



THE CERULEAN

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

OOS – The Year in Review

In the past two spring issues of *The Cerulean*, editor Su Snyder has granted me space to recap the past year, and I'm again grateful for this opportunity. Membership has risen by well over 100 people since last year's recap, and we now have about 800 members.

As I went through my notes and calendar, it was gratifying to look back on the accomplishments our fledgling organization made in the last year. Our biggest event has been and probably always will be our annual conference, which is also the membership meeting. As many of you know, the latest was held in April 2006 at Shawnee State Park, and about 250 people attended. In addition to great field trips and tons of birds – and other biodiversity – we were treated to two outstanding speakers, Phil Hoose and Kenn Kaufman. We'll miss Shawnee, but the board decided it best to rotate this conference every two years, and hold it in different areas of Ohio, to more fully represent the state as a whole.

So, on the weekend of May 18-20, 2007, the OOS annual conference will take place at Mohican State Forest. While smaller in scale, Mohican is every bit as interesting as Shawnee for birds, and it promises to be another great event. We're excited to have keynote speakers Steve McKee and Donald Kroodsmas (author of *The Singing Life of Birds*). After our Mohican stint concludes in 2008, we have another very interesting locale in mind for the following two years.

We conducted other symposia and events during the past year, including one in partnership with the Holden Arboretum, and a Cedar Bog day in conjunction with the Ohio Historical Society and the Champaign County Master Gardeners. On September 30th, we held a Sparrow Symposium in partnership with the Black Swamp Bird Observatory and the Kirtland Bird Club. A lot of people were amazed to see some 230 people come together to learn about little brown birds! Our most recent symposium was about owls, at Hueston Woods back in February, along with our partner Audubon Miami Valley. Again, about 230 people attended this one. We were pleased to raise \$1000 at this event to donate to keynote speaker Denver Holt's North American Owl Institute.

Putting on events like the above are not cheap and we have to charge for these, but the OOS also wants to offer more free field trips. With that in mind, several of our board members, along with many volunteers, organized and led a trip to the Wilds. That January expedition produced some interesting birds and great birding, and attracted about 80 people. We're grateful to staff of the Wilds for working with us to make that possible. We will be doing more of these.

One priority for our group is encouraging interest in birds among young people. To that end, with the indispensable help of member Marty Sedluk we organized an exciting boat excursion to the Lake Erie islands for the Ohio Young Birders Club. We encountered some of the roughest seas you'll want to find up there, but came through just fine and with many good birds to boot. We also raised \$1000 at the Sparrow Symposium that was donated to this club. Check them out at: www.ohioyoungbirders.org

A big part of any ornithological society should be supporting science; thus we are pleased to have our relationship with the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II. The OOS provides Web site hosting for this project, and our Web guru and board member Ned Keller helped set the site up. The Atlas is the most important large-scale bird census project in Ohio, and everyone's participation is welcomed. Please visit <http://www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/> to learn more.

Speaking of our website, its growth has been exponential, and it now attracts around 600 unique visitors daily, from many parts of the world. Likewise, the Ohio birds list-serve has grown like a weed, and now has well over 1,000 subscribers, making it one of the biggest state birding list-serves in the country. An invaluable and fast way of exchanging information about birds, we owe a tip of the hat to Vic Fazio, who started Ohio birds over ten years ago, and we're proud to have assumed ownership of it. We also give kudos to Miami University for partnering with us to host the list-serve. Our newest Web initiative is the Ohio Birds Forum, which provides a place for birders to discuss nearly anything bird- or conservation-related, and that has proven to be very popular, too.

Of course, our print publications are vital to our mission, and it has been great to see *The Ohio Cardinal* now reaching OOS readers. This is one of the best state ornithological journals, with many interesting articles and thorough seasonal accounts, and we're thrilled that collaboration between the OOS and the *Cardinal* has made it one of the larger circulation journals of its kind. Likewise, our newsletter *The Cerulean* continues to improve and expand. From its humble four-page beginnings, this informative mini-magazine has grown to twelve pages and we are thinking of adding yet more.

In 2006, we began taking expeditions to Costa Rica, a Central American country – half the size of Ohio – where many of "our" birds winter. In 2007, because of increased interest among our members, we expanded to two trips, both of which were quite successful and everyone saw lots of great birds. It is interesting and eye-opening to see familiar species like Summer Tanager and Chestnut-sided Warbler amongst tropical gems like Violaceous Trogon and Black-cowled Oriole. Our long-term goal is to forge a conservation alliance with Costa Rica to research and educate people in both countries about the birds we share. Ultimately, we hope this leads to greater protection of these species. We'll be heading back to Costa Rica in 2008: be sure to let us know if you are interested in expanding your life list!

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 and meetings, recent bird sightings and 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 cerulean1@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. Because the newsletter is sent as bulk mail, subscribers should remember that the Post Office will not forward this newsletter to a new address. Please notify the Editor promptly if you move.

Design Manager--Delores Cole, Editor--Su Snyder.

We are grateful for the support of our members who make generous donations to allow us to pursue conservation and education initiatives. Increasingly, we get unsolicited gifts ranging from \$10 to several hundred dollars, and this generosity has allowed us to work in new and valuable ways. Our biggest goal has been to contribute a sizable gift to The Nature Conservancy to assist with land purchases at the Edge of Appalachia Preserve in Adams County. We hope to make our donation this fall, and will keep you informed.

Watch for some interesting OOS activities in 2007. We're planning a fall warbler symposium for September, which will feature interesting speakers and field trips, and we're especially excited about our first Conservation Symposium, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy. The latter will be in December, and you won't want to miss it.

On behalf of the OOS board, thank you for your support, and great birding in 2007!

--*Jim McCormac*, President
Ohio Ornithological Society

Opening Day

For the first time this year—for the first time in a long time, it seems—my windows are open, my screens are down, and the bird-song is bursting through.

