



THE CERULEAN

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

OOS: 5th Annual Spring
Conference & Banquet
May 16th, 2009

from the

EDITOR

If the cold and ice of recent months turned your life upside down, then you're probably looking forward to the return of spring. To birders, spring means migration.



American Goldfinch sipping a melting icicle. Photo courtesy John McKean. Travel the world via McKean's photos in a Dayton Audubon presentation taking you from backyard birds in Bellbrook to exotic destinations such as Fiji, Panama, and the Galapagos on Wednesday, March 18th. <http://www.dayton.net/audubon/>

In Ohio, migration means the Western Basin of Lake Erie. To OOS, Lake Erie means our 5th Annual Conference on Saturday, May 16th in Perrysburg. This one-day event includes three speakers and our annual banquet. Plus, optional self-guided field trips the next day to nearby Oak Openings, Magee Marsh, Black Swamp Bird Observatory and more!

The conference is a bargain at \$50 for adults and \$25 for young birders. Perhaps event emcee Bill Thompson III might even sing an original Happy 5th Birthday song to OOS! Details online: <http://www.ohiobirds.org/> See you there!

Inside this issue of *The Cerulean*, you'll find an update on Major Randel Rogers and his contribution to ornithology in Iraq. Dr. Azzam Alwash, Chief Executive Officer of Nature Iraq, says OOS support is "showing Iraqis what Americans are really like"! You can make your own contribution to Randy's efforts (see page 5) or you can contribute to the understanding of birds in Ohio by joining one of a number of citizen science projects (pages 2-4, 8). Opportunities abound. Carpe diem.

Ann Oliver

Take the OOS Spring Conference Quiz!

- 1.) What habitat in Ohio has a rare ecosystem as *significant* as the tropical rainforest?
- 2.) Where is the *birder's paradise* known for nesting Lark Sparrows, Summer Tanagers, Blue Grosbeaks, and Whip-poor-wills?
- 3.) The Nature Conservancy calls what area of Ohio one of the "*Last Great Places on Earth*"?
- 4.) What do the *federally endangered* Karner Blue Butterfly, the state endangered species Persius Dusky Wing, and Purplish Copper have in common?
- 5.) What globally distinct ecosystem west of Toledo, *with five globally rare plant communities*, is built on a clay foundation and covered by wind-swept sand?
- 6.) What Ohio ecosystem has the *greatest number of rare & endangered flora & fauna*?

The answer is the same for *all* six questions: the Oak Openings Region! It's a vast 130 square-mile region stretching across northwest Ohio. The jewel in the crown is the Oak Openings Preserve of Toledo Metroparks.

Now, here's a bonus question:

- 7.) Where can you meet new birding friends and have dinner with long-time companions this spring? A hint: you'll also hear a special presentation called "Oak Openings: Desert of Diversity" by Jim McCormac, OOS President and author of the new book "*Wild Ohio: The Best of Our Natural Heritage*".

Answer: The OOS 5th Annual Conference, Saturday May 16th in Perrysburg. Other highlights of the one-day event are Kim Kaufman's talk "So, I Married a Birder", and Jim Berry, the director of the Roger Tory Peterson Institute. Look for details and a registration form online at <http://www.ohiobirds.org/>.

Citizen Science Opportunities Abound for Ohio Birders

As birders, we observe the natural world on a continual basis. To some extent and frequently without even realizing it, we pay attention to birds no matter where we are or what we are doing. This is arguably one of the greatest aspects of birding. As a group, birders are a collective force of observation with enormous potential for "citizen science". Here in Ohio, there are several opportunities for birders to incorporate observational abilities into the objectives and goals of unique projects.

The most well-known citizen science project is the Christmas Bird Count (<http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/>), which will enter its 110th season during the upcoming 2009-10 winter season. Organized by the National Audubon Society, this widely popular birding activity is enjoyed by thousands across the country. Data collected for this project has provided valuable insight into the spatial and temporal status of many species. Ohio is

blessed with dozens of separate Christmas Bird Counts. Information and map of Ohio's CBCs can be found at the OOS website: (http://www.ohiobirds.org/calendar/winter_counts/winter.php).

Talking with any veteran Christmas counter will convey their excitement about participating in this incredibly fun and worthwhile project. I've often contemplated, "What is so exciting about Christmas bird counting?" I mean, it's just birding and I'm always birding...maybe it's the camaraderie of getting out in the field with fellow birders? Or maybe a CBC becomes a game of sorts with participants trying to break previous records for total species tallied or even numbers tallied of a specific species? Regardless, Christmas counting is not inherently different from what we, as birders, do every time we go out into the field...we look for and tally the birds that we see. Most importantly, I think we all relish the unknown and the possibility of discovery.

Soon after the Christmas counts are wrapping up in early January, February brings the Great Backyard Bird Count (<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>). The 2009 count took place from February 13-16. This joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society might be described in terms of a Christmas Bird Count, but the participant is not limited to staying within the pre-defined count circles.

