

particularly interesting because its behaviors and habitats differ so much from the Arctic breeders. Nesting near ponds, lakes, rivers, or ditches, its breeding season is much longer than theirs, and spotties can be found perched on tree branches or cattails, or even walking completely submerged like dippers. Females establish territories, each displaying for and mating with as many as four males. After laying the eggs in one nest, they abandon them to the male, and sow their wild oats by doing the same for others, all the while defending the territory from other females.

We don't know why shorebirds in particular should have such exotic sex lives. Some have speculated that their habits of nesting in large open areas encourage this in some way; the short breeding season in the far north as well as the precocial young of shorebirds (most can feed themselves within hours of hatching) may have an influence as well. High risks of egg loss in the Arctic may favor non-incubating females who can provide more eggs. This does not explain, however, why so few other tundra breeders share such breeding systems, or why shorebirds of distinctly different habitats—spotted sandpipers and jaçanas are good examples—do.

Polyandry has of course been successfully practiced among human populations, but rarely enough to be little more than an anthropological curiosity. All the same, I know more than a few birders---many of them feminists---who cheer on these birds, whose populations can flourish with breeding strategies of which females seem to be so thoroughly in charge. 🐣

—**Bill Whan**  
Columbus, Ohio

## Welcome New Members!

We would like to once again thank you for your support of the Ohio Ornithological Society. As one of the founding members, we would like to update our records to know your interests in other organizations and in volunteering\*. Please complete the below form and return to: **Ohio Ornithological Society**  
P.O. Box 14051  
Columbus, Ohio 43214

or email Jen Sauter: [jsauter@covad.net](mailto:jsauter@covad.net) 🐣

\*If you joined the OOS via the internet, you do not have to fill out this form. Thank you!

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Welcoming backyard birdwatchers and researchers in the field alike, the Ohio Ornithological Society is the only statewide organization specifically devoted to fostering a deeper appreciation of wild birds, fellowship and collaboration in advancing our collective knowledge about them, and our ability to speak with one voice to preserve Ohio's bird habitats.

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# THE CERULEAN

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Quarterly Newsletter of the **Ohio Ornithological Society**: *Ohio's Birding Network*

Fall 2004  
Vol. 1, No. 3

## Fall Warbler Trips: September 19, 2004

### Magee Marsh and Maumee Bay

The Ohio Ornithological Society hosted a day of fun and food for 25 birders at Magee Marsh and Maumee Bay. Attendees ranged in age from 14 to 82! What better evidence could there be of the attraction of birding to people of all ages? Following a brief delay at the entrance gate (a gate was locked that shouldn't have been, which threatened our walk with disaster before it began until a Magee staffer most apologetically opened the gate), we assembled at the parking lot near the boardwalk. Seeing that 25 people would be too large for a single group, trip leader Greg Links suggested we split up into two groups. One group, led by Micki Dunakin, did the standard loop of the bird trail while Greg's group started at the trail and then relocated to the trail by the Sportsmen's Center. This approach seemed to work well, as each group found some species the other hadn't spotted. The birding was quite typical for a fall day, with only sporadic sighting of little flocks here and there. As usual, sightings were often near the tops of some of the higher trees at Magee, providing participants with excellent looks at undertail coverts, tail spots and belly markings. These difficulties, however, gave many of us a good opportunity to learn some of the finer details of field identification. After all, hungry migrating warblers rarely grace us with those striking profiles seen in the field guides!

Our morning walk at Magee Marsh netted 72 species, including 14 species of warblers, 5 vireos, 4 wrens, and 5 woodpeckers. Birds of note included Bald Eagle, Osprey, Caspian Tern, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, both Kinglets, Marsh Wren, Winter Wren, Red-breasted Nut-hatch, Philadelphia Vireo, and Scarlet Tanager. Warblers seen included Nashville, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Cape May, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Black-and-white, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's and Canada. Not bad at all considering the low numbers of birds actually sighted.

Our brunch at Maumee Bay was simply outstanding, with a little bit of something for everyone, ranging from omelets, sausages, waffles, and sweet rolls for the breakfast-minded to roast beef, salmon, chicken, and a variety of salads and desserts. One needs to keep one's strength up when birding, doesn't one? Needless to say, it was a delightful meal.

After lunch, trip leaders Greg Links and Micki Dunakin treated us to a great slide presentation on identification of fall warblers, with the aid of some fantastic images provided by OOS President Jim McCormac. For those able to stay fully awake after such a fantastic meal, it was a very informative session.

Following the session at the lodge, we birded awhile on the boardwalk at Maumee Bay.

