

A & T Farm Field Trip

2.27.16

Piedmont Bird Club/T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Joint Trip

Trip Leader: Emily Tyler

Trip Report by Jean Murdick



A record number of participants, among them a good many guests and new Piedmont Bird Club members, showed up to bird the A&T Farm on a beautiful sunny but chilly morning. We spent four-and-a-quarter hours caravanning through the farm. Our target birds were Wilson's Snipe and American Pipit. But forget about those hard-to-see target birds—raptors were the stars of the show this year. Before we even left the parking area we spotted a Red-shouldered Hawk and a Red-tailed Hawk, both perched in trees.

As we drove slowly down the road to our first stopping point, an American Kestrel swooped low over the pasture and landed on a fence post, where it stayed long enough for us to get a scope on it and identify it as a female.

At the pond where we usually find Wilson's Snipe, we were not disappointed. While many of us caught only a glimpse of one these expertly camouflaged shorebirds, Emily Tyler and Scott DePue both were able to determine through scopes that there were at least four. In the water were Buffleheads, Northern Shovelers, and Ruddy Ducks. Turning our attention to the skies, we saw Black Vultures, Turkey Vultures, and then, thanks to Matt Wangerin's sharp eyes, an immature Bald Eagle!



Other areas of the farm turned up more of the waterfowl we had previously seen, with the addition of Gadwall and Mallard. In a stand of pines the squeaky-toy calls of Brown-headed Nuthatches alerted us to their presence. From the agitated scolding we received, it is probably safe to assume that uninvited guests were not welcome.

Over that same stand of pine trees, Scott spotted a Cooper's Hawk flying by and, as we were watching it, our eagle made another appearance. Which one to watch?!

Our last stop, and last chance to find our other target bird, the American Pipit, was at the hog farm. By this time the wind had picked up appreciably and it can be assumed that many birds were lying low. Large flocks of American Robins and an equally large flock of female Red-winged Blackbirds sought shelter in the woodland edging the fields. A big flock of whistling European Starlings was hanging out under the canopy of the hog feeding area, occasionally swooping down to share the feast.



We never did find the pipits, but no one would consider the trip to be anything other than a resounding success. The total number of species found was 44, an average total for this late winter trip to the farm. Trip leader Emily Tyler says, "Thanks to everyone for all your help in spotting and identifying the birds!"

Birds Seen or Heard at A&T Farm on February 27, 2016
(44 Total Species)

Canada Goose
Gadwall
Mallard
N. Shoveler
Ring-necked Duck
Bufflehead
Ruddy Duck
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Bald Eagle
10

Cooper's Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
American Kestrel
Killdeer
Wilson's Snipe**
Ring-billed Gull

** Target birds

Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Red-bellied Woodpecker
20

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Blue Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Brown-headed Nuthatch
Carolina Wren
30

Eastern Bluebird
American Robin

Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
Yellow-rumped warbler
Eastern Towhee
Song Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
40

Northern Cardinal
Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark
House Finch
44



Species Totals for This Late Winter Trip to A&T Farm in the Last Seven Years

2005 - 37

2006 - 42

2007 - 43

2008 - 40

2010 - 45

2011 - 46

2012 - 46 (Tied for highest number of species in last seven February/March trips)

2013 - 45

2014 - 45

2015 - 42

(Trip was canceled in 2009 due to weather)

Group photos by Lon Murdick