Maybe you've always been interested in doing a Christmas count in Champaign County...where there are none. With the GBBC, you can submit as many birding checklists from as many parts of the county as you can possibly collect over this 4-day period! Of course, you can stick with submitting observations from just your backyard, but the count is a great excuse to get out and canvas some under-birded areas.



Powell, Ohio backyard feeder. Photo courtesy Darlene Sillick.

Citizen science projects like the GBBC can capitalize on the internet by creating online data-entry interfaces. It is fascinating to participate in the GBBC because your birding results appear on real-time maps at the project website. Tracking observations is fun and the sheer volume of data coming through the website in just a few days is phenomenal. The 2009 count tallied more than 11 million birds from over 88,000 birding checklists! The National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology have certainly provided an efficient way of correlating large amounts of data.

Cornell continues to provide cutting edge, web-based applications for citizen science projects. Their project eBird (<http://ebird.org>) is probably the most innovative means of organizing typical birding checklists into truly meaningful data. In many ways, eBird has provided a catalyst revolutionizing the way birders go birding. If there's not a particular birding project to get involved in, and you still wish your investment of time and money in birding endeavors could contribute to more than just a sense of personal gratification, take a look at eBird.

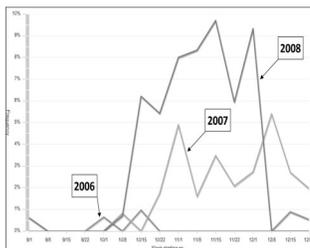
To sum it up, eBird is a multifaceted way for birders to record birding tallies from anywhere on the continent and from any time of year. In fact, eBird now allows you to submit birding data for any location in the western hemisphere (and I've heard rumors that version 3.0 will be global!). The project's purpose is not to provide free record keeping, but creating a user account will do that once you start inputting data. Any time you submit a birding checklist, eBird automatically updates your personal birding statistics with county, state, region, and country lists. This website is a lister's dream.

Once birding data are submitted to eBird, they are accessible to all birders and researchers alike. Maybe you're curious about Pine Siskin (*Carduelis pinus*) observations in Ohio this fall.



Pine Siskin in Chardon. Photo courtesy Sally Isacco.

Why not see what eBird has to say about Pine Siskin data by graphing frequency of detection for the species in comparison to that for previous years? The power of this tool is eye opening, especially in regard to providing birders with valuable information on topics like species distribution or timing of occurrence.



Frequency Pine Siskin appeared on birding checklists submitted to eBird (September through December; 2006-2008). Graph courtesy of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>. (Accessed: December 08, 2008).

eBird is growing in popularity by leaps and bounds, and its ability to unite birders in a common goal is exciting. For example, eBird is being employed by researchers to provide valuable data on the precipitously declining Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*). Seen a flock of these birds lately? There you go...you're in possession of scientifically valuable data!



Rusty Blackbird in Columbiana County. Photo courtesy Jim Dolan.

It doesn't take a lot to orient one's self in terms of "eBirding." Their website contains a wealth of information about why you should contribute data, what data are appropriate, the "ins" and "outs" of the website, how to document birding locations, and all of the new eBird tools churned out on a frequent basis. A recent update is the ability to upload spreadsheet files (e.g., Excel) of birding data. This is a great feature because you can now compile a group of checklists in one spreadsheet and upload the entire file in one web session. This is a great feature for birders who only occasionally get internet access.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has incorporated its expertise with web-based data entry applications directly into Ohio's avian citizen science projects. The Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II has teamed with Cornell to customize an online atlas data-entry portal, which subsequently receives the majority of data submitted to OBBA2. This online database possesses similar real-time data exploration capabilities found with eBird. As of early December 2008, the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II has received more than 187,000 breeding bird observations from around the state. Anyone can access Atlas statistics and current species distribution maps at any time. Such technology is indispensable from an organizational standpoint: the ability to display current survey progress goes a long way when volunteers and project coordinators are trying to figure out what remains to be done. Plus, you don't have to wait a year to see data in the final atlas publication.

If you haven't heard about the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II, please visit the project website (<http://www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/>) and consider becoming a volunteer. The website contains a wealth of information about the history of breeding bird atlases in Ohio and extensive information about being a volunteer. Do you already use eBird for the USGS Breeding Bird Survey program (another great citizen science project that may need volunteers...<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBS/>)? Any data submitted to these projects could potentially be submitted directly to the Atlas!

Surveys for the breeding bird atlas typically take place from June through July, which provides great incentive to go out and do some birding after those waves of spring migrants dwindle. You may occasionally hear the term "summer doldrums" when birders discuss the topic of birding during summer months, but summer birding is anything but dull. It is true...a warm day in early July may never yield such amazing species diversity like Magee Marsh during a dreary morning in May. However, the discoveries awaiting the intrepid observer willing to venture into any Ohio county during June or July will rival any birding experiences had during spring or fall migration. If anything, the quality of a summer birding experience can be wildly different than one might expect during any other time of the year. You simply never know what you might find or where you will find it.



Atlasing in SW Ohio. Photo courtesy Dave Slager.

