



Outing Report:

Fields of Barley (and Sandhill Cranes) Bicycle Tour

Saturday, September 21, 2019 by Chuck Miller



We explored the barley and hay fields near Desbarats for flocks of Sandhill Cranes as they gather for fall migration. This was a 24 km route by bicycle on gravel and hard surface roads. The terrain was relatively flat with a few rolling hills.



We started at the Johnson Farmers' Market in Desbarats. The market was open along with the Sylvan Circle crafts tour occurring. A shout out to the Market for installing some great bicycle racks! Eight Sault naturalist attended 7 by bicycle and 1 by car.

It was a beautiful fall day with a light south wind and temperature of 26C. It looked like harvest time with lots of local produce, changing leaf colour and migrating flocks of birds. The sky was often alive with sounds of the birds.

We made our way to Government Road where both blackbirds and two escaped cows were in the corn.





A Hairy Woodpecker made an appearance.



We then started to see sandhill cranes first a few, then a field with about 300 cranes at a distance. We crossed the Gordon Lake Road and came to a closer flock of 200 which would build to over 500 later in the afternoon.

We continued east toward Centre Line Road – through some gently rolling hills through the rural countryside. We stopped at a well-known spring for lunch.





Along the way we came across some domestic turkeys. Ron started up a conversation and to our surprise the turkeys listened. We continued to see smaller flocks of cranes. Until getting back to Government Road where the flock had grown to over 500 birds.



Research has shown that when the cranes leave our area, they will likely make their way to the Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area in Medaryville, Indiana – flying around Lake Michigan either via the Michigan mitten or thru Wisconsin, The wildlife area is 140 km (86 miles) south east of Chicago.

