

The Ohio



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The Ohio Cardinal is a quarterly publication devoted to the study and appreciation of Ohio's birdlife.

The Ohio Cardinal exists to provide a permanent and timely record of the abundance and distribution of birds in Ohio; to help document the occurrence of rare species in the state; to provide information on identification of birds; and to provide information on birding areas within Ohio.

The Ohio Cardinal invites readers to submit articles on unusual occurrences of birds, bird distribution within the state, birding areas in Ohio, identification tips, and other aspects of ornithology. Bird reports and photographs are welcome from any area of the state. Report forms are not a necessity but will be supplied upon request. Unusual species should be documented, and forms to do so are available upon request from the Editor, Publisher, and Records Committee Secretary.

Seasonal Report Due Dates

Winter (Dec.-Feb.) - March 25
Spring (Mar.-May) - June 25
Summer (June-July) - August 25
Autumn (Aug.-Nov.) - December 25

Please send all reports to:

Bill Whan
223 E. Tulane Rd.
Columbus, OH 43202
danielel@iwaynet.net

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The Ohio Cardinal

Bill Whan, Editor
Edwin C. Pierce, Publisher
Joseph W. Hammond, Design Manager
The Ohio Bird Records Committee: Jim McCormac, Secretary
ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves
1889 Fountain Square Court
Columbus, OH 43224
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On the Cover: This black rail was photographed in a Holmes County flower bed on 14 June 2003 by Morris Miller.

Summer 2003 Overview

Bill Whan

223 East Tulane Road, Columbus, OH 43202
danielel@iwaynet.net

It seemed like a cool summer because we had so few really hot spells, but in the end temperatures were not so far off normal. Here in central Ohio, we started with a first four days of June colder than the first four of April, but it all averaged out. Depending on where you were, you might have called it a wet summer or a dry one. Rain was very unevenly distributed, with few well-defined broad fronts, instead often consisting of very localized downpours in what the forecasters defensively began to call "pop-up storms." During June, rainfall in Columbus and Cincinnati differed by a significant 2.58 inches, and in July, Columbus and Dayton differed by 4.25 inches. During July, Cleveland recorded a lot of rain—4.89 inches—but only 75 miles away in the Youngstown area 10.6 inches fell; Columbus had 1.68 inches less than normal rainfall in July, when parts of Paulding County got a Noachian 11.6 inches.

Four review species were documented, about average for the season: tricolored heron, black rail, ruff, and loggerhead shrike. Twenty years ago, species subject to review before adding them to the published record included the following: American white pelican, greater white-fronted goose, brant, northern goshawk, pomarine jaeger, laughing gull, black-legged kittiwake, Thayer's gull, and Bell's vireo. Why do they no longer require review? Do we see more of them, or have record-keepers become less conservative? Among them probably only the pelican, not the most difficult to identify, is more common now in Ohio. Better field ID techniques have helped; even the popular field guides are now more helpful on jaegers and gulls, for example, than older ones. It helps that more birders are in the field, and better linked by communications media: more birds are seen by multiple observers, and beginners are more likely to know someone more experienced nearby to help with a strange-looking bird. Still, editors and other reviewers are likely to seek more details upon getting a report of a species out of place or season—a brant in Athens County, a June Thayer's gull anywhere—or for those species that remain less familiar to most Ohioans and/or difficult to identify: goshawks, immature eagles, adult dowitchers, or kittiwakes.

On 11 May, a half-dozen or more trumpeter swans were released in Cedar Point NWR, perhaps the most pristine of Ohio's Lake Erie marshes, where their presence on this Federal property may test the wisdom of Ohio officials' introduction program. Common loons stuck around in good numbers, and some intriguing reports emerged—far from substantiated as of the date of this writing—that seemed consistent with successful nesting in the central part of the state. If nothing else, these reports will keep local observers more alert next summer.

Raptors, by all reports, had a great breeding season statewide, and were present in better-than-average numbers. Some attributed this to a rapid filling of available territories after ravages of the West Nile Virus, some to the reduced depredations of

great horned owls, also courtesy of WNV. It is also possible the effects of this virus were overestimated. Shorebird habitat suffered greatly from the flooding of lowlands. Wetlands in Williams County (of all places) in June and in Ashtabula County in July hosted some shorebirds, as did Funk WA and a few carefully-surveyed flooded agricultural fields in Wyandot County. Others appeared at Big Island WA, but only because dike repairs required lowering water levels in one impoundment. Let us note that weather notwithstanding Pointe Mouillee in Michigan had a superb summer for shorebirds, including breeding pairs of black-necked stilts—so wet weather doesn't get our land managers off the hook.

Northbound flycatchers passed through abnormally late, and some stayed to claim out-of-the-way territories during weather that didn't unduly stress them. Migrant thrushes and warblers straggled through well into June, when higher than usual numbers of species like dark-eyed juncos stayed to breed. Going missing in reports were species like northern shovelers, great black-backed gulls, yellow-headed blackbirds, and pine siskins. Increasing appearances of red-breasted nuthatches, however, may promise a better winter finch year than we had most recently.

Finally, we hope readers who enjoy Rob Harlan's "Further Afield" series about how to find rarer birds in Ohio will recognize that he was able to offer this excellent advice largely because Ohio birders over the years reported their sightings to the *Cardinal* and other publications; unless reliable reports are sent in, our knowledge of these phenomena is relegated to the realm of rumors and dim memory.

The Reports follow the taxonomic order of the 44th Supplement (July 2003) to the 7th edition of the *AOU Check-list of North American Birds* (1998); readers will immediately notice extensive changes here. Underlined names of species indicate those on the OBRC Review List; acceptable documentation is needed to add reports of such species to official state records. When supplied, county names appear *italicized*. Unless numbers are specified, sightings refer to single birds. Abbreviations, conventions, and symbols used in the Reports should be readily understood, with the possible exceptions of the following: BCSP=Buck Creek SP in *Clark*; BIWA=Big Island WA in *Marion*; CVNP=Cuyahoga Valley National Park in *Cuyahoga* and *Summit*; EFSP=East Fork SP in *Clermont*; *fade*= "in trust of," said of data conveyed on behalf of another person; GAASSBC=Greater Akron Audubon Summit County Summer Bird Count of 13-22 June, reported herein by **A. Chasar**; GMAS=Greater Mohican Audubon Society Summer Bird Count, *Ashland*, of 7-21 June, reported herein by **T. Leslie**; GRWA=Grand River WA in *Trumbull*; HBSP=Headlands Beach SP in *Lake*; HWSP=Hueston Woods SP in *Preble* and *Butler*; Killbuck=Killbuck WA in *Wayne*; KPWA=Killdeer Plains WA in *Wyandot*; CPNWR=Cedar Point NWR in *Lucas*; Magee=Magee Marsh WA in *Lucas*; MBSP=Maumee Bay SP in *Lucas*; Metzger=Metzger Marsh WA in *Lucas*; MP=Metropark or Metro Park; m obs=many observers; MWW=Miami-Whitewater Wetlands in *Hamilton*; NWR=National Wildlife Refuge; OBRC=Ohio Bird Records Committee; ONWR=Ottawa NWR in *Ottawa* and *Lucas*; ONWRC=monthly Ottawa NWR census, reported herein by **E. Pierce**; RTLS=Ravenna Training & Logistics Site in *Portage*; Res=reservoir; Res'n=reservation; SF=State Forest; SNP=State Nature Preserve; SP=State Park; SVWA=Spring Valley WA in *Greene* and *Warren*; WA=Wildlife Area; ~≈approximately.

For the Record

Here are noteworthy reports (from spring 2003 unless otherwise noted) that for one reason or another escaped our notice for publication in the previous issue:

Red-throated Loon: One was found dead in Sagamore Hills 5 Apr (**D. Chasar**).

Willet: Add to spring's total two at HBSP 11 May (**R. Hannikman**), making 27 in all.


Laughing Gull: **E. Bacik** reported an adult at HBSP 29 Mar.

Forster's Tern: One was early at HBSP 29 Mar (**R. Hannikman**, **E. Bacik**).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: Ad birds banded 31 Jul in *Vinton* and 5 Aug 2002 in *Jackson* were early (**A. Vitz**).

Philadelphia Vireo: One 19 Apr at the Bath Reserve in CVNP was quite early (**M. Romito**).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: During 2002 in *Vinton*'s Zaleski SF, **A. Vitz** banded seven 22 Jun, one 25 Jun, one 29 Jun, two 4 Jul, and four (three hatch-year) 24 Jul. In *Gallia*, he banded one 16 Jul and another 25 Jul.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: A hatch-year female was banded 1 Aug 2002 down in *Gallia* (**A. Vitz**). 



This savannah sparrow obligingly posed for a photograph at Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Summit County on 18 June 2003. Photo by Gary Meszaros.

Summer 2003 Reports

Bill Whan

223 East Tulane Road, Columbus, OH 43202
danielel@iwaynet.net

Snow Goose: One hung out with domestic geese at Hoover Res 28 Jul (**D. Sanders**).

Canada Goose: **K. Metcalf** reported that *Cyanhoga* birds began heavy molt of wings 4 Jun, with 10 of 22 having dropped primaries by 6 Jun. Most were flightless by 15 Jun, and some had completed primary molt and could fly by 13 Jul.

Mute Swan: The GAASSBC tallied 29 there 13-22 Jun, representing nearly 10% of the state population according to US Fish & Wildlife Service figures.

Wood Duck: Gathered in traditional spots late in the period, with 56 (including 20 young) on the 6 Jul ONWRC, 271 at Magee 20 Jul (**H&S Hiris**), and 31 at Killbuck 28 Jul (**S. Snyder**).

American Black Duck: The 6 Jul ONWRC found three.

Blue-winged Teal: Rather scantily reported. On 1 Jun, one was in *Holmes* (**L.E. Yoder**) and 22 at ONWR (ONWRC). On 12 Jul one was seen at Gilmore Ponds (**M. Busam**).

Green-winged Teal: A lone drake spent the period in a *Williams* wetland (**J. Yochum**). More successful was a pair at Sandy Ridge in *Lorain*, seen with young 12 Jul (**T. Fairweather**).

Redhead: **B. Hardesty** reported two drakes and a hen on a *Fostoria* res 10 Jun. **H&S Hiris** found three at Magee on 15 Jun. A female with five young was seen at Pickerel Ck WA on 8 Jul (**S. Zadar**).

Ring-necked Duck: One lingered 1 Jun at MWV (**D. Brinkman**) and perhaps was the same drake found 15 Jun (**L. Brumbaugh**). A pair was in a Mentor park 4 and 6 Jun (**J. Pogacnik**), and a female at Sandy Ridge in *Lorain* 4 Jun (**T. Fairweather**).

Lesser Scaup: Interesting was a pair found at CPNWR 26 Jun (**R. Gardner** *vide J. McCormac*).

Hooded Merganser: Successful nesting was reported from *Cuyahoga*, *Erie*, *Hamilton*, *Hocking*, *Holmes*, *Lucas*, *Trumbull*, and *Wayne*.

Red-breasted Merganser: Tardy were 17 off *Lake* on 6 Jun (**J. Pogacnik**) and one in Paulding Res 13 Jun (**M&D Dunakin**).

Ruddy Duck: While breeding was not confirmed as last summer, nonetheless more evident than usual. Beginning with six alt birds there in early Jun, 1-2 pairs were present all summer near Antwerp in *Paulding* (**D&M Dunakin**). Five on 1 Jun at an Upper Sandusky res grew to 15 by 15 Jun (**R. Counts**). Two in a *Williams* wetland on 5 Jun (**J. Grabmeyer**) and one at Sandy Ridge MP in *Lorain* 6 Jun (**T. Fairweather**) were detected. **H&S Hiris** found two at Magee 15 Jun, and one floated in Sandusky Bay 26 Jul (**S. Houpert**).

Common Loon: More than expected. An imm was at Camp Dennison 7 Jun (**B. Lacker**), and an alt ad at Hoover Res 8 Jun (**D. Linzell**) remained through mid-month (**C. Bombaci**). An imm spent most of the period in Shalersville Twp. *Portage* (**L. Rosche**). A basic-plumaged bird in *Holmes* 19 Jun was found dead 25 Jun (**P. Soehnten**). The GAASSBC found three 13-22 Jun. **E. Snively** reported an alt and one with plumage "emerging from winter" together on a *Morrow* res 19 Jun. A basic-plumaged bird was at HWSP 24 Jun (**D. Russell**). **D. Sanders** found a "mostly basic" bird at Hoover Res 31 Jul. An observer reported having watched with binoculars chicks, one on the back of an alt adult loon, and one or more others in the water nearby at Alum Ck Res in *Delaware* in early Jun. Though familiar with loon families, he was not aware such a sighting might be unusual

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in Ohio, and did not report it till late Jul. Since that time m obs have repeatedly found two alt-plumaged loons and one basic- or juvenal-plumaged individual at Alum Ck. Documentations and especially photos are being collected for the OBRC in case the original report can be substantiated.

Pied-billed Grebe: Successful breeding reported in *Lorain*, *Lucas*, *Marion*, *Ottawa*, *Portage*, and *Trumbull*. High count 44 at Magee 20 Jul (**H&S Hiris**).

American White Pelican: Last spring's bird lingered at BIWA through 1 Jun (**R. Sempier**).

Double-crested Cormorant: A count of 2613 pairs at West Sister Isl (ONWR) was down a bit from last year. Inland, non-breeding birds showed up for lengthy stays at many reservoirs and wetlands, the highest numbers 22 in *Ashtand* for the local summer census (*vide T. Leslie*), and 35+ at Buckeye Lake through the period (**G. Buckey**).

American Bittern: Breeding unconfirmed but strongly suspected for birds seen at Pickerel Ck WA 7 Jun (**J. Lehman**, **T. Shively**), Sandy Ridge MP in *Lorain* 6 Jun (**T. Fairweather**), Magee 15 Jun (**H&S Hiris**), and ONWR 6 Jul (ONWRC).

