

OOS Warblers & Wildflowers Weekend, April 25-27, 2025

Field Trips in Scioto (#1-6) & Adams (#7-8) Counties

SATURDAY (4/26) FIELD TRIPS - RAIN OR SHINE! 7AM - 2PM

EASY: Low level of exertion, short walking distance. Considerable birding from vehicle and multiple birding stops.

MODERATE: Reasonable level of exertion. Some birding from vehicle and hiking off-trail for moderate distance (30 minutes).

Trip 1 (A & B): The Amazing Birds & Botany of Shawnee State Park

TRIP RATING: EASY

The “Little Smokies” of Ohio abound with birds this time of year. We’ll accumulate a large list of the Shawnee breeding birds in addition to many migrants. Southern Ohio is the breeding home for Worm-eating, Prairie, and Kentucky Warblers; orioles, vireos, thrushes, and grosbeaks. Many migrants should also be in great abundance this weekend! In terms of botanical wonders, Shawnee is heavily influenced by a river we can no longer see—the prehistoric Teays River, which flowed north from the Carolinas and through Ohio millions of years ago. It brought with it an amazing Appalachian flora, some of which still survives to this day in the surrounding hills and valleys; in some cases this is the only locale north of the Ohio River where these plants occur. We’ll meander along abandoned forestry roads, surrounded by rich forests that harbor such botanical wonders as Pink and Yellow Lady’s-slipper Orchids, Birdfoot Violet, Spotted Mandarin, Dwarf Violet Iris, Pink Azalea, and many other rare and fantastic plants. *Mostly driving with stops for birding and wildflowers. Some very modest walking.*

Trip (A & B): Neotropical Jewels: Warblers

TRIP RATING: EASY

Spring is many a birder’s favorite time and with good reason—wood warblers! No “confusing fall warblers” here: everyone will be decked out in festive spring colors, and the testosterone-filled males will be singing like crazy. Shawnee State Park is *the place* for them this weekend, as just about all of the resident species will be on territory, the very first arrivals at Ohio latitudes. At least 17 warbler species breed here, including coveted species like the Worm-eating Warbler, Northern Parula, and Cerulean Warbler. In addition, we should have no trouble finding southern Ohio favorites like Yellow-throated, Kentucky, Prairie and Hooded Warblers, as well as Louisiana Waterthrush. We’ll learn about their ecology and ensure that all participants get good looks at them. Many migrants will be passing through, so expect to compile a list of many of Ohio’s expected warblers. *Mostly driving with stops for birding. Some very modest walking.*

Trip 3: Birds & Butterflies - Wings of Spring

TRIP RATING: EASY

This trip is all about flying objects. Just as on trips 1 & 2, birders should expect to see many migrants as well as southern Ohio breeding birds. While Shawnee State Park is a fantastic place to find birds, it also offers butterflies galore! On a good day in early May, it's possible to discover 25 or more species. Attendees can expect to view a variety of species, including early spring fliers like the stunning Falcate Orangetip, as well as more common butterflies, such as Pipevine and Zebra Swallowtails. There is always the possibility of stumbling across something really unusual, like a Juniper Hairstreak or Pine Elfin. While your binoculars will get a great workout looking at warblers, vireos and tanagers, they work just as well to get great looks at butterflies! We'll have to hope for decent weather, though, as butterflies definitely prefer warm, sunny days. *Driving to locations with short walks to target spots.*

Trip 4: All Creatures (and Plants) Great and Small

TRIP RATING: MODERATE

This comprehensive expedition will encompass all aspects of the wonderful world of birds, butterflies, reptiles, mammals and plants—if you see it, we will try to ID it! We'll poke around and see how many creatures are eking out a living in the forests and streams of Shawnee State Park. Newcomers to the area will be fascinated by the many stunning but under-appreciated animals that we will encounter. Expect lots of good birds, too, including Yellow-throated Vireos, which love to snack on moths. We'll ramble Shawnee and turn over rock and logs, peer behind trees, and look up and down in a variety of different environments to see what we can find. *We'll follow our eyes and ears and noses so there may be more walking than driving. Be prepared for dirt and to get down on your hands and knees.*

Trip 5: Birding 101

TRIP RATING: EASY

Whether it's tips on learning how to distinguish between those warblers and vireos, or strategies for learning bird songs, you'll come away from this field trip with tons of new information. The emphasis will definitely be on learning to observe bird behavior, shape, song, and habitat, but participants can nevertheless expect an impressive overall list by trip's end, as this adventure will include visits to some of the best birding locales in the forest. This trip will be especially suited to beginning birders.

Trip 6: Thru the Lens: Photographing Birds

TRIP RATING: EASY TO MODERATE

Cameras in hand, we'll immerse ourselves in Shawnee State Park to photograph some of Ohio's most sought-after warbler and spring migrant species. Expect a casual pace, as we will be spending quality time with each bird. This adventure is all about patience, with a focus on the techniques to best photograph each species so that participants capture not just the subject, but its personality and surroundings. Along the journey, you'll have the opportunity to discuss lighting, exposure, composition, and color with your expert guides, and ask any other questions you may have about photographing wild birds. Primary targets will include Cerulean, Worm-eating, Prairie, and Hooded Warblers, as well as Ovenbird. Other species we might encounter are Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Yellow-throated Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated Warbler, American Redstart, Black-and-white Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, and many more.

Trip 7 (A & B): Birds & Wildflowers of Adams County - Edge of Appalachia Preserve

TRIP RATING: EASY TO MODERATE

This trip will focus on birding and botany in Adams County by exploring diverse areas along Brush Creek with a focal point at the George Rieveschl Jr. Creek's Bend Overlook. The Overlook site provides access to several good habitats within the 20,000-acre Edge of Appalachia Preserve, Ohio's largest privately owned protected natural area. The preserve is one of the most biologically diverse areas in the Midwest. We'll take advantage of a stone patio overlook of the Brush Creek, an access trail to the Creek, as well as two other trails: the easy Prairie Garden Trail and, optionally, the moderate 1.6-mile, round-trip, Joan Jones Portman Trail, which leads through prairie openings to a small rock promontory for a view of the adjacent forested valley. You'll leave this field trip with a much better understanding of why this part of southern Ohio is the unique place that it is, all while improving your bird list and wildflower knowledge. *Hiking distance: Other than the 1.6-mile (roundtrip) Portman trail, walking will be easy over established trails.*

Trip 8: Birds & Botany of Adams County - Lynx Prairie

TRIP RATING: EASY TO MODERATE

We'll explore the incredible diversity of the E. Lucy Braun Lynx Prairie Preserve, named after legendary University of Cincinnati botanist Dr. E. Lucy Braun. Her effort to preserve this prairie eventually seeded the now-20,000-acre Richard & Lucile Durrell Edge of Appalachia Preserve. It also resulted in the establishment of The Nature Conservancy, the world's largest conservation organization. The cedar barrens of this area are prairie-like in nature, with thin, shallow soils overlying dolomite, allowing for an abundance of native grasses and wildflowers to flourish. Referred to as "relict" prairies—naturally occurring, not planted—these specialized habitats are home to a large number of rare species of plants and animals. We will explore native insects—butterflies and dragonflies—as well as native breeding birds and migrants. We'll walk the 1.5 miles of trail loops that wind through the 52-acre property, and after the hike, we may carpool to a nearby Nature Conservancy property to look for breeding Blue Grosbeaks and other local specialties like Prairie Warbler and Black Vulture. *More walking than driving, but on easy terrain.*