



# THE CERULEAN

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[www.ohiobirds.org](http://www.ohiobirds.org) ..... [info@ohiobirds.org](mailto:info@ohiobirds.org)

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

## The OOS Fall Warbler Symposium

Migrating birds from as far away as Alaska and Labrador, and bird authorities from all around North America, dropped in at historic Lakeside, Ohio, September 8 and 9, 2007 for the OOS Fall Warbler Symposium. The OOS partnered with two organizations: the venerable Toledo Naturalists' Association and the vibrant Black Swamp Bird Observatory, sharing expertise and bringing top experts to Ohio just in time for peak fall warbler migration along Ohio's North Coast. About 230 birders enjoyed a weekend of warblers and other migrating birds while learning about fall warbler identification and the mysteries of migration with some of North America's most knowledgeable and experienced birders, scientists, writers, and educators.

The fun began with pre-symposium field trips early Saturday morning. Birders met with field trip leaders to walk in still mists of a cloudy dawn in coastal migrant traps near Lakeside. The birds gathered, too. Migrants were still dropping in as groups of birders assembled at East Harbor State Park, Quarry View, the Lakeside community, and the Marblehead Lighthouse woodlands. Birding was fun and challenging, as warblers and thrushes materialized out of soft morning mists and landed in the drizzle-drenched foliage of cottonwoods, box elders, and green ashes along Lake Erie's shoreline. Migrants caught their breath in moments, then busied themselves gleaning insect protein from leaves and bark and air, fattening up for extraordinary journeys to southern wintering ranges. Their busy motions among misty branches helped birders get on them with binos to see field marks explained by trip leaders like Jon Dunn, Kenn Kaufman, Rick Nirschl, Jim McCormac, and others. All the morning birds were active: Black-and-white Warblers explored creeper-like along the trunks and larger branches of trees; Swainson's Thrushes skulked and called through the low shrubs and mid-story; and Caspian Terns flew by—announced by their gravelly calls.

Eastern Wood-Peewees, Eastern Phoebes, and an Olive-sided Flycatcher sallied for the mosquitoes repelled by the birder's bug-juice permeating the still air over trails. And many other warblers

came into view, offering looks at fall plumage details like the relative thickness of the wing bars on occasional Bay-breasted Warblers in comparison with thinner wing bars on more common Blackpoll Warblers. Detailed field marks came into view for Magnolia Warblers, Yellow Warblers, Tennessee Warblers, Chestnut-sided Warblers, American Redstarts, Ovenbirds, Blackburnian Warblers, Black-throated Green Warblers, Black-throated Blue Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, a few Cape May Warblers, and more, all before 8:30 AM.

Next on the day's agenda was a slate of expert speakers. Symposium registration opened at 9:00 AM in nearby Danbury High School while birders ambled through vendor exhibits and enjoyed morning snacks. Birding supplies, natural history crafts, artwork, stunning photographs, and books were on sale. Authors Jon Dunn, Kenn Kaufman, Elliot Tramer, Bill Thompson, Larry Rosche and Jim McCormac were on hand to sign books during the event.

Master of ceremonies Dana Bollin gathered participants in the comfortable school auditorium, welcoming the roomful of partici-

pants and introducing the day's presentations and discussions. First up, Elliot Tramer, professor in the University of Toledo's Department of Earth, Ecological, and Environmental Sciences and seasoned educator, offered "Going Home to the Tropics." Elliot illuminated mysteries of migration and the vulnerability of migrants in the tropical wintering areas where many species spend the majority of their lives. Avian conservation efforts must bridge the Gulf of Mexico and reach deep into South America if we are to protect many species of warblers and other neotropical migrants we share with the southern hemisphere.



\$1,900.00 was raised for the Ohio Young Birders Club at the Fall Warbler Symposium. From left, Jim McCormac, Brett McCarty, Phil Chaon, Ethan Kistler, Rick Nirschl, Kim Kaufman. Photo by Hugh Rose

Our next speaker was Bill Evans, formerly of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and later the founder of Old Bird, Inc., dedicated to facilitating acoustic monitoring of avian night flight calls. Bill introduced the wonder and challenge of identifying unseen migrants overhead, using recordings and sonograms during his talk "Nocturnal Flight Calls of Migratory Songbirds." Bill invited everyone to join him on the Lakeside pier later Saturday evening, after dark, for the 'ear-opening' experience of hearing night flight calls. Many attended the later session and it was a thrilling first for many present. Several species were easily heard by all as their calls emanated from low in the dark cloudy sky. Bill guided listening, calling

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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](mailto: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](http://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.**

out identifications, “That was a Swainson’s,” “That’s a Gray-checked,” then, quickly, “That zip was a warbler of some kind,” and, pointing again toward the black night sky, “That’s a Blackpoll Warbler call.”

Box lunches offered a tasty mid-day meal-break for casual gathering and time for visiting vendor displays before the afternoon sessions. Dana rallied participants and kept the symposium on schedule creatively. She motivated timely return to seats by calling out raffle ticket numbers for donated giveaways. “You must be present to win,” she warned--and it worked!

Kenn Kaufman led the afternoon session. Kenn is a world birding phenomenon. Author of the big year epic and personal exploration, *Kingbird Highway*, and is author and editor of Houghton Mifflin Company’s next generation natural history guide series, the *Kaufman Focus Guides*, his talks are always inspiring and thought-provoking and this one raised the bar again. Kenn lifted listeners out of afternoon doldrums into the wide-awake frenetic life of John James Audubon. His talk, “Audubon’s Warblers: Personal Connections to Elusive Birds,” gave listeners insight into the lives of driven explorers--people like Audubon and Kaufman himself.