This past atlas season was arguably the most exciting since Ohio's second atlas project launched in March of 2006. Coverage of many under-surveyed areas saw substantial headway. There were phenomenal finds such as breeding Common Ravens in Jefferson County. As late as early-September, birders were still coming across nesting evidence for several species of birds.



Common Raven in Jefferson County. Photo courtesy Jim McCormac.

The project is always in need of volunteers and participating is as easy as jotting down what you see, when and where you see it.



Common Raven nest. Photo courtesy Ethan Kistler.

Continued on Page 4

These are exciting times to be a birder! Just think about the elusive Black Rails at Charlie's Pond in Pickaway County found last June. The important thing to keep in mind is your birding skills make a difference.



Charlie's Pond in Pickaway County. Photo courtesy Ann Oliver.

Let's also remember the important contributions we all make to the permanent record in the form of state and national journals. Editors of publications like *The Ohio Cardinal* (Andy Jones; ajones@cmnh.org) and *North American Birds* (Victor Fazio; bcvireo@sbcglobal.net) are always looking for reports to "fill in the blanks" of seasonal reports (if you use eBird to keep track of your birding records, you can use the program to quickly generate reports for submissions to seasonal editors). The written documentation of rarities also adds important information to the permanent record and the Ohio Bird Records Committee maintains this important catalog of information (<http://www.ohiobirds.org/records/aboutobrc.php>). Consider taking steps to making your birding count for citizen science efforts in Ohio and abroad. I guarantee that you won't be disappointed!

Aaron Boone, Project Coordinator
Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II
-Columbus



eBird Enlightenment: eBird Coming to Midwest Birding Symposium

Attendees at this fall's Midwest Birding Symposium (MBS), September 17th-20th, in Lakeside, Ohio, will have a special opportunity to become more familiar with eBird. Think of it as "eBird Made Easy"!

Chris Wood, Project Leader for eBird at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, will explain what eBird is and why birders are using it to share sightings with researchers! Wood is a tour leader for WINGS and a photo quiz editor for the American Birding Association.

Registration for the Midwest Birding Symposium has already opened on-line. For more information on MBS, cosponsored by OOS and Bird Watcher's Digest: <https://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/mwb/main.php> <http://www.ohiobirds.org/>

The Early Bird Gets the Worm But The Late Night OBBA2 Birder Gets the Owl!

The Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II needs your help! Only a tiny portion of total hours devoted to OBBA2 efforts occur at night. Nocturnal surveys must be invested in the OBBA2 priority blocks for adequate comparisons. Chances are good at least one owl species resides in the atlas block that you live in or survey. What time should you listen? Official surveys recommend one hour after sunset until midnight or just before sunrise.

Great Horned and Barred Owls begin breeding much earlier in the year than most nesting species in Ohio. Safe dates for both owl species began February 1st.



Great Horned Owlets. Photo courtesy Ann Oliver.

Detecting Great Horned (only 8% of blocks) or Barred Owls (only 7% of blocks) may be as simple as stepping out on your front porch during a calm, moonlit evening. Great Horned Owls are surprisingly common in urban areas, especially areas with older trees. They can also be found in wooded upland areas or agriculturally dominated areas with limited wooded areas. Look and listen for Barred Owls in wooded areas near streams, rivers, wet flood plain forests, or wooded urban areas.

Eastern Screech-Owls may be the most common raptor in Ohio: they occupy the smallest of woodlots. Their safe dates begin April 1st but are probably starting their



Eastern Screech-Owl. Photo courtesy Mike Acheson.

breeding activities right now. Listen for their territorial "descending trill" or "whinny" calls. Several other species of nesting birds will soon have active safe dates.

Contact Aaron Boone (project coordinator) with your observations. Email obba2@osu.edu or call 614-247-6458 if you would like more information about surveying nocturnal species in Ohio.

OBBA2 website: <http://www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/index.php>

Randy Rogers Update from Al Asad in Iraq

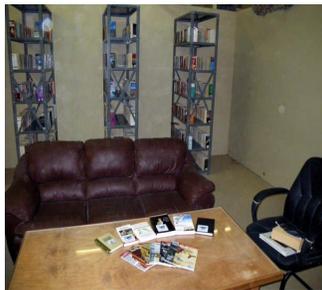
The last couple of months have been busy here at Al Asad, at least for a birder! My species tally is up to 104 identified species, several of which were added during my Christmas Bird Count. I spent December 15th through January 1st surveying the winter birds here, and counted 2,047 individual birds representing over 47 species!



Major Randel Rogers birding in Iraq.

Also in December, I assisted Nature Iraq in using the partnership contribution from the OOS to purchase nearly \$1,700 worth of gear to assist with their winter Important Bird Area surveys. These funds provided a pair of Bogen tripods (one light for the mountains and one heavier for normal use), a 100-400mm Canon lens, some miscellaneous photography gear, and a set of field guides. One member of Nature Iraq said OOS donations were “like Christmas”!