Least Bittern: Status identical to the above at all locations cited, plus present at SYWA 1 Jun (**N. Cade**), Chippewa Lk in *Medina* 17 and 21 Jun (**R&S Harlan**), and CPNWR 12 Jul (**E. Tramer**).

Great Blue Heron: Numbers at the West Sister Isl colony at ONWR were down slightly to 987 pairs; the 12-year average there is 1372 pairs. At the Lordstown colony in *Trumbull*, **C. Babyak** tallied 392 nests in 87 trees.

Great Egret: Numbers at the West Sister Isl colony were down slightly to 700 pairs. The ONWRC of 6 Jul counted 291 birds, 154 in a single field. Inland spots hosted small numbers through the period, the largest -45 at BIWA on 14 Jul, where 20+ had been present 28 Jun and a single bird 1 Jun (all **R. Sempier**).

Snovy Egret: Fourteen pairs tallied at the West Sister Isl nesting colony tied the previous high count there. All other reports came from the Lk Erie marshes, the highest of them seven at Magee 15 Jun (**H&S Hiris**).

Little Blue Heron: An ad remained at SVWA through 2 Jun (**L. Gara**). An ad was at Magee 7 Jun (**C. Cousino**). One visited *Hancock* 10 Jun (**B. Hardesty**). **S. Zadar** saw one in "calico" plumage at Pickerel Ck WA 1 Jul and a juv at Willow Pt WA 23 Jul.

Tricolored Heron: Likely the same bird, one skulked Pipe Ck WA 8 (**S. Zadar**)-9 Jul (**D. Sanders**), and one was in full view at a dock in Catawba Island 24 Jul (**N. Bixler**).

Green Heron: Widely reported. **L. Rosche** remarked he'd seen more in ne Ohio than in any of the past 20 years.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: The West Sister Isl colony was up to an estimated 460 from last year's 393. The largest mainland numbers came from the nw marshes, with 11 at Magee 15 Jun (**H&S Hiris**) and 21 at Pickerel Ck WA 1 Jul (**S. Zadar**).

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: The Columbus nest site had produced three early young, one in awkward flight, plus a runt, by 26 Jun (**A. Paschall**). Last seen were four adults and four young birds 11 Jun (**Paschall**). No other confirmed reports in the state.

Black Vulture: Seems to be continuing a slow expansion of range. During the period birds were probably nesting in *Holmes* and *Coshocton* (*vide B. Glick*), and **D. Graham** discovered a nest in *Ross*. High count ~15 at Shawnee Lookout in *Hamilton* 21 Jun (**J. Van Coney**).

Osprey: Nested in *Butler, Delaware, Erie, Fayette, Guernsey, Harrison, Jefferson, Mahoning, Pickaway, Portage, Stark, Summit, Trumbull, Tuscarawas, Warren, and Williams* (ODOW). Missing from apparently suitable habitat in the Lk Erie marshes, allegedly because of competition from the following species, but do they not co-exist more peacefully elsewhere? Also widely reported as non-breeders across the state, and doing well. A success story, accelerated by a fruitful ODOW re-introduction project.

Bald Eagle: Like the above, widely reported away from nesting sites, an interesting example an adult on the Ohio side of the River in exotic *Monroe* 1 Jun (**R&S Harlan**).

Northern Harrier: **H&S Hiris** saw one in Magee 15 Jun, **D. Morse** one in nw *Adams* 22 Jun, and **C. Babyak** a pair hunting Mosquito WA 29 Jun; nesting was confirmed at the latter location, with four young being fed at a nest 6 Jul (**S. DeHaven** *vide* **Babyak**).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: **J. Pogacnik** regarded nesting as at least possible in six *Lake* MPs during the period. **K. Metcalf** had one through Jun at South Chagrim MP, *Cuyahoga*.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Widely reported as doing very well. **J. Pogacnik** regarded nesting as at least possible in 18 *Lake* MPs.

Broad-winged Hawk: Also doing quite well. **E. Tramer** reported a nest in an oak near Whitehouse, *Lucas* with incubation 5 Jun, single chick visible 28 Jun, and fledging by 18 Jul. **K. Metcalf** reported an unusual 10+ in *Geauga* during the period, and **L. Rosche** saw birds in the northeast in *Ashtabula, Portage, Lake, Cuyahoga, and Summit* as well.

Common Moorhen: A pair spent the summer at GRWA (**C. Babyak, D. Hochadel**), and a nest was suspected at Hidden Valley MP in *Lake* (**J. Pogacnik**). Three were at Mallard Club Marsh 7 Jun (**J. Lehman**), two at CPNWR 12 Jun (**E. Tramer**), three at Magee 15 Jun (**H&S Hiris**), two at Killbuck 16 Jun (**S. Snyder**), the high count of 11, ad and 11 young at BIWA 6 Jul (**G. Stauffer**), two on the 6 Jul ONWRC, two at Sandy Ridge MP 9 Jul (**P. Lozano**), and 12 at Magee 20 Jul (**Hirses**).

American Coot: In their customary strongholds the high count was 105, with 10 young, on the 1 Jun ONWRC. Inland, **R. Counts** had six on 16 Jun in *Wyandot*, and **S. Snyder** a pair with two young on 23 Jul at BIWA.

Sandhill Crane: The high count at Funk WA in *Wayne* was seven on 30 Jul (**D. Plant**); no reports received of potential breeders elsewhere.

Black-bellied Plover: All adults, these birds were scarce, with one early on 1 Jul at Pickerel Ck WA (**S. Zadar**), one in *Wyandot* the 21st (**R. Counts**), and three at Conneaut the 31st (**G. Leidy**).

Semipalmated Plover: The ONWRC had 31 on 1 Jun, and **J. Sedransk** six at Conneaut 2 Jun, and the latest northbound was one in *Williams* 5 Jun (**J. Grabmeier**). Returnees weren't reported till 26 Jul, with two at BIWA (**D. Sanders**) and 31 at Conneaut 31 Jul (**G. Leidy**).

Killdeer: By 27 Jul, 320+ could be found at BIWA (**K. Metcalf**).

American Avocet: Adults appeared at Pipe Ck WA 7 (**T. Shively**)-11 Jul (**W. Sarno**), at the CCE on 14 Jul (**D. Sanders**), and in *Wyandot* on 28 Jul (**R. Counts**).

Greater Yellowlegs: Last departing on 7 Jun from *Paulding* (**D&M Dunakin**), the first to return were two on 8 Jul at Pickerel Ck WA (**S. Zadar**). High count 31+ at Conneaut 31 Jul (**G. Leidy**).

Lesser Yellowlegs: One 12 Jun in *Williams* must have missed out on the breeding season (**D. Sanders**). **S. Zadar** saw six returnees near Sandusky Bay on 1 Jul. Big counts came at the end of the month, with 115 in *Wyandot* (**R. Counts**) and 96 at Funk (**S. Snyder**).

Solitary Sandpiper: Two returned for the 6 Jul ONWRC, and the high count came near the end of the period, with 10 in *Williams* 27 Jul (**J. Yochum**).

Willet: So numerous in spring, only one: 15 Jul in *Williams* (**J. Yochum**).

Spotted Sandpiper: The high count was 22, at a Findlay res 15 Jul (**B. Hardesty**).

Upland Sandpiper: One of the Krause Rd pair was seen 7 Jun (**J. Lehman**), but no others were reported.

Ruddy Turnstone: Jun birds included three in *Wyandot* (**R. Counts**) and 15 for the ONWRC, both on the 1st. The first southbound bird was at Conneaut 30 Jul (**E. Elder**).

Red Knot: Two lingered at Conneaut 5 Jun (**B. Winger**), where the first to return was an ad found by **E. Elder** on 30 Jul, seen the following day there by **G. Leidy**.

Sanderling: Spring birds remained at Conneaut 2 Jun (**J. Sedransk**), with a very early returning bird 6 Jul for the ONWRC. High count was 10 ad at HBSP 22 Jul (**K. Metcalf**).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: Fifty-plus lingered in *Paulding* through 7 Jun (**M&D Dunakin**). The high count was 92 at Conneaut 31 Jul (**G. Leidy**).

Western Sandpiper: A good find were two juv at Cowan Lk SP 30 Jul (**B. Powell**).

Least Sandpiper: Adults returned 30 Jun, with three in *Williams* (**J. Yochum**). By 9 Jul, ~100 were at Pipe Ck WA (**D. Sanders**). The first juv were two in *Wyandot* 26 Jul (**B. Whan**).

White-rumped Sandpiper: Jun migrants numbering 22 were reported in *Ashtabula, Butler, Paulding, Wyandot*, with a final sighting in *Williams* as late as the 12th (**D. Sanders**). The first two returning were adults at Conneaut 31 Jul (**G. Leidy**).

Pectoral Sandpiper: One lingered at Conneaut 2 Jun (**J. Sedransk**), and one going the other way was at Pipe Ck WA 1 Jul (**S. Zadar**). High counts ~200 at BIWA 27 Jul (**K. Metcalf**) and 123 at Funk the following day (**S. Snyder**).

Dunlin: High count 308 on 1 Jun for the ONWRC, with two in *Paulding* 7 Jun (**D&M Dunakin**). One in all plumage, probably a failed breeder, haunted ONWRC through 6 Jul through the period (ONWRC, m obs).

Stilt Sandpiper: First appearing 9 Jul at Pipe Ck WA (**D. Sanders**), their numbers peaked at 17 in Conneaut 31 Jul (**G. Leidy**).

Ruff: A reeve in *Wyandot* 18 Jul was written up for the OBRC.

Short-billed Dowitcher: Adults showed up first on 1 Jul at Pipe Ck WA (**S. Zadar**), peaking at 86 at the CCE 16 Jul (**D. Sanders**). Conneaut had 18 ad 31 Jul (**G. Leidy**).

Wilson's Phalarope: Probably late migrants were females in *Union* 6 Jun (**S. Richards**) and *Williams* 11 Jun (**J. Yochum**). **S. Zadar** had one 8 Jul at Pipe Ck WA, and **G. Leidy** two juv at Conneaut 31 Jul. Probable nesting took place at BIWA in the same area as in late Jun 2000 and 2002: a pair circled observer **M. Bolton** for 45 min, calling and hovering in a wetland there 16 Jul; coincidentally or not, on 26 Jul a pair of juv was found at a mudflat at BIWA (**B. Whan** et al.).

Red-necked Phalarope: Late was one in *Union* 6 Jun (**G. Miller** et al.).

Franklin's Gull: An immature bird was discovered at Caesar Ck SP on 12 Jul (**B. Hull**).

Bonaparte's Gull: Unexpected inland were singletons at *Paulding* Res 12 Jun (**M&D Dunakin**), *Williams* 15 Jun (**J. Yochum**), and BCSP 5-27 Jul (**D. Overacker**). Eleven were at a res in *Findlay* 29 Jul (**B. Hardesty**).

Caspian Tern: Early were five at Pipe Ck WA on 7 Jul (**E. Suively**) and one at Caesar Ck SP (**L. Gara**). **L. Rosche** reported that ≤ 10 to all intents and purposes summered at La Due Res in *Geauga*.

Common Tern: Two at Hoover Res 7 Jun were unexpected (**C. Bombaci**), as was one at Caesar Ck SP 18 Jul (**L. Gara**). The high count was ~ 275 at the CCE 16 Jul (**D. Sanders**). At the assisted colonies, on 8 Jul the ONWR's eight platforms supported 15 nests, 25 eggs, 31 chicks, and 65 fledged young, with more than 60 adults observed; on 9 Jul the Pipe Ck WA's four platforms had eight nests, 17 eggs, 11 chicks, and 43 fledged birds, with 40 adults observed (*vide* **R. Huffman**).

Forster's Tern: Seldom seen, with one at Pt. Clinton 7 Jul (**E. Suively**).

Black Tern: Not a bad showing for recent years, 63 birds were reported from 20 occasions in *Butler*, *Fulton*, *Hancock*, *Lorain*, *Lucas*, *Marion*, *Ottawa*, *Paulding*, *Williams*, and *Wyandot*. High count was 14 birds in *Paulding* 7 Jun (**M&D Dunakin**). Twelve sightings occurred in the first three weeks of Jun, then after a hiatus eight during the second through fourth weeks of Jul. **P. Rodewald** was led to speculate about possible nesting by sightings of 3+ on 2 Jun and 5+ on 19 Jun in a remote area of ONWR. No reports from CPNWR.

Black-billed Cuckoo: Normal numbers. The GAASSBC tallied eight 13-22 Jun.

Barn Owl: At least six pairs were known to be in *Wayne* and *Holmes* (*vide* **B. Glick**). **L. Rosche** was surprised by one at the RTLS in *Portage* 3 Jun.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: By late Jul as many as 80 frequented feeders at a *Scioto* residence (**J. McCormac**). On 31 Jul, 62 were banded at a single site in *Lawrence* (**A. Chartier**). Interesting side note: north of Elkins, WV during the period three researchers banded 416 at a single residence over four consecutive days (*vide* **Chartier**).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Quite unusual for *Trumbull* was a nest discovered by **S. DeHaven** 6 Jul at Mosquito WA (*vide* **C. Babyak**, pb). **J. Pogacnik** reported possible or probable nesting at five locations in the *Lake* MPs during the season.

Pileated Woodpecker: Still unusual in the NW, one was seen in Oak Openings MP in Toledo 7-18 Jun (**E. Tramer**), and another spent the period in Marie De Larne Wds in *Paulding* (**M&D Dunakin**).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Lingered 2 Jun in *Lake* (**J. Pogacnik**), 4 Jun at the Shaker Lks (**L. Deininger**), and 5 Jun in the Oak Openings (**E. Durbinn**).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: Ten Jun reports, including birds as late as the 6th in *Lake* (**J. Pogacnik**) and in *Cuyahoga* (**K. Metcalf**).