As I sit here on a sunny March afternoon, my thermometer puts the temperature at 68 degrees. But the breeze still has that tangy early-spring nip to it, ready to chill the overeager and underdressed sun-worshipper caught carelessly in the shade. But by the sounds of things—by the palpable urgency I hear in the overtures of the sparrows, the cardinals, and the robins singing outside my window—these birds are not ones to be easily put off by a little nip in the air. They don't care about a nip, and neither do I. Because it is spring. There is something flawless in spring.

I have lots of interests, but not many loves. Two of my loves blend together elegantly, both being intimate with the spring. One love, birding, is obvious; but the other, baseball, might come as a surprise. But the symmetry is there.

Both are reasonably predictable, but with plenty of room left for serendipity. Both have lengthy chronicles, dripping with the kind of diagnosable data that statistics geeks love. Both are open to the interested amateur (well, maybe softball rather than baseball, for aging statistics geeks). And, singularly in the spring, birding and baseball are both synonymous with reawakening, renewal, and rare opportunity; for the diehard, this is especially so on baseball's Opening Day, when every team shares first place in the standings, and anything seems possible, and maybe even likely.

In recent years, my wife Sandy and I have established our own amalgamation of baseball and birding tradition. We live in the Cleveland area, so naturally our loyalties lie with the habitually underachieving, occasionally brilliant, but always exasperating Cleveland Indians, who, over the course of my lifetime, have never won a game. That assessment may not be precisely accurate, but it often seems to be the case as another marathon season drags on. But on Opening Day, with a tie for first place firmly in hand, everything is right with the world.

Our ritual? We keep an Opening Day bird list, which includes only those species found from *within* the confines of Jacobs Field, the home turf of the Indians, in downtown Cleveland. One distinctly advantageous aspect to Jacobs Field, and therefore to our list, is that it lies across the road from venerable Erie Street Cemetery, home to many of Cleveland's early settlers and notables, and many migrant birds, as well.

Size wise, Erie Street Cemetery is no match for Green Lawn, Woodlawn, or Spring Grove cemeteries, but it is long and narrow, with almost no ground cover. Ordinarily, this is not such a good thing. But a lack of ground cover improves the view for birders peering down from the outside right field concourse of the Jacobs Field upper deck, particularly those birders intent on building an Opening Day list. All two of us, most likely.

Without a doubt, our best Opening Day list came on April 8, 2002, when the winds were perfect for migration, and the birds were hopping. Our list that day, all seen from within Jacobs Field, included Sharp-shinned Hawk (10), American Kestrel (7), Northern Flicker (20), Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Towhee, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark.

Whenever possible, we like to walk through the cemetery before attending a game, just to see what we can find. Without ground cover, sparrows are usually much in evidence on a decent migration day, but the same holds true for migrant American Woodcocks. Erie Street Cemetery is a good place to find them, as they are more or less captive here for the day, forced to rest in a rare green island in the otherwise brick and mortar world of downtown Cleveland. It's a common thing to get good looks at a woodcock or two here in early April; they'll usually be tucked along the tall brick wall boundaries of the cemetery, seeking any decent semblance of cover. But on April 8, 2002, that remarkable day, we counted no less than 53 woodcocks in the cemetery—clumps of woodcocks, huddled masses of woodcocks, a profusion of woodcocks. It was one of the darnedest things I've ever seen. And yes, we listed one, far below, from our Jacobs Field perch.

I often wonder if other Ohio birders keep such a list. Over the years, we've run into a surprising number of birders, but mostly non-birding birders, at Jacobs Field. Do any Cincinnati Reds fans keep a list from the Great American Ball Park, or formerly, from Riverfront Stadium? How about from the home of Columbus's current Major League team? Oh, wait....

Or how would such a list have looked back in the early days of professional baseball? Did anyone-- maybe J.M. Wheaton-- keep a list from Recreation Park, the home of the American Association's Columbus Buckeyes in 1883-1884, and the Columbus Solons in 1889-1891? Did anyone keep a list from the Tri-State Fair Grounds, home of the AA's 1884 Toledo Blue Stockings, or from Speranza Park, home of the AA's 1890 Toledo Maumees?

Who's to say? I think it's possible, but then again, in the spring, and on Opening Day, anything seems possible. Enjoy the renewal, and the rare opportunities, this spring.

--Rob Harlan
Norton



North America's largest sparrow and a rare visitor to Ohio, this Harris's Sparrow was seen by over 400 birders this winter at the home of the Eli D. Miller family in Holmes County. Photo taken on January 27, 2007 by Bruce Glick.

Birder's Bio - Winnie Sarno

As I enter my 79th year with a sense of joy and appreciation for all the marvelous birding adventures encountered and yet to come, I realize that I am not just a part of the birding world, but birding is at the core of my being.

When I was diagnosed some 25 years ago with cancer that threatened to cut short my life, I became enamored with birds and their place in the world. As I began learning, observing, and listing, my focus changed from myself to these fascinating creatures. Over the next few years as cancer took my husband, my youngest son, and my siblings, I was able to balance my life with the joys of birding and sharing this joy with my two little great-granddaughters.

I began birding with local endeavors such as Cornell's Project FeederWatch, took part in the first Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas, and area Christmas Bird Counts. With the help of Henry Merkle, The Wilderness Center Bird Club was started and we moved from forays such as to see the Cliff Swallows at David Kline's farm to trips to Georgia's Jekyll Island and Okefenokee. We went for Arizona's specialties and to the Rio Grande for birds such as , Common Paurques. Then we T.W.C. birders tried our hand at the Asa Wright nature center in Trinidad for Oilbirds and Blue-crowned Motmots, and Costa Rica for Resplendent Quetzal.

