

Spring in Sandy Mush
April 8, 2021

Trip Report

Our first Sandy Mush tour of the year began with visits to several of the access points along Cedar Hill Road. Though it was a bit cool to start with, we found the birds to be quite active, especially in the first couple of hours. FIELD SPARROW songs were prevalent (as they always are) as were CHIPPING SPARROWS. We got great views of a foraging BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER and a recently returned WHITE-EYED VIREO, singing its 'quick, gimme a beer quick' song almost constantly. A singing NORTHERN PARULA eluded us but not for long, and we eventually found him singing from the top of a maple. Back near the parking area, we found YELLOW-THROATED VIREO singing the typical 'three A' song, and the first of many singing RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS for the day.

As the morning progressed, we began to see more raptors, first with both TURKEY and BLACK VULTURES leaving their nightly roosts, soaring up on thermals. While we observed a male AMERICAN KESTREL through the scope, a couple of BROAD-WINGED HAWKS cruised overhead, their banded tails just visible from our distance. Songbird activity tends to drop in the game lands in late morning but we still managed to find a few more 'day birds' for our list before lunch, including RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, EASTERN MEADOWLARK, and a couple of flyover flocks of PURPLE FINCH.

Special thanks must be given to Sam Cathey, for generously offering his porch in Alexander for a convenient lunch spot. Birding here also had its rewards – we got great looks at EASTERN PHOEBE, COMMON GRACKLES, and a male EASTERN BLUEBIRD gifting food to his mate while we ate our lunch.

We finished this delightful, early spring day in Sandy Mush with a total of 50 species!

Species encountered

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|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Wild Turkey | Blue Jay | Eastern Bluebird |
| Mourning Dove | American Crow | American Robin |
| Black Vulture | Carolina Chickadee | House Finch |
| Turkey Vulture | Tufted Titmouse | Purple Finch |
| Cooper's Hawk | Tree Swallow | American Goldfinch |
| Broad-winged Hawk | Barn Swallow | Chipping Sparrow |
| Red-tailed Hawk | Golden-crowned Kinglet (heard) | Field Sparrow |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker | Ruby-crowned Kinglet | White-throated Sparrow |
| Downy Woodpecker | White-breasted Nuthatch | Song Sparrow |
| Pileated Woodpecker | Brown-headed Nuthatch | Eastern Towhee |
| Northern Flicker | Blue-gray Gnatcatcher | Brown-headed Cowbird |
| American Kestrel | House Wren (heard only) | Eastern Meadowlark |
| Eastern Phoebe | Carolina Wren | Red-winged Blackbird |
| White-eyed Vireo | European Starling | Common Grackle |
| Yellow-throated Vireo | Northern Mockingbird | Northern Parula |
| Blue-headed Vireo | Brown Thrasher | Pine Warbler |
| | | Yellow-rumped Warbler |
| | | Northern Cardinal |