Acadian Flycatcher: A northbound bird was part of the 1 Jun ONWR. High count 10 at Johnson's Wds SNP in *Wayne* 10 Jun (**R&S Harlan**).

Alder Flycatcher: An apparent migrant remained at Magee 6 Jun (**R. Nirschl**). In traditional nesting range were two in the CVNP 29 Jun (**S&R Harlan**) and six pairs in the *Lake* MPs during the period (**J. Pogacnik**). **L. Rosche** reported "outstanding numbers" at the RTLS in *Portage*. Out of range were a singing male in a *Logan* peatland in suitable nesting habitat 12 Jun (**J. McCormac**), and another at Cedar Bog in *Champaign* 23 Jun (**T. Shively** et al.).

Willow Flycatcher: The 1 Jun ONWR counted 73, where 11 remained 6 Jul. Eleven found along a BBS route in *Lorain/Huron/Ashland* 8 Jun may have been in part migrants (**R&S Harlan**), ditto for 12 on 4 Jun at Pickerington Ponds, *Franklin* (**J. Watts**).

Least Flycatcher: In nw *Coshocton*, **L.E. Yoder** had one on 1 and 21 Jun and 5 Jul. **S&R Harlan** had one in Overton, *Wayne* 14 Jun. **J. Pogacnik** reported nine possible or probable breeding pairs in the *Lake* MPs during the period. **A. Vitz** banded adults, probably early southbound migrants, on 17 Jul in *Gallia*, on 22 Jul in *Jackson*, and on 29 Jul in *Vinton*.

Great Crested Flycatcher: A migrant lingered at Magee 6 Jun (**R. Nirschl**).

Loggerhead Shrike: The nesting pair in *Adams* remained 2 Jun (**B. Sparks**).

Bell's Vireo: Reported there as early as 3 May (**H. Armstrong**), three were observed at MWW 6 Jun (**N. Cade**), with a pair building a nest (**L. Brumbaugh**). On 21 Jun, this nest had two vireo eggs and a cowbird's egg, and another pair's nest was under construction (**Brumbaugh**); on 3 Jul the second nest had been deserted, with three vireo eggs plus a cowbird egg (**Brumbaugh**). A pair was last seen 13 Jul, but no nest was noted at the time. **T. Shively** reported another Bell's in *Logan* 18 Jun.

Blue-headed Vireo: One in *Paulding* 3 Jun was a local first (**M&D Dunakin**). One was in Stebbin's Gulch, *Lake* 7 Jun (**H. Petruschke**). In other traditional nesting locales, **J. Pogacnik** reported 27 pairs in the *Lake* MPs for the period, **R&S Harlan** five in Mohican SP 22 Jun, and **J. Lehman** two in Clear Ck MP in *Hocking* 30 Jun. A pair building a nest in Oak Openings MP in *Lucas* 23 Jul was a third local record (**T. Kemp**).

Bank Swallow: A large aggregation at Conneaut, which lasted well into the following period, was estimated at 2500 on 18 Jul by **G. Meszaros**.

Cliff Swallow: Continued to colonize new bridges etc. statewide. Ten-plus at a dam near the Ohio River in *Monroe* 1 Jun (**S&R Harlan**) may or may not have been truly new, but were new to us. In *Holmes*, **P. Yoder**'s colony numbered 394 nests in a rebuilding year, and neighbor **A.A. Troyer** had 545 nests, the same number he hosted in 2001.

American Crow: **B. Hardesty** compared *Hancock* survey numbers of 2003 and [2002]: on 3 Jun 26 and [52], on 22 Jul 22 and [68], and on 29 Jul 15 and [60].

Carolina Chickadee: **R&S Harlan** had one just south of Overton in *Wayne* 14 Jun.

Black-capped Chickadee: **R&S Harlan** had one just north of Overton in *Wayne* 14 Jun.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: **R&S Harlan** reported one in *Cuyahoga* 4 Jun, four at Mohican SP 22 Jun, singletons in the CVNP, *Summit* 24 and 29 Jun, and on 1 Jul one at Hinckley MP in *Medina* with another adult and 1-2 young elsewhere in the park—in total "more than I've ever had here in the summer in one year, and maybe more than all previous summers combined." **S. Snyder** had one at Mohican SF 12 Jun, **B. Whan** one in Columbus 17 Jun, and **T. Kemp** three, probably a family group, at a *Lucas* golf course 28 Jun.

Brown Creeper: **J. Pogacnik** reported three in the *Lake* MPs during the period. **R&S Harlan** had different birds in the CVNP 24 and 29 Jun.

Winter Wren: **H. Petruschke** reported one in Stebbin's Gulch 7 Jun, and **B. Roberts** a singing male in *S. Chagrin* MP 26 Jun. **J. Pogacnik** found 17 pairs in the *Lake* MPs during the period.

Sedge Wren: First discovered at MWW on 1 Jun by **D. Brinkman**, then at KPWA 21 Jun by **C. Dusthimer**. **F. Dinkelbach** reported one at the old Coliseum site in the CVNP 6 Jul. At the VOA property in *Butler*, the maximum number was 10 during Jul (**M. Busam**, **F. Renfrow**).

Marsh Wren: High count 25 on the 6 Jul ONWR. At Sandy Ridge MP in *Lorain*, four were present 9 Jul (**P. Lozano**), and three were at Killbuck 12 Jul (**S. Snyder**).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: A male was in song near Clendenen Lk, *Harrison* 5 Jul (**J. Beechy** *vide* **B. Glick**). **J. Pogacnik** regarded nesting as possible in Chapin Forest, *Lake* once again.

Veery: A late migrant appeared for the 1 Jun ONWR. Among its scattered breeding sites, birds were found in Clear Ck MP in *Hocking* (four, 18 Jun **J. Watts**), *Wayne* 12 (**J. McCormac**) and 14 Jun (**R&S Harlan**), *Ashland* 21 Jun (**G. Cowell** *vide* **T. Leslie**), Mohican SF 22 Jun (seven, **Harlans**), and in the CVNP (three, **Harlans**) 29 Jun. **K. Metcalf** noted a few pairs in the Chagrin Valley during the period. No reports from other known areas. Most interesting was an ad female with a wrinkled brood patch banded in *Vinton* 26 Jul (**A. Vitz**).

Gray-cheeked Thrush: One brought up the rear in *Lake* 6 Jun (**J. Pogacnik**).

Swainson's Thrush: **J. Watts** found one in Clear Ck MP in *Hocking* 1 Jun. **R. Harlan** overheard five in Norton 3 Jun and two 4 Jun.

Hermit Thrush: Singing males were reported in good numbers in appropriate habitat in the *Hocking* hills parks, Mohican SP and SF, the CVNP, and *Lake* MPs.

Northern Mockingbird: In 1878, Langdon described it as a "rare summer resident" in Cincinnati, with only "[o]ne specimen taken in winter." Now **E. Tramer** reports mockers are "seemingly more numerous than the Brown Thrasher" sw of Toledo.

Cedar Waxwing: High count 90 on the 1 Jun ONWRC.

Blue-winged Warbler: Late was one 6 Jun at Magee (**R. Nirschl**).

Golden-winged Warbler: One was seen in the CVNP 1 Jun, but not relocated later (**B. Roberts**).

Northern Parula: Three were in *Monroe* 1 Jun and one in Mohican SF 22 Jun (**S&R Harlan**). Four singing males were in Cedar Bog, *Champaign* 19 Jun (**T. Shively** et al.).

Yellow Warbler: **E. Schlabach** reported probable migrants in *Holmes* 12 Jul. **K. Metcalf** tallied 10 in *Geauga* the 22nd, and by 31 Jul **G. Leidy** was to report ~75 at Conneaut. The GAASSBC tallied a record 534. Last report of song 16 Jul ONWR (**B. Whan**).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: Five were in nw *Coshocton* 1 Jun (**L.E. Yoder**), and one at Magee 6 Jun (**R. Nirschl**). The GAASSBC reported five. One was in Mohican SF 22 Jun (**S&R Harlan**), and one at S. Chagrin MP 26 Jun (**B. Roberts**). In *Vinton*, **A. Vitz** banded different individuals of this species as follows: three 19 Jun, two 3 Jul, one 6 Jul, one 11 Jul, two 16 Jul, and two 6 Aug, well outside its accustomed nesting range; he had previously banded six individuals there in 2002.

Magnolia Warbler: A number of Jun migrants, as late as the 7th at N. Chagrin MP (**K. Metcalf**), with as many as seven on the 1 Jun ONWRC. One was found 16 Jun in Clear Ck MP in *Hocking* (**J. Watts**), and another in Mohican SF 22 Jun (**R&S Harlan**). **J. Pogacnik** tallied 18 in the *Lake* MPs during the period.

Cape May Warbler: One straggler was found by the 1 Jun ONWRC.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: **H. Petruschke** reported three in Stebbin's Gulch 7 Jun. **J. Pogacnik** noted a singing male in two visits to a previous nesting area in Hidden Valley MP, also in *Lake*, during the period.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: A female was banded 2 Jun at ONWR's Darby unit (**P. Rodewald**).

Black-throated Green Warbler: Doing well in its haunts, with one in Stebbin's Gulch 7 Jun (**H. Petruschke**), four at Clear Ck MP in *Hocking* 12 Jun (**B. Whan**), one in sw *Medina* 17 Jun (**R&S Harlan**), five in Mohican SF 22 Jun (**Harlans**), one in S. Chagrin MP 26 Jun (**B. Roberts**), four along Scobie Rd in the CVNP 29 Jun and five-plus at Hinckley MP in *Medina* 12 Jul (**Harlans**); **L.E. Yoder** noted five at three different nw *Coshocton* spots during the period. **A. Vitz** banded a hatch-year bird in Zaleski SF in *Vinton* on 7 Jul.

Blackburnian Warbler: Late migrants were at MWW (**D. Brinkman**) and in *Greene* (**D. Overacker**) on 1 Jun, as well as in Parma Hts 5 Jun (**S&R Harlan**). Oddly, a male was in Cincinnati 29 Jul (**S. Corbo**).

Yellow-throated Warbler: **E. Roush** noted a male singing almost continuously near his home in *Cinton* from 14 Jun through 18 Jul, then silent until resuming singing 30 Jul and 1 Aug. In fringier areas of its range, **R&S Harlan** had five in Mohican SF 22 Jun, and **J. Pogacnik** three in the *Lake* MPs during the period.

Pine Warbler: From outside the core range came reports through the period of three singing males in the Oak Openings (**E. Tramer**) and probable nesting in Chapin Forest MP, *Lake* (**J. Pogacnik**). Five were in Mohican 22 Jun and two in the CVNP 29 Jun (**R&S Harlan**).

Prairie Warbler: A migrant visited Magee 6 Jun (**R. Nirschl**). On the same day, a nest with three 1-2 day old young was found in a pitch pine in Clear Ck MP in *Hocking* (**J. Watts**).

Blackpoll Warbler: Late were birds at Conneaut 5 Jun (**B. Winger**), at Magee 6 Jun (**R. Nirschl**), and at Pickerel Ck WA 7 Jun (**J. Lehman**).

Cerulean Warbler: **J. McCormac** reported that this canopy-loving species flourished at Shawnee SF despite severe localized ice-storm damage from spring. Good numbers to the north included three territorial males at Mosquito WA on 29 Jun and 8 Jul (**C. Babyak**), four in Stebbin's Gulch 7 Jun (**H. Petruschke**), and seven in nw *Coshocton* 14 Jun (**L.E. Yoder**).

American Redstart: A laggard passed through Magee 6 Jun (**R. Nirschl**). **L.E. Yoder** counted a remarkable 38, nearly all males, in nw *Coshocton* 14 Jun, reckoning redstarts the most common warbler present there at the time.

Prothonotary Warbler: One was around for the 6 Jul ONWRC. **C. Bombaci** tallied 19 singing males 21 Jun in the Hoover Res area he monitors.

Worm-eating Warbler: Out of the expected range, breeding or at least yearning to, was one seen in May and still in song 24 Jul in Marie de Larme Woods in *Paulding* (**M. Dunakin**). A nest with four 5-7 day old young was found at Clear Ck MP, *Hocking* 5 Jun (**J. Watts**).

Ovenbird: Doubtless migrants were one from the 1 Jun ONWRC and another at Magee 6 Jun (**R. Nirschl**). **Northern Waterthrush:** A late migrant was in *Monroe* 1 Jun (**S&R Harlan**). During the period **J. Pogacnik** noted possible nesting at three *Lake* MPs.

Louisiana Waterthrush: In the north, seen at Stebbin's Gulch 7 Jun (**H. Petruschke**), and 7 Jul in Parma for a local record (**G. Leidy**). One was still in song 28 Jul in *Ashtabula* (**K. Metcalf**). Nest found with four young in Clear Ck MP 5 Jun (**J. Watts**).

Mourning Warbler: Half a dozen stragglers reported in early Jun, the latest 7 Jun in *Portage* (**E. Elder**). **L. Rosche** noted a territorial male in Munson Twp. *Geauga* 28 Jun into Jul for a remarkable record.

Wilson's Warbler: A male was tardy in Cincinnati 7 Jun (**A. Oliver**).

Canada Warbler: Seven apparent migrants were reported the first wk of Jun. Found at Old Man's Cave 12 Jun (**T. Shively**), another at Conkle's Hollow 24 Jun (**B. Powell**), and two in Mohican SF 22 Jun (**R&S Harlan**). Six birds including three fledglings were at Clear Ck MP 11 Jul (**B. Whan**). Through the period, **J. Pogacnik** counted seven possible or probable nestings in the *Lake* MPs.