I became less a loner and less reclusive, finding birders to be agreeably social when sharing their passion. As my courage and my sense of adventure peaked, along with my finances, over the next 10 years I was fortunate to travel with *Field Guides* birding tours. In 1997 we went to Ecuador to bird along the Amazon, both slopes of the Andes, and an Achuar village. I saw such marvelous species as the Hoatzin, Andean Cock-of-the-Rock, Deep-blue Flowerpiercer, Flame-colored Tanager, and Swallow-tailed Nightjar.

In Thailand in 1999, possibly my favorite trip, I recall Asian Fairy-bluebird, Great Hornbill, the colorful rollers, laughing thrushes and barbets of Khao Tai National Park. Then to Zimbabwe, where great birds vied with other great animals! Trips in 2000 to Papua, New Guinea and Australia produced Rainbow Bee-eater, Australian Brush-turkey, Willie Wagtail, Australian Bustard, the bowerbirds, cockatoos, and the birds-of-paradise.

Now with slightly less courage, and much reduced funds, I am very happy to travel with my three birding companions with our tents and travel-trailer over the U.S., to a planned second visit to the Dry Tortugas in April, and three weeks in Alaska to revisit Nome, Barrow, Denali, and the Pribilofs.

I'll see you in OOS Conference at Mohican, and happy birding!

--Winnie Sarno
Massillon



Help Save Habitat in Your Community

The Columbus homeowners at Preston Commons and Blendon Chase Condominiums enjoy the Great Blue Heron rookery in their backyards. So when they received a letter saying that developers were going to fill it in, they got up in arms. They didn't know it is the largest rookery in Franklin County with 50+ nests, but they knew it was beautiful and brought joy to them and their children.

They called the Big Walnut and Tributaries' Watershed Coordinator, Dr. Susann Moeller, for help, and the Chair of the Wetlands Preservation Committee, Bill Resch, worked on the case with many other volunteers before I found out about the situation.

This property contains 128 acres of mature forest with vernal pool-dominated category 3 wetlands at the northeast and northwest corners at 161 and Hamilton Roads.

The lesson is that you have a chance to save habitat around you if it is under any kind of protective law (endangered species or migratory bird treaty act, etc.). A display of interest, like the standing-room-only crowd at the hearing, gets attention.

If you don't understand the legal process (as I don't), it is very informative to attend a zoning meeting. As a Habitat Ambassador, I see the woods and wetlands as a whole habitat. The law sees it divided into many parcels owned by different corporations.

I testified and reached out to other conservation organizations' speakers, who were willing to donate their time because of the size and condition of the habitat (thank you all!). Each homeowner association elected a speaker, who was well educated by Bill Resch about the benefits of their wetlands.

We coordinated topics so that we didn't have redundancy. Our testimonies contained factual, common sense scientific information delivered in a respectfully forceful way. Passion, without tempers, got the Zoning Council's attention the best.

Reaching out to the press to cover the story proved to be very helpful. Local papers announced the meeting, and the Columbus Dispatch published a well-researched, front-page article afterwards that put more pressure on the developers.

Any success birders have at getting all developers to honor the law and preserve what little habitat is left for Ohio wildlife is worth the effort. It was a great learning experience for everyone. Consider making a difference in your community, as well as in your backyard.

If you have questions about this article, would like tips about what we learned changing our yard into a habitat, and for notifications about presentations and yard tours, please email me at marca@columbus.rr.com.

--Toni Stahl
Columbus

Blockbusting for the OBBA

As every reader of *The Cerulean* will know, the "block" is the basic unit of the ongoing second Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas, any of ~4600 into which the map of Ohio is divided for purposes of surveying our breeding birds. Coverage of blocks is pretty good so far in many parts of Ohio, particularly near cities, but in remoter areas birders are much more thinly distributed. One tradition of the first Atlas from twenty years ago is "blockbusting," a method for covering remote areas by inviting numbers of birders to converge on little-studied blocks for a day or two of intensive coverage on behalf of the Atlas.

I well remember a blockbusting event I participated in long ago for the first Atlas. Thirty or so of us met in Adams County in early June, where we slept in tents or in a barn on Nature Conservancy land there. We shared dinner one evening, when Dan Rice and Bruce Peterjohn mustered our efforts, assigning various areas to survey for breeding birds. Some of us set out just afterwards, counting Chuck-will's-widows, etc. in the area, and everyone fanned out early the next morning, taking notes on probable and

confirmed nesting species in assigned areas. These were the early days, and I can recall a couple of folks who accompanied my brother Pete and I on these surveys being amazed that we were able to confirm the presence of birds by their songs! I hope we're all more sophisticated today. We did a decent job on some uncovered Adams County blocks, developing a map of calling chucks. I recall our team found a singing Least Flycatcher; while it was not later confirmed as a breeder, perhaps because no one reported having looked for it, I wondered if it might have been. The whole thing was a lot of fun, with camaraderie in pursuit of knowledge, and lots of pleasant socializing among like-minded birders.

For this Atlas, we have a lot more birders, and a lot more skilled ones. The plan is not to merely sample blocks, but to survey all of them, so the challenge is equal to our resources. I think blockbusting will play an even more important role this time, with out-of-the-way blocks covered importantly by concentrated visits by birders.

My local gang, the Avid Birders, will venture outside our usual turf for three outings, two in June and one in early July, to survey birds in uncovered areas in southeastern Ohio this year. We generally conduct trips in June and July, and this time we'll dedicate them to collecting data for the Atlas. Some readers will appreciate my willingness to sacrifice a traditional July trip dedicated to migrant shorebirds on behalf of the OBBA. We know the birdlife of this less-explored region is rich, and there are many discoveries to be made. How widespread are caprimulgids like Chuck-will's-widows and Whip-poor-wills? Can we find islands of hemlocks, etc., where species of more northern affiliations might breed? Might we even find Swainson's Warblers, or even Bachman's Sparrows? Have Blue Grosbeaks really increased as much as one hears as Ohio breeders? There are many questions to be answered, discoveries to be made.

