

# BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY AT MAGEE MARSH



Dan Landis

# Chapters:

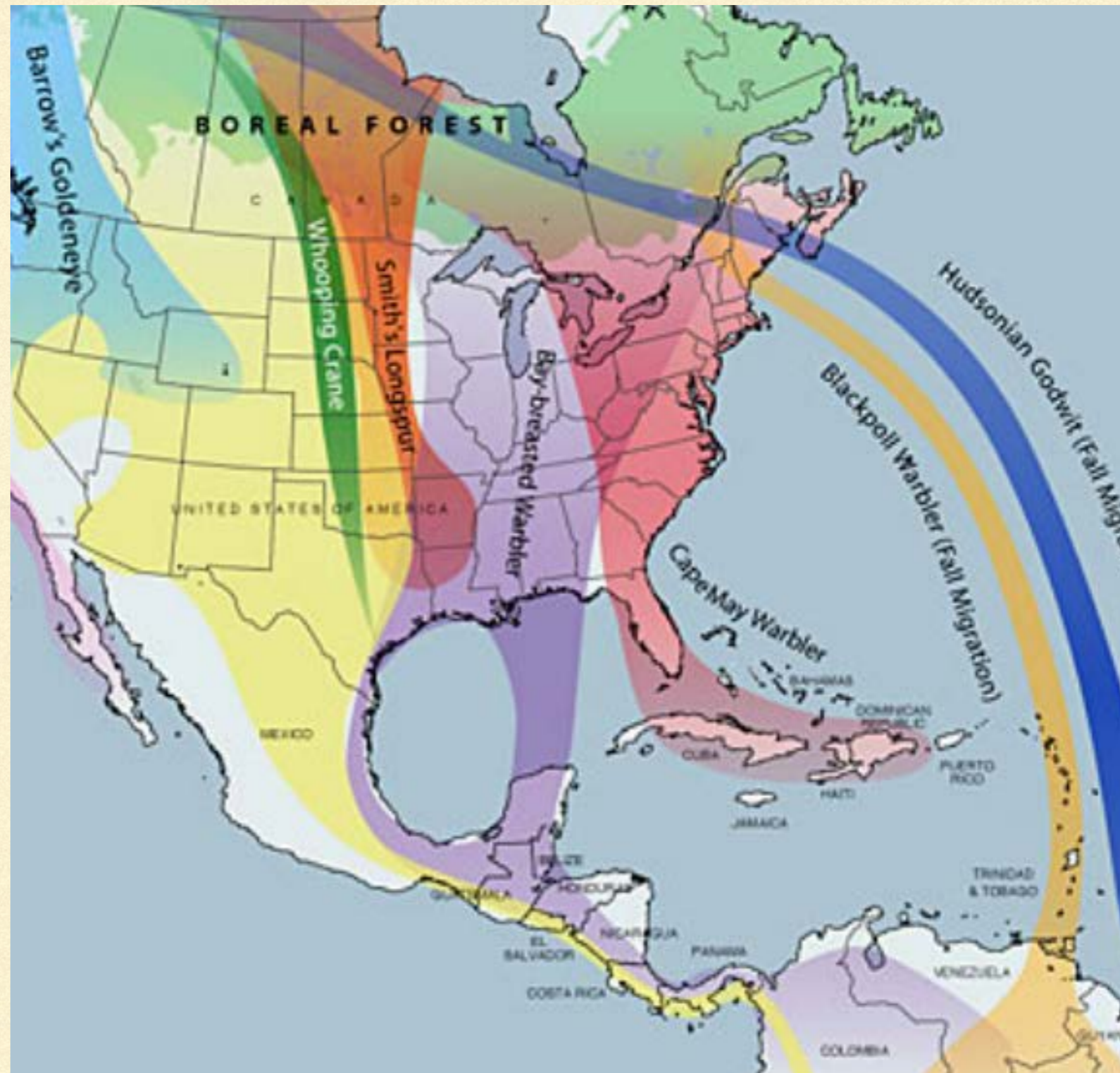
- What's All the Fuss About?
- When to go
- About Magee Marsh
- Equipment and Technique
- Photos