Yellow-breasted Chat: One near Antwerp in *Paulding* through the period was of local interest (**D&M Dunakin**).

Summer Tanager: Three males were on territory in the Oak Openings through the period (**E. Tramer**), and on 7 Jul **R. Nirschl** was able to find a remarkable six in the Toledo area. **R&S Harlan** found one on 1 Jun for the *Monroe* list.

Clay-colored Sparrow: One was seen on 1 Jun near Sugarcreek, *Tuscarawas* (**J. Miller**).

Savannah Sparrow: ~Thirty were to be found at the old Coliseum site in the CVNP 15 Jun (**F. Dinkelbach**), and 15 at the VOA site in *Butler* 6 Jul (**M. Busam**).

Grasshopper Sparrow: In outlying areas of its range, **J. Lehman** reported one from Krause Rd in *Ottawa* 7 Jun, and **E. Tramer** had five in the Oak Openings 6 Jul. On 13 Jun, 14 were in a *Union* MP, where a nest with four eggs was found 22 Jul (**J. Watts**).

Henslow's Sparrow: The population at the VOA grassland in *Butler* peaked at 19, including a hatch-year bird, on 23 Jul (**M. Busam**). One was in Oak Openings MP 5 Jun (**E. Durbin**). Unusual at KPWA, two were found 14 Jul (**B. Royse**).

Swamp Sparrow: High count was 10 at Chippewa Lk in *Medina* 21 Jun (**R&S Harlan**).

White-throated Sparrow: Odd enough was a singing male 21 Jun at Gilmore Ponds (**M. Busam**).

Dark-eyed Junco: Several reports of this species came, as always, from Mohican; the high count was three 22 Jun (**R&S Harlan**). **K. Metcalf** reported 10+ territorial males at N. Chagrin MP in *Cuyahoga*. **J. Pogacnik**, noting that cool springs and summers mean good junco numbers, reported 84 territorial sites in 19 *Lake* MP's during the period.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Confirmed for *Monroe* 1 Jun (**R&S Harlan**), a pair was copulating in *Clinton* by 7 Jun (**L. Gara**), and three pairs came to a single *Logan* feeder 8 Jun (**T. Shively**). The GAASSBC counted a local record 193. **A. Vitz** banded a hatch-year bird in *Zaleski* SF way down in *Vinton* on 20 Jun.

Blue Grosbeak: A pair near the *Pickaway* airport produced three young, seen 12 Jun (**T. Shively**). The only *Adams* report was of one near the Nature Conservancy office 22 Jun (**D. Morse**). Two were reported at Crown City WA (*Lawrence/Gallia*) 25 Jun (**J. Fry**). A flurry of reports from the Oak Openings, involving as many as two adults and two first-year birds, began on 28 Jun (**R. Nirschl**) and ended 16 Jul (**E. Tramer**). A nesting attempt by a pair at a now-traditional *Holmes* site was unsuccessful (*vide* **B. Glick**).

Dickcissel: Staged an invasion of sorts, reported in 26 counties: *Butler, Champaign, Clinton, Darke, Defiance, Franklin, Gallia, Hancock, Hardin, Lawrence, Logan, Lucas, Madison, Marion, Miami, Montgomery, Ottawa, Paulding, Pickaway, Portage* (first summering record *vide* **L. Rosche**), *Ross, Wood, Tuscarawas, Union, Williams, and Wyandot*. **R. Counts** surveyed *Wyandot* with care, finding as many as 41 singing males 28 Jun. The ONWRC of 6 Jul found 20, and 15-20 were in very small quarters in *Pickaway* 12 Jun (**T. Shively**).

Bobolink: A few reported during spring along Krause Rd in *Ottawa* had dwindled to one by 7 Jun (**J. Lehman**), and on the same date 14 w of the Toledo Airport were unusual, and didn't stay (**E. Tramer**). At strongholds in the frequently visited grassland islands, the old Coliseum site in the CVNP had 60+ 15 Jun (**F. Dinkelbach**) and on 9 Jul (**M&T Romito**), and the VOA site in *Butler* boasted 50 on 6 Jul (**M. Busam**).

Eastern Meadowlark: All too sparse in agricultural country, but the VOA had 50 on 6 Jul and 42 on 16 Jul (both **M. Busam**).

Western Meadowlark: An excellent year for this seldom-detected species. Spring's male in Whitehouse, *Lucas* flirted with observers through 18 Jul (**M. Anderson**). A male remained in ONWR 7 Jun (**J. Lehman**), detected in the general area for over a month afterwards (m obs). **E. Durbin** discovered another in *Fulton* 24 Jun. These followed the usual pattern of a lonely male singing himself hoarse, but one at the Toledo airport 1 Jul was accompanied by a female; both adults were carrying food, and nesting all but certain (**J. Watts**). **C. Anderson** found another in *Wood* 5 Jul, seen at least through 8 Jul (**M. Anderson**). Another singer was in *Wyandot* 13 Jul (**R. Counts**). Birders in the western counties who learn the loud and distinctive song of this species may increase our knowledge of its abundance in Ohio.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: As in spring, not a single solitary report of this species.

Brewer's Blackbird: **R&S Harlan** offered full details of a male seen 15 Jun in the Flats in Cleveland. Second documented Jun record.

Orchard Oriole: Big numbers of orchards came from *Monroe* (30+, **R&S Harlan**) on 1 Jun, 33 from the GAASSBC, and 13 on the 6 Jul OWNRC.

Purple Finch: Skimpily seen as usual. **K. Metcalf** reported a female at a N. Chagrin MP feeder 7 Jun. **R&S Harlan** singles at Mohican 22 Jun and in the CVNP 29 Jun, and **J. Pogacnik** reckoned that seven were possible/probable nesters in the *Lake* MP's during the period.

Pine Siskin: Nary a word was heard of siskins.

Contributors

We are grateful to the following observers who made their sightings reports available: Joe Agius, Chuck Anderson, Matt Anderson, Lynda Andrews, Carole Babyak, Erich Baumgardner, Jacob Beechy, Ned Bixler, Mike Bolton, Charlie Bombaci, David Brinkman, Jeff Brown, Lori Brumbaugh, Mike Busam, Neill Cade, Allen Chartier, Ann Chasar, Bob Conlon, Colleen Cousino, Sam Corbo, Rick Counts, Gary Cowell, Sheri DeHaven, Fred Dinkelbach, Micki Dunakin, Eric Durbin, Curt Dusthimer, Elinor Elder, Tim Fairweather, Bob Foppe, Chris Followay, Jim Fry, Larry Gara, Paul Gardner, Rick Gardner, Bruce Glick, Rob Harlan, Sandy Harlan, Betty Hardesty, Andrea Haslage, Hank Harris, Sally Harris, Dave Hochadel, Dave Horn, Sylvain Houpert, Ron Huffman, Bill Hull, Pauline Kasserman, Ned Keller, Tom Kemp, Ev Kitchin, David Kline, Bob Lacker, Gabe Leidy, Jay Lehman, Tim Leslie, Greg Links, Doreene Linzell, Paula Lozano, Susan Marengo, Bernard Master, Jim McCormac, Gary Meszaros, Brian Miller, Greg Miller, Jeffrey Miller, Jeremiah Miller, Mike Miller, Morris Miller, Reuben Miller, Ben Morrison, Donald Morse, Rick Nirschl, Ann Oliver, Doug Overacker, Anne Paschall, Haans Petruschke, Ed Pierce, Don Plant, John Pogacnik, Bob Powell, Frank Renfrow, Scott Reeves, Steve Richards, Bryn Roberts, Paul Rodewald, Randel Rogers, Mary Anne Romito, Tom Romito, Larry Rosche, Bob Royse, David Russell, Dan Sanders, Willie Sarno, Ed Schlabach, Robert Schlabach, Joe Sedransk, Ron Sempier, Troy Shively, Elaine Snively, Su Snyder, Pat Soehnlén, Gene Stauffer, Mike Sweeney, Tim Tolford, Elliot Tramer, Andy A. Troyer, Jane Van Coney, Andrew Vitz, Suzanne Wagner, John Watts, Bill Whan, Randy White, Courtenay Willis, Ben Winger, John Yochum, Aden Yoder, Leroy E. Yoder, Perry Yoder, Sean Zadar. We gratefully acknowledge help from internet resources managed by Chuck Anderson, Ned Keller, Vic Fazio, and Greg Miller, as well as from the editors of the *Bobolink*.



Coshocton County's Woodbury Wildlife Area is home to many grassland species, including this Henslow's sparrow. Photo taken by Bob Royse in July 2003.

Further Afield

Rob Harlan

3361 Columbia Woods Drive, Apt. F, Norton, OH 44203-5778
kiskadee96@hotmail.com

Back in the Summer 2002 issue of *The Ohio Cardinal* (25(4):181-85), we began a series discussing the rare birds of Ohio and, hopefully, how to find them. We continue that series here. After all, an Ohio state list is only as good as the rare species that appear on it. Therefore, we have combed through the 10 most recent published years of *The Ohio Cardinal* for each season (Spring 1993-2002, Summer 1993-2002, Autumn 1993-2002, and Winter 1993/94-2002/03), and then combined that with personal experience and perhaps a bit of wishful thinking into brief accounts covering another batch of rare Ohio birds. The species we address here are those graphed only as "rare" in the first edition of the *Ohio Bird Records Committee Checklist of the Birds of Ohio* (ODNR-Division of Natural Areas and Preserves, June 2002). In the near future, the Committee hopes to have an updated version available online. As defined in the *Checklist*, a "rare" species "normally occurs annually, but with only a few records on average." Another term we often use is "casual", which the *Checklist* defines as "not observed annually, but with a recognized pattern of occurrence." All uses of the words "rare" and "casual" that follow conform to these definitions. In our first installment of this series, we covered red-throated loon, red-necked grebe, eared grebe, American white pelican, little blue heron, and yellow-crowned night-heron. This time around, we handle greater white-fronted goose, brant, Eurasian wigeon, harlequin duck, white-winged scoter, and long-tailed duck. That's a lot to handle, so I suggest we begin immediately.

Greater White-fronted Goose

As far as rare Ohio species go, the Arctic-nesting greater white-fronted goose seems to become less rare all the time. As migrants, they were casual at best in Ohio into the 1970s, but have subsequently increased so that a determined wild goose-chaser can usually expect to see this species every year in Ohio. Many migrants will linger for extended periods of a week or more when feeding is good, and when found are usually mixed in with large flocks of Canada geese. Although searching through these goose flocks can be tiresome, it can also pay off. Scan especially for tight groups of smaller geese, perhaps separated a bit from the main group. Size differences are often apparent even in flight. Before you rush off, a reminder that it is usually easier to track down a stake-out white-fronted rather than hoping to find one on your own, but in the end they all count the same.

This species has been reported at least once in each of the 10 most recent winters, ranging from one bird to over 100, and with a notable upward trend since 1996-97. Although few white-fronteds have ever actually wintered in Ohio, late fall migrants and early spring migrants also occur during the December through February winter reporting period. Fall migrants are quite irregular, ranging from zero birds in four years between 1993-2002, up to over 150 birds. They are casually

FURTHER AFIELD

found from the last quarter of October through the first quarter of November, and then upgrade to rare for the middle two quarters of November. Late fall migrants then trend down to casual from the last quarter of November through the second quarter of January, although early January records have increased enough to warrant a very rare status. There is a distinct lack of records from the last two quarters of January, but they pick up again as rare spring migrants in the last quarter of February. They remain rare through the third quarter of March, and then fall back to casual through the third quarter of April. During the spring seasons of 1993-2002, individuals reported across Ohio ranged from zero birds (once) through 24 birds. Beware of any sightings outside of these periods, being especially wary of domestic geese, as described below.

In North America, the greater white-fronted goose is mostly a central and western species; their records however are surprisingly widespread in Ohio, although tending toward the western and central counties. In the past 10 years, they have been found in at least 30 counties. Omitting two oddball flocks of 31 birds in Licking County and 23 birds in Guernsey County, only 15-20% of white-fronteds have been found in eastern Ohio during this period. If I required a white-fronted goose for Ohio, unquestionably I'd head to the vicinity of Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area (Wyandot and Marion counties), home to an abundance of Canada geese and site of more white-fronted goose reports than any other in recent years. This would include Ohio's largest-ever recorded flock, of 113 birds on 27 November 1998. Other areas with multiple recent reports include Clinton and Warren counties in southwestern Ohio, Franklin County in central Ohio, Wayne and Lake counties in the northeast, and Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge (Ottawa and Lucas counties) in the northwest.

Unexpectedly, domestic barnyard geese (mostly greylag types) can appear superficially similar to white-fronteds, and may trip up the unwary. As an aid in sorting through the two, bear in mind that barnyard geese usually appear bottom-heavy or pot-bellied, are very vocal, including much honking, and tend to favor barns and other rustic structures. You may also wish to distinguish barnyard geese from most demolition derby drivers, who curiously share many of these same traits.

Brant

There can be no doubt about it—those in need of an Ohio brant should head for the Lake Erie shoreline, stretching from Erie County to Ashtabula County, and plan to do so from the last quarter of October through the third quarter of December. Even within this brief span, there is a definite spike in activity in the second quarter of November; almost three times as many reports have come from this period than from any other quarter-month over the past 10 autumn seasons. I'm pretty sure I'd look then. After the second quarter of December, brants become casual through the winter (almost exclusively as visitors, rather than winterers) and remain so into early April. Keep in mind that only eight individual brants have been seen during the combined springs of 1993 through 2002. Focus on the fall.

And focus on the lakefront. Brants heavily favor the immediate Lake Erie shoreline, when not seen on or over the Lake itself. They can often be found grazing in parks on grassy lakefront lawns or foraging on lakefront mudflats. In recent years, the mudflats at Conneaut Harbor (Ashtabula County) have become a hotspot for this species, with roughly 90 individuals reported there and nearby. Heading west along the Lake, Lake County has generated 80+ birds, and Erie County almost 60, during the autumns of 1993-2002. All other counties in the state have totaled a paltry 11 birds, and only three of those were inland.