A set of field guides were also purchased for the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation office here on post for use by soldiers. I still have just over \$100 in the kitty, which I am hoping some upcoming articles and donations will increase enough to provide more items to assist Nature Iraq with essential field studies.



OOS donated field guides and Bird Watcher's Digest for the office of Morale, Welfare, & Recreation, Al Asad, Iraq. Photo courtesy of Major Randel Rogers.



Common Snipe.
Photo courtesy
Major Randel Rogers.

It has been colder here – sometimes in the low 20's with a single digit wind chill – but wildlife still abounds. I have found a new spot, a cliff that overlooks a pair of artificial ponds used to hold water for use here on base, and from this vantage have found several shorebirds and even added a new duck to my list by finding a Pochard on New

Year's morning. Other recent sightings include Finsch's Wheatear, Hen Harrier, and Moustached Warbler. Shorebirds included Common Snipe, Ruff, Green Sandpiper, and Red-wattled Plover. I have encountered a number of foxes and jackals, and several Cape Hares have been observed. Meanwhile, the base veterinarian and I are monitoring small mammals for ectoparasites for a Smithsonian database. I will be coming home in late spring, so will soon start looking for a successor, with hopes of having a breeding bird survey done this summer.

Major Randel Rogers, Logistics Officer
Ohio Army National Guard
– Al Anbar Province, Iraq

Editor's Note: The donations for **Randy Rogers' Iraq Project** stands at \$2500! \$1500 from the public and \$1000 match from OOS. Send your donation to **Randy Rogers' Iraq Project** to OOS, P.O. Box 14051, Columbus, Ohio 43214. For back issues of “Al Asad au Natural”, Randy's newsletter for his brigade: <http://www.ohiobirds.org/conservation/Rogers.php>



The Eagle Has Landed! Eagle Optics Donates Scope to Nature Iraq

The OOS recently sent donation request letters to optics companies on behalf of Randy Rogers and Nature Iraq to gain support for “building bridges between US and Iraqi birders”. Nature Iraq (NI) is an Iraqi non-governmental organization accredited to the United Nations Environment Program and Iraq's first and only affiliate to Birdlife International. NI's mission is protect, restore, and preserve Iraq's natural environment and the cultural heritage it nourishes. Nature Iraq is working to restore the vast Mesopotamian marshland ecosystem, intentionally damaged by the prior regime, once a key wintering and staging site for migrating birds from several continents.

Eagle Optics answered our appeal with a generous gift: a Vortex Skyline 20-60 X 80 Angled Spotting Scope! OOS President Jim McCormac liked the scope so much he bought one for himself! The Eagle Optic scope, along with donated binoculars and many other items, are now in Iraq being used by the Nature Iraq team.



Left to right: Dan Sanders, Ann Oliver holding the donated Eagle Optics scope, Cheryl Harner, Dana Bollin, Craig Caldwell, and Marc Nolls. Photo courtesy Jim McCormac.

Continued on Page 6

Mudhafar Salim, leading ornithologist with NI, remarked “Randel is the first of the American birders, of whom I know, who initiated such an idea. Doing this will put a stable fingerprint on ornithology in Iraq that will not be forgotten.”



Dr. Azzam Alwash, the CEO of NI added: “In many ways, Randel is helping Iraqis see Americans as more than just soldiers, and helping Americans see Iraq as more than a bunch of warring Sunni and Shiite, Arab and Kurd, and the many artificial divisions visited on us by so-called Iraqi experts pontificating on US screens. He is helping in the most humble way possible, using his passion for nature, to bring us together. Birders are still ‘strange’ in Iraq. It is kind of an oxymoron when you really think about it. Protecting nature in the middle of a war!!!...But, war makes the task even more important, for in the midst of human tragedy, the stress on nature fades to the background. Hence, it is up to us, the strange people who love nature, to do our hardest work now. Because it is needed now more than ever.”

Learn more about Nature Iraq including their recent Iraqi children’s birding book: <http://www.natureiraq.org/>



FYI: Eagle Optics will be at the Midwest Birding Symposium September 17-20th continuing their good deeds. Eagle Optics will partner with Birder’s Exchange to collect old-but-still-usable binoculars and spotting scopes at the Lakeside, Ohio gathering. Birder’s Exchange will pass the donated optics on to researchers, guides, and programs in the Tropics. NOTE: Folks making a optics donation during MBS get a free Eagle Optics harness strap and discount coupon toward new optics. <https://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/mwb/main.php>

A Cuckoo Idea

Cincinnati graphic artist Mark Gilsdorf, a new OOS member, had an idea to publicize the 2008 Cincinnati Christmas Bird Count that wasn’t crazy. But the 25 posters he designed and distributed around the Tristate were very cuckoo!



Special thanks to Gilsdorf’s employer, Josh Guttman of The Spanish Journal (La Jornada Latina). The publication serves the Hispanic Community in Cincinnati, Columbus, Detroit, and Pittsburgh.