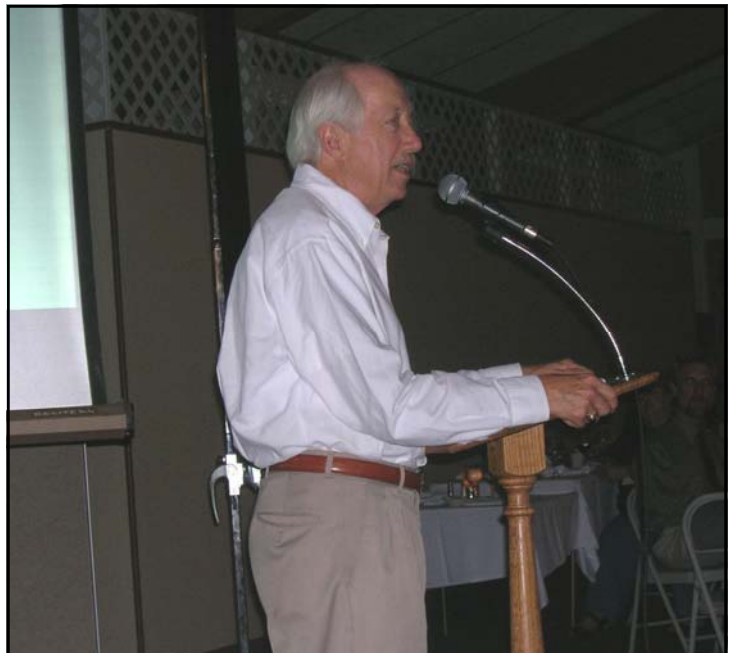
Kenn’s audience buckled Audubon’s bootstraps and rode in his saddle through the wilderness in his elusive quest to paint all the species of North American birds.

Our vicarious journey, guided by Kenn’s imagination, offered insightful views of the history of North American ornithology seen over the iron sights of Audubon’s rifle. Audubon was constrained by his technology. There was no substitute then for seeing small birds well in the days before good optics, and some birds remained shrouded in mystery; flyaway species like Audubon’s fabled “Carbonated Warbler” graced a page of Audubon’s folio but were never to be seen again. Ambitious, Audubon was willing to illustrate specimens he received, even though he had not observed them in life, in order to achieve his vision.

Audubon was unable to appreciate the animated beauty and behavior of small warblers. He often painted them in static unfamiliar poses while painting extreme liveliness into the images of large showy birds available for exciting observations without optics. Audubon was a romantic, Kenn helped us understand. Today, we see limitless horizons because we stand on the shoulders of courageous giants who risked and sometimes lost life, limbs, and fortunes in their struggles to discover and share the nature of North America.

Jon Dunn, the afternoon keynote speaker, is a birding and ornithology legend, a world birding guide, author, and scientist. Jon literally wrote the book on North American warblers, a volume of the Peterson Field Guide Series with co-author Kimball Garrett titled *Warblers*. Jon has also been the editor through all editions of National Geographic’s *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Jon opened his remarks by joining the audience in applause for mid-western friendliness, and for Ohio’s birding organizations, the young Ohio Ornithological Society in particular. Jon offered, “Events like this are wonderful; especially the cooperativeness of various organizations coming together. The fact that you can start a state organization, and in a few years get to nearly a thousand members, I think, is just terrific.” Further, he suggested, “The grass-roots; that’s where it’s most important because of a host of issues, from excellence in ornithology; as well as the grass-roots concern for conservation that we all have near and dear to our hearts.”

Jon’s keynote presentation, titled “Distribution and Identification of Eastern Fall Warblers,” brought us the details of warbler identification. We viewed illustrations of important details like plumage variations and primary projection. Jon also talked about status and distribution: “In teaching people how to be better birders, the one thing I hammer relentlessly is to learn status and distribution,” he explained, “It’s amazing how predictable they are.” Jon explained that all migration routes shift east in fall. Our experience has taught us, and Jon assured us, “Ohio is a great place to see migrating warblers.”



Keynote speaker Victor Emanuel. This was Victor's first visit to Ohio since 1965. Photo by Jim McCormac

Saturday evening's excellent dinner banquet was served in Lakeside's Wesley Lodge followed by important recognitions, a mainstay of OOS events. We were gratified to join the Black Swamp Bird Observatory and the Toledo Naturalists' Association in presenting a check for \$1,900 to the Ohio Young Birders Club (OYBC) to support scholarships and club activities encouraging youth in birding. Next, Delores Cole was recognized for her dedication and contributions to birding in Ohio.

Victor Emanuel, legendary world birder and founder of VENT (Victor Emanuel Nature Tours), presented the evening's keynote address, "Warblers, the Most Wonderful Birds in the World." Victor shared images of beautiful warblers, every one his favorite, as he spoke of his love for birds; all birds. He emphasized the importance of enjoying birds the way an excited child relishes discoveries; each for its own unique beauty and qualities. "Every day is a good day birding," Victor proclaimed. "Don't ask me if there are any good birds. The answer is always yes." And "Don't tell me, 'You should have been here yesterday,'" Victor insisted; "Every day is a good day, birding."

Many participants were overnight guests at the historic Hotel Lakeside, built in 1874. This great old hotel is a stone's-throw from the Lakeside Pier and just a block from the modern Fountain Inn where other guests chose to stay. Lakeside is a beautiful community founded for, and dedicated to, the Chautauqua tradition of educational, physical, and spiritual renewal. President Theodore Roosevelt is quoted claiming that the Chautauqua is "the most American thing in America."