Don't plan to spend much time searching goose flocks for brants—they show little tendency to gather in feeding flocks with other goose species in Ohio. Greater white-fronted geese, yes; snow geese, yes; Canada geese, most alarmingly yes; and even the casual Ross's geese, all tend to gather with other geese, but not brants. Instead, they prefer coastal saltwater habitats, while the other species are more upland and field oriented. Since Ohio is rather thin on saltwater habitats, brants tend to move on quickly, but sometimes will stick tight for a few days to refuel before moving on to the central Atlantic coast to spend the winter.

During the fall, watch the weather maps for northeasterly winds, another scarce commodity on Lake Erie. Although I don't have hard data to back it up, in my experience northeasterly winds seem to push rare species into Ohio; species that would normally be expected to migrate to our east. I suspect brants fall into this category. Ohio's best brant flight ever came on the strong northeasterly winds of 11 November 1985, when several groups of birders each recorded 200-300 fly-by brants at Huron and Vermilion in Erie County. That was one wild day, 18 years ago. Did I mention the 600 black scoters that also flew by?

Eurasian Wigeon

Here is certainly the rarest of the rare species we are covering in this issue, only recently removed from the Ohio Bird Records Committee Review List. Since 1993, it has been found almost exclusively in the spring, so much so that outside the mid-March through late April spring migration window it should be considered casual at best. Although the OBRC *Checklist* graphs this species as rare for all of March and April, and into the first quarter of May, I would now restrict it even further to rare beginning with the third quarter of March through the end of April. The first three quarters of April seem to form a long peak, as spring waterfowl, especially American wigeons, move through Ohio.

Be especially aware of large wigeon flocks, as male Eurasians will sometimes lurk in their midst. Surprisingly, the rich reddish-brown heads of the male Eurasians aren't always as easy to detect as one might think, and flocks require careful scrutiny. Even suspected Eurasians may turn into Eurasian X American wigeon hybrids, a form that has been identified in Ohio more than once. Female Eurasians must surely be overlooked, but since female Eurasian and American wigeons appear so similar, who's to say? The rufous-morph female Eurasian has been identified here at least twice, so keep that in mind.

Eurasian wigeons have been reported from at least seven counties since 1993, with the western Lake Erie marshes producing the lion's share. Actually, about two-thirds of Ohio reports during this period have come from Lucas, Ottawa, and Erie counties, especially Ottawa NWR. The dikes forming the large impounded areas there allow scrutiny from many angles, and it's a good idea to check as many angles as you can. If you'd rather sit in your vehicle and look rather than hike the dikes, you can do no better than scope out Medusa Marsh in Erie County, on the southern border of Sandusky Bay.

Harlequin Duck

In Ohio, the harlequin duck is essentially a bird of two habitats—rocky Lake Erie shores and jetties, and rapidly flowing rivers. Only a handful of Ohio harlequins have ever been found away from these settings. Even within these narrow habitat requirements, harlequins have chosen their favorite haunts even more specifically—the rocky shores of Lake County, and the rapidly flowing rivers of southwestern Ohio.

Amazingly, since 1993 almost *five times* as many harlequins have been reported from Lake County than from any other county, with most sightings emanating from Eastlake Power Plant, Headlands Beach, Fairport Harbor, and Lakeshore Reservation. Although quite a few of these have been fly-bys, many have also set up shop for extended periods. Actually, any likely-looking habitat along the Lake Erie shore from Erie County east through Ashtabula County is worth a peek. In the southwest, Montgomery County seems to attract more than its quota of harlequins, particularly in the rapids of the Great Miami River in or near Dayton. Their attraction to rapidly flowing rivers should be no surprise, as mountain streams are their preferred nesting habitat, but the secret of their attraction to southwestern Ohio is anyone's guess. The Maumee River rapids in northwestern Ohio may also prove to be a steady Ohio choice.

As fall migrants, harlequin ducks are rare throughout November. They then drop off considerably in December, but pick up again as winter visitors and residents in January through the first quarter of February. After this, they might better be termed as casual through mid-March, mostly representing a few lingering winterers. True spring migrants are almost accidental. Birds seen outside the late fall through early spring period are always highly suspect as potential escapees, especially if they feed from your hand.

While adult males are about as easily identified as any bird has a right to be, relatively few adult males are found in Ohio. Immatures and females seen here tend to outnumber adult males by somewhere between two- to three-to-one. Watch especially for these immatures and females amongst near-shore buffleheads, focusing in particular on the facial markings, which can sometimes even be differentiated on flying birds. Female and young harlequins also have all-dark wings; you should be able to pick up some white on fly-by buffleheads, assuming you're close enough. Be close enough before calling a fly-by harlequin.

White-winged Scoter

Although once considered the most numerous scoter in Ohio, white-winged scoters have now fallen to the third position numerically, behind surf and black scoters. Even so, they are often still readily findable, albeit in very small numbers, when a generalized scoter flock is present. Just look for the ones with white on the wings.

The first edition of the OBRC *Checklist* graphs white-wingeds as rare in the third quarter of October; I think I'd push their fall arrival back even further to the beginning of November. For the entire month of November they remain steady but rare, and have averaged about 16 birds per fall season from 1993 through 2002. They remain rare but in slightly lesser numbers through the winter, but pick up again, presumably as spring migrants, with the third quarter of February. They remain as rare spring migrants all the way through mid-May. During their spring movements, peak numbers appear in the first two quarters of March. Although they have averaged about eight birds per spring period from 1993-2002, they are irregular; in four of those years, only one bird each year has been reported across the state.

But where to look? Since 1993, roughly three times as many white-wingeds have been found on Lake Erie as inland. Lake and Cuyahoga counties seem your best bet, followed by Lorain and Erie. My best guess would be to search through the scoter flocks that have taken to lingering off Rocky River City Park in Cuyahoga County just west of Cleveland. Beginning in late October and through November, this park is always worth a stop. Rocky River City Park is not to be confused with Rocky River MetroPark, also on Cleveland's west side, but well inland. Although white-winged scoters may have little use for Rocky River MetroPark, it's a favorite of mine, whether the scoters like it or not.

If you want to look inland, be my guest: white-winged scoters have been seen in 20+ inland counties over the past 10 years. Inland birds are rather widely distributed, with 10-20 individuals seen in each of the northwestern, southwestern, central, and northeastern regions of the state. As with most other waterfowl, the south-central, east-central, and southeastern counties are hardly scoter magnets; if my math is correct, a grand total of three white-wingeds has been seen in these regions since 1993. This is in contrast to about 220 birds seen on Lake Erie in the same time period. Don't say I didn't warn you.

Long-tailed Duck


I still prefer to call them oldsquaws. But then again, I also prefer marsh hawk, snowflake, and butcher bird, if anyone asks. Also worth asking is how the long-tailed duck, so very unpredictable in numbers from year to year, can be so predictable in their timing. In the fall, they begin to appear as rare in the fourth quarter of October, but virtually none are found before that. They remain rare throughout the winter as residents and visitors, and then through the spring until mid-April, when virtually all head north by 15 April in one fell swoop, or swell foop, as my mother likes to say. On average, numbers remain remarkably consistent all the way from

late October through mid-February, then dip somewhat, only to rise to a very sharp peak during the last quarter of March. This seems to be the best time of the year to find a long-tailed oldsquaw duck.

Numbers of migrants vary widely from year to year, possibly due to weather-related groundings. For the 10 consecutive springs beginning with 1993, my best accounting reveals 59 birds, then 35, 65, 19, 8, 18, 15, 9, 4, and 45 birds found across the state. For the 10 consecutive falls beginning with 1993, I come up with 12 birds, then 5, 39, 5, 8, 9, 14, 1, and about 40 birds found. On average, they are still rare though, and are certainly not particularly easy to find; in a good flight, you might come across a clump of 15 on one lake, but then none the rest of the day.

In the fall, usually more than twice as many birds are seen on Lake Erie (mostly in Lake and Erie counties) rather than on inland lakes. During winter, numbers are about equally distributed between Lake Erie and inland. In the spring, their distribution changes again, with roughly three times as many birds being seen inland versus on Lake Erie. I'd like to know why, but I haven't a clue.

Certainly, the northeastern inland counties of Summit, Portage, and Geauga are the places to look, hoarding about half of the state's inland spring birds since 1993. Specific sites that have attracted large flocks are Nimisila and Summit Lakes in Summit County, West Branch and Walborn Reservoirs in Portage County, and La Due Reservoir in Geauga County. If I had only one shot, I'd try a tour of all these sites and more during the last week of March or first week of April; scour as many sites as possible to increase your chances of success.

That's certainly enough to digest for one issue. Next time, whenever that might be, we hope to cover northern goshawk, golden eagle, king rail, and begin on the shorebirds. But first, you've got lots of waterfowl to look for. Go to it. 



Franklin County's nesting yellow-crowned night-herons produced several young birds this season, including this duo. Photo by Tim Leslie on 9 July 2003.

Golden Eagles in Ohio: An Overview of the Species in Ohio and Eastern North America

Mike Busam

7577 Whitehall Circle West, West Chester, OH 45069

mjb@schafter.cc

Golden eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* have never been common or easy to find in Ohio. The ornithological record for the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is based primarily on birds shot by farmers or caught in leg traps. Thus it was as trophies that most golden eagle records reached Ohio's early ornithologists. The majority of birds collected during this period were immature eagles, and their unweariness in the presence of humans may explain the relatively large proportion that ended up as mounted specimens. Milton B. Trautman described an up-close view of an immature golden eagle at Buckeye Lake in December 1928, and commented on "the apparent tameness of this eagle" that "seems characteristic of this species in Ohio. I have noted this tameness or stupidity in 2 other immatures seen elsewhere in the state, and other observers have likewise noted a lack of wariness." He added that he knew of seven specimens of immature golden eagles taken in Ohio between 1922 and 1933 (Trautman 1940).

However unwary, golden eagles were hard to come by in more recent years as well, with an average of five to eight sightings per decade from the 1940s through the 1970s (Peterjohn 2001). Most of these sightings came from northern Ohio, though golden eagles were also found on occasion throughout the state, primarily in the central and western counties.

The number of golden eagles observed in Ohio and throughout eastern North America began to trend upwards in the 1980s, and by the late 1990s Ohio birders were reporting five to 15 or more annually (Peterjohn 2001), including overwintering eagles in southeastern Ohio. Regional hawk watches such as Holiday Beach in southern Ontario, the Southeastern Michigan Raptor Research sites south of Detroit, and the Black Swamp Bird Observatory spring migration hawk watch centered at Magee Marsh, all now regularly report numbers of golden eagles unheard of a mere 20 years ago. The increase is likely the result of improving productivity among eastern Canadian breeding populations. Some attribute the increase in golden eagles in part to the banning of DDT in 1972 as well as the "banning of strychnine poisoning for Coyotes and Wolves, reduced use of leg-hold traps to capture furbearers, increased restrictions on guns, and greater public awareness and appreciation of raptors" (Wheeler 2003).

Most of eastern North America's breeding golden eagles were probably born in Labrador and Quebec. "An estimated 200 pairs and 400 juveniles and subadults inhabit Quebec in the summer. Virtually all pairs are found north of a line from the southern tip of James Bay east to Sept-Îles," with the largest strongholds on "the

east shore of Hudson Bay and on the Ungava Peninsula" (Wheeler 2003). Breeding has not been confirmed in the Maritime Provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, but summering birds have been sighted in New Brunswick and the Cape Breton Peninsula of Nova Scotia (Wheeler 2003).

In the eastern United States, golden eagles are known historically to have bred in only a handful of places and only in small numbers in the eastern states of Maine, New Hampshire, and New York (Wheeler 2003). For all practical purposes, these breeding populations no longer exist. Golden eagles in Maine last attempted to breed in 1997, but were unsuccessful; the last successful pair of nesting golden eagles in New York was recorded in 1970, with a failed attempt in 1980. It was a huge surprise when a pair of goldens nested in Michigan's Kalkaska County in 1997. They have not nested there since. Golden eagles are seen occasionally in summer in the southern Appalachian Mountains, but no proof of breeding has ever been recorded. A pair of golden eagles from a Georgia reintroduction program nested in Tennessee in 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000, and 2001, while a pair from the same program kept Georgia on their minds, nesting in the Peach State during the 1990s (Wheeler 2003).