Our grand total for species on the trip was 74, a good number considering there was no big songbird movement and our total birding time was around just four hours. All in all, it was a nice mixture of birding, food, and the special kind of fellowship shared

among birders. Greg and Micki wish to thank all participants for making it an especially enjoyable day! 🐣

—**Doug Dunakin**  
Antwerp, Ohio

### Northeastern Ohio

On Sunday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, the Ohio Ornithological Society hosted a warbler-watching and identification workshop. Twenty-three birders from all over the state met here for introductions and a preview of the day's activities from trip leader Kevin Metcalf. We started at Headlands Beach State Park, and although the weather was great, the numbers and variety of warblers and other migrants were not as great as we had hoped for. All the same, several warbler species were very cooperative, offering great looks at close distances. In the beach and dunes area, other cooperative migrant species included a Least Sandpiper, two Semi-palmated Plovers, nine Sanderlings, an American Pipit, and an unexpected Marsh Wren.

Hoping to find larger numbers and variety at another location, we headed west and made a stop at Mentor Lagoons. Unfortunately, it was also pretty slow for us here and a great deal of time and patience was required to add just a few more warbler species.

Our next stop was at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History where we enjoyed a catered lunch after which Kevin presented a most informative slide program and discussion on fall warbler identification. For several of the more confusing fall plumages, the excellent slides were very helpful in seeing and comparing the key identification field marks. If only they'd hold still like this in the field!

Our final stop of the day was at the Gordon Park Impoundment (Dike 14). As arrangements for birding inside the impoundment had not been finalized, we were content to bird along the perimeter of the area where we added several new species for the day, including three very cooperative Red-breasted Nuthatches. The total species count for the day was 62, including 12 warbler species.

Many thanks are owed to the Ohio Ornithological Society and to Kevin Metcalf for this unique Ohio birding opportunity! 🐣

—**Dan Sanders**  
Columbus, Ohio

## Annual Meeting, Election of Board Members

OOS members are urged to participate in our first Annual Meeting, to be held at the Shawnee State Park Lodge on 30 April during our first state Conference. The most important item on the agenda will be the first election of the thirteen Board members

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# THE CERULEAN

**THE CERULEAN** is the official newsletter of the **Ohio Ornithological Society** (OOS). **THE CERULEAN** is published four times a year. It contains timely information regarding upcoming field trips & meetings, recent bird sightings & current hot spots, trip reports, as well as other pertinent birding information. A subscription to **THE CERULEAN** is included among the benefits of the OOS. Members of the OOS are encouraged to contribute announcements, articles, photographs, drawings, and other birding related information to the newsletter. Seasonal deadlines for contributions to **THE CERULEAN** are as follows:

- ❖ Spring: 1 March
- ❖ Summer: 1 June
- ❖ Fall: 1 September
- ❖ Winter: 1 December

Send contributions for the newsletter to the editor, Su Snyder, at [cerulean@ohiobirds.org](mailto:cerulean@ohiobirds.org), or by regular mail to **THE CERULEAN**, c/o OOS, P.O. Box 14051, Columbus, Ohio 43214. For more information see the Publications page on the OOS web site at [www.ohiobirds.org](http://www.ohiobirds.org).

## The AOU Check-list: What it Means to You

The American Ornithologists' Union performs valuable services for everyone seriously interested in birds through its Committee on Classification and Nomenclature. One of them involves codifying the official list of North America's birds. New species are added when a bird is found and adequately documented for the first time in North America. Others are added to the list when evidence requires splitting an existing species into two or more new ones. Occasionally a species is removed, such as when researchers determine it no longer deserves separate species rank, and is lumped with a similar form or banished altogether from the list.

The Committee may change the order in which birds appear in the list, based on evidence that systematic relationships among groups of species are newly understood. A list could be devised with red birds first, yellow ones second, and brown ones next, but that wouldn't tell us much about how the species are related now and over time. For generations, the loon family came first in every official list. Last year, the Committee accepted new theories about the evolution of birds that put the ducks first, with loons moving down after turkeys and bobwhites.

Finally, the Committee establishes the official names of birds on the list, both English and scientific. This is done so we can speak with one another confident we understand precisely which species

of the Society, including five officers and eight regional directors. The OOS Nominating Committee will be nominating individuals for election, but members at large may also nominate candidates for elections to the Board to be held at this meeting. Nominations must be made in good faith, and with the approval of the person nominated; nominees and nominators must be OOS members in good standing. All nominations must be in the hands of Executive Secretary Laura Kammermeier ([info@ohiobirds.org](mailto:info@ohiobirds.org) or write to: Ohio Ornithological Society, P.O. Box 14051, Columbus, Ohio 43214) 100 days prior to the Annual Meeting, meaning 20 January 2005. Further details on this meeting, elections, offices, terms of office, etc., may be found in the OOS Bylaws <http://www.ohiobirds.org/about/who/background.php>. Members without internet access may request a copy of the Bylaws from the Executive Secretary. 🐦

we're discussing, and also so that nomenclature can be consistent, unequivocal, and grammatically correct.