Blockbusting events are not only enjoyable social events for birding, but also an opportunity to serve ornithology in exotic (at least for Ohio) locales. In days gone by, people would gather for communal squirrel-hunts, or a turkey-shoot, under similar circumstances. Now we can enjoy wildlife without diminishing it, and advance our knowledge of Ohio's native birds. Our group has, via the help of local regional coordinators, gotten access to a farmhouse in Meigs County that will sleep twelve, campsites in Lawrence County, and we hope to get a farm site in Adams County for our third trip. Birders in our area are invited to join us for these blockbusting events (until spaces are filled), and also to contact regional coordinators to set up similar events elsewhere in other underserved counties. It's a lot of fun to explore the unexplored with like-minded birders, and serve science at the same time.

--Bill Whan
Columbus

The Cerulean Available On-line

If you missed any previous issues of this newsletter, you can download them from the OOS web site at <http://www.ohiobirds.org/publications/cerulean/about.php>.

If you'd like to save trees (and OOS some postage), we will send you an e-mailed notice when future issues appear online, instead of a printed copy of this newsletter. Just send a note to the editor at cerulean1@ohiobirds.org.

Costa Rican Adventure--Trip One

Is there a better way to spend a snowed-in afternoon than ticking off birds in my birding journal and remembering our recent trip to Costa Rica?

Jim McCormac's enthusiasm when he spoke at Kelleys Island whetted our appetite for travel away from the Great Black Swamp in northern Ohio. And so it was that we four family members took an eight-day trip to Costa Rica. We're medium-skilled birders: (we netted 230 species, while the twelve-day trip came up with 330). But this was truly a once in a lifetime experience! We stayed two days in three different eco-lodges, high in the mountainous cloud forest, sub-alpine, and coastal range elevations, all peaceful and beautiful and full of birds. Our able escort was Noel Urena, a genius guide spelled with a capital G, wise beyond his years and brimming with enthusiasm for all things natural. Food served was of the highest quality, accommodations were excellent and all in all, this is great return for money spent. You must try it!

Being a member of the Ohio Ornithological Society has broadened our birding experiences and afforded us some quality family time. Again, money well spent! Thank you, Jim, Jen, and Noel.

--Faye Stahl,
Vermilion

Costa Rica: Tropical Jungles and "Our" Birds

For the second year in a row, the Ohio Ornithological Society organized an expedition to Costa Rica – two of them, actually. You can read about the first group's trip in the article by Faye Stahl elsewhere in this issue. I want to report on the second trip, in which I and six others took part, and more importantly, why we are doing this.

On January 30th, Delores Cole, Julie and Ken Davis, myself and John McCormac, Michael Packer, and Jen Sauter fled the bitter Ohio winter and flew into San Jose, Costa Rica's capital. From there, we had a whirlwind trip of ten days that covered much of the country, from highlands to lowlands, and Caribbean to Pacific slopes. Along the way, we racked up nearly 340 species of birds, many of them "lifers" for everyone.

It is vital to have a guide intimately familiar with the jungles and Costa Rican bird life to really maximize birding productivity, and we had that with Noel Urena. He is an awesome birder; he often can produce even the most secretive and retiring of birds, and is intimately familiar with their habitats and habits. With Noel's help, we saw many interesting species like Bat Falcon, Great Green Macaw, Striped Owl, White-crested Coquette, and American Pygmy Kingfisher, to name a very few.

We were particularly interested in North American breeding birds there for the winter. In the course of our wanderings, we saw 28 species of birds that breed in Ohio, totaling over 400 individuals.

These included 41 Baltimore Orioles, 15 Black-and-white Warblers, 12 Broad-winged Hawks, 62 Chestnut-sided Warblers, five Prothonotary Warblers, and 12 Great Crested Flycatchers, among many others.



Rufous Motmot on February 3, 2007 at La Selva Biological Reserve, Costa Rica.
Photo by Jim McCormac

In addition to providing what we hope are fascinating tropical trips, the OOS also wishes to use our Costa Rican adventures to publicize the global movements of Neotropical birds like those mentioned above, and emphasize the need for North Americans to collaborate with Central and South Americans to protect them. There is no shortage of work that needs to be done on this front.

This year, we took along several pairs of Eagle Optics binoculars and sixteen copies of *Guía de campo Kaufman a las aves de norteamérica*, or *Kaufman Guide to Birds of North America*. As most Costa Ricans speak Spanish, Kenn's Spanish-version guide was a great gift for us to provide to Costa Rican birders so they could learn more about "our" birds they see down there. And a huge thanks to Eagle Optics - <http://www.eagleoptics.com> - and the West-

terville, Ohio, Wild Birds Unlimited store and Pam Hall - <http://stores.wbu.com/westerville> - for giving us the binos at cost. We were able to give the binoculars to some very talented Costa Rican birders who previously had not had the advantage of excellent optics.

We hope to use these trips as a springboard to increase a partnership between the Ohio birding community and our like-minded friends in Costa Rica. There is much that needs study regarding Ohio breeding birds that winter down there, such as habitat needs, population densities, sex ratios, feeding behavior, molts, etc. By using funds raised by these expeditions, we hope to eventually be able to fund qualified Ohio students to travel and spend time in Costa Rica, working directly with Costa Rican researchers to gather information on Ohio breeding birds.

While Costa Rica is very progressive in protecting natural areas and has done much in that regard, as anywhere else there is much more that can be done on the conservation front. In particular, the southern Pacific slope habitats are being rapidly gobbled up by developers, and this area supports an incredible diversity of avifauna, including many of "our" birds. A huge thanks to OOS members and Columbus residents Barb and Jim Lewis for all they are doing to promote conservation in Costa Rica, and for graciously hosting us at their fabulous place in the Oro Verde Biological Reserve.

If you are interested in seeing the 2007 Costa Rica trip itineraries, visit: http://www.ohiobirds.org/calendar/society_events/current/CostaRica/about.php For photos and stories of the trips, visit my blog at: <http://www.ohiobirds.org/blog/blog.php> and type "Costa Rica" into the search engine.

