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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 Road Columbus, OH 43202 billwhan@columbus.rr.com
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On the Cover:

William Hull captured the best photos of Ohio's first sooty tern, including this one showing the diagnostic underwings and facial markings, on 15 July at East Fork Lake in Clermont County.

Summer 2005 Overview and Reports

Bill Whan

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Unusually hot and dry, the summer produced predictable effects on birds and bird sightings. Cleveland got few cool Lake Erie breezes, with temperatures ranging far above average, by 6.2°F in June and 3.3° in July. Having started out ahead of average rainfall, the Columbus area had fallen behind by 4.22 inches by summer's end, and all areas of the state ended well in deficit for the year to date, with the north-central counties (from Lucas to Lorain and one tier to the south) suffering least. Water levels at municipal reservoirs, the first among them Hoover in Delaware county, fell enough by summer's end to expose mudflats for migrant shorebirds. Lake Erie levels declined a bit below long-term means by 1 July, exposing a few foraging areas and roosts for larids and shorebirds along natural shorelines in the western basin. The passage of the remnants of Hurricane Dennis in mid-July finally brought Ohio at least one storm-driven southern pelagic species.

We had fewer than usual waterfowl reports, and certainly the number of odd species hanging around diminished. Some waterbird trends seem interrupted, at least temporarily: cormorants, for example, seemed down in numbers. Shorebird numbers would have been far more meager without the habitat contributions of ONWR and beleaguered spots like Conneaut Harbor; their total of 28 species for the summer was the highest since 1999. What in spring was perceived as a dearth of hummingbirds became hordes as wild nectar supplies diminished. Spring's trend of late arrivals and departures of passerines continued, with many flycatchers, warblers, etc. passing through well into June. Recent trends in which species once far more common in the south—summer tanager, blue grosbeak, northern mockingbird, for example—have become routine farther north, and a tendency for a few more northern species to be reported south of their normal ranges—alder flycatcher, for example, or blue-headed vireo—seemed accentuated this summer; it seems the former are widespread and caused by recent climate change, but the latter more sporadic changes may perhaps represent better coverage by more observers.

Nine reports of review species were well above average for a short summer season: glossy ibis, four separate white ibis sightings (as many as we'd accumulated in the previous 25 years), a parasitic jaeger, a first state-record sooty tern, and two sightings of scissor-tailed flycatchers. In other news, the Division of Wildlife declared victory and halted its trumpeter swan introduction project, having achieved 17 confirmed nests this year, one more than the 16 targeted in 1996. No more swans remain in the pipeline, and only monitoring of the existing population will be carried out from now on. A third of the 100+ trumpeters in the project no longer wear neck collars, and existing collars will continue falling off without replacement. Releases of swans have been most successful in the western Lake Erie marshes; other populations have diminished, or even been extirpated, such as at Killbuck Marsh WA.

We're considering regularly dedicating a paragraph of the Overview to victories and defeats for bird habitats in Ohio, and invite well-documented submissions from readers. This time, for example, we might mention on the plus side Governor Taft's veto of provisions that would have allowed developers to circumvent current

restrictions in the mitigation requirements for wetlands destruction in Ohio. On the other side, the Division of Natural Areas and Preserves is taking some heat for apparently destructive “improvements” at their properties at Conkle’s Hollow and Headlands Beach; a site at Killdeer Plains WA that last year hosted successful nests by king and Virginia rails and soras was barren this year after the installation of a drain, apparently because for several days a couple of inches of water lay on a seldom-used county road. And the planned dredging of Conneaut Harbor seems likely to obliterate an important stopover sight for migratory birds. It seems unwise to expect significantly better protection for the full range of wildlife species in Ohio until we are willing to devote some big money—tax money—to the cause.

A word about the Reports for our many new subscribers. Space is limited, and we cannot use it to re-verify over and over again what is already known about the normal ranges and numbers and migratory schedules of Ohio’s birds. These facts you can find in standard references like the OBRC Checklist of the Birds of Ohio, or Peterjohn’s *The Birds of Ohio*. Therefore you will often find in the Reports interesting deviations from the norm, deviations that might indicate important trends (climate change, habitat availability, population changes, etc.) or perhaps just the play of chance that makes birding so fascinatingly unpredictable.

For the Record

Omitted in the last issue was the earliest sighting of Connecticut warbler for the spring, from **Scioto Trail SF** 12 May (J. Dunn *vide* R. Harlan).

Omitted spring 2005 sightings of species unusual at that season included two black scoters 15-17 Mar near **Coshocton** (Merle Schlabach), two stilt sandpipers in **Holmes** 17 Apr (Monroe E. Weaver), and a snowy owl in Guernsey 11 Mar (Melvin Weaver). The latter observer also found an early laughing gull at **Charles Mill Lk** 22 Mar.