# 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.



# Migrant Traps

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

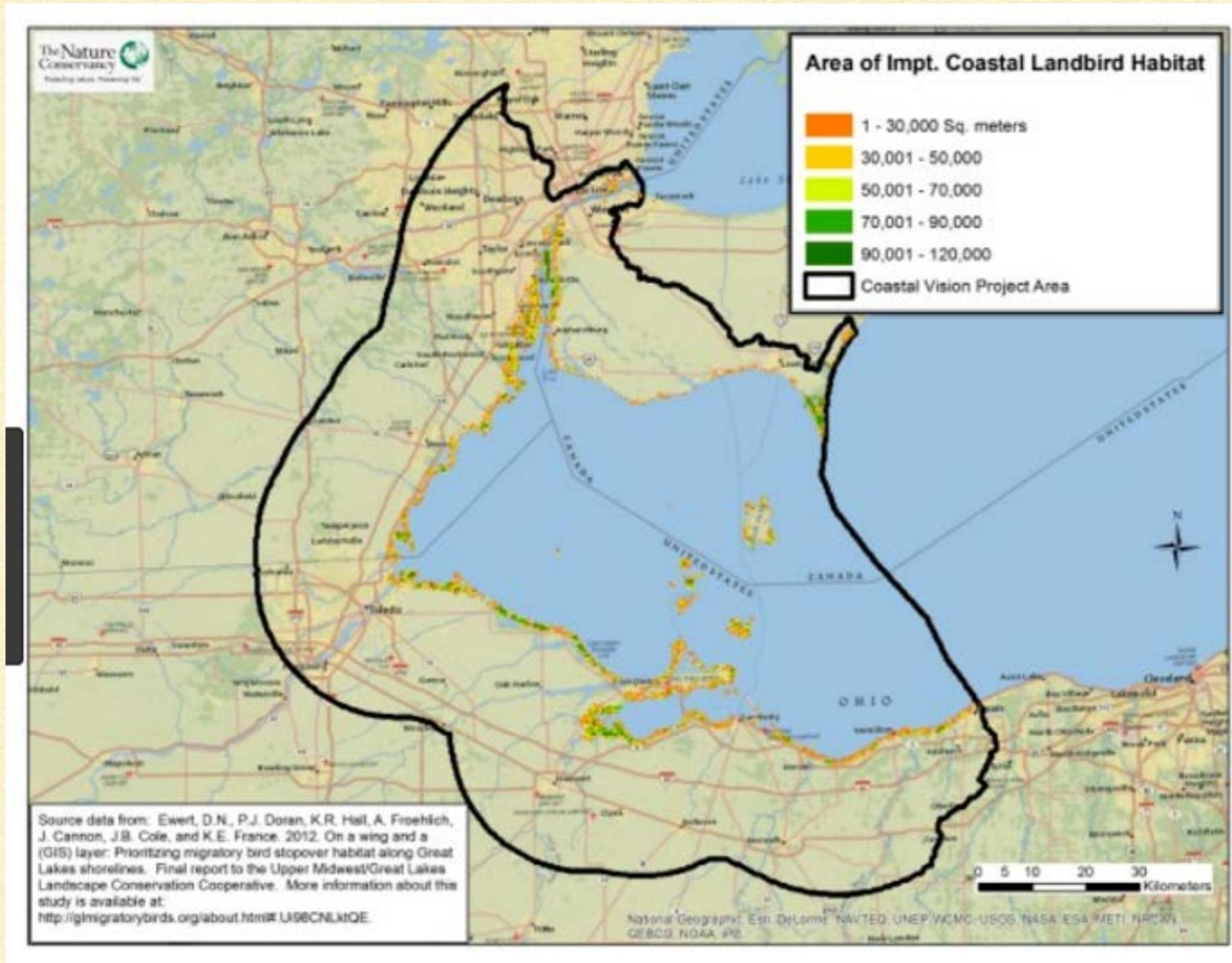
Dauphin Island, Alabama

Red River Gorge, Kentucky

Shawnee State Forest, Ohio

Tawas, Michigan

# Lake Erie Bird Stopover Habitat Areas



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](http://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!**