Ohio’s Desert of Diversity: The Oak Openings

Even though the Oak Openings comprise only 130 square miles of Ohio’s surface area, it is without question one of the state’s most significant ecological resources. This habitat is located on the ancient shores and beach ridges of modern day Lake Erie’s larger predecessor, Lake Warren, which until the last glaciations extended far into Lucas, Henry, Fulton, and Wood counties. The Oak Openings are characterized by dry sandy ridges and knolls, cloaked with scattered oaks with a highly specialized herbaceous understory flora. A high water table keeps low-lying swales wet thereby harboring species of very rare wetland flora and fauna.

Perhaps 1,000 species of vascular plants are found within this region. Lucas County, which contains the heart of the Oak Openings, has more documented state-listed rare plant species than any other Ohio county. The botanical influence here is profound – western prairie species, northern species at the southern limits of their range, and disjunct Atlantic Coastal Plain species.

Many rare and interesting animals are found here as well. The Oak Openings, along with the marshes of western Lake Erie, is by far the most significant habitat for breeding birds in Northwestern Ohio. Many species not found nesting elsewhere in the northwestern quarter of the state occur here in numbers, including specialty birds like Blue Grosbeak, Lark Sparrow, Summer Tanager, and Whip-poor-will. A number of other rare animals occur too, like Blue-spotted Salamander.

Because of the highly specialized and extremely sensitive nature of Oak Openings ecology, this ecosystem is very vulnerable to threats caused by incautious development. In particular, disruption of water tables jeopardizes sensitive wetland communities. However, much has been learned in recent years as to how to best manage Oak Openings habitats. The Toledo Metroparks, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and The Nature Conservancy are all making important contributions to the preservation of this incredible ecosystem.

Jim McCormac
-Columbus

Editor’s Note: You can learn more about Ohio’s amazing heritage in the Oak Openings Region at the OOS 5th Annual Conference on Saturday May 16th, in Perrysburg, Ohio. OOS President Jim McCormac will give the evening presentation called “Oak Openings: Desert of Diversity”. Registration is online at: http://www.ohiobirds.org/calendar/annual_meeting/meeting.php

Check It Out: New OBRC Checklist of The Birds of Ohio

The Ohio Bird Records Committee announces the publication of the new Ohio Birds Records Committee "Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Ohio". Project editor and author was Robert Harlan; contributing authors include David Dister, Joseph Hammond, Bernard Master, and Bill Whan. The project was a volunteer effort by OBRC in hopes all Ohio birders benefit.

Since the most recent OBRC checklist appeared in 2004, eight species have been added to the official Ohio state bird list. Many other noteworthy sightings of recent years have also affected the way we view the abundance and distribution of Ohio's birds, and they are in the checklist as well.



More importantly, this new publication is not just an updated edition, but a much expanded resource. It features graphical representations of occurrences, as well as text annotations, for all 420 Ohio bird species now accepted by the OBRC, including records through August 2008. It also reflects all current American Ornithologists Union decisions as to taxonomy and nomenclature.

Suitable for use in the field or as a convenient desk reference, the new OBRC checklist is larger and longer, with 60 pages of text. New features include a more readable format, scientific names, a quick-find index, check-off boxes, and a brief historical overview for most species based on Ohio birding references published in 1882, 1903, and 1968.

Robert Hershberger of Time & Optics, Ltd. is the distributor. He will be selling copies (individual and bulk) through the mail, at his store, and through his optics catalog. By mail, single copies will be \$3.75 each, which includes shipping and sales tax. Single copies are \$2.99 at the store. For bulk orders of 50 or more, the price is \$1.99 each, plus shipping and sales tax if applicable. Please contact Robert Hershberger if you have any questions.

Time & Optics is located in Holmes County, south of Mt. Hope. Store hours are Monday-Wednesday 7:30 am-5:00 pm; Friday 7:30 am-7:00 pm; Saturday 7:30 am-3:00 pm. Closed Thursday and Sunday. The address is: Time & Optics, Ltd., 6954 CR 77, Millersburg, OH 44654. Their toll-free number is 866-308-0727.

Ned Keller
-North Bend

Birder's Bio: Jen Sauter

I crossed paths with Jen not long after she had taken up birding, at least birding with a passion. A fortuitous encounter with our oddest warbler, the Yellow-breasted Chat, sparked her interest in avifauna, and she's been going strong ever since. In the fall of 2003, I got an excited call from Jen, whom I had not yet met, telling me of an interesting jaeger that she had found at Hoover Reservoir, near Columbus. Of course, ANY jaeger is interesting in Ohio, especially away from Lake Erie.

Later that day, Jen and her buddy Julie Davis brought photos to my office, clearly showing a Long-tailed Jaeger, Ohio's most infrequently encountered jaeger and one of very few records away from our Great Lake.

We founded and launched the OOS in May of the following year, and Jen has been an integral part since the inception. She has served as Executive Secretary and brought her organizational skills to bear on managing our membership, conferences, and symposia.

Our inaugural annual conference was April 2005 at Shawnee State Park, and Jen ran the show, setting a big benchmark for future conferences. We had about 200 attendees the first year, and nearly 250 at Shawnee the second year! Organizing these affairs, especially with the logistical hurdles field trips entail, is no small feat.