Recently the Committee has announced its findings yearly, in the July issue of *The Auk*, the AOU's journal. A more detailed summary of 2004's decisions as they pertain to the continental US and Canada appears elsewhere (see [http://www.ohiobirds.org/news.php?news\\_ID=103](http://www.ohiobirds.org/news.php?news_ID=103)), but there follow a few examples of news of special interest to Ohioans here.

First, we may soon (when and if the Ohio Bird Records Committee verifies the occurrence of this one) have a new species on Ohio's list. As a result of a taxonomic split, cackling goose *Branta hutchinsii* is now on the AOU list and likely to go on Ohio's. The Committee accepted evidence that the smaller Canada goose subspecies, all breeding in the far north, constitute a new species, now split off as cackling geese from the larger subspecies of more southern distribution, which retain the name Canada goose *Branta canadensis*. The Committee also changed the order in which the geese appear on the list; now the order is brant, cackling goose, then Canada goose.

This new species probably has many records in Ohio, where they have been variously called "Hutchins's goose," "Richardson's goose," "Aleutian Canada goose," or just "small Canadas." Several specimens exist, and quite a few photographs. No doubt birders will be more carefully studying migrant "Canada" geese from now on. We might as well start studying all the subspecies in the Canada goose complex; the AOU has hinted that further splits may be announced; if they split the new cackling goose itself, most of our records will no longer be as clear as we thought.

In other actions, the Committee split a species, recognizing a North American form as distinct from the Old World form, and added six new species to the list based on extralimital records in Alaska, California, and Florida. None is known to have occurred in Ohio.

The English names of five species were officially changed. This was done for various reasons: to conform with usages in other English-speaking countries, to more accurately describe the species in question, and to correct grammar. None of these species is known to have occurred in Ohio.

The scientific names of three Ohio species, all of them local breeders, were changed: green heron *Butorides striata* (formerly *B. striatus*), spotted sandpiper *Actitis macularius* (formerly *A. macularia*), and worm-eating warbler *Helmitheros vermivorus* (formerly *H. vermivora*). Readers familiar with Latin will recognize these as minor alterations correcting gender agreement with the Greek roots in genus names. This grammatical project will apparently be an ongoing one, and announcing these tinkering a few at a time every year will be bothersome for those who keep and publish checklists.

Thus, this AOU committee performed all three of the basic operations of list-making: it changed the number of members on the list, their names, and the order in which they appear. The AOU has no rival in making these decisions for the rest of us; their reputation and authority is solid, and everyone will follow their lead. The *AOU Check-list* is the gold standard. So revered is the AOU that the rest of us have put up with various indecisive decisions. *Ardea alba*'s English name has changed so often that a friend of mine jokingly calls it the "Great white common American egret," and we uncomplainingly put up with the white-tailed kite becoming the black-shouldered kite, then reverting to white-tailed kite after a few years. And many in the ornithological community, though hardly all, follow the AOU's curious practice of capitalizing English names of birds, as if we still walked around in powdered wigs and wrote with quills.

Even if we don't all pay close attention to the AOU, it influences birding and bird study in many ways, not the least of them its management of the official checklist. You can see the Check-list itself at <http://www.aou.org/aou/birdlist.html>, and you can read a recent report from the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature at <http://www.thayerbirding.com/aou2003.pdf>. 🐦

—Bill Whan  
Columbus, Ohio

## An Evening on a Lake Erie Marsh

On a late afternoon of early August, I find myself in the car with my family, entering the Magee Marsh Wildlife Area. Moments earlier I caught a glimpse of an adult Little Blue Heron standing just outside the entrance of Magee. Only a handful of these herons are seen each year in Ohio, but the few that do show up are usually found in the large marshes of southwestern Lake Erie.

The heat of the day is finally beginning to fade as the sun sets in the sky. Driving along the causeway, with extensive marshland on both sides of the road, we can sense the marsh is alive with wildlife. Red-winged Blackbirds fly past in small flocks, and a Yellow Warbler sings from a tree. A Swamp Sparrow lets out a loud "chink," but is reluctant to reveal himself. Numerous Great Egrets dot the landscape, standing quietly at the edge of the water with long plumes extending down their backs. The birds' snow-white plumage is a beautiful contrast against the green vegetation around them. Great Blue Herons are abundant as well, but less conspicuous than the egrets. A few Common Terns gracefully float over a Black-crowned Night-Heron, who pops his head up from the vegetation for just a second. There are probably many other night-herons lurking here in the marsh, but are just not showing themselves right now.

