

The First KOS Breeding Bird Blitz

The Breeding Bird Blitz was a blast! From June 13 through 16, birders from all over the state recorded the birds in Kentucky at the peak of breeding season. The turnout was fantastic and the enthusiasm was contagious. Despite the threat of daily thunderstorms and ever-present ticks and chiggers, over 100 folks signed up and submitted more than 700 eBird lists with a total of 154 species.

The purpose of the Blitz was to catalog the birds in every county in the state. Birders were asked to “adopt” a county or several counties for the 4-day event. They earned a raffle ticket for each county they chose. The 12 least-birded counties in the state were identified and participants got two raffle tickets for those.

There were some interesting findings. Swainson’s Warblers were found in 13 different locations including some new discoveries. There were 18 different warbler species; the most prominent by far was the Common Yellowthroat - 725 seen/heard on 275 lists, more than twice as many as any other warbler. A few Alder and Willow Flycatchers were found in certain parts of the state. Owls were found in low numbers with Barred Owls reported on 20 lists and Eastern Screech-Owls on 5. Canada Geese are doing very well. How well? You can see the trip report here: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/384239> It has a wealth of good information. A more detailed look at the data will be available soon.

Pam Spaulding was the winner of the raffle, a \$200 gift card for Kentucky State Parks, sponsored by KOS. She and Carol Besse went above and beyond by traveling to far western Kentucky to pick up some counties that no one else claimed. They drove over 818 miles in just two days (and thought they should get the award for the dirtiest car.) Other participants planned camping trips around their efforts in the eastern part of the state. Several birders went to 6 or more counties. It was great! Kentucky birders are the best! Only 6 counties out of 120 were missing from reports over the long weekend.

KOS plans to continue sponsoring the BBBlitz to monitor population changes. This year had two unusual variables – a lot of rain and 17-year cicadas. Abundant food and water almost certainly had an impact. It will be important to observe fluctuations with shifting weather patterns in the future. We sent out thanks for all the intrepid birders who took part in this event and to those who made it possible – the BBBlitz planning team, Rona O’Carra and Roseanna Denton for their work with eBird, and Steve Brown for handling the tech side of things. Let’s do it again next year!