Brought to you by Black Swamp Bird Observatory

*In Northwest Ohio,  
the Warbler Capital of the World*

**May 3-12, 2019**

*Celebrating our 10th year!*

## 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.



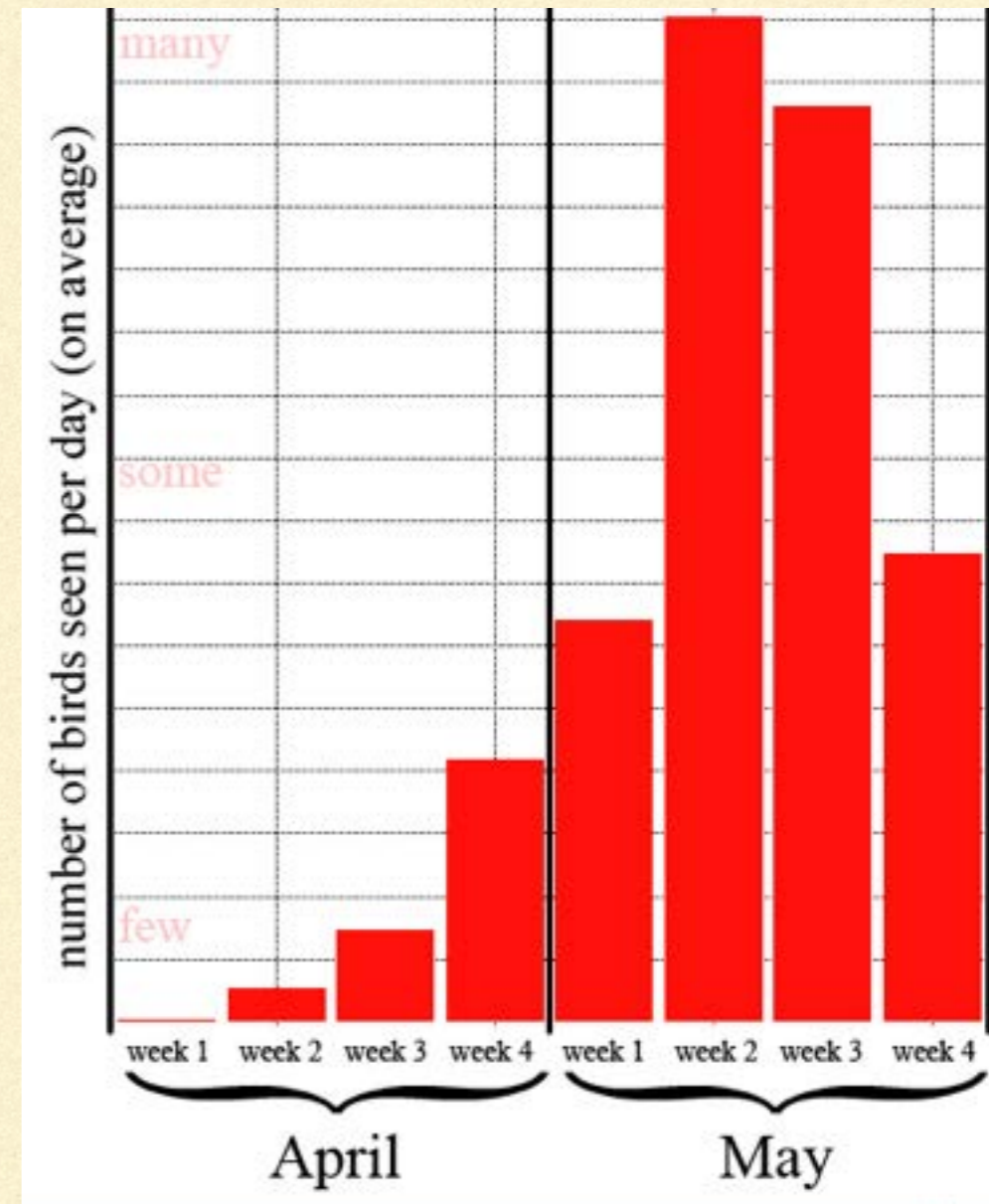
# When to Go

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.

→ FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2018

**Update: Changing forecast and migration outlook May 12 - 16**



A female Bay-breasted Warbler pauses along the Estuary Trail at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, Ohio. Photo by Kenn Kaufman.