Let us know if you are interested in the 2008 Costa Rican adventure. Please contact our Executive Secretary Jen Sauter at yb-chat@insight.rr.com

--Jim McCormac,
OOS President

Site Highlight: The Urban "Islands"

During recent personal reflection on the one experience that sparked my interest in bird watching, fond memories of my childhood neighborhood explorations came flooding back. I'll have to admit that growing up in an urban environment in Northwest Ohio really did offer some memorable experiences in nature, and absolutely sparked my interest as a birder. Interestingly, my very urban neighborhood still had some green space, tree-lined streets and backyard habitats, a waterway nearby and food sources that birds sought as breeders and migrants. Smaller natural areas like these, along with larger parks in urban locations, can offer important stopover habitat for long-distance migrants. These areas are the green urban "islands" among the concrete ribbons (as viewed from above) of sidewalks, streets, and highways that birds seek as an oasis for breeding or for fueling up after migrating long distances.

One of my favorite nearby "islands" that offered an annual roosting site for tired migrants such as Hermit and Gray-cheeked thrushes was a small city park at the end of the street. It wasn't much of a natural area, with its tennis courts, mowed recreation field, and playground, but a few old elms offered these birds a place to rest. In the darkness of the early morning hours of autumn, their soft, "pink.... pink" calls were unmistakable signs they were back in the neighborhood. This same park was also consistently a home to a family of breeding Cooper's Hawks, and an abundance of Common Nighthawks and big brown bats obviously attracted to the flying insects that hovered around the adjacent streetlight. The Cooper's Hawks in turn helped themselves to visitors to the adjacent backyard bird feeders.

Another "island" of habitat in the city was located on a corner lot of two busy roads bordered by houses. The vegetation of this small area consisted of dense brambles. This area offered me, as a ten-year old, my first glimpse of Tree Sparrows and White-crowned and White-throated sparrows. This brushy habitat on the corner of two city streets offered a perfect feeding area for these species.

The most amazing area I recall for viewing spring warblers is a north Toledo neighborhood sandwiched between the Ottawa and the Maumee rivers. As a child, I always looked forward to my Mother's Day walk down the street after lunch at grandma's each year. I still vividly remember the first time when at age eight I spotted Chestnut-sided, Black-and-white, Black-throated Blue and Palm warblers and an American Redstart all foraging for insects between two city trees. That was the special experience that sparked my interest in birding--all because I happened to be looking among the horse-chestnut trees lining the street. I can't really give credit to one particular warbler that got me hooked, but I imagine the array of bright colors was enough to put me into a hypnotic state. Consequently, the adjacent river corridors had quite a bit to do with the concentrations of these warblers, yet it still amazes to me that they were foraging for insects along the city streets. Apparently the insect numbers are in sufficient supply.

As I continue to live in the city, I have strived to offer birds a little urban oasis in my own postage-stamp sized backyard through native plantings, feeders and a water source that attracts Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, American Goldfinches, Cedar Waxwings, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Baltimore Orioles, and many more. By leaving the fallen leaves in my garden until late spring I

also attract a fair number of ground-feeding migrants in search of insects. I usually see White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows and Hermit Thrushes kicking the leaves around. Screech-owls have nested in the tree cavity behind my house, and seem attracted to the mice that are often night visitors at bird feeders. These small owls are common in urban environments.

In this Site Highlight I draw attention to the beneficial urban bird oases (parks, highway medians, cemeteries, backyards, neighborhood lots, buildings, etc.) that exist throughout Ohio, because they do provide important resources for resident and migrant birds. Some interesting birding experiences have come from urban sites, and I hope others will consider creating backyard habitat, birding some productive urban areas, and preserving other spaces in these areas so birds will find it easier to fuel up between stops or find sufficient nesting habitat.

Some informative websites:

www.birds.cornell.edu/programs/urbanbirds/
www.urbanhabitats.org

--Karen Menard
Toledo

Kirtland Bird Club Honors Ed Pierce

At the April 4, 2007 Kirtland Bird Club (KBC) monthly meeting, Ed Pierce was honored for his many contributions to the Club and to the Ohio birding community. After 17 years of dedication, patience, and leadership, Ed retired from leading KBC's weekend van trips last fall.



Eileen Zimlich and Delores Cole showing Ed Pierce the "Van Trip Memory Scrapbook".

The meeting celebration started with a tribute to Ed given by Bill Toneff. Then KBC President, Delores Cole, awarded Ed with an honorary lifetime Club membership which was followed by Eileen Zimlich and Delores presenting him with a "Van Trip Memory Scrapbook" filled with photos, thank you notes and letters of van trip remembrances from the members. And finally, Karin Tanquist, who organized this tribute, presented Ed with a gift check to purchase a new spotting scope.

Many club members have come to be better birders through their experiences with this leader and many Ohio birders have reaped the benefits of his accomplishments.

In 1980 Ed became publisher of *The Ohio Cardinal*, the journal of record for observers of Ohio's bird life. Along with the Ohio Ornithological Society, he continues this involvement to this day. Since 1981, he has coordinated and participated in the monthly Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge bird census. He compiles and archives the records of the census, and has developed the refuge bird list. He continues this work to this day. In 1991, he helped form the Ohio Bird Records Committee, and continues to be very involved in maintaining and ensuring accurate birding records for Ohio. In the early 2000s, he was integral in the formation of the Ohio Ornithological Society and is currently Vice-President. He is an active participant with bird surveys for the Summit County Metroparks system, the Greater Akron Audubon Society and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. In 1989, he conceived and organized the monthly weekend van trips for the Kirtland Bird Club. Over the past 17 years he led over 150 van trips throughout Ohio, Michigan, West Virginia and Canada.

Ed, the Kirtland Bird Club and the Ohio birding community thank you!