Jen also brings exceptional artistic skills to the table as a talented painter. Among her many projects was an excellent rendering of a Baird's Trogon, the mascot bird of the Oro Verde Biological Reserve in Costa Rica. In between organizing a trip to this beautiful tropical country for OOS members a few years back, Jen whipped up the trogon painting, and graciously gave it to our hosts at Oro Verde. It hangs proudly there to this day, in a prominent spot in the main house. Her artistic skills have been a huge asset to numerous other OOS projects.

Revisiting school later in life, Jen graduated from The Ohio State University with a degree in wildlife management in 2005, specializing in avian ecology. She lives on the shoreline of Hoover Reservoir with her husband and a jumbo Australian Shepherd Dog.



Photo courtesy Jim McCormac.

Next time you cross paths with Jen, give her a word of thanks for the work she does on behalf of the OOS and Ohio's birding community!

Jim McCormac
-Columbus

World Series of Atasing: June 19-21 at Burr Oak SP

Heard of the “World Series of Birding” sponsored by the Cape May Bird Observatory each spring in New Jersey? What about the “Great Texas Birding Classic” hosted by Gulf Coast Bird Observatory? Well, The Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II is proud to announce the 2009 “World Series of Atasing” June 19-21st at Burr Oak State Park in Ohio.

This competition will provide Ohio birders with an opportunity to compete in a "World Series of Birding" type of event while advancing important survey goals of the Ohio Atlas. The region around beautiful Burr Oak State Park (Athens/Morgan County) could yield as many as 120 nesting species during the weekend and may produce exceptional finds. Last summer, Mississippi Kites were spotted in the greater Burr Oak area. And what about all of those American Electric Power (AEP) recreation lands? Think big... like "Short-eared Owl" big!

The main goal is to attract teams of two to four birders to canvas surrounding areas for breeding birds. Teams will fan out to randomly assigned territories of atlas blocks. Prizes will be awarded to the teams with the highest scores in specific scoring categories.

If you would like to be a team leader, or would like to participate but aren't sure about organizing a team, let us know and we can place you in an appropriate group. You do not need to be an "expert" birder. If you have questions about the event or accommodations contact Aaron Boone, OBBA2 Project Coordinator (obba2@osu.edu OR 614-247-6458).



Editor's Note: Speaking of the “World Series of Birding”... Don't miss your chance to see “Opposable Chums: Guts and Glory at the World Series of Birding” at the Midwest Birding Symposium in Lakeside, Ohio on September 17th . The nature documentary comedy film by Jason

Kessler is FREE for all MSB attendees. For more information or to register for the event:

<http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/mwb/events.php>

Strike One: The First Bird-Plane Collision

On January 15, 2009 a US Airways Airbus A320 crossed paths with a flock of birds: the birds won. Both engines were struck and the aircraft made an emergency water landing on the Hudson River where all 155 passengers survived. Up until this point in modern aviation most people rarely think of what happens when birds strike aircraft. Interestingly enough, I recently completed my masters project on the subject of bird strikes with civil aircraft.

It seems inevitable humans would collide (literally and figuratively) with birds. During my research I found the history of bird strikes began with the same two brothers that fathered the first controlled, powered, and sustained human flight on December 17, 1903 in North Carolina. On September 7, 1905 in Dayton, Ohio, the first reported bird strike was recorded by Orville Wright. Wright briefly described the event in his journal.



The 1905 Wright Flyer 3 in flight over Huffman Prairie near Dayton, Ohio. Photo courtesy of The Wright Brothers Aeroplane Company and Museum of Pioneer Aviation website.

“...flew 4,751 meters in 4 minutes and 45 seconds, four complete circles. Twice passed over fence into Beard's cornfield. Chased flock of birds for two rounds and killed one which fell on top of the upper surface and after a time fell off when swinging a sharp curve.”

As aviation developed, bird strikes would become deadly and on April 3, 1912 pilot Cal Rodgers' Wright Pusher aircraft struck a gull, resulting in a crash into the surf at Long Beach, California. Rodgers was pinned in the wreckage and drowned. Nearly 50 years passed before another [reported] bird strike would result in fatalities. Since these tragic accidents, aircraft design, propulsion, and performance have changed dramatically.

Jeff Brown
-Mason

Thanks for the Photos

A note of appreciation to everyone who responded to a February “Birdingonthe.net” post requesting photos for *The Cerulean*. We used as many images as possible!

The Wilds Raptor Rendezvous

Bundled birders rendezvoused in the windy hills of eastern Ohio on January 17, 2009 for the Ohio Ornithological Society's annual birding coldfest—the Raptor Extravaganza at the Wilds. Record low temperatures, a reported – 12 degrees in the parking lot, did not dissuade



Hugh Rose holds the sign for Group 4.
Photo courtesy Ernie Cornelius.

the hardy 117 determined hard-core birders from discovering wind-dancers sailing over Ohio's big sky country. The Wilds is a success story, a Phoenix arisen from the flames of Ohio's black gold—coal. These rolling hills are reclamation lands—a new ecology resembling the grassy haunts of northern raptors.