Golden Eagle Migration in Eastern North America

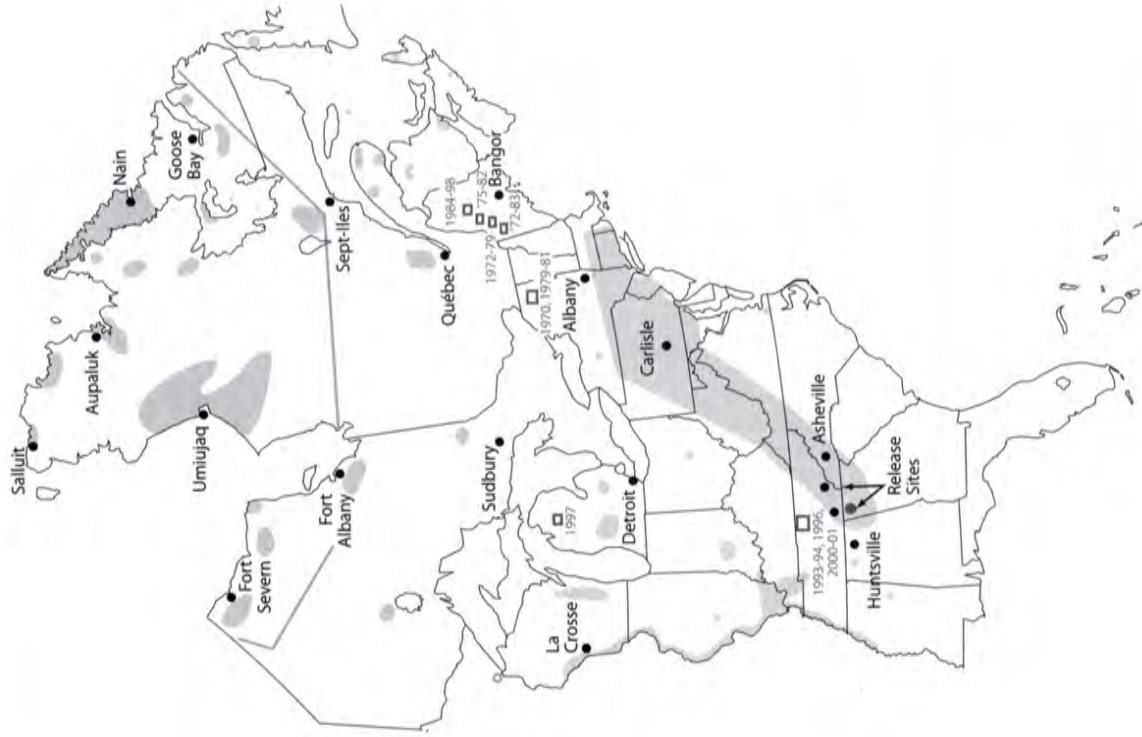
Golden eagles are short- to moderate-distance migrants, with juveniles migrating before subadults and adults. Though young birds from the small population of reintroduced eagles in Georgia and Tennessee do disperse from natal areas, they do not migrate *per se* (Wheeler 2003). This means that the golden eagles that migrate through Ohio or winter here are most likely of Canadian origin. Most migrating golden eagles use the Appalachian corridor to reach their wintering grounds, but a few migrate down the Mid-Atlantic Coast or around the Great Lakes (Wheeler 2003).

In general, spring migration of golden eagles in eastern North America involves retracing northward the southbound routes followed in fall. Adult migration peaks in March; juveniles and subadults peak in April, and stragglers are possible well into May (Wheeler 2003).

Golden Eagle Migration in Western Lake Erie

A number of Great Lakes migrant golden eagles reach Ohio each fall. Fall hawk watch stations along western Lake Erie such as Holiday Beach in Essex County in southwestern Ontario, and the Lake Erie Metropark and Pointe Mouillee State Game Area watches in Michigan just south of Detroit sometimes record the first juvenile goldens of the year in mid-September, but more typically observe juveniles beginning in early or mid-October. The movement of juvenile golden eagles along Lake Erie peaks in late October, and numbers of subadults and adults are strongest in November, with a few passing through possibly even into December (Wheeler 2003).

To give some sense of how many golden eagles move through western Lake Erie in the fall, consider some figures from Southeastern Michigan Raptor Research (SMRR). SMRR president Paul Cypher reports that the organization's counters



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Map by John Economy, taken from the new guide *Raptors of Eastern North America* by Brian K. Wheeler, Princeton University Press, 2003.

tallied an average of 60 golden eagles each fall between 1992 and 1998. In 1999, the numbers exploded—as was the case in hawk watches in other areas of the eastern United States and Canada—and SMRR counted a record 245 golden eagles that year. They broke that record a year later with 252 in 2000, followed by lower but still robust totals of 174 golden eagles during the fall 2001 season, and 110 in fall 2002 (Paul Cypher, pers. comm., SMRR web site). Cypher explains that during this period a “significant number of birds recorded were non-adult.” As an example “in [2001] 8% were adults, 32% were unknown and the rest were non-adult” (Paul Cypher, pers. comm.).

Golden eagle numbers from the hawk watch at Holiday Beach, which sits on the north shore of Lake Erie in Ontario, are lower than those recorded by SMRR for the same period, but mirror the general pattern. Holiday Beach hawk watch counters recorded 28 golden eagles in 1998 followed by 134 during the boom year of 1999, 103 in 2000, 85 in 2001, and 66 in 2002 (Holiday Beach Migration Observatory web site).

Spring migration in western Lake Erie is not so thoroughly documented as fall migration. However, there have been efforts in the western Great Lakes region to set up spring hawk watches (Mark Shieldcastle, pers. comm.). The Johnson Beach spring hawk watch at Indiana Dunes on the south shore of Lake Michigan, for instance, records an average of one golden eagle every two years, mostly in April (Indiana Audubon web site). Another spring site hawk watch site is on the southern shore of Lake Huron in Port Huron, Michigan.

The Niagara Peninsula spring hawk watch on the Niagara escarpment just south of Lake Ontario is a long-standing spring hawk watch, operating since 1975. In spring 2002, the Niagara Peninsula watch recorded 8 golden eagles, a number “very close to the recent and long-term average.” For 2001, they report “Golden Eagle numbers were down from a record high of 13 [in 2000] to just 6.” But the Niagara Peninsula counters don’t consider this indicative of a trend, since numbers of golden eagles “tend to vary considerably from year to year.” (Dieroff 2001, 2002).

The Whitefish Point Bird Observatory (WPBO) in Michigan’s upper peninsula between Lake Superior and Whitefish Bay has an active spring hawk watch. In 2003, for instance, the Observatory’s counters tallied 75 golden eagles between March and the end of May. In 2002 counters observed 44 golden eagles. In 2001 and 2000 the Observatory counted 70 and 95 golden eagles respectively (WPBO web site).

In Ohio, spring migration of golden eagles generally involves a handful of birds passing through western Ohio anywhere from February through early May (Peterjohn 2001). For example, the spring migration hawk watch by Black Swamp Bird Observatory (BSBO), a rare example of a long-running spring hawk watch in the western Lake Erie region, reported three golden eagles in 2001, and five in both 2002 and 2003 from sites between Sandusky Bay and Toledo. BSBO’s principal hawk watch site is located at Magee Marsh.

The Winter Status of Golden Eagles in Eastern North America

Golden eagles pretty much desert Canada, crossing the US border, during winter. Wintering golden eagles in eastern North America are concentrated in a range extending from southern New England south into the central and southern Appalachian mountains of North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. The eagles prefer montane regions in this portion of the Appalachians. Golden eagles also "regularly winter in isolated areas" in the Midwest, including Wisconsin, southern Michigan, western and southern Illinois, and southern Indiana (Wheeler 2003), and, of course, Ohio. Numbers of over-wintering golden eagles in the Midwest are always lower than in the core portion of the eagles' eastern North American winter range. Sporadic wintering of golden eagles also occurs in western Kentucky, western Tennessee, and Louisiana (Wheeler 2003).

One spot Ohio birders visited in an attempt to see wintering goldens, prior to the discovery of the eagles at The Wilds, was Lake Monroe in Monroe County, Indiana—nonetheless a long drive from Ohio. Another location in Indiana for finding occasional golden eagles in winter is in "Parke County [west central Indiana] near the Wabash River and Sugar Creek, where upwards of 75+ bald eagles winter and a few pairs nest" (Don Gorney, pers. comm.). Such meetings of the two North American species ought to provide opportunities to work on separating immature golden eagles from subadult bald eagles! In southern Michigan, three to five golden eagles winter most years (Allen Chartier, pers. comm.). One Michigan location that has hosted wintering golden eagles, and not too far away from many Ohio birders, is the Allegan State Game Area in Allegan County (Johnson 1999).

Winter Status of Ohio Golden Eagles

Ohio golden eagles in old accounts are best considered transients or accidental residents from December through February (Peterjohn 2001). Most winter records from Ohio involve one eagle, occasionally two, and are concentrated in the northern half of the state, with a few records in the southern half of the state. A record from February 1904 of eight golden eagles perched on ice along the Lake Erie shore (Baird 1905) sounds suspiciously like a group of subadult bald eagles. Separating golden eagles from subadult bald eagles at a distance was often a tricky identification problem in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and, in some cases still is today, despite advances in optics and increased knowledge of the different plumages involved. Concerns that golden eagles are being misidentified, coupled with the fact that not all observers provide documentation for their sightings, obscures the true status of golden eagles in Ohio so far as many authorities are concerned. However, enough golden eagles are being documented thoroughly or viewed by multiple—even numerous—observers to convince even the most conservative minds that golden eagle sightings are now increasing in number relative to the past 100-plus years.

Recent Fall and Winter Golden Eagle Sightings In Ohio

The region's big year for golden eagles at western Lake Erie hawk watches was echoed in Ohio, where a noticeably strong fall period netted six sightings between 24 October and 8 November 1999, all involving immature or subadult birds, followed by "unprecedented numbers of documented sightings," consisting of at least nine golden eagles during the winter 1999-2000 season. Interestingly, in addition to an eagle that wintered at The Wilds, winter reports came to light from 9 February of an immature bird near Chillicothe, and another eagle was photographed near Lake Hope in Vinton County on 28 February (*The Ohio Cardinal* 23:1 and 23:2).

Fall 2000 was another good period for golden eagles in Ohio, with five birds reported between 19 October and 26 November (*The Ohio Cardinal* 24:1). There were three records from winter 2001: two from The Wilds and one from the Chandlersville (Muskingum County) Christmas Bird Count (*The Ohio Cardinal* 24:2). In fall 2001, four birds were reported between 30 October and 11 November. A fifth bird was reported in Noble County on 17 September 2001, twelve days before the SMMR's counters recorded their first golden eagle of the season (*The Ohio Cardinal* 25:1). Winter 2001-02 saw a wing-shot bird on 8 December in Morrow County, but no birds were reported from The Wilds until a single bird on 9 March (*The Ohio Cardinal* 25:2 and 25:3). It's assumed this bird over-wintered. Catching us up to the present, there was one fall report of two golden eagles in Lucas County on 23 October 2002, and three birds, one adult and two immature, over-wintered at The Wilds 2002-03 (*The Ohio Cardinal* 26:1 and 26:2). The majority of golden eagle sightings in Ohio involve immature or subadult birds.

The Wilds' Wintering Goldens

Today, Ohio birders enjoy an unprecedented era so far as golden eagles are concerned. Not only are they finding more golden eagles during spring and fall migration, as well as during the winter, than ever before, but since the winter of 1996-97, golden eagles have over-wintered in and around The Wilds in Muskingum County in southeastern Ohio. Prior to this time, there is little hard evidence for over-wintering golden eagles in Ohio, though a pair may have wintered near Toledo in Lucas County during the winter of 1947-48 (Mayfield 1948). Perhaps other golden eagles might have stuck around longer during Ohio winters of decades past, but they tended to end up caught in leg traps or shot and stuffed. As mentioned above, getting shot is still an occupational hazard for golden eagles: the wing-shot golden eagle from Morrow County in December 2001 was eventually picked up by Ohio Division of Wildlife personnel, but its damaged left wing had to be amputated (*The Ohio Cardinal* 25:2). And with wingspans of six to seven feet, electrocution from accidental contact with utility lines while perching on poles is another hazard golden eagles face, as was evident when an electrocuted golden eagle turned up—or dropped dead—in Adams County in January 1992 (*The Ohio Cardinal* 15:2).

In a way, the golden eagles of The Wilds have become part of the folklore of Ohio birders. And, as is often the case with folklore, the actual history behind the

story is muddled enough that today nobody knows for certain how many winters the birds have been visiting this large grassland situated atop a reclaimed strip mine in Muskingum County. David St. John first reported one wintering at The Wilds in February 1997 (Vic Fazio, pers. comm.). Golden eagles were apparently seen by Wilds employees during the winters of 1997-98 and 1998-99, but documentation of The Wilds' wintering goldens didn't occur until the winter of 1999-2000 when David St. John photographed an immature and Bill Murphy provided written documentation of an adult (Fazio, pers. comm.). During the winter of 2002-03, as many as three golden eagles (two immature and one adult or near-adult) could be found at one time at The Wilds until mid-March. Numerous Ohio birders were able to make the trip to see at least one golden eagle; and as is often the case, "good" birds bring more birders, and additional reports of The Wilds' eagles throughout the winter season of 2002-03 (and one hopes in subsequent winters) should help us better understand the winter status of the species in Ohio.

Finding Golden Eagles in Ohio During Migration and Winter

Birders who wish to see golden eagles in Ohio have a few different strategies to choose from. Here's the Cliff's Notes version: 1) Pay regular visits to the Magee Marsh Hawk Watch during spring migration, look up in the sky and wait, 2) Visit the Oak Openings region in late-October or early-November, look up in the sky and wait, 3) Wait for someone to report goldens at The Wilds during the winter, drive out there, look up in the sky or across the horizon, and wait.

During spring migration, a handful of golden eagles generally pass through northwest Ohio. The odds are against running into one on any given day, but the Black Swamp Bird Observatory does record them most springs at their hawk watch sites, including the main site at Magee Marsh. As is the case at the fall hawk watches in western Lake Erie, the BSBO spring hawk watch "seem[s] to be seeing [golden eagles] with more regularity," according to Mark Shieldcastle. The experience of BSBO hawk watchers in spring is similar to that of observers at fall sites—that is, golden eagles migrate in the late afternoon (Mark Shieldcastle, pers. comm.). So catching sight of one in Ohio in the spring requires setting aside time and focusing one's attention—perhaps even giving up on warblers and songbirds for a day or two—in order to improve one's odds.

The chance to see migrating golden eagles in the fall increases considerably, especially in northwest Ohio. Birders would probably benefit from keeping track of the reported daily totals from SMRR <www.smrr.net> and the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory <www.hbmo.org> posted on the internet. But this will be of limited benefit because while daily reports indicate when birds are moving, it's not necessarily the case that one could track down tomorrow in northwest Ohio eagles seen today in Michigan or Ontario. Still, birders can check the pulse of migration by following regional hawk watches on the internet.

