



Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy

Birding from Kayaks on Lake Randleman May 21, 2017

Submitted by Julien McCarthy, Trip Leader

It was foggy on the wild side of Lake Randleman and a bit cool and breezy as ten of us departed the kayak launch in search of birds and any wildlife that might show. We had already seen a nice Indigo Bunting and an Eastern Kingbird at the launch area.

As we rounded the close island we heard a Scarlet Tanager singing in the tall forest to our right. Easing on towards headwaters at Wall Road, we came across many Common Yellowthroats and even an Orchard Oriole. Many regal Great Blue Herons passed us by on their way back and forth from their lofty rookery.



*Great Blue Heron Rookery
Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy*



*Red-tailed Hawk's Nest
Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy*

With Blue-gray Gnatcatchers wheezing in the trees and American Goldfinches chirping away, we noticed the Red-tailed Hawk's nest high in a hickory tree above the water's edge. At first it looked like the juveniles had fledged, but no, here came an adult with prey in talon so we stayed for the show and what a show it was as the juvenile was fed the prey by the adults: yum, yum. Eventually both parents came to the nest calling out that typical raspy vocalization.



Eastern Kingbirds
Photo Credit: Julien McCarthy

Suddenly along the bank, we were treated by the cavorting of an Eastern Kingbird couple up close to the fleet, and across the water a Yellow-billed Cuckoo clucked away out of sight, but loud and obvious. The gorgeous Orchard Oriole couple put on a display just above us, apparently setting up house.

If things weren't already good enough, up cropped a mystery bird high in a snag. We could not get enough field marks, but then it flew to another snag and perched just above a Pileated Woodpecker. It was a Merlin, and the Pileated dispatched it from the spar rather quickly. We made it to the turnabout, found a resting spot, and stayed for a snack break.

The ever-present Red eyed vireo never quit singing, but the Prothonotary Warbler did not show. Heading in, we turned up Northern Parulas and Prairie warblers, as well as Purple Martins and a few more of the expected birds.

We garnered forty species, which was pretty good. It would have been better but for the cool and cloudy conditions, I think. Nevertheless, all of us were delighted with the companionship over a morning of intense birding from kayaks. If you haven't done it, go out there, or you'll miss a really rewarding birding experience.



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