At the end of the road we come to the beach, where a number of vacationers are swimming in Erie's waters. Ring-billed and Herring Gulls are occupying the parking lot here, with several others flying overhead. Turning back towards the marsh, we drive back down the causeway.

Common Yellowthroats sing close by. A Pied-billed Grebe looks around before diving. Common Terns continue to fly back and forth over the road, and then a much larger Caspian Tern appears, flapping his long wings as he surveys the area below him, looking for a meal. As we continue down the causeway, we continue to see Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets everywhere. One of the Great Blues, a particularly irritable bird, squawked at us a few times and flew off when we stopped to get a quick picture. The other herons are much more cooperative and seem to tolerate our presence. As the sun continues to drop behind the horizon, the birds hurry around to finish their day's activities, and we finally wrap up our self-guided tour of the marsh.

As we drive along the highway again a short time later, during the last few minutes of daylight, a large bird has come into view, flying alongside the road with slow, steady wing-beats. As we come closer, it is evident that the bird is not another heron, but an adult Bald Eagle. The eagle continues to fly on majestic wings, its course parallel with our vehicle's for several more minutes. Then we go our separate ways—the eagle turns back to his home in the marsh, while we travel back to our home, many miles away. 🐦

—Kyle Carlsen, age 15  
Vincent, Ohio

## New Christmas Bird Count

A new Christmas Bird Count (CBC) circle has been added in Ohio this year. The Brown Family Environmental Center, Kenyon College in Gambier, in Knox County CBC will be held on Sunday, December 19, 2004. If you are interested in participating in this CBC, please contact the compiler, Jason Larson, at 740-427-5055 or [larson@kenyon.edu](mailto:larson@kenyon.edu). 🐦

## The Strange Sex Lives of Shorebirds

Polygamy—mating with more than one individual of the opposite sex—is fairly common among birds. It is an efficient way to perpetuate a species. Polygamy nearly always takes the form of *polygyny*—in which males mate with more than one female—and it might seem the most efficient use of reproductive capabilities...until we consider *polyandry*, a far rarer breeding system in which females take on more than one mate, often with reversals of customary sexual roles in rearing young. Fewer than 1% of the world's bird species adopt this strategy, and most of them are shorebirds.

Most species of shorebirds lay four eggs at a time. For many species, four eggs adds up to as much as 80% of the female's body mass, and some are capable of laying four or five clutches of eggs a season! But every clutch has to be incubated for weeks, and the young have to be guarded for a period after hatching. How can Arctic nesters, with their short breeding season, take advantage of these capabilities? Well, many have evolved to put the males to work in reproduction, compelling them to contribute more than mere donations of genetic material. What a concept.

Most birders are familiar with polyandry among our three species of phalaropes. Unlike so many other birds, female phalaropes sport brighter breeding plumage than males, and it is they who conduct displays to attract partners. They often mate with several males, laying eggs but playing no part in incubation or care for young; the duller-plumaged males instead sit on the eggs and tend chicks after hatching. Female phalaropes never incubate eggs unless a male is killed. Fewer of us, however, know how successful this unusual breeding system is among other species of shorebirds.

Among the more than eighty species of shorebirds recorded in North America, more than twenty are polyandrous, or at least require males to do the homemaking. Females of certain species rare here—the northern jaçana is a prime example—practice polyandry in its purest form. Hen jaçanas fiercely defend nests in their large territories with the sharp spurs on their wings, mating with multiple males and depositing pairs of eggs at different sites. Thereafter, the cocks do the incubating, tucking an egg beneath each wing against their breasts, and later care for hatchlings. Female spotted redshanks, snowy plovers, mountain plovers, Eurasian dotterels, sanderlings, and little stints may leave a single clutch for males to care for, mate with a second male, and tend another nest on their own. Male spoon-billed sandpipers do the incubating and care of young. Temminck's stints engage in mutual bigamy, each partner mating with another to produce a second brood, then caring separately for them. Among more familiar species, it is male purple and rock sandpipers that do the incubating and tending of chicks, and among both species of dowitchers, while monogamous, males assume all or most of the post-hatching parental duties after the females depart.

Not all these role-swapping shorebirds nest in remote realms. The polyandrous spotted sandpiper, a common Ohio breeder, is