Living with a Carolina Parakeet: Wilson's Observations

From the *American Ornithology* (1808-1814) of Alexander Wilson (1766-1813): text and illustrations online at <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/DLDecArts/DLDecArts-idx?type=browse&scope=DLDECARTS.AMORNWIL>

Anxious to try the effects of education on one of those which I procured at Big-Bone lick*, and which was but slightly wounded in the wing, I fixed up a place for it in the stern of my boat, and presented it with some cockle-burrs, which it freely fed on in less than an hour after being on board. The intermediate time, between eating and sleeping, was occupied in gnawing the sticks that formed its place of confinement, in order to make a practicable breach, which it repeatedly effected. When I abandoned the river, and travelled by land, I wrapt it up closely in a silk handkerchief, tying it tightly around, and carried it in my pocket. When I stopped for refreshment, I unbound my prisoner, and gave it its allowance, which it generally despatched with great dexterity, unhusking the seeds from the burr in a twinkling; in doing which it always employed its left foot to hold the burr, as did several others that I kept for some time... In recommitting it to "durance vile," we generally had a quarrel; during which it frequently paid me in kind for the wound I had inflicted, and for depriving it of liberty, by cutting and almost disabling

several of my fingers with its sharp and powerful bill...the Paroquet frequently escaped from my pocket, obliging me to dismount and pursue it through the worst of the morass, before I could regain it. On these occasions I was several times tempted to abandon it; but I persisted in bringing it along. When at night I encamped in the woods, I placed it on the baggage beside me, where it usually sat, with great composure, dozing and gazing at the fire till morning. In this manner I carried it upwards of a thousand miles in my pocket, where it was exposed all day to the jolting of the horse, but regularly liberated at meal times, and in the evening, at which it always expressed great satisfaction. In passing through the Chickasaw and Chactaw nations, the Indians, wherever I stopped to feed, collected around me, men, women and children, laughing and seeming wonderfully amused with the novelty of my companion. The Chickasaws called it in their language "Kelinky;" but when they heard me call it Poll, they soon repeated the name; and wherever I chanced to stop among these people, we soon became familiar with each other through the medium of Poll. On arriving at Mr. Dunbar's, below Natchez, I procured a cage, and placed it under the piazza, where by its call it soon attracted the passing flocks, such is the attachment they have for each other. Numerous parties frequently alighted on the trees immediately above, keeping up a constant conversation with the prisoner. One of these I wounded slightly in the wing, and the pleasure Poll expressed on meeting with this new companion was really amusing. She crept close up to it, as it hung on the side of the cage, chattered to it in a low tone of voice, as if sympathizing in its misfortune, scratched about its head and neck with her bill; and both at night nestled as close as possible to each other, sometimes Poll's head being thrust among the plumage of the other. On the death of this companion, she appeared restless and inconsolable for several days. On reaching New Orleans, I placed a looking-glass beside the place where she usually sat, and the instant she perceived her image, all her former fondness seemed to return, so that she could scarcely absent herself from it a moment. It was evident that she was completely deceived. Always when evening drew on, and often during the day, she laid her head close to that of the image in the glass, and began to doze with great composure and satisfaction. In this short space she had learnt to know her name; to answer and come when called on; to climb up my clothes, sit on my shoulder, and eat from my mouth. I took her with me to sea, determined to persevere in her education; but, destined to another fate, poor Poll, having one morning about day-break wrought her way through the cage, while I was asleep, instantly flew overboard, and perished in the gulf of Mexico.

*Big Bone Lick is in Kentucky, ~30 mi from Cincinnati.

1st Annual Ohio Young Birders' Conference

Saturday, May 26, 2007
9:30 AM to 6:00 PM

Sponsored by the Black Swamp Bird Observatory and
Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge



The first annual Ohio Young Birders' Conference will be held at the all new
Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center
Oak Harbor, Ohio

This special event will feature
Presentations given by young birders on topics such as:

Taking Field Notes & Sketching Birds
An in-depth study of Ohio Rails
Night Flight Calls of Birds
Raptor Research

Field Trips to Birding Hotspots including:

Magee Marsh
Cedar Point National Wildlife Refuge

Registration is \$10.00 per OYBC member and \$15.00 per OYBC adult
supporting member and \$15.00 & \$20.00 after May 19th

Adult registrations will be taken based on space availability

For further information and a registration form visit
<http://www.ohioyoungbirders.org> or call 419 898-4070

OOS/Columbus Audubon Trip to The Wilds

All birders have had the experience of waking up on a morning when you had planned to go bird-watching only to hear rain on the roof, and decided to go back to sleep while mumbling to yourself "Oh, the birds will all be hunkered down anyway so I'm sure we won't see anything." I want you to know that had I foolishly done that on Saturday, January 6, 2007 I would have missed a terrific bird-watching experience.

Traveling from Columbus with my three companions, the closer we drove to Zanesville the harder the rain was coming down, and yet we saw patches of blue sky just above the horizon as we approached the vast landscape that is The Wilds. Despite the dreary weather we remained optimistic that the skies would eventually clear. More than seventy birders converged on the parking lot below the visitors' center at The Wilds to break off into three-car caravan groups to explore the territory. We drove about five minutes to the first stop, where we saw two Pileated Woodpeckers in flight. It was an excellent start to the day. I was introduced to the use of I-Pod technology to call in birds. I was of course familiar with "pishing," but this was the first time I had observed "podding," as we tried to draw the attention of other birds with the call of the Eastern Screech-Owl.

The next stop was alongside two large ponds where we saw a variety of waterfowl including American Black Ducks, Gadwalls, and Green-winged Teals. The view was excellent, as we were slightly elevated looking down on two ponds on either side of the road and could still see the surrounding plains, where we observed Northern Harriers. I would be remiss if I failed to mention the myriad talents of the driver of the car I was riding in, Carolyn May. She was an absolute crackerjack at spotting birds while behind the wheel. Carolyn also served a fragrant apple-spice tea from a thermos and generously offered healthy snacks to her passengers, all the while managing to stop the car when a bird was spotted without bumping into the lead car. She would spring forth from the vehicle with binoculars in hand take a quick look at the bird in question and dash to the trunk to set up the spotting scope. I was amazed at her quickness.



