BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY AT MAGEE MARSH

Dan Landis
Chapters:

• What’s All the Fuss About?
• When to go
• About Magee Marsh
• Equipment and Technique
• Photos
WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT?
Every spring, warblers leave their southern habitats in Central and South America for northern habitats, as the weather warms and flower and insect populations increase.
Areas like this, which are locations where birds rest either before or after crossing a barrier are called “migrant traps.”

Magee Marsh is one of the most popular migrant traps for birders.

Other warbler “migrant traps” and hotspots:

- South Padre Island, Texas
- Dauphin Island, Alabama
- Red River Gorge, Kentucky
- Shawnee State Forest, Ohio
- Tawas, Michigan
The Great Lakes provides a formidable barrier for migrating birds to cross. Consequently, they tend to accumulate on the northern wooded areas of Ohio on Lake Erie. They stop here to rest and feed before crossing the lakes. They wait until wind and weather conditions are optimal for them to cross.
Magee Marsh is known all over as the “Warbler Capital of the World,” and, every spring, birders and photographers come from all over the world to attend what is known as “The Biggest Week in American Birding.”
People pay big bucks for tours to Magee Marsh

All of these tours advertise Magee Marsh as the highlight of the tour.

Cost:

- tropicalbirding.com charges $4400 for a 12 day tour.
- Wings Birding Tours Worldwide does a similar trip for $3650.
- “She Flew” Birding Tours offers a trip for $2395.

(Costs vary due to what lodging/meals are included.)
Route Taken by Many Professionally-Guided Birding Tours
Magee Marsh is in our back yard, and it’s free!
Biggest Week Festival Schedule

Field Trips, Workshops and Keynote Presentations are described on individual pages.

FIELD TRIPS
GUIDED VAN TRIPS
YOU DRIVE/WE LEAD
BIRD WALKS AND SITS
BIRDING WITH THE STARS
BIRDING ON THE WATER

WORKSHOPS
BIRD ID
BEGINNING BIRDING
PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS
MORE GREAT WORKSHOPS

PRESENTATIONS
KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS
WORLD BIRDING PRESENTATIONS
BONUS PRESENTATIONS

Participation in workshops and presentations requires a $50 registration fee.
Lodging:

Either Toledo or Port Clinton.

**Port Clinton** (16 miles away—fewer dining and hotel options, highest rated hotel is 3 stars)

**Toledo** (22 miles away—more dining and hotel options, highest rated hotel is 4 stars.)

Last year I stayed at the Island House Hotel in Port Clinton.

- It was clean.
- Small room
- No TV
- It was fine.
When to Go

Good birding is 100% about timing!

In general, the **middle two weeks of May** are the best, but there are peak days, which are created by ideal conditions.

Winds out of the north may cause birds to linger at Magee Marsh, waiting for more ideal conditions to cross.

Colder weather usually brings the birds down from the canopy to closer to the ground.
The best source for when to go is Kenn Kaufman’s blog

Kenn Kaufman’s blog can be found at

http://cranecreekbirding.blogspot.com/

Kenn Kaufman provides a “birding forecast” and gives current advice as to when the conditions are optimal for good bird numbers.

Update: Changing forecast and migration outlook May 12 - 16

Friday May 11, 2018: Three days ago, based on the weather forecast at the time, we predicted that tomorrow (Saturday the 12th) could see a major arrival of migrants. The weather pattern has changed since then. Tonight (Friday night) there will still be strong winds from the south, all the way from the Gulf of Mexico to the Midwest, but apparently they won’t reach northern Ohio. A high-pressure area over southern Ontario will block that system, so here along the Lake Erie shoreline, we’re supposed to get cool temperatures, east-northeast winds, and probably scattered thunderstorms during the night. Saturday and Sunday will continue to be relatively cool, with northeasterly winds and probably with scattered thunderstorms on Saturday.

What does that mean for birding? While we probably won’t see many new birds arriving, most of the migrants that are here now should stick around. Excellent numbers and variety of warblers and other migrants have been seen in all the usual spots along and near Lake Erie during the last couple of days, and that good birding will likely continue through the weekend.
About Magee Marsh

Getting there:

Magee Marsh address:
13531 W. St. Rt. 2,
Oak Harbor, OH 43412

From Dayton Ohio:
165 miles. (2 hours, 42 minutes).