Lakeside is a great choice for a birding symposium venue, and personally gratifying. I felt I had come home. When I was a very young birder, I spent summer vacations at Lakeside with grandparents dedicated to education and family—wonderful memories echoed by calling gulls everywhere I go as an adult. Sunday morning was field trip time again and the night's rain stopped just in time: Suddenly, migrants were everywhere, and very active. Birders gathered with world-renowned guides like Dunn, Emanuel, and Kaufman. Ohio birders including OYBC young birders Ethan Kistler, Phil Chaon, and Bret McCarty were great guides, too.

All gathered at birding locations like the Magee Marsh Boardwalk, Metzger Marsh, Ottawa NWR, Sheldon Marsh, Cedar Point NWR, East Harbor State Park, and the Navarre Marsh banding station. A long list of birds was seen, and highlights like a Golden-winged Warbler assured that many birders found lifers! My favorite part of the day was joining Victor Emanuel in looking at an American Woodcock sitting just feet from the trail—Victor's first really close look at a sitting woodcock in many years. Victor embraced the moment and helped our group rediscover the wonder and beauty of all birds.

--Tom Bain  
Chillicothe

Named recently to the OOS Conservation Committee, Cheryl Harner has some useful experience as an agent for the North Central Ohio Land Conservancy, Inc., and former professional realtor. During her two-term presidency of the Greater Mohican Audubon Society, GMAS purchased 109 acres of wetlands at the cost of \$414,000 in Ashland and deeded the property to the Ashland County Park District with an attached conservation easement.

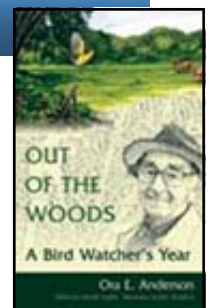
Cheryl is intensely interested in plants, gardening, and butterflies. She is a Master Gardener and an Ambassador for The Heritage Gardens at the Ohio Governor's Residence. She also belongs to a virtual alphabet soup of other organizations. As a frequent speaker for garden clubs and civic groups, she has incorporated birds and butterflies in association with specific plants in her programs. A firm believer in backyard conservation as well as education to promote preservation, Cheryl has lent a hand to several educational events, i.e. Flora-quest, Bobolinks at Byers Woods, Ohio Dragonfly Conference, several Richland County Master Gardeners' Think Spring events, as well as OOS events such as at Cedar Bog in 2006 and the 2007 Annual Conference. She also maintains several Web sites and the Flora-quest.com blog.

"The best perk of being a birder is the fantastic people I have met. I will never have the birding skills of some of those great OOS board members, but I enjoy learning more on every trip outside, whether it is about birds, plants, or insects. And sharing that knowledge and enthusiasm with others will help us build an interest in conservation of lands, not only for birds, but also plants and other native species. Birds don't live in a vacuum; what is good for birds is good for all species—including humans."

Previously a year-round resident of Lakeside, Ohio, Cheryl has lived in the Mansfield area for ten years. Married for 19 years to Randal Harner, she has two daughters, Michelle and J.J., who currently attend Ohio University in Education and Aquatic Conservation, respectively.

**Book Review - Out of the Woods:  
A Bird Watcher's Year**

*Out of the Woods: A Bird Watcher's Year*, by Ora E. Anderson, edited by Deborah Griffith. Illustrations by Julie Zickefoose, Ohio University Press, 2007, 173 pp., ISBN 0-8214-1741-X



Ora (Andy) Anderson was an observant, gentle, and intelligent man of both nature and words—a naturalist, journalist, author, conservationist, and artist. It was my privilege to know him for years. Named an honorary life trustee of The Nature Conservancy, for which I work, he was a long time supporter of the Wayne National Forest. Appropriately, he starred in the award-winning video documentary about Wayne National Forest, "A Forest Returns." In 2006 the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Conservation inducted him into its Hall of Fame. Ora died in August of 2006.



This work takes the shape of an almanac across the natural year, and derives from a lifetime on his farm, centered on birds, bird watching, and growing older. The vignettes are told in friendly narrative prose and poems that draw the reader into his life. He speaks intimately about growing up in Kentucky and learning bird identification from the small bird cards found at that time in Arm & Hammer baking-soda boxes he begged from his mother and the neighbors. One story evocative of recent discussions on the Ohio-birds list serve was about encountering a "seemly endless stream... [of]...uncountable" common nighthawks flying over him on his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1927. In a long life he witnessed the waning and the rebirths of species. He chronicles his experiences by the seasons, allowing the reader to see through his eyes landscapes changing over many years. For those who ponder our transience, he shows a philosophical clearness of mind and abiding optimism:

"I know my own October well, and yet  
I feel the sun of April in my heart"

Those readers who enjoyed Ora's weekly radio essays on WOUB will recognize some of them here, and will be able to lend his soft voice to the words on the page, enjoying them all the more. For those who never heard the show, imagine sitting at the knee of your grandfather as a child, by a quiet fire, and you will be there.

As a young man I was given a small wren Ora had carved in wood, and it sat on my windowsill, looking out as if expecting to leave at any moment. I've sat on his back porch and watched his pond much as he describes doing in his book. I listened to many of the stories retold here. So it was with warmth and remembrance that I turned the pages of *Out of the Woods*, so many beautifully illustrated by Julie Zickefoose.

In two chapters Ora speaks of birds named after famous naturalists. So it is fitting that The Nature Conservancy with the help of Wayne National Forest has decided to name their newest land project in Lawrence County "Anderson Meadows," and they are soon to open the "Ora E. Anderson Trail" in Athens County. Both serve as tributes to a great naturalist, and as a gift for future naturalists to enjoy.