Bundled up on a cold day at The Wilds are: Wendy Nuetzel, Judy-Kolo Rose, Hugh Rose, Marc Nolls, and Mike Edgington. Photo by Cheryl Harner

The next stop brought the pleasure of seeing a flock of beautiful Horned Larks tarrying in the road as they often do. They are such charming little birds, replete with personal adornment in the form of those tiny black upraised feathers on their heads. It is not surprising that they have often been celebrated in hunting genre painting. Time passed quickly, as it often does when you are fully engaged in an activity you love, and suddenly it was time for lunch. We had the pleasure of hearing from Nicole Cavender, the restoration ecologist for The Wilds, at their visitor center. She shared with us an overview of the range of programs and volunteer opportunities available at The Wilds. After our brief respite we headed back out to the field. Our first stop after lunch, with a pond on the left side of the road and open plain on the right, brought four Trumpeter Swans gliding in on the water. On the opposite side we observed a Sharp-shinned Hawk perched in a small tree. It remained there long enough for all of us to see it clearly through the spotting scopes. Suddenly a flock of Northern Pintails passed overhead. It was an exciting bird to see in flight. They landed near where we were headed next, so we hoped to get a closer look at them from the newly completed observation deck. Luckily, we did see two in the pond below where we set up the scopes. We were fortunate to see a Golden Eagle from the deck as well. This was absolutely the highlight of the day, as it was a life bird for me.

As we departed for our next destination we hoped to see the Northern Shrike. We were not lucky enough to see it but we were treated to a trio of Red-Tailed Hawks, a female and two males exhibiting courting behavior. It was a fascinating way to end our afternoon as we bid adieu to our fellow birders and headed back toward Zanesville. It had been a marvelous start to another year of birding.

--Sheila Fagan
Upper Arlington

Bobolinks at Byers Wood in Ashland June 16, 2007

Please join the Greater Mohican Audubon Society (GMAS) for an exciting opportunity to see Bobolinks and other grassland birds and visit a unique habitat created in mid-Ohio. Byers Wood incorporates woods, prairie grasses, a butterfly garden, ponds, and the outstanding example of Ashland County's creative use of a former landfill site.

Optional birding starts the day, followed by a presentation next door at the Ashland County-West Holmes Career Center, 1783 State Route 60, Ashland, Ohio 44805. Keynote speaker Jim McCormac will present a program on grassland birds. An overview of the prairie and butterfly garden will be given by Dick Stoffer of Ashland College. Learn how Ashland took a one-time landfill and created an oasis for wildlife. In the afternoon, we will break into small groups suitable for searching out these grassland birds.

Lunch and guided field trips to see Bobolinks and other grassland birds are included in the registration price of \$25. See the GMAS website at www.gmasohio.org for details and a downloadable registration. Or e-mail Cheryl Harner at harner1@bright.net, or call Su Snyder at (330) 264-1966 for more information.



Members' Corner

Thank you for your donations!

We would like to thank and acknowledge the following members who have given generous donations. These donations have been deposited into the Ohio Ornithological Society's Conservation & Education Fund. These funds will be used towards promoting conservation, education and research of Ohio's avifauna. Thank you!

Scioto Valley Bird & Nature Club	Josh Suliman
Brenda Cantrell	Andi & Steve Wolfe
Matthew Erickson	Denise Lesko
Carolyn May	Craig Rieker

Welcome New Members!

We would like to welcome our new members who have joined us since our last issue:

Jan Auburn	Rev. Ted Grotjohn	Jen Molnar
Christian Michael Austin	Cecilia J. Hartman	Scott Mosier
Amy Balzer	Carol Hathaway	Jim Perry
Paul Barding	Margaret S. Hensel	Glenn & Barbara Redmer
Margarette Beckwith	Ron Howenstine	Dave & Nancy Reinhart
John P. Benko	Ronald Huth	Katryn Renard
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Nancy Rudd Bob Gold	Alison Katz	Lorey Roggenkamp
Marcia Brehmer	Susie Kennedy	Kirk Roth
Sandra Burris	Suzanne J. Kral	Melanie Shuter
Nicole Candelora	Louisa Kreider	Robin Slanie
Dr. Julie Clayman	Jean Kuns	Angela Smith
Joycelyn Stevens	Chandra Little	Gene Smith
David Koceyeski	Patsy Mason	Jeffrey Spaulding
Dorothy Dawson-Sheldon	Carolyn May	Josh Suliman
Cheryl Dykstra	Kim McGrew	Ryan Tuttle
Curtis B. Edmundson	Sarah McGrew	John Watts
Sheila M. Fagan	Julie Means	Samuel Weaver
Kenneth R. Faller	Jeff & Cheri Medlin	Andi & Steve Wolfe
David Forde-Johnston	Lee Melius	
Anthony Fries	Marla & Rufus Milsted	

2007 Calendar of Events

The Ohio Ornithological Society's 3rd Annual Conference will be held Friday through Sunday, May 18th to 20th, at Mohican State Park in the heart of Mohican State Forest. Mohican harbors one of the richest densities of breeding birds in Ohio, with over 100 species nesting annually. This includes many of our rare hemlock-obligate species, like Canada Warbler, Winter Wren, and Hermit Thrush. At that time in May, not only will all of the resident species be back and in full tune, but there will still be migrants passing through, so the conference list should be a big one. There is also plenty of other biodiversity at Mohican, and the flora is especially rich. There are only a few spots left! See our Web site for further details.

