of the Embrun lagoons, which, continuing the pattern of the season, had little shorebird habitat and little variety of waterfowl. Still, at that time of the day there were few useful options. Leaving Embrun was our most productive strategy at this lagoon since we saw a Northern Harrier on the way out.

Now Bob and I were getting burned out, due to general exhaustion and all the walking in the hot sunshine. To paraphrase Ps. 69:3, we were worn out looking for birds. Strangely, though, Bernie was not, considering that he had started the day heavily medicated (for allergies) and warned us that he may be a bit of a zombie. At that point Bob and I were considering taking some of that medication.

It was now 5:30 pm, and we had decided to head back west for our final effort. We had decided that ending the day at the Shirley's Bay boat launch was the best strategy. This we did after first stopping to check the river in the Crystal Bay area. This area was entirely dead, with the lucky exception of two early Red-Necked Grebes, which had been in the area for a week. Our last stop at the boat launch was a complete fizzle. Unlike what was stated in Gen. 1: 21, the area did not have "...every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind." Instead we saw a few common species, plus a few dozen people with their watercraft and families, enjoying the nicest weekend in the last few weeks. The writing was on the wall (Dan. 5:5) for our marathon ; there was no point lingering. It was time, to paraphrase Gen. 1: 31, to rest from all of the work of birding.

So after nearly 300 Km of driving and 13000 steps of walking, the Seedathon ended with a respectable 122 species of birds (plus an escaped Budgerigar at Britannia). Despite a great morning, the lack of migrants and shorebirds kept our tally to an average level. But what could we do? The day had promised to be clear and calm and there was no point risking a certain acceptable day for the uncertain possibilities of a better one next week. Good company and pleasant but hot conditions made it a great day. As for the birds, "time and chance happen to all men" and evidently birds too (Ec. 9:11) and there wasn't much more we could do.

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Note: While our Seedathon was not an adventure of biblical proportions, it is nonetheless interesting that many times our situation seemed to have a parallel in the Bible.

Canada Goose	353	Willow Flycatcher	1
Wood Duck	105	Least Flycatcher	2
American Wigeon	1	Eastern Phoebe	12
American Black Duck	3	Great Crested Flycatcher	3
Mallard	359	Eastern Kingbird	3
Blue-winged Teal	10	Warbling Vireo	2
Green-winged Teal	50	Red-eyed Vireo	19
Ring-necked Duck	7	Blue Jay	33
Hooded Merganser	2	American Crow	30
Common Merganser	2	Common Raven	2
Ruddy Duck	5	Tree Swallow	150
Wild Turkey	7	Bank Swallow	1
Pied-billed Grebe	10	Barn Swallow	2
Red-necked Grebe	2	Black-capped Chickadee	37
Double-crested Cormorant	147	Red-breasted Nuthatch	8
American Bittern	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	16
Great Blue Heron	12	House Wren	1
Great Egret	10	Marsh Wren	1
Green Heron	9	Carolina Wren	1
Black-crowned Night-Heron	20	Eastern Bluebird	2
Turkey Vulture	7	Veery	106
Osprey	4	Swainson's Thrush	9
Northern Harrier	1	Wood Thrush	2
Cooper's Hawk	1	American Robin	26
Broad-winged Hawk	1	Gray Catbird	9
Red-tailed Hawk	5	Brown Thrasher	1
Sora	1	European Starling	108
Common Gallinule	43	Cedar Waxwing	73
Semipalmated Plover	2	Black-and-white Warbler	3
Killdeer	46	Tennessee Warbler	2
Spotted Sandpiper	5	Nashville Warbler	5
Solitary Sandpiper	1	Common Yellowthroat	18
Greater Yellowlegs	3	American Redstart	5
Lesser Yellowlegs	104	Cape May Warbler	3
Least Sandpiper	22	Magnolia Warbler	4
Semipalmated Sandpiper	2	Blackburnian Warbler	1
Wilson's Snipe	4	Yellow Warbler	5
Ring-billed Gull	1,930	Chestnut-sided Warbler	2
Herring Gull	71	Pine Warbler	2
Great Black-backed Gull	4	Yellow-rumped Warbler	15

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gull sp.	500	Black-throated Green Warbler	3
Caspian Tern	3	Eastern Towhee	1
Rock Pigeon	3	Chipping Sparrow	4
Mourning Dove	32	Clay-colored Sparrow	1
Great Horned Owl	2	Field Sparrow	4
Barred Owl	2	Savannah Sparrow	2
Long-eared Owl	3	Grasshopper Sparrow	1
Common Nighthawk	41	Song Sparrow	31
Eastern Whip-poor-will	12	Swamp Sparrow	30
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	1	White-throated Sparrow	5
Belted Kingfisher	4	Scarlet Tanager	3
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	Northern Cardinal	6
Downy Woodpecker	6	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	11
Hairy Woodpecker	7	Bobolink	6
Northern Flicker	7	Red-winged Blackbird	43
Pileated Woodpecker	8	Common Grackle	20
American Kestrel	2	Baltimore Oriole	2
Merlin	3	House Finch	2
Eastern Wood-Pewee	9	Purple Finch	14
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	1	American Goldfinch	40
Alder Flycatcher	1	House Sparrow	4