I, like he, found the excitement of birding early in life, then turned to the science of birds. Now, in part with his help, I can enjoy the wonder of "bird watching" again. Don't miss the experience.

--Pete Whan  
Manchester

### The 2007 Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas Field Season



We would like to extend a big "thank you" to everyone who contributed valuable information on nesting birds from this past summer to the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II. Over 90,000

individual breeding bird observations from 2006 & 2007 have flooded into the Atlas office. These records already represent an amazing 194 species with 176 of those being confirmed breeders.

Everyone has done a phenomenal job of documenting Ohio's breeding birds, and observations continue to trickle in. If you haven't done so already, please compile your 2006 and/or 2007 data

### Christmas Bird Counts & Winter Bird Atlas

No matter what your birding skill level, please consider participating in one or more winter bird counts. For a list of Ohio Christmas Bird Counts and other winter counts see [http://www.ohiobirds.org/calendar/winter\\_counts/winter.php](http://www.ohiobirds.org/calendar/winter_counts/winter.php). The Ohio Winter Bird Atlas has been extended for one more year. Information on the Ohio Winter Bird Atlas that will take place during the month of January 2008 can be found at [http://www.bsbo.org/winter\\_bird\\_atlas/winter\\_bird\\_atlas.htm](http://www.bsbo.org/winter_bird_atlas/winter_bird_atlas.htm).

and submit them as soon as possible. This is important so that we can have a better idea of the work ahead of us. Our goal is to have ALL breeding bird observations from 2006 & 2007 submitted either electronically or through the mail by **December 1, 2007**.

We would also like to encourage everyone who has been surveying adopted blocks, to consider wrapping up coverage for those next year. If you have at least 20 hours of survey coverage in your "owned" blocks so far, take some time this fall and winter to look over your species lists and decide which species are likely missing based on presence of appropriate habitat or whether or not certain elusive species (owls, nightjars, etc.) have yet to be sought out. Once you have your list of target species, narrow your search efforts to acquire detections for each. Also, think about moving the majority of your future atlasing efforts into new areas with little coverage. More than 2/3 of the state has absolutely no data (a few counties have no coverage!), and we all need to start considering all possible ways to keep survey effort moving into uncharted regions of Ohio. If you would like more information about new areas to survey, please contact us at 614-247-6458, [obba2@osu.edu](mailto:obba2@osu.edu), or by mail at Aaron Boone, OOB II, 210 Kottman Hall, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1085.

The second issue of *The Ohio Atlatser*, official newsletter of the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas, will be available in fall 2007. The first issue was published and mailed/emailed last spring. If you're an Atlas volunteer and you didn't get a copy, please let us know. We'll send you a copy right away! If you would prefer to receive electronic notification when the next issue is available, please send us your email address; send us your mailing address if you'd prefer a post mailed copy. For future reference, PDF files of each newsletter issue will be archived on our website <http://www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/newsletters.php>. Each issue of *The Ohio Atlatser* will feature highlights from each Atlas field season, important information about nesting birds in Ohio, important project announcements, and other topics specifically related to participating in the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II.

If you would like more information about Ohio's breeding bird atlas project, send us an email or give us a call. We'd love to talk to you about the Atlas and the many ways in which you could participate. Atlasing is arguably the most fun type of birding that a birder can engage in (especially for all of you listers out there!). Birding discovery abounds with any breeding bird atlas project and we promise that you'll greatly enjoy your time in the field! Atlasing is for everyone, so experience level should never limit you from contributing valuable information that will ultimately aid the effective conservation of birds in this great state of ours. We need help from all birders, so please consider volunteering today! And please spread the word about the Atlas!!

--Aaron Boone & Paul Rodewald  
Columbus

## Official Notification to the Membership

The Nominating Committee of the OOS will be considering members to fill the slate of Officer and Regional Director positions being vacated in the spring of 2008. Names suggested may be submitted to the committee at any time prior to 1 November 2007 in order that the committee may reach its decision at their meeting in November. As directed by the Board, the committee will nominate a single candidate for each office, and these candidates' names will appear in the winter issue of *The Cerulean*.

Under our bylaws, any member may nominate additional names beyond those of the Nominating Committee. The bylaws prohibit nominations "from the floor" during the annual meeting, but names may be submitted in writing to the executive secretary no later than 30 days prior to the annual meeting. Each nominee must approve the nomination in writing, and indicate her/his willingness to discharge the duties of the office. He/she must also provide a brief biography to be included in the voting materials that will be handed to each voting member at the Annual Meeting.

The following Board positions will be up for election at the 2008 Annual Meeting:

- President
- Vice-president
- Executive Secretary
- Recording Secretary
- Treasurer
- Director, East Central Region
- Director, Central Region
- Director, At-Large
- Director, At-Large

The strength of a large organization depends on its officers and directors, and the larger the membership, the more we must depend on members to bring to our attention those members with leadership ability who are willing to commit their time and energies to strengthen and improve the organization. Please help us find the right people to continue the good work of the OOS Board.

Suggestions for nominees may be sent to the Nominating Committee:

c/o John Perchalski (Chair)  
1001 S. Walnut St.  
Van Wert, Ohio 45891  
419-232-4108 (evenings)  
jeperch@roadrunner.com

### Common Mergansers Nest Along Little Beaver Creek

In May of 2001, I was hiking along the North Fork of Little Beaver Creek in Columbiana County. As I came to a pool where there are often waterfowl, I saw a Common Merganser hen sitting on a rock. The hen was accompanied by 8-10 little fuzz-balls. The mother entered the water with her brood and I was able to watch them for at least 10 minutes.