May 5, 2007, 9 am to 5 pm: Ross County Fairgrounds near Chillicothe, Ohio

The OOS has been invited to participate in the Simon Kenton Council's Scouting Centenary Celebration to mark the 100-year anniversary of scouting in the world. The event already has 4,500 scouts and leaders registered. The scouts, ages 6 to 21 years old, will be camping. In addition, the event will be open to the public. If you are interested in volunteering to man the OOS display and participating in an activity with a focus on drawing the interest of youth, please contact Jen Sauter at ybchat@insight.rr.com.

The Owls of North America Symposium

What better way to spend a cold winter weekend: visit a lovely state park lodge, hike the winter woods with fellow birders to find roosting owls, and learn from owl-experts. Oh yes—and enjoy lively fun-filled music performed by OOS members. February 23-25, 2007, the OOS and Audubon Miami Valley partnered to present an outstanding conference: The Owls of North America Symposium. Approximately 230 enthusiastic birders gathered at Hueston Woods State Park near Oxford, Ohio, for the event.

It was easy to locate the lodge—simply follow the numerous gliding Black Vultures and Turkey Vultures that roost on the A-frame style roof and stone chimney of the grand lodge.

The Hueston Woods Lodge, with spacious lobbies with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking frozen Acton Lake, was the perfect venue for the symposium. The downstairs lobby was filled with vendors offering artwork, photographs, books, and birding gear. The upstairs lobby showcased live raptors in the care of the Raptor Inc. Rehabilitation Center of Cincinnati. As always, meals were plentiful, varied and delicious.



Dr. Hardy Eshbaugh is presented with the OOS "Outstanding Communicator Award" at the Owl Symposium by Jim McCormac (left) and Bill Heck (right). Photo by *Hugh Rose*.

The conference started Friday evening with a lively, fun-filled concert from the Chick Sandwich trio, featuring Bill Thompson, III, aka "right bread slice" playing acoustic guitar and vocals, Julie Zickefoose, "sandwich entree" on vocals and percussion, and John Kogge, "left bread slice" on acoustic guitar and vocals. Their folk-style music was blended with banter and laced with humor. Music included covers of classic favorites as well as original material. So much talent from one family!

Previous OOS conferences helped birders learn to identify gulls, shorebirds, and sparrows, all relatively easy to locate, but sometimes frustratingly difficult to identify. By comparison, owls are relatively easy to identify, however are frustratingly difficult to locate. The species' secretive nature drew attendees to the symposium to learn about Great Horned Owl physiology from David Russell and Northern Saw-whet Owl migration habits from Kelly Williams-Sieg. "Ghosts Unmasked" featured owl stories and po-

etry from Julie Zickefoose. The lives of Snowy Owls on the Alaska arctic tundra was a special presentation by Denver Holt. Symposium materials included a pre-release copy of "Owls of Ohio," the latest bird songs CD and booklet from Ohio Division of Wildlife. This set covers calls and descriptions for all 22 North American owl species. It is a veritable field guide for these elusive birds, identifiable by various hoots, barks, chitters, twitters, wing-claps, and bill-snaps. (See what we learned?)

Interspersed among speakers were field trips—near and far—to test our newly acquired skills. Intrepid birders hiked the snow-covered Big Woods Trail through an old-growth forest to locate a cooperative Barred Owl, allowing scores of thrilled birders ample time to observe through binoculars and scopes. The winter woods were sparingly sprinkled with various species, including Pileated Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Red-tailed Hawk, and White-breasted Nuthatch. Oh yes, and a Raccoon sleeping atop a broken treetop.

Other groups carpoled to near-frozen Brookville Lake in Indiana to observe a Northern Shrike, seven dancing Sandhill Cranes, Bald Eagles, and numerous waterfowl. A young red fox was easily spotted striding along the frozen white shoreline.

Continuing its practice of recognition and encouragement, the OOS honored local birders and made contributions to field research. Dr. Hardy Eshbaugh was recognized with the "Outstanding Communicator Award". His long list of contributions to conservation and service include that as past president of Audubon Miami Valley. The OOS and Audubon Miami Valley donated \$1,000 to Denver Holt's Owl Research Institute in Montana to assist with field research that has been featured in National Geographic magazine.

If there was a dark spot in the weekend, it was the rain-sleet-snow storm that cancelled the evening owl walks Saturday night. Birders, anxious to ply their newly acquired skills of discerning calls in the field, instead moved to the lounge. There, impromptu exhibitions of owl calls and courtship display dances were demonstrated by several conference attendees. Regrettably, neither field notes, photographs, nor names were collected to document these sightings.

The Owls of North America Symposium was the most recent example of successfully combining education, field skills, good people and excellent food into an enjoyable weekend. We anticipate the next symposium and are currently making plans to attend the Ohio Ornithological Society Third Annual Conference, May 18-20, 2007, at Mohican State Park in the heart of Mohican State Forest.

-- *Marc Nolls*
Akron

Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II Newsletter
Available On-line or By Mail

The first issue of the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II Newsletter, *The Ohio Atlaser*, is now available for download at <http://www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/newsletters.php>. If you would like a hard copy mailed to you, please contact Aaron Boone by phone at (614) 247-6458 or by mail at Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II, c/o Aaron Boone; School of Environment & Natural Resources; 210 Kottman Hall, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1085 or by e-mail at boone.70@osu.edu.

Ohio Ornithological Society Membership Application

For an online version of this application visit: www.ohiobirds.org/join.php



Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

(For electronic news updates)

\$ _____ Donation Amount - Yes I would like to make a one-time donation to help support OOS.

\$ _____ Membership Dues.

\$ _____ Total Payment Enclosed (Please make checks payable to OOS.)

How did you hear of OOS? _____

Are you interested in:

Volunteering? Distributing OOS flyers within your club or community?

- \$15 Student/Limited Income
- \$25 Individual
- \$40 Family or Nonprofit
- \$100 Patron or Business
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THE OHIO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 14051 ♦ Columbus, Ohio 43214
...
OUR MISSION
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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