**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 continued this morning. When we get a cold spell in mid-

# 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).

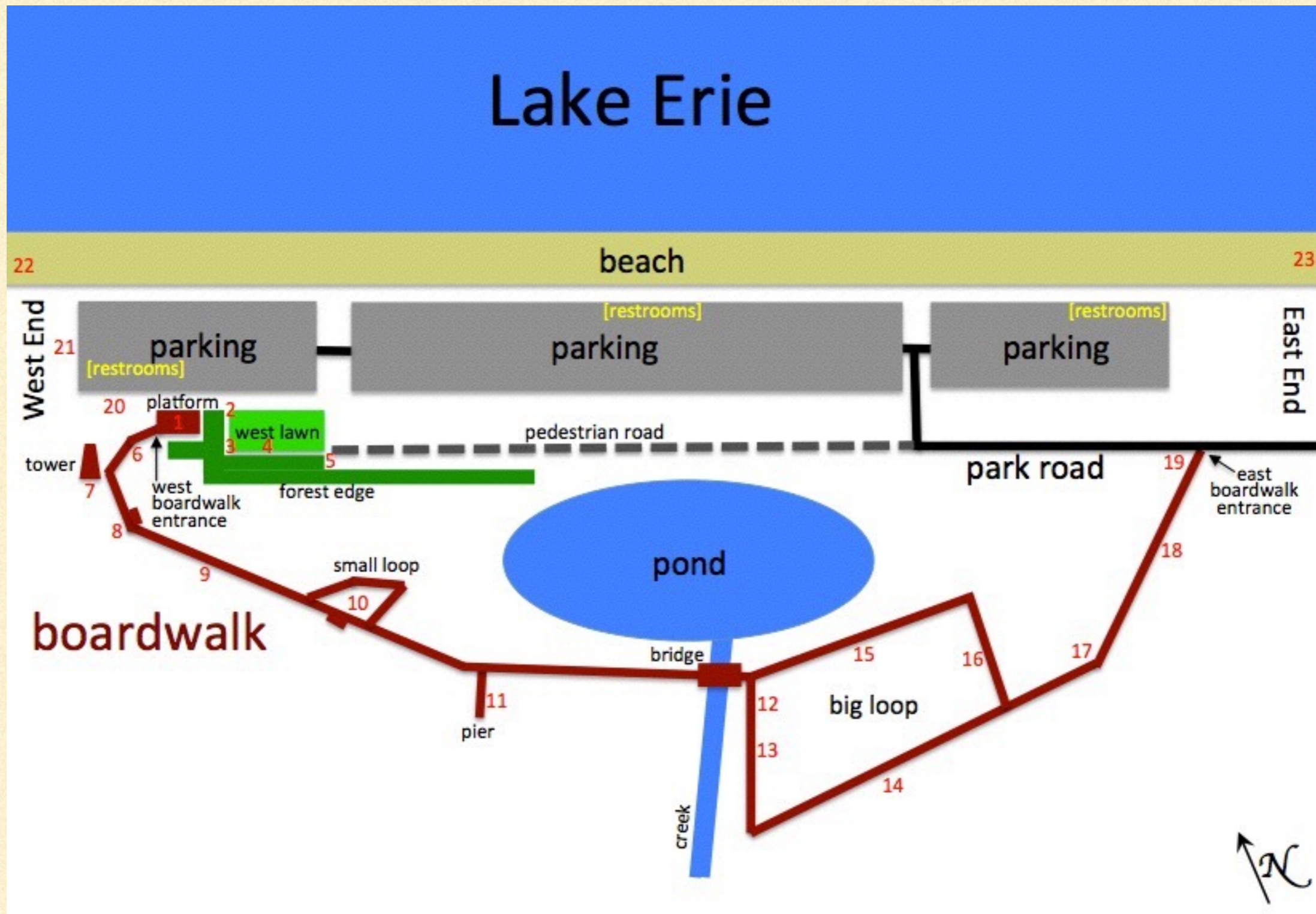
**From Toledo, Ohio:**  
22 miles. (27 minutes).

**From Port Clinton, Ohio:**  
16.3 miles. (19 minutes)



# Magee Marsh Boardwalk

(approximately one mile of boardwalk)





# BIRDING MAP OF THE MAGEE BOARDWALK

## MAGEE MARSH WILDLIFE AREA, NORTHWEST OHIO



CRANE CREEK ESTUARY TRAIL (OTTAWA NWR)

WEST TOWER

PLATFORM AND WEST ENTRANCE

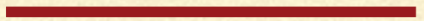

LAKE ERIE

TO OHIO ROUTE 2 -->

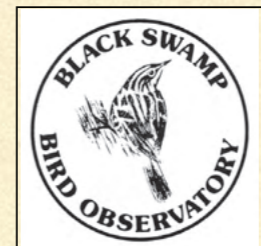
BOARDWALK EAST ENTRANCE

**26** The numbers along the boardwalk, etched into the top handrail, are useful for communicating about the locations of bird sightings

SCALE = 500 Feet

 Boardwalk  
 Dirt or gravel trail

Please support birding and wildlife diversity  
 Purchase the Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp



Produced by Kenn Kaufman for the Black Swamp Bird Observatory, 2013. This copyrighted map is available for free downloading and printing. [www.bsbobird.org/birding](http://www.bsbobird.org/birding)





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



CRANE CREEK ESTUARY TRAIL (OTTAWA NWR)

LAKE ERIE

N

PARKING

Please support birding and wildlife diversity - Purchase the Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp

MAGEE BOARDWALK (more details on separate map)

WILDLIFE BEACH TRAIL

Lucas Co.  
Ottawa Co.