When I got home that evening, my girlfriend asked if I had seen anything interesting on my hike. I told her about the mergansers and she proceeded to tell me that Common Mergansers don't nest in Ohio. She then suggested that I let someone in Columbus know about them.

I didn't know anyone in Columbus, so my girlfriend found the number of some guy at ODNR named Jim McCormac. I called Mr. McCormac and told him what I had seen. He seemed very interested and asked me to call some guy named Bill Whan and tell him about the sighting. I called Mr. Whan and he asked me to make a written report, which I did.



Female Common Merganser in Little Beaver Creek.  
Photo by Jim Dolan

Over the next few years, I would occasionally see mergansers with young along the creek. Whenever I saw them, I would let Jim

McCormac know, but I never got a photo to confirm the nesting.

Then along came the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II. In May of 2006, I decided to try to confirm the nesting. Dan Justice and I put his canoe in the main fork of the Little Beaver at Beaver Creek State Park. We hadn't gone a mile before we saw our first mergansers. Just below Fredericktown, we spotted a merganser hen with young. I was able to get some grainy photos, which clearly confirmed the mergansers as nesters. I sent the photos to Jim McCormac and he immediately posted them on his blog for the world to see.



Jim Dolan (left) and Dan Justice with their newly built merganser boxes. Photo by Brad Bosley

Jim then suggested that I might try putting up a nest box to see if mergansers would use it. I told a friend, Carol Bretz, that I was going to make a nest box. Carol is the president of the Little Beaver Creek Land Foundation. The Land foundation is a local organization dedicated to preserving habitat within the Little Beaver watershed. Carol suggested that if I wanted to make more than one nest box, perhaps the Foundation could offer a grant to pay for the materials. With the Foundation's backing, we decided on making 10 boxes.

I got the plans from Cornell University. I then contacted a man named Mark Mallory. Mark is a seabird biologist for the Canadian Wildlife Service on Baffin Island. Mark is one of North America's leading experts on waterfowl nesting habits. Mark gave me information about hole size and placement of the boxes.

Dan and I built the boxes in his garage over the winter. We passed them out and now there are 10 nest boxes spaced along the Little Beaver main branch and north fork. We have a number of people watching them.

We will keep a close eye on our boxes and hope that some of them get used next spring.

--Jim Dolan  
East Palestine

**Editor's Note:** Jim's find represents the first accepted documented nesting of Common Merganser in Ohio, and Little Beaver Creek remains the only known Ohio breeding locale.

## Waterfowl on the Upswing

North America's waterfowl are among the best-surveyed groups of birds in the world. Systematic aerial surveys by Canadian and U.S. wildlife agencies have been ongoing since 1955. The accumulated data bank gives us a good basis for gauging annual population cycles, and the opportunity to evaluate longer-term trends.

The 2007 breeding season was a good one. Inclusive totals of the overall waterfowl population were up 14% over 2006, and 24% higher than the long-term average (1955-2006). In all, over 41 million birds were tallied this year. This should mean better duck-watching for Ohio birders, and hopefully high goose, swan, and duck production next year. In the big picture, increased waterfowl production means wholesale improvements in nesting habitats in the regions where most waterfowl breed.

Ohio is not a major state in regards to nesting habitat for geese, ducks, and swans (except for the now ubiquitous Canada Goose of the *maxima* subspecies, Mallards, and Wood Ducks). We are important as a provider of stopover habitats, and to a lesser degree, wintering areas. To date, 42 species of waterfowl have been found in Ohio, the last addition being Black-bellied Whistling-Duck in 2004, a stray from the southwest. The whistling-duck is one of eleven very rare species that have been recorded; another eight species occur in low numbers annually. The remaining 23 species are recorded in large numbers and comprise an appreciable part of our state's avifauna.

Below are the results of the 2007 North American Waterfowl Survey, with Ohio species listed in order of abundance. Ruddy Duck

Species	Population Estimate	Long-term (1955-2007) Trend
Mallard	8.3 million	+11%
Blue-winged Teal	6.7 million	+48%
Northern Shoveler	4.6 million	+106%
Scaup (includes both species)*	3.5 million	-33%
Northern Pintail	3.3 million	-19%
Gadwall	3.4 million	+96%
Green-winged Teal	2.9 million	+54%
American Wigeon	2.8 million	At average
Redhead	1 million	+60%
Canvasback	900,000	+53%
Ring-necked Duck	651,000	+19%
American Black Duck	569,000	+14%
Mergansers (includes Common, Hooded, Red-breasted)*	400,000	+27%
Goldeneyes (includes Barrow's and Common)* Bufflehead (eastern region)	319,000 16,000	+49% similar to long-term avg.



is not included, and sea ducks are excluded as their nesting range generally lies to the north of survey routes. Wood Ducks are not included as much of their breeding range lies south of survey routes, or they are otherwise difficult to assess with this survey protocol. However, the North American Breeding Bird Survey suggests Wood Ducks have increased an average of 3.3% since the inception of the survey (1966).

\*Scaup, mergansers, and goldeneyes are lumped together, in part because separating the species from aircraft is difficult. It could be assumed, based on breeding distribution, that survey numbers are comprised mostly of Lesser Scaup, Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, and Common Goldeneye. The *Birds of North America* monographs offer somewhat more exacting population estimates for these species: **Lesser Scaup** (5.5 million averaged from 1955-1995, but has declined in recent years); **Greater Scaup** (634,000 in 2001); **Common Merganser** (1,090,000); **Hooded Merganser** (possibly 385,000+); **Red-breasted Merganser** (no good estimates but probably 250,000+); **Common Goldeneye** (1,250,000); **Barrow's Goldeneye** (ca. 120,000).

