

Our Feathered Friends - January 25, 2012

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White Crowned Sparrow

Ray was waiting on his front porch for my arrival to do some birding this past week. He wanted to get out and do what he loves to do, so we were soon on the road. We spotted quite a few Cardinals, Juncos, Robins and Chickadees, but we were soon very impressed by a huge flock of about 100 or more turkeys out in a cow pasture. I see turkeys quite frequently but it usually consists of about 15-20. This group was just amazing in size and obviously in a good location.

Off a side road in north Wilson County we saw what Ray and I thought at first to be a Carolina Wren, but Ray soon determined it was too small and it was missing the white line above the eye. Getting a better look with our binoculars we determined it was actually a Winter Wren. Soon after we spied a Nuthatch as well as the back side of a Pileated Woodpecker (we only got a quick glance as he took off as soon as we spotted him). If I hadn't been with Ray I wouldn't have been able to determine what type of woodpecker had taken off, but Ray was able to tell from the size, color and flight! He never ceases to amaze me!

Out near a flooded grassland area that Ray explained is used as a duck sanctuary we spotted some sparrows along a dirt path. Ray got very excited as he was getting a better look with his binoculars and soon exclaimed that we had found what he was looking for...the White-crowned Sparrow. Not only were we blessed with one but we had actually come across a group of about 10 hopping around in the undergrowth. These little birds have beautiful white and black stripes on their heads, and although similar to the White-throated Sparrow, they lack the white throat patch and yellow notch above their eyes.



Northern Harrier

Still out in farm country I spied a large hawk in a rotted out tree. At first I thought he might be an owl, but his head was not big enough. But when Ray got a better look we determined it was a Northern Harrier all fluffed up due to the weather. I only wish he had been closer to us because even with binoculars he was too far to get a good view.

As we neared the end of our trip Ray suddenly had the urge to try one more side road. I think he must be partially psychic because, low and behold, ahead of us was a large flock of about 20-25 Cedar Waxwings. I have not seen a Cedar Waxwing in several years and was reminded just how beautiful this bird is with its grey-brown color and plash of yellow on the tips of their tail feathers. This particular group was cleaning a bush of its berries and giving us a circus show in the process. Dangling upside down and bouncing around they looked to be enjoying themselves while they ate.

from Garr's Feed & Rental contacted me this week and asked if I would be willing to pass on some information about a new program he is trying to establish. It is called "Donate A House" and is specifically for unused bird houses, in particular Purple Martin houses that you may have and are either not using or are unable to maintain. Two local parks, Long Hunter and Cedars of Lebanon, are interested in the houses. More information will be in future articles, but if you have any questions you can contact Garr's at 615-754-BIRD (2473) or via email at