COUNTY LINE

OTTAWA

MAGEE / OTTAWA PARTNERSHIP TRAIL



**Crane Creek  
Estuary Trail**



# The Traveling Chef

*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

[thetravelingchef.com](http://thetravelingchef.com)

Follow us on twitter: @chef\_traveling



e-mail:  
[thetravelingchef@wow.com](mailto:thetravelingchef@wow.com)

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, Shriners 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.

The Traveling  
Chef

Catering for all Occasions:

Banquets

Parties

Weddings

Special events

Personal Chef

Golf Outings

# Equipment and Technique



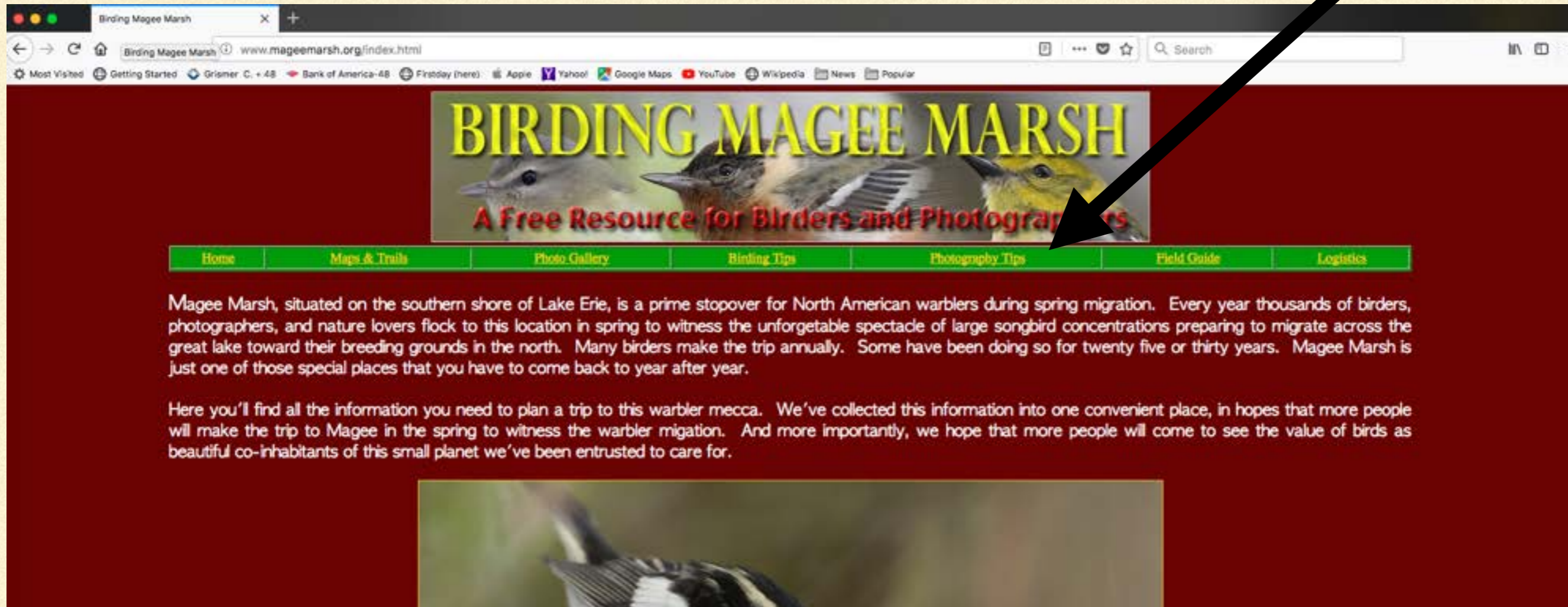
Canon 7D MkII, Canon Speedlite 580 EXII, Canon 100-400 lens,  
Home made flash extender

# 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!



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL [www.mageemarsh.org/index.html](http://www.mageemarsh.org/index.html). The page features a dark red background with a central banner for "BIRDING MAGEE MARSH" in yellow text, with the subtitle "A Free Resource for Birders and Photographers" in red. Below the banner is a green navigation bar with links for Home, Maps & Trails, Photo Gallery, Birding Tips, Photography Tips, Field Guide, and Logistics. A large black arrow points from the text above to the "Photography Tips" link. Below the navigation bar, there is introductory text about Magee Marsh as a birding destination and a partial view of a warbler photograph at the bottom.