Geese and swans are treated separately in the waterfowl survey report, and geese in particular are harder to interpret. Wildlife managers use their own criteria for determining populations and nomenclature for geese, and their interpretations differ somewhat from the scientific ornithological community. Listed below are estimates that apply to populations that occur in Ohio.

Snow Goose*	2,917,100	+31% over 2006
Canada Goose**	2,143,100	Similar to past five years
Ross's Goose***	780,000	Recent increases of about 9% annually
Greater White-fronted Goose****	751,300	+43% over 2006
Cackling Goose*****	173,400	+2% over 2006
Brant*****	150,600	+3% over 2006
Tundra Swan*****	87,800	+25% over 2006

\*Called "Mid-continent Light Geese" in report. This category covers all or nearly all Ohio birds, but may also include some Ross's Geese.

\*\*Broken into sixteen populations/subspecies; each reported on separately. Ohio birds fall into "**Southern James Bay**" (98,000; similar to past five years); "**Mississippi Valley**" (402,600; +5% over 2006. Probably only small numbers pass through Ohio); and "**Mississippi Flyway Giant**" (1,642,500; -5% over 2006. Includes our resident Giant Canada Goose).

\*\*\*Listed as "Ross' Goose" [sic] (Correct name is Ross's Goose). "... annually surveyed at only two of their numerous nesting colonies".

\*\*\*\*Split into two populations; Ohio birds are in the "Mid-continent" population.

\*\*\*\*\*Listed under Canada Goose populations as "Cackling Canada Geese". Cackling Goose was given full species status in 2004 by the American Ornithologists' Union.

\*\*\*\*\*Split into three populations; Ohio birds are in the "Atlantic" population.

\*\*\*\*\*Split into two populations; Ohio birds are in the "Eastern" population.

In general, the 2007 survey is a positive one, and documents increased populations of most species of waterfowl. This should mean better waterfowl-watching for Ohio observers this fall and winter. Scaup and Northern Pintail remain well under long-term averages, and birders should make special efforts to document these species, and obtain accurate tallies when possible.

--*Jim McCormac*  
Columbus

## Ohio Bird Conservation Conference December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 Deer Creek State Park and Resort



Scott Weidensaul

The Ohio Ornithological Society joins with the Ohio Chapter of The Nature Conservancy to present an exciting conference focused on the big picture of bird conservation. We are especially pleased to work with TNC, as they are the largest and most effective conservation organization in the world.

We've done numerous technical symposia on various groups of birds - warblers, owls, shorebirds, etc. - and providing educational opportunities related to the

ecology, study, and identification of Ohio's birds is an important part of the OOS mission.

But so is conservation. Birders represent a potentially enormous pool of contributors to hands-on habitat conservation, and many of us are already active on that front. Still, compared to traditional sources of monies for habitat acquisition, our contributions are minor. In order to study plumages and molts, distribution and migration, nesting ecology, or just simply enjoy watching birds, we need to protect the subjects that provide us these opportunities to indulge our passions.

Many of the birds that migrate through or nest in Ohio have declined significantly in recent decades. Much of the blame for these losses can be directly attributed to habitat loss. Over 90% of the wetlands that were once present in Ohio have been destroyed, as have 99+% of our prairies - once home to our grassland species. One-third of the state's breeding birds are neotropical, and little is known of these species in their tropical wintering grounds.

Our slate of speakers will address the complexities of bird conservation. Dave Ewert will speak to the importance of Lake Erie habitats to migrant birds, and what needs to be done. Amanda Rodewald will inform us about her ground-breaking work on the OOS icon bird, Cerulean Warbler, both on Venezuelan wintering grounds and southern Ohio nesting areas. Paul Baicich will speak to specific ways in which birders can be active contributors to conservation. And Chris Bedel will talk about southern Ohio's Edge of Appalachia preserve and Shawnee State Forest, perhaps the most important area left in regards to conservation of many Ohio's neotropical birds. All are exceptional communicators and enter-

taining speakers.

We are especially pleased to present keynote speaker Scott Weidensaul. Scott is one of America's foremost natural history authors, and a mesmerizing speaker. Among his many books is *Return to Wild America: A Yearlong Search for the Continent's Natural Soul* (2006). This work is probably Scott's most apropos for this conference. In it, he details his retracing of Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher's 1953 journey in which they visited many of the continent's greatest natural places. Some of Scott's other books include *Of a Feather* (2007), *The Ghost with Trembling Wings* (2003), about animals that are presumed extinct, and *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds* (2000). Few naturalists have the multi-faceted understanding of science and conservation that Scott does, or the ability to effectively communicate the need to protect our natural resources. You won't want to miss him.

For all of the conference details, and registration information, please visit the OOS website at [www.ohiobirds.org](http://www.ohiobirds.org)

--Jen Sauter  
Westerville

## Birding Van Wert County

When we first announced that we were moving to Van Wert, Ohio, our birding friends in Columbus sent condolences, since, as everyone else knew, there were no birds in Van Wert County. In the ten years we have lived in this bird anti-magnet, we have developed a real appreciation for the stragglers and lost souls of the avian world: the birds that actually do make it to Van Wert County.