The prime site for golden eagles in Ohio is in the Oak Openings region in western Lucas County. Tom Kemp compiled 28 golden eagle sightings from western Lucas County from the years 1988 through 1998. Birds were sighted

between 19 October and 25 November, with 22 of the sightings occurring between 27 October and 11 November. Of the 28 birds tallied in this 10-year period, 20 were juveniles or subadults (Kemp 1997).

The typical day for golden eagles to pass through Lucas County had westerly winds, with 22 of 28 birds seen on days with at least some west wind. Additionally, all but three of the eagles from Kemp's sample were afternoon migrants, in keeping with their apparent preference for afternoon flights during migration. Kemp advises "to add this species to your state list, bundle up in your warmest clothes, and choose a spot with a good view of the northern sky; try the corner of Giridham and Reed Rds., in the Oak Openings or areas near Toledo Express Airport" (Kemp 1997).

With the presence of over-wintering birds at The Wilds in recent years, it's easier today than at any time in Ohio birding history to see golden eagles. As is so often the case with rare or uncommon birds, the attraction of The Wilds is the landscape. During migration and in the winter, golden eagles are attracted to "semi-open montane regions, especially areas with open 'bald' landscapes," and to a lesser extent, "dry or wet semi-open lowland regions with meadows, rivers, lakes, and marshes." They often share such areas with bald eagles (Wheeler 2003).

The Wilds is nearly 10,000 acres in size, and sits atop reclaimed strip mines in Muskingum County, southeast of Zanesville. Much of the property is open grassland. According to its website, The Wilds "manages approximately 6,000 acres [of non-native grassland," but plans are apparently underway to replace "large sections with Ohio-genotype tall grass prairie" (The Wilds web site). It will be interesting to see what effects management practices of grasslands at The Wilds will have on both breeding and wintering birds in the area.

In the winter of 2002-03, most golden eagle sightings in The Wilds were along Zion Ridge Road and International Road. This might change year to year, assuming that goldens continue to winter at The Wilds, but there should be plenty of information available on various birder "grapevines." The Wilds is also a good spot in winter to catch sight of rough-legged hawks, northern harriers, short-eared owls, and the occasional large African mammal, so even if one doesn't see a golden eagle on a trip to the area, there ought to be something to look at during the visit.

Historically, southeastern Ohio would have had little appeal to over-wintering raptors or breeding grassland birds, but years of surface mining and other land uses have left huge tracts of open land in this formerly wooded part of the state. In addition to the 10,000-acre Wilds property, there are four state wildlife areas in southeastern Ohio encompassing over 61,000 acres, much of it open grassland or mixed successional shrublands, grasslands, wetlands, and lakes. Any of the following sites, as well as other areas in the vicinity, would be worth checking for golden eagles and other raptors in winter: the 11,171-acre Crown City Wildlife Area along the Gallia/Lawrence county line; the 14,300-acre Egypt Valley Wildlife Area in Belmont County; Tri-Valley Wildlife Area's 16,200 acres in Muskingum County; and the 19,000 acres of Woodbury Wildlife Area in Coshocton County (McCormac 1999). In addition to designated parks and wildlife areas, there are additional

reclaimed strip mining sites in southeastern Ohio between St. Clairsville in Belmont County and McConnellsville in Morgan County (Al Parker, pers. comm.). It's likely, too, that southeastern Ohio has any number of additional areas that might be suitable for golden eagles in winter.

An organized and concerted effort by birders running winter raptor counts in southeastern Ohio might turn up a number of wintering golden eagles and other raptors in places where they had previously not been known to winter. Such an effort, if under taken at least once in January, would also be of benefit to the ongoing Ohio Winter Bird Atlas project.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Brian K. Wheeler for generously sending and allowing me to use as a reference the golden eagle species account from his upcoming book *Raptors of Eastern North America: The Wheeler Guide*, due out in September 2003 from Princeton University Press. John Economidy, who worked on the maps for *Raptors of Eastern North America* and the companion volume *Raptors of Western North America: The Wheeler Guide* (also due for release in September 2003), graciously put me in touch with Brian K. Wheeler and Robert Kirk, Executive Editor of Field Guides and Natural History at Princeton University Press, who allowed reproduction of the golden eagle range map from Wheeler's book for this article. Judging by the golden eagle species account and range map, these two new guides will be very popular among birders and raptor enthusiasts. The golden eagle account contains detailed descriptions of plumages and molts for all the age classes of golden eagle, in addition to the informative natural history information that I used for this article. I would also like to thank the following individuals for providing information for this article which I either cited directly or used as background to help me understand better golden eagle migrating, wintering, and breeding habits: Allen Chartier; Paul Cypher, President, Southeastern Michigan Raptor Research; Vic Fazio; Don Gorney; Chuck Nicholson; Al Parker, Conservation Director of The Wilds; Ron Pittaway; Mark Shieldcastle, Ohio Division of Wildlife; and Bill Whan.

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The beach at Caesar Creek State Park in Warren County produced this nice Franklin's gull on 12 July 2003. Photo by Bill Hull.

Testing Field Marks of Adult Dowitchers in Ohio: The Testimony of Specimens

Bill Whan

223 East Tulane Road, Columbus, OH 43202
danielele@iwaynet.net

Times may have changed, but once, next to the outdoors, the research collection was the favorite haunt of ornithologists. Treasure-houses of genetic material, intraspecific variation, systematic relationships, type and voucher specimens, and lasting evidence of evolution in action, trays of museum specimens now go unopened for months at a time. For field birders, however, they offer a trove of identification hints—tangible evidence from the birds themselves, rather than illustrations and descriptions merely derived from them. There are some pitfalls in relying on skins, but much can still be learned from them that can be gleaned in no other way.

The following notes summarize studies at Ohio State University's Museum of Biological Diversity of its 67 skins of short-billed dowitchers *Limnodromus griseus hendersoni* (hereafter SBD), our local subspecies, and 31 of long-billed dowitchers *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (hereafter LBD), nearly all collected in Ohio (Figure 1). The intent was to evaluate the "textbook" field-marks of these easily confused species: just how reliable are the published ID hints at separating known-identity birds in the hand, and what are the implications for Ohio birders in the field?



Figure 1. A tray of long-billed dowitcher specimens, along with a few red knots, at the Ohio State University Museum of Biological Diversity in Columbus, Ohio.

These species can be extremely difficult to tell apart. The photograph on the cover page of the American Ornithologists' Union's prestigious *Birds of North America* account for short-billed dowitcher (Jehl et al. 2001), for example, is actually of a LBD, so even Homer nods on this call. Juveniles are fairly easily identified (Figure 2), but dowitchers in other plumages present a lot of problems. There are some confusing statements in the literature (for a summary, see Winger 2003), including accounts of adults identified in the hand. Several popular field guides, including Peterson's venerable work (1980), don't even treat the distinct subspecies of short-bills. All the field guides illustrate adult dowitchers in the immaculate fresh finery of spring, but in Ohio, where LBDs are very scarce in spring, we look in vain for this plumage on our worn birds of fall.

In any review of the popular field guides and major ID articles, the following criteria emerge for identification of adult *hendersoni* short-billed dowitcher vs. adult long-billed dowitcher in alternate plumage.

- **Morphology:** Length of bill, legs, wings.
- **Tail Feathers:** Pattern of white and black on tail.
- **Underparts Coloration:** Shade and overall extent of background color beneath.
- **Underparts Markings:** Especially on the throat or sides of upper breast.
- **Upperparts Coloration and Markings:** Overall darkness of upperparts (i.e., color/width of fringing and internal markings on dark feathers).
- **Voice**
- **Jizz**

In taking notes on these features for field birders, the author did not undertake microscopic scrutinies or take anything but rough and ready measurements, concentrating instead on grosser features one might reasonably compare through optics at a distance. Similarly, the photos presented here are no beauties, but nevertheless present views better than we often get in the field. All short-billed dowitcher specimens discussed are *L. g. hendersoni* (SBD).



Figure 2. Juveniles, short-billed dowitcher (30 August) on left, and long-billed dowitcher (14 September) on right, showing typical plumage distinctions.

Morphology

The three largest LBD bills (all in females) measured ~7.4 cm. The three largest SBD bills (also females) measured ~5.9, ~6.0, and ~6.2 cm. Thus, for a few LBDs bill length alone (estimated widely in the literature as \geq twice the head length) should help to separate them (Figure 3). Nine times out of 10, however, bill length is not diagnostic in the field. As for leg length, tarsi of both females average longer, with LBDs' averaging longer than SBDs' (Chandler 1998, Jehl et al. 2001, Takekawa and Warnock 2000), but there is so much overlap that this feature must be useless for field ID, even in direct comparison. Tarsi were not measured for this study. SBDs are said to average more petite overall, but the masses of shorebirds vary considerably during migration with state of nutrition etc., and could not be accurately estimated on stuffed skins in any event.

Comparison between lengths of folded wings and tail has recently been anointed as a useful criterion. Apparently it applies best to birds in unworn plumage (i.e., in fresh, fully-grown alternate or basic feathers) seen very well. Chandler makes much of the length of dowitcher wings as an ID criterion, but gives measurements of LBD and SBD wings that are by far the closest pairing in this regard (vs. *L. g. griseus* and *L. g. caurimus*), with a range of difference of 2-6 mm in males and 1-6 mm in females (Figure 4), a tough call in the field under the best of circumstances. A check of this feature in 26 LBD specimens (alternate, juvenal, and basic plumages) showed only one with primaries extending beyond the ends of the tail feathers: a strange 9 May 1869 specimen from Alaska, its left wing extends fully 22 mm beyond the tail, and the right falls 2 mm short. Because this old specimen was

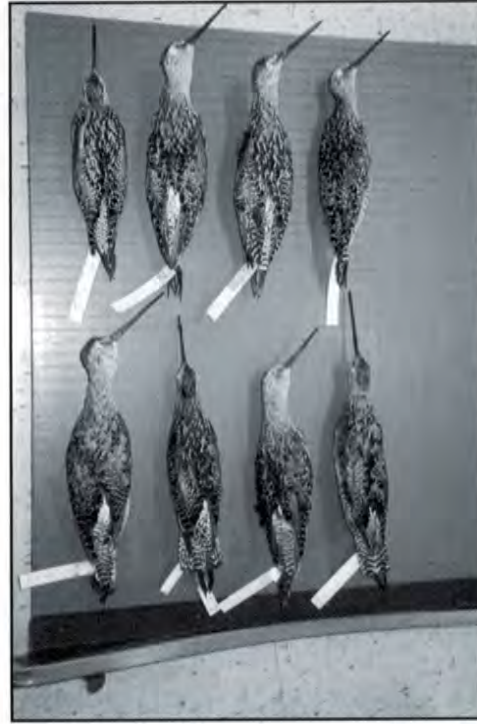


Figure 3. Worn adults, all collected in July and August in Ohio, of long-billed dowitcher (four birds on left) and short-billed dowitcher (birds on right). Compare tail banding, molt, and darkness of upperparts. The upper left bird has a 7.4 cm bill.

brittle, no attempt was made to determine if outer primaries might have been missing, or if improper preparation resulted in unnatural positioning of one wing. Among 65 SBD skins (24 adults and 41 juveniles) examined, only 12 showed at least one wingtip extending farther than tail feathers: 10 are adults, six of them in spring alternate plumage, four in fall's. Fall LBD adults showed worn flight feathers (or emerging fresh ones), with wing tips as much as 29 mm short of the tail; fall SBD adults may have been equally worn, but their corresponding maximum shortfall was 14 mm. These results do not support this as a useful ID criterion, at least locally. Perhaps it is more useful with other short-billed dowitcher subspecies, or basic-plumaged SBDs, but there are no known Ohio specimens of either.

Tail Feathers

Many guides tell us the tail feathers of LBDs show black bands wider than white ones, while the contrary is true for SBDs. Scrutiny of specimens for this study showed this seems to hold true on average, but far from the case for each and every bird (Figure 5). As for visibility in the field, we estimated that 14 of 31 LBD skins showed black bands enough wider than white ones to enable an observer in the field to use this feature, if well seen, as a useful ID criterion. Some guides caution birders not to confuse the tail coverts with the ~5 cm-long tail in this aspect; this is good advice, because the coverts examined were much more alike. Easy to assess on birds in the hand, details on tail feathers are not so clear from a distance (even with 10X optics at 100 yards, tested on skins), and even more difficult to glimpse in the field because they are seldom exposed to view except in flight.

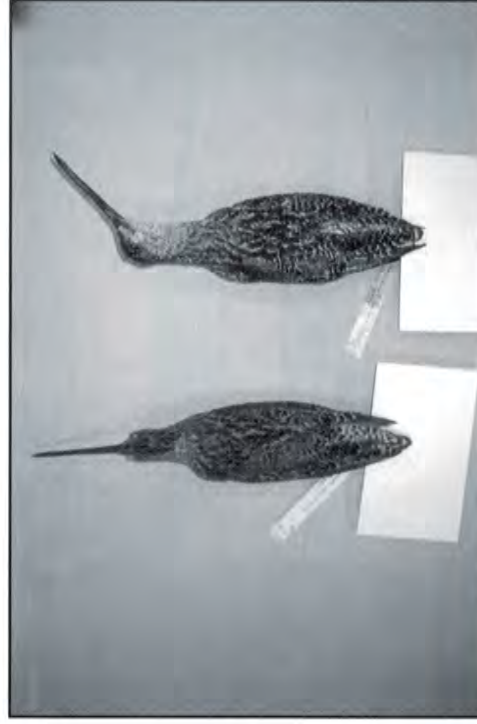


Figure 4. Left, long-billed dowitcher in fresh spring plumage 18 May; right, short-billed dowitcher in worn alternate plumage 6 July. Note the short-billed dowitcher's wings extend past the tail, unlike those of the long-billed dowitcher. Tail bands are equivocal, bills of these females are of equal length.