Entire text also available for free at  
[www.digitalbirdphotography.com](http://www.digitalbirdphotography.com)

900+ pages of  
expert information—

for free!

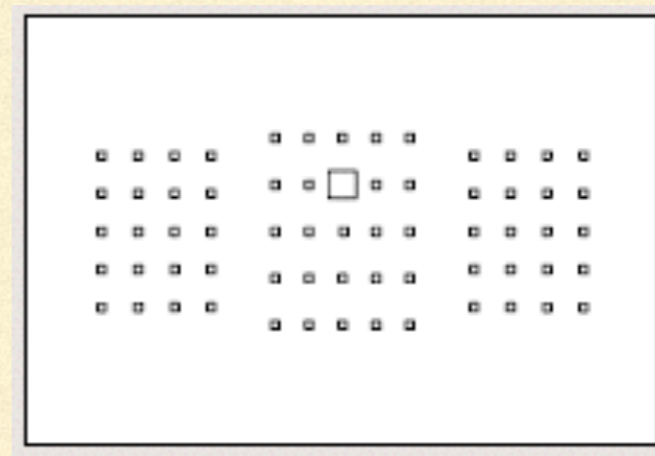
He doesn't even  
ask for contributions!





# 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 I:**

Shot with 500+1.4 extender  
(=700mm)

Tripod was necessary



700mm  
ISO 400  
1/320 sec  
f8

*Palm Warbler*




700mm  
ISO 1250  
1/3200 sec  
f6.3

*Yellow-Rumped Warbler*



700mm  
ISO 1250  
1/3200 sec  
f6.3

*Scarlet Tanager*

A female Redstart bird is perched on a thin, light-colored branch. The bird has a greyish-brown head and back, a bright yellow breast and belly, and a dark tail. It is facing right. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green. In the upper left, there is a cluster of young, yellow-green leaves on a branch.

700mm  
ISO 1250  
1/1000 sec  
f7.1

*Female Redstart*

700mm,  
ISO 800,  
1/400, f5.6



*Bay-Breasted Warbler*

700mm  
ISO 1250  
1/2000 sec  
f7.1



*Northern Parula*







700mm  
ISO 1250  
1/3200 sec  
f8

*Prothonotary Warbler*



700mm  
ISO 400  
1/800, f9

*Common Yellowthroat*

**Gallery Section II:**  
Shot with 100-400mm lens

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



*Magnolia Warbler*



Same photo, uncropped



400mm  
ISO 400  
1/1000 sec  
f7.1

*Prothonotary Warbler*



Same photo, uncropped



400mm,  
ISO 400  
1/320, f9

*Tree Swallow*



400mm  
ISO 400  
1/1000 sec  
f7.1

*Yellow-Rumped Warbler*





400mm  
ISO 800  
1/1000 sec  
f7.1

*Yellow-Rumped Warbler*



400mm  
ISO 800  
1/250 sec  
f9

*Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher*



400mm  
ISO 400  
1/1000 sec  
f8

*Baltimore Oriole*



400mm  
ISO 800  
1/1000 sec  
f7.1

*Yellow Warbler*



400mm  
ISO 800  
1/1000 sec  
f7.1

*Yellow Warbler*

A close-up photograph of a Black-throated blue warbler perched on a light brown, textured branch. The bird is shown in profile, facing left. It has a dark blue head and back, a black throat and breast, and a white belly. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and blue. In the bottom right corner, the text "Black-Throated Blue Warbler" is written in white. In the bottom left corner, a white-bordered box contains technical camera settings: "400mm", "ISO 800", "1/1000 sec", and "f7.1".

400mm  
ISO 800  
1/1000 sec  
f7.1

*Black-Throated Blue Warbler*

*There are things to photograph other than warblers ...*







Go for the event.

Hope for the pictures.

Thank you!