If you have never visited our desert in the middle of the birding oasis that is Ohio, a geography lesson is in order. The county borders Indiana, fourth down from the Michigan state line. It is named for Isaac Van Wart, one of the three captors of the Revolutionary War spy John Andre (the other two are immortalized in the names of Williams and Paulding Counties). Unfortunately, the spelling discrepancy in the name is not a typo in this document; rather, it was caused when the National Post Office first registered the county name, and it persists despite the efforts of poor Isaac's descendants to the present day.

Thousands of years ago, our county lay on the shores of a much larger Lake Erie, a relic of much earlier glaciation. As waters gradually receded, the Ohio northwest became the great Black Swamp, and was heavily treed and nearly uninhabitable by man. As westward migration of newly-arrived Europeans continued, hardy souls found their way here, apparently found lots of birds, and decided to stay. They immediately cut down trees, drained swamps, and converted the area from bird habitat to people habitat. The soil left behind by the retreat of Lake Erie was perfect for farming, so trees and stumps were removed to make the area safe for a new species of ungulate fond of foraging around outhouses, and thus became known as the John Deer (or "Deere" in the old spelling). Whereas 150 years ago the area consisted of forests and swamps, by 100 years ago it had been mostly converted to farms

and hedgerows. Today, less than four percent of Van Wert County is wooded. Hedgerows, which for many years provided cover for small passerine species, gave way to the urge to plant every square inch of arable land. Finally, the land was tilled and drained so that standing water no longer destroyed developing corn and soybean crops.

We arrived in this serene and forgotten contour-less land to find large tracts of corn, winter wheat and soybean monocultures, very little standing water, and widely scattered wooded lots of less than 20 acres. The local inhabitants have always been interested in bird watching and feeding, since either they arrived from other places where birds were present, or (if they had been born here) had heard stories around the campfires of strange and beautiful feathered flying creatures. They watched birds, and (except for years when they attempted Christmas Bird Counts) they kept their secrets.



Summer Tanager  
Photo by John and Jean Perchalski

With great trepidation we moved in, changed our "backyard" address in our computerized bird database from Columbus to Van Wert, and set out our feeders and bird bath. Then, binoculars in hand, we waited. To our relief and amusement, the birds came. By ones and twos, they came. We saw cardinals, robins, nuthatches, starlings. In our first spring, not two feet from our window, we saw

a Black-throated Blue warbler! Our Van Wert list slowly began to grow. We began visiting the reservoirs and sedimentation ponds south of town, and added ducks, Ospreys, Great Blue Herons and an American Avocet. We drove the cornstalk-lined byways looking for lost birds, and found many Horned Larks. In our fourth May here, we found a pair of Black-necked Stilts, and birders came from all over Ohio and surrounding states to see "the Van Wert stilts." For three days, we lived in a major birding center, but of course, they (stilts and birders) left, and we were alone again.



Red-headed Woodpecker  
Photo by John and Jean Perchalski

Birding in Van Wert County has not been marked with the excitement of seeing a thousand Blue-winged Teal lift off

from a lake surface in the morning sunlight. But there are smaller thrills for those who watch and wait patiently. Birds arrive in small numbers and (mostly) stay briefly. But for the prepared observer at the right place and time, the diversity is dramatic.



## Highlights of the Summer 2007 Season

2006 was a landmark year for us, and a justification for all the morning walks during which we saw thirty or fewer species. Last year, our county bird list hit two hundred species with the appearance of our first Snowy Owl in February, and stands now at a respectable 205 with the addition of a Merlin in August of 2006. Since we have been keeping detailed records, we have accumulated a total of six full, and two partial years (1999, 2007), averaging 50 trips per year, ranging from 24 (partial year 1998) to 71 (in 2004). The average number of species seen per year is 134, with a range from 79 (partial year) to 152 (2003).

Fifty-eight species have been seen every year, while seventeen species have been seen only once. One hundred forty species have appeared in at least half the years. Species seen only once include



Black-necked Stilt  
Photo by John and Jean  
Perchalski

Black-necked Stilts (pair), Glossy Ibis, Common Goldeneye, Merlin, Sanderling, American Woodcock, Wilson's Phalarope, Common Tern, Long-eared and Snowy Owls, Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Orchard Oriole, Blue-winged Warbler, Vesper Sparrow, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Dickcissel. Anyone interested in a complete list can email us at [jeperch@roadrunner.com](mailto:jeperch@roadrunner.com).

There are actually many birders in Van Wert, but it has taken a long time to identify them. We send emails to the group for birds of local interest. The current habitat problems are not likely to improve, and may worsen in the frenzy to farm for biofuels. On a positive note, the county is building a new larger reservoir, which should greatly help with shorebirds and ducks.

Of greater interest to OOS, a number of us have recently begun looking into reactivating the *Upper Maumee Valley Naturalists Club*, an organization formed in 1945 of people from Van Wert and the surrounding seven counties that make up the northwest corner of Ohio. It held meetings and presentations of interest to the group, wrote papers about wildlife and conservation, and conducted Christmas Bird Counts. According to minutes of their thirtieth anniversary meeting, among their accomplishments was the assistance they provided in helping organize new Christmas Bird Counts for both Grand Lake St. Marys and Darke County. The Van Wert group continued their own CBC from 1946 until the group disbanded in 1986. Although their original count circle included only the eastern part of the county, we are choosing to continue the same circle in order to provide comparisons to the original data. For instance, they list several years in the 1970s that included fairly widespread sightings of Evening Grosbeaks, a bird that has not been seen here in recent memory. Hopefully, with the re-organization of many new and old local birders, we can again get Van Wert County on the map, and finally put to rest its reputation as Ohio's "birdless county."