Teams of birders, expertly organized by Marc Nolls and Cheryl Harner of OOS, caravanned from overlook to overlook. Everyone piled out at stops for better viewing, enduring the bite of wind chill feeling like twenty-five below. Raptors seen included Red-shouldered Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, Merlin, Rough-legged Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, Northern Harriers, and Short-eared Owls. Many birders observed an immature Golden Eagle winging over the lakes and ponds and perching on new raptor perches installed through a partnership between OOS, American Electric Power, and the Wilds.



Birders at the Wilds, 2009.
Photo courtesy Tom Bain.

The rest of the time drivers blasted the defrost setting to clear the windows as birders searched passing terrain. Windows powered down with each new sighting as conversations bounced between birds and the cold. "Open the windows on one side only, so the wind doesn't blow through" a back seat birder calls out through chattering teeth. "If this is a drive-thru, we'll have four large mugs of steaming hot Joe, a baker's-dozen of mixed donuts, and a Golden Eagle on the side, please" another passenger jokes! Later, all participants enjoyed the warm, indoor hospitality of the Wilds during a lunch time program highlighting educational, recreational, and conservation programs of the wildlife conservation center.

Tom Bain, OOS Conservation Chair
-Galena

Kestrel Condos and Raptor Perches at the Wilds

Over ninety-percent of the acreage at the Wilds was previously surfaced mined for bituminous coal during the mid-Twentieth Century. Award-winning reclamation, and partnerships between American Electric Power, the Wilds, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, inspired by a new era of reclamation legislation in Ohio, resurrected this wild area from a post-mining spoil wasteland to today's youthful steppe ecosystem friendly for vertebrates, wild and semi-wild. Open-country birds of the northland find a new grassland ecology where forests once dominated.

The Wilds is home to conservation science, research, and 29 species of rare mammals, some no longer found in the wild. The Wilds is a giant research zoo and a migratory raptor magnet! Our year-round grassland raptor, the American Kestrel, is found here, too. Regrettably, American Kestrels are declining across North America, particularly east of the Mississippi.

American Kestrels are secondary cavity nesters and cavities are a scarce resource at the Wilds. But kestrels readily use artificial nest boxes. So OOS partnered with AEP to give American Kestrels some housing assistance. During spring 2008, OOS conservation committee members rendezvoused with Wild's education professional, Al Parker, and with AEP ReCreation Lands representative, Dave Dingey for installation of recycled utility poles with mounted kestrel nest boxes. Crews from AEP installed 15 kestrel boxes and six raptor perches last April.



Raptor perch installation by AEP, April 2008.
Photo courtesy Dave Dingey.



American Kestrel
nestbox project

The durable kestrel condos, made from recycled plastic lumber, are the creation of OOS member Craig Rieker. Each includes a corrugated insert filled with wood chips which will be replaced each season to maintain the boxes in clean condition for the falcons.

Photo courtesy Mike Maier.

Continued on Page 10

Here's what Craig Rieker says about the box design: "The "Kestrel Kave" is a modified version of the standard screech owl/kestrel nest box plan, widely published on the internet. The biggest advantage of this design is it can be built from a single 8' board with little scrap. My main objectives were to assure long life through the use of weather resistant materials and construction techniques, and to simplify box maintenance by eliminating the need for tools or the removal of hardware, such as screws, to open the box, which could be lost in the field.

The box is built from 100% recycled plastic obtained from "The Plastic Lumber Co.", Akron. The only hardware used are stainless steel ringshank siding nails. All joints are dadoed to minimize rain infiltration and improve strength. Access to the box was changed from a hinged lid on the original plan to a sliding panel on the front of the box. This eliminates the need for expensive and corrodible hinges, and a potential leak point at the roof's hinge seam. Front panel access greatly simplifies removal of the previous year's fouled nest material. The provided nest material is wood chips, which are contained in a well fitting cardboard box. This prevents the nest contents from falling out of the box when the front panel is removed. The panel slides in dadoes on either side and is held in place by a snug friction fit. A finger hole was added to assist in its removal. A 1x2 rough cedar board was placed behind the access panel. This serves both to align the seam and as a step to help fledglings exit the box. Any questions or comments may be sent to me at ccrieker@sbcglobal.net."



Photo courtesy Craig Rieker.

Unfortunately, none of the boxes were used by kestrels last year. Wilds employees say either the boxes were placed too late in the season or the few American Kestrels in the area haven't yet discovered the boxes. We'll keep you posted on the 2009 breeding season.

Tom Bain, OOS Conservation Chair
-Galena

Editor's Note: The 5th Annual "Birding by Ear Weekend Workshop" returns to the Wilds on May 29th to 31st. Classes and workshops are available for beginners, intermediate, and advanced birders. For information: http://www.thewilds.org/events/bird_by_ear.asp

Shawnee State Park: Flora-Quest '09 May 1-3



Shawnee State Park, the spectacular site of previous OOS Spring Conferences in 2005 and 2006, will play host to Flora-Quest '09, May 1-3. Flora-Quest, a hands-on learning adventure focusing on plants and natural areas, has many of Ohio's most gifted botanists and naturalists leading the 2009 expeditions. Featured speakers include photographer Ian Adams, conservationist Guy Denny, naturalist Paul Knoop, and butterfly expert Dr. Jaret Daniels.