Underparts Coloration

LBDs did show a darker orange-red hue beneath than a few SBDs (the latter all spring birds in our sample), which showed a lighter or even pinkish-orange not exhibited by any LBDs; however, the majority of Ohio dowitcher specimens appeared indistinguishable in this aspect in the hand. As for the amount of white below, SBDs always showed some, but often significantly less than is illustrated in some field guides, and the fact that worn and molting (beginning on the flanks) underparts feathers among LBDs present at the same time as SBDs can make them look more like the latter makes this criterion of little practical use for identification. All fall dowitcher skins showed at least a little white on the underparts, the unmolted LBDs least; SBD white tended to be denser toward the vent, and LBD white more generally distributed. Based on this study, underparts coloration seems not to be a reliable criterion.

Underparts Markings

Good looks at dowitchers in fresh alternate plumage will show, we are told, LBD with distinct barring across, or at least on the sides of, the upper breast, and SBDs with separated spotting in these areas (Figure 6). Both usually showed strong barring on the flanks, even in fall. LBDs are seldom seen in spring in Ohio, when some are in molt anyway, and southbound adults of both species arrive in worn plumage that doesn't often show this characteristic clearly. One LBD skin showed distinct barring as late as 13 August, whereas another was largely in basic plumage by this date. To make matters worse, some southbound adult SBDs in summer

showed patterns that looked confusingly like barring on the sides of the breast, even from a couple of feet away. While a dowitcher with clear barring in this area is almost certainly a LBD, in Ohio this doesn't seem to be a useful ID criterion in most instances, especially later in the fall migration as wear and molt ensue.

Upperparts Color and Markings

LBDs in high breeding plumage have rusty internal bars and comparatively narrow frosty-white fringes to the upperparts feathers. SBDs of the same age tend to show golden edges and internal markings to mantle and coverts feathers. At least this is what the field guides say. It is easy, however, to choose numerous specimens of spring migrant SBDs and LBDs that seem identical—at arm's length—in overall hue and markings on the upperparts. And of course by the time southbound dowitchers reach our latitude, wear has obliterated the subtle distinctions said to be visible among freshly-plumaged adults. It was surprising to see how seldom field-guide distinctions about the upperparts were 1) visible, or 2) even when visible, diagnostic among these specimens. Is it possible that live birds are more distinguishable than dusty old skins? Perhaps, but the author is now a lot less likely than he once was to suggest a distant dowitcher might be a LBD based merely on the overall darkness of its upperparts.



Figure 5. The 13 August long-billed dowitcher above shows "textbook" tail bands, but the 2 August short-billed dowitcher is not so typical. Note the molt underway on the long-billed dowitcher.



Figure 6. Same birds as in Figure 5. Long-billed dowitcher of 13 August above, and short-billed dowitcher of 2 August below. Both show flanks barred. On the upper breast the long-billed dowitcher shows barring, the short-billed dowitcher spotting.

Voice

Vocalization differences are said to be the gold standard of ID for dowitchers of any age. Consulting field guides will give the impression the species are quite easily distinguished in this way, but various vocalizations can sound more alike than the guides allow. Authors use identical words so often one wonders if they are simply listening to one another rather than to the birds. SBD's call, often described as a "mellow, yellowlegs-like 'tu-tu-tu,'" doesn't sound mellow (more like "chew," than "tu"), can be single and is doubled as often as tripled, is more hurried and muted than a yellowlegs', and can resemble LBD as closely as it does a yellowlegs. Furthermore, if one's field practice with these birds' calls is restricted to migrants in Ohio, real confidence takes time. The birds don't vocalize all that often—SBDs seldom except when disturbed—and in settings crowded with other shorebirds their voices seldom stand out in the throng. Finally (see Wilds 1990), their calls differ depending upon circumstances, and both species occasionally utter nuptial songs on migration. Overall, vocalizations heard well can be diagnostic for the experienced and careful observer, but relying on field-guide descriptions alone is not advised.

Jizz

Some observers very familiar with dowitchers use jizz as an indicator in distinguishing them. LBDs, they say (in another oft-repeated cliché), convey a lanky godwit-like impression, while SBDs more resemble snipes. LBD's bill can show a subtle double curve (Figure 3), or a slight droop toward the tip, seldom shown by SBD; the impression given by specimens, however, was that the longer the bill—no matter which species was involved—the more often such features can be discerned. When combined with the extra reaching required by longer legs, the shorter wings of LBD may lend it a chunkier, hunch-backed, front-loaded look. Interestingly, most of these sorts of hints tend to come from birders on the coasts, who get more practice than we with wintering birds (and, one should add, with short-billed dowitcher subspecies less like LBD than the trickier *hendersoni*).

All in all, comparing known-identity Ohio skins¹ with field guides' treatments of adult dowitchers does not inspire much confidence in the "textbook" field-marks. Armed only with Peterson (1980), for example, observers would probably be helpless to identify most dowitchers in Ohio. Sibley (2000) is much more helpful, but only briefly mentions, and does not illustrate, the important effects of wear in adults. The National Geographic Society guide (2002) best illustrates some degree of wear in plumage. Lengthier treatments, such as Wilds (1983, 1990) mention the exceptions to the rules, the overlapping characters, and the closeness of the calls, uncertainties that looking at a good series of skins will quickly reveal. All in all, we here in the "fly-over states" may be forgiven for detecting occasional bias in favor

¹ Are all OSU's dowitcher specimens correctly identified? All seem to have been vetted by Milton B. Trautman, and he in fact collected and prepared the majority of them, attesting to his special interest in this group. We found no deviations among the skins in more objective clues, morphometric values (e.g., bill length), or in molt or migration timing.

of *caurinus* and nominate *griseus* subspecies of short-billed dowitcher among the ID gurus, with less attention given to the admittedly rarer² and much more problematic *hendersoni* form of the Midwest.

This study suggests that many morphological and plumage differences between long-billed dowitcher and *hendersoni* short-billed dowitcher are overemphasized in the literature, especially as criteria for field identification. Certain hints for distinguishing them are useful at times, but there is much overlap, and this remains one of the most treacherous field IDs when conducted by plumage alone. When scrutiny of birds in the hand is so often inconclusive using these criteria, it is folly to attempt to go further when out in the field.

Additional Help in Dowitcher Identification

Fortunately, there are two additional criteria Ohio observers can apply to these birds. While it is not possible to use them in every instance, they are powerful aids, combined with other observed details, in identifying dowitchers in our part of their range. Very few field guides mention them: they are timing and state of molt.

Migration Timing

Our two dowitchers have very different schedules, and the dates of observations can often be a useful clue. Generously considered, the Ohio schedules are:

Adults headed north in spring

LBD: 15 March – 5 May (only a handful each year)
SBD: 20 April – 10 June

Adults headed south in fall

LBD: 25 July – 15 October
SBD: 25 June – 15 August

Juveniles headed south in fall

LBD: 5 September – 25 November
SBD: 5 August – 5 October

Thus, while one or both species of dowitcher may be present here during fully 10 months of the year (there are a few December records of LBD), the period when the confusable adults should both be present comprises only about 35 days; if we set aside overlap in the spring, when LBDs are far more unlikely, the prime period for confusion lasts about three weeks: 25 July – 15 August.

Molt

Finally, it is only slowly becoming generally known that during the southbound migration adult LBDs in Ohio—at least many of them—are molting, and SBDs are not. This phenomenon, mentioned only in the National Geographic Society volume and later by Sibley among major field guides, was treated in these pages by Dunn

² The Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences offers the following dowitcher population estimates (admittedly to some degree guesswork): *L. g. caurinus* 150,000; *L. g. griseus* 110,000; *L. g. hendersoni* 60,000; *L. scolopaceus* 500,000 (see *The Ohio Cardinal* 25(1):50).

(1999), and in our previous issue (Winger 2003). Any Ohio dowitcher seen to be in molt—with fresh gray winter feathers emerging (generally starting on the head and nape) is a LBD. Any Ohio dowitcher in basic plumage should be a LBD. LBDs often begin molt soon after arriving here, and during the period of confusing ID many show signs of molt, even including visible gaps in wings in flight. Individual LBDs may spend weeks in Ohio undergoing molt, but SBDs—retaining their summer plumage—pass through comparatively quickly. Some Ohio SBDs, likely first-summer birds, may appear to be in molt, with gray on the wing coverts that superficially resembles fresh basic feathers, but which proves on closer examination to be retained juvenal plumage, often so severely worn as to be tattered and even concave in cross-section among specimens. Adult SBD specimens from Ohio do not show basic gray feathers emerging on the head, nape, mantle, or scapulars.

Summary

Most field-identification treatments of North American dowitchers over-generalize. At best they attempt briefly to distinguish LBD from three distinct subspecies of short-billed dowitcher across an entire continent, and in some of many plumages and states of wear. Some rely too heavily on older studies that did not adequately distinguish among the short-billed dowitcher subspecies. Most lend too much emphasis to plumage differences, especially in our region. The difficult identification of dowitchers, however, especially long-billed vs. *hendersoni* short-billed, is aided considerably by local knowledge of these birds. In Ohio—and presumably elsewhere in the Midwest—it includes narrowing the likelihood of various subspecies, coupled with familiarity with dowitchers' contrasting migratory schedules and molt strategies.

This information can be far more useful in identifying dowitchers as to species than certain oft-cited fine discriminations in plumage and morphology. Any identification should be confirmed by voice if possible, but the date, age, and state of molt of an adult dowitcher constitute a less ambiguous start toward an answer. To identify a fall dowitcher in Ohio, do not despair if your field guide seems of little help with the birds you see, but proceed as follows:

- First, note the *date*. Compare it with the species' known schedules.
- Second, *age* the bird. There are reliable and reassuringly easy ways, well treated in most guides, to tell the dowitchers apart as juveniles.
- Third, note the state of *molt* of adults. Ohio birds in active molt or in basic plumage are LBDs. Those not in molt may be either, as some LBDs may not molt here, or may not have begun molting. LBD molt should be obvious by mid-August, and often earlier.
- Fourth, confirm by *voice* when possible, after you've learned their vocalizations in the field, or at least studied them on several good recordings. If dowitchers always cooperated by vocalizing, this would be the number one criterion for the experienced observer.
- Fifth, note certain *plumage* details. "Textbook" marks covered above are sometimes helpful, and often not. For adult birds in Ohio, we found no single plumage or morphological criterion consistently reliable—and


consistently visible—for separating the species. A combination of them in any particular case can be suggestive, however. It is also worth being alert for the *L. g. griseus* subspecies of short-billed; there are a few documented Ohio records of this form, and their adult plumage is much more unlike SBD's than is LBD's.

Finally, when books and articles don't seem up to the puzzles of field identification, consider consulting the bird specimens sleeping in the drawers at the nearest museum collection. Mute and motionless as they are, they have much to teach us.

Acknowledgment

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AOU Announces Taxonomic Changes

In the July 2003 issue of *The Auk*, 120(3):923-931, The American Ornithologists' Union Committee on Classification and Nomenclature announced changes to the AOU's *Check-list of North American Birds* in the form of the 44th Supplement to the *Check-list's* 7th Edition (1998). With this publication, the Committee will begin publishing Supplements yearly instead of biennially.

The Supplement announced the placement of *Anseriformes* and *Galliformes* prior to *Gaviiformes* in the official *Check-list*, and hinted at numerous sequential changes to come in the 8th Edition due in part to the increasing influence of molecular genetics in describing the systematic relationships of birds. The AOU follows the British Ornithological Union in this decision. Other revisions to the *Check-list* of interest to birders in the ABA Area follow:

- The English name of *Larus belcheri* is changed from band-tailed gull to Belcher's gull.
- The generic name of three regular North American pigeon species is changed from *Columba* to *Patagioenas*: white-crowned pigeon is now *Patagioenas leucocephala*, red-billed pigeon *P. flavirostris*, and band-tailed pigeon *P. fasciata*.
- The English name rock dove for *Columba livia* is changed to rock pigeon.
- New World species formerly in genus *Otus*, with the exception of flammulated owl *O. flammeolus*, are now in the new genus *Megascops*: for the ABA area, western screech-owl is now *Megascops kennicottii*, eastern screech-owl *M. asio*, and whiskered screech-owl *M. trichopsis*.
- The genus *Nyctea* having been merged into *Bubo*, the scientific name of snowy owl becomes *Bubo scandiaca*.
- As a result of a split, the New World form of three-toed woodpecker becomes American three-toed woodpecker *Picooides dorsalis*; the Old World form retains the nominate species name *P. tridactylus*, with the English name Eurasian three-toed woodpecker. These new species are probably distinguishable in the field, and both may have occurred in Alaska.
- For grammatical reasons, the scientific name of black-capped vireo is changed to *Vireo atricapilla*.
- For grammatical reasons, the scientific name of black-capped chickadee reverts to *Poecile atricapillus*.
- For grammatical reasons, the scientific name of ovenbird is changed to *Seiurus aurocapilla*.
- A split among the New World crossbills separates Hispaniolan crossbill *Loxia megalaga* from white-winged crossbill *L. leucoptera*.

Far more details on all the above decisions, and many others affecting the avifauna of Central America, may be found in the July 2003 issue of *The Auk*. The new *Check-list* is on the Web at <www.aou.org/aou/birdlist.html>. The Supplement offers hints about future revisions, including ongoing consideration of one or more splits in seaside sparrow *Ammodramus maritimus*. The report concludes by saying the Committee is "aware of reports in our area of several species not now on our list, but are awaiting consideration of these reports by our sister committee of the American Birding Association." —Ed. 



This singing sedge wren was photographed in Butler County's Voice of America Park in July 2003 by Bob Royse.



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