--John and Jean Perchalski  
Van Wert

The summer season never produces the bounty of unusual birds that spring or fall does, but some good finds always turn up. Last summer produced some very notable birds, and following are some pictorial highlights.



Mississippi Kite adult prepares to feed juvenile.  
Hocking County, Ohio, August 31, 2007.  
Photo by Aaron Boone.

**Mississippi Kite.** Without a doubt, confirmation of the first Ohio breeding record of this graceful raptor headlined Ohio's 2007 breeding season. First discovered at the Brass Ring Golf Course in Hocking County in early June by Rick Perkins, a pair of adults attracted hundreds of birders over the next couple of months. Nesting was suspected but despite efforts a nest could not be discovered. Golf course employees also became very interested in the birds, and kept close watch on them.

Finally, on August 28<sup>th</sup>, I received an excited call from Chad Galloway, course superintendent, that three birds were present. On August 31<sup>st</sup>, Aaron Boone, Scott Albaugh and I headed to the Brass Ring. In short order, we found the juvenile being fed by an adult and watched them for several hours, obtaining dozens of photos and much video, too.

Boone and I are planning to publish a detailed paper documenting this discovery, and will reproduce the main points of that article in a later *Cerulean*. I want to gratefully acknowledge the staff of Brass Ring, particularly Mr. Galloway, for taking such an interest in the kites and keeping us apprised of their status. As far as we are aware, this represents the northernmost nesting of Mississippi Kite. We are hopeful that they return to breed next year.



King Rail  
Summit County, Ohio  
June 18, 2007  
Photo by Sandy Brown

**King Rail.** Always a great find, this endangered rail was discovered by Sandy Brown on one of her kayaking voyages around Turkey-foot Lake in Summit County on June 17<sup>th</sup>. It was seen in the same area for several weeks, but breeding was not confirmed. Historically, King Rail was the most common rail in Ohio; now, it is by far our rarest.

**Piping Plover.** A juvenile was found by Larry Rosche and Judy Semroc on August 4<sup>th</sup> on a small beach in Port Clinton. Any records of this extremely rare species should be thoroughly documented. The Great Lake population is Federally Endangered, and has fallen as low as twelve breeding pairs since its listing in 1986. Over 50 pairs are currently known; still a perilously low number. The last Ohio nesting was in 1942.



Piping Plover with Least Sandpipers and Sanderlings.  
Ottawa County, Ohio, August 4, 2007  
Photo by Judy Semroc

**Eurasian Collared-Dove.** The long-anticipated invasion may be slowly materializing. On June 19<sup>th</sup> Cindy Ploch found in one in Darke County, and Regina Schieltz turned a second bird up at the same locale the following day. While the pairs seemed to show some signs of possible breeding, no nesting could be confirmed and they did not remain in the area very long after their discovery. Three



Eurasian Collared-Dove  
Darke County, Ohio  
June 20, 2007  
Photo by Jim McCormac

birds turned up late in June in nearby West Manchester, Preble County. Brian Barchus turned up a pair in Celina on July 11<sup>th</sup>, which is also in the general area of the previous sightings. Evidence suggests that Eurasian Collared-Doves are infiltrating Ohio from the west, and 2008 should bring confirmation of breeding.



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Lucas County, Ohio. July 15, 2007.  
Photo by Rick Nirschl

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.** Rick Nirschl discovered one on July 15<sup>th</sup> in the Oak Openings of Lucas County. Although no photographs could be obtained, Carl Hoagstrom watched a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at length on June 8<sup>th</sup> in Hardin County. Records of this spectacular western flycatcher are on the upswing, and nesting in Ohio in the future may not be out of the question. They should especially be watched for in the summer months in massive reclaimed strip mine grasslands of southeastern Ohio, such as the Wilds.



Bell's Vireo  
Pickaway County Ohio  
June 8, 2007  
Photo by Robert Royse

**Bell's Vireo.** Always a very rare Ohio breeder, 2007 was a banner year for this drab western vireo in Ohio. At least five pairs turned up in Franklin and Pickaway counties. Breeding was confirmed with at least two pairs. Interestingly, all records come from former prairie regions of Ohio.

--Jim McCormac  
Columbus



## 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!

Wendy Akin  
Rick Asamoto  
Delores Cole  
Dan Elliott  
Frank Frick  
Thomas J. Fye  
Robert R. Johnson

Don Koch  
Nenita M. Lapitan  
Edie Lotz  
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Louise Marie McDonald  
Heather Nagy  
John O'Meara

Michael Packer  
Roberta Roberts  
Edward C. Roush  
Carol Skinner  
Dorinda Whitsett

### Welcome New Members!

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

Nancy N. Anderson  
Verna L. Ansel  
Byron Hart Arnett  
Stanley Brown  
Fritz Buck  
Chris and Paula Burger  
Carol Susan Chester  
David Collopy  
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Brett Willard  
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### 2007 Calendar of Events

**Ohio Bird Conservation Conference:** November 30 - December 2, 2007 Deer Creek Resort & Conference Center: Speakers include: Amanda Rodewald, Dave Ewert, Paul Baicich, Chris Bedel and Scott Weidensaul. See full details on our website!

**4<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference:** Mark your calendars! Our 4<sup>th</sup> annual conference will be held May 16 -18, 2008 at Mohican State Forest. Details to be announced in January 2008.



# Ohio Ornithological Society Membership Application

For an online version of this application visit: [www.ohiobirds.org/join.php](http://www.ohiobirds.org/join.php)



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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\$ \_\_\_\_\_ 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
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- \$100 Patron or Business
- \$250 Sustaining Member
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**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.

**THE OHIO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**  
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