From Toledo, Ohio:
22 miles. (27 minutes).

From Port Clinton, Ohio:
16.3 miles. (19 minutes)
Magee Marsh Boardwalk
(approximately one mile of boardwalk)
The numbers along the boardwalk, etched into the top handrail, are useful for communicating about the locations of bird sightings.

Please support birding and wildlife diversity.
Purchase the Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp.
Eastern Entrance to the Boardwalk
Western Entrance to Boardwalk
Information Tent near Western Boardwalk Entrance
Raised platform near western entrance to boardwalk
“Bird Jams” are common along the boardwalk.
Other areas to explore at Magee Marsh

Crane Creek Estuary Trail

Wildlife Beach Trail
The Traveling Chef

Breakfast
served 8am - 10am
On the estuary trail ONWR
Weather permitting

BREAKFAST SANDWICHES
Sausage or Bacon, egg & cheese
Egg & cheese
Muffins-Blueberry, Banana nut, Chocolate chip
Coffee, Hot chocolate

The Traveling Chef
Catering for all Occasions:
- Banquets
- Parties
- Weddings
- Special events
- Personal Chef
- Golf Outings

e-mail: thetravelingchef@wow.com
Follow us on twitter: @chef_traveling

We have been in business since 1999, and have 44 years of food-service experience.

We have catered events all over Northwest Ohio - from the Toledo Botanical Gardens to the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, Shinners bike runs to Penta Prom.

What ever your event we will build a menu to your taste & budget. We are based in Oregon, Ohio, and use the finest local ingredients available.

Let us take the stress off your shoulders. From set-up to tear down and clean up, we'll do our best so you can enjoy your event.
Equipment and Technique

Canon 7D MkII, Canon Speedlite 580 EXII, Canon 100-400 lens, Home made flash extender
Technique

Go to http://www.mageemarsh.org/photographytips.html

There’s a wealth of information on this website, including the entire text of *Secrets of Digital Bird Photography* by W. H. Majoros.

The chapter on “Photographing Warblers” is excellent!
Entire text also available for free at www.digitalbirdphotography.com

900+ pages of expert information—

for free!

He doesn’t even ask for contributions!
My Preferred Camera Settings

• **High speed shutter burst** (Use in short bursts. Make sure your card has a high write speed.)

• **Back-button focusing**—separates the shutter from the focus function.

• **Single-shot auto focus** (Not Servo or AF-C)

• **Single center focus point** (Select just above center)
Camera Settings—Depend Greatly on Light Conditions

**Shutter Speed:** 1/400 to 1/1600 (You’re not trying to stop fast action.)

**Aperture:** f7.1 to 9 (Keep the background fuzzy.)

**ISO:** 400-800 preferred; 1250 if necessary
Lens Settings

- Limit focus range for quicker focusing.
- Auto focus on.
- Image Stabilization on.
- Choose Stabilizer mode.
Fill Flash is tremendously helpful for photography at Magee Marsh!

Flash Settings:
- **ETTL** (Expose Through the Lens)
- **High Speed Synch** (Allows for faster shutter speeds)
- Reduce flash intensity to -2/3 or -1 (Experiment)
- The use of a flash extender, like a “Better Beamer” is recommended.
With/Without Fill Flash Comparison

With Fill Flash

Without Fill Flash
With/Without Fill Flash Comparison

With Fill Flash

Without Fill Flash
Challenges of Bird Photography at Magee Marsh

1. **Opportunities**—Will the birds come low and close?

2. **Backgrounds**—Getting shots free of distracting brush, branches, sky
Finding good backgrounds is a real challenge at Magee Marsh!
Gallery Section 1:
Shot with 500+1.4 extender
(=700mm)

Tripod was necessary
Palm Warbler

700mm
ISO 400
1/320 sec
f8
Scarlet Tanager
Bay-Breasted Warbler
Prothonotary Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Gallery Section II:
Shot with 100-400mm lens
Magnolia Warbler

400mm, ISO 400, 1/1000, f 7.1

Magnolia Warbler
Tree Swallow

400mm, ISO 400, 1/320, f9
Yellow-Rumped Warbler
Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher
Baltimore Oriole
Yellow Warbler

400mm
ISO 800
1/1000 sec
f7.1
Yellow Warbler
Black-Throated Blue Warbler
There are things to photograph other than warblers ...
Go for the event.

Hope for the pictures.

Thank you!