Shawnee is known for its fabulous birds! A special nature trip on Saturday, "Feathers and Foliage", will be led by excellent birders. Centered at Shawnee State Park lodge, all field trips will be split between the 65,000 acre state forest and The Nature Conservancy's 14,000 acre Edge of Appalachia Preserve. In addition to learning about plants, upwards of 1,000 species of native plants are found locally – there are less than 1,900 natives in all of Ohio.

Please visit www.flora-quest.com for more information on programs, discounted rooms at the lodge, and special moon-light programs.

Shreve Spring Migration Sensation: March 28

Plan to attend the 9th Annual Shreve Spring Migration Sensation Saturday March 28th, 2009. The event features professional workshops, birding, vendor displays, children's activities, and a pancake breakfast. A special afternoon lecture, "Understanding What You See for Better Bird ID", will be given by Kenn Kaufman at 3:45.

Registration begins at 7 am at Shreve Elementary School, 598 N. Market Street (St. Rt. 226), Shreve, Ohio, 44676. Maps will be handed out to the self-guided birding locations including nearby Killbuck Marsh, Shreve Lake, Brown's Bog, and Funk Bottoms. Each wildlife viewing site will have a "Help Station" in the morning staffed by volunteers with spotting scopes. For information call the Wayne County Convention Bureau at 1-800-362-6474. The event costs \$10 per person or \$15 per family.

Su Snyder
-Wooster

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!

Brenda Baber
Margarette Beckwith
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Bob Scott Placier
Mary E. Reinthal
Regina Shieltz
Lee Ann Schmid
Ronald Sempier
William Shields
Donna Siple
Ransome Williams

Welcome New Members!

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

Scott Albaugh
Marilyn Beasley
Steven D. Beckman
Deborah Bryant
Thomas Dorobek
Joe A. Faulkner
Vicki Ferguson
Mark Gilsdorf
Ken Grahl
Karl W. Hahn
Luke Heider

Dr. Damon D. Hickey
John Lortz
Michelle Manzo
Neil Marquard
Joe David Phillips
Jacob Saborse
H.M. Taft
James Thompson
Wilbur Wenger
Elizabeth Wickemeyer
Donald Yarnell

Friends of Randy Rogers' Iraq Project!

Thanks for your support!

Columbus Audubon
Joan Campbell
Nancy Engeman
Paul Gardner
Jeff Grabmeier
Colleen Kammer
Debra Marsh

John & Martha McCormac
Jim McCormac
Ned Keller & Kathy McDonald
Shirley Ogden
Eagle Optics
Jen Sauter
Michael Sharkey

Read the December 9th, 2008 Columbus Dispatch article about Randy: <http://tinyurl.com/6dlhbb> His story ran the following day in newspapers around the nation.

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 Andrea Cook at andrealcook123@yahoo.com if you have moved.**

Editor--Ann Oliver, Design Manager--Kathy McDonald

Calendar of Events

Oak Openings: May 16th, 2009

Our Fifth Annual Spring Event is a one-day conference and annual banquet focusing on the Oak Openings Region. Speakers include Jim Berry of the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, Kim Kaufman of Black Swamp Bird Observatory, and Jim McCormac. The member conference package price is an affordable \$50... a bargain in these economic times. Birders from all over the nation converge on the Western Lake Erie Basin in the spring, so register early as space is limited. For your registration form:

http://www.ohiobirds.org/calendar/annual_meeting/meeting.php

Midwest Birding Symposium: Lakeside, Ohio: September 17 -20, 2009

Registration is underway for The Midwest Birding Symposium sponsored by The Ohio Ornithological Society & Bird Watcher's Digest. Confirmed speakers include Julie Zickefoose, Alvaro Jaramillo, Jeff Gordon, Chris Wood, Wayne Peterson, Kenn Kaufman, Lang Elliott, Jim McCormac, Arthur Morris, Jane Alexander, Scott Weidensaul, and Bill Thompson III. Workshops include digiscoping, blogging, and photography. Special events include a screening of the film "Opposable Chums: Guts & Glory at the World Series of Birding" and a Lake Erie Island Sunset Boat Cruise on the Goodtime I. Plus, a special track for young birders sponsored by Black Swamp Bird Observatory and Ohio Young Birder's Club. Don't miss out on the fun! Register online today at <https://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/mwb/main.php>

Ohio Ornithological Society Membership Application

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



Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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(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
- \$250 Sustaining Member
- \$500 Benefactor
- \$1,000 Lifetime Benefactor

Mail to: Ohio Ornithological Society ♦ P.O. Box 14051 ♦ Columbus, Ohio 43214



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

OUR MISSION . . .

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