The Reports follow the nomenclature and taxonomic order of the 7th edition of the *AOU Check-list of North American Birds* (1998), including the 46th Supplement (July 2005). Underlined names of species indicate those on the OBRC Review List; documentation is needed to add reports of these species to official state records, or to attributed records in the Reports. 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: ad=adult; alt=alternate (breeding) plumage; BCSP=Buck Ck SP in *Clark*; BIWA=Big Isl WA in *Marion*; BSBO=Black Swamp Bird Observatory; CCE= Crane Ck estuary in ONWR; CVNP=Cuyahoga Valley Natl Pk in *Cuyahoga* and *Summit*; Dike 14=the Gordon Park impoundment in Cleveland; EFSP=East Fork SP in *Clermont*; eop=end of the period, in this case 31 Jul 2005; EHSP=East Hbr SP in *Ottawa*; fide= “in trust of,” said of data conveyed on behalf of another person; GAAS=Greater Akron Audubon Society Summit County Bird Count (10-19 June, reported by D. Vogus and A. Chasar); Gilmore Ponds is in *Butler*=Grand Lk St Marys in *Mercer/Auglaize*, HBSP=Headlands Beach SP in *Lake*; HBSNP=Headlands Beach SNP in *Lake*; HWSP=Hueston Wds SP (*Butler/Preble*); imm=immature; Killbuck=Killbuck Marsh WA in *Wayne/Holmes*; KPWA=Killdeer Plains WA in *Wyandot*; LSR=Lakeshore Reservation (MP) in *Lake*; Magee=Magee Marsh WA in *Ottawa/Lucas*; MBSP=Maumee Bay SP in *Lucas*; MP=Metropark; m obs=many observers; MWW=Miami-Whitewater Wetlands in *Hamilton*; NWR=National Wildlife Refuge; OBRC=Ohio Bird Records Committee; ODOV=Ohio Division of Wildlife; ONWR=Ottawa NWR in *Ottawa/Lucas*; ONWRC=monthly bird census at ONWR; PCWA=Pickerel Ck WA in *Sandusky*; ph=photograph, Res=Reservoir; Res’n=Reservation; SF=State Forest; SNP=State Nature Preserve; SP=State Park; SVWA=Spring Valley WA in *Greene/Warren*; WA=Wildlife Area.

Summer 2005 Reports

Snow goose: Two remained from the previous period: a blue-phase bird at **Conneaut** last reported 25 Jun (B. Coulter) and one near **ONWR** in **Ottawa** through the period (m obs).

Mute swan: Showing some disquieting increases in numbers recently, witness 48 tallied on the GAAS June 10-19 in *Summit* alone.

Gadwall: Two were found by the 5 Jun **ONWRC**.

Blue-winged teal: Reported in normal numbers, for example 27 on the 5 Jun **ONWRC**, and three at **MWW** 17 Jul (L. Peyton).

Northern pintail: A lone drake paddled **ONWR** 18 Jun (S. Snyder).

Green-winged teal: At **ONWR**, P. Rodewald found five 14 Jun and four 16 Jun, while the 3 Jul **ONWRC** tallied 13. Two were at **CPNWR** 17 Jul (E. Tramer).

Ring-necked duck: A lone individual haunted **MWW** 7 Jun (B. Foppe) through 23 Jul (J. Lehman).

Lesser scaup: Perhaps wounded, one was seen at a pond in **Hancock** 7 and 14 Jun; it was joined by another 28 Jun (*vide* B. Hardesty).

Bufflehead: A forlorn drake, present since spring, stayed through at least 25 Jun (B. Coulter) in **Conneaut Harbor**.

Common goldeneye: B. Stanley reported a female at **EFSP** 28 Jun.

Hooded merganser: Bred sparingly. The **ONWRC** found nine, including four young on 6 Jun, and 12 including 10 young 3 Jul.

Common merganser: Significantly, an adult and six chicks were seen in **Little Beaver Creek** in **Columbiana** 5 Jun, where this species has become an admittedly isolated but regular nester in recent years.

Red-breasted merganser: Two were tardy 4 Jun at **LSR** in **Lake** (J. Pogacnik).

Ruddy duck: Just one tarried at **CPNWR** by 18 Jun (E. Tramer).

Common loon: Quite a few lingered through mid-June at reservoirs. One seen at **Nimisila Res** in *Summit* 26 Jun (S. Brown) was around 10 Jul (R&S Harlan), and a first-summer bird stayed at **Mosquito Res** in *Trumbull* 12 Jul (C. Holt). Their enigmatic presence at **Alum Ck Res** in *Delaware* continued, with three basic-plumaged birds 9 Jun (R. Thorn), one on 21 Jun (R. Schroeder), and two on 15 Jul (Thorn).

Pied-billed grebe: Bred in many suitable spots, with a maximum of 13 including three young for the 5 Jun **ONWRC**. An imm was in a small pond in **Dorset Twp, Ashtabula**, 30 Jul for an out-of-the-way record (J. Heflich).

American white pelican: Continues to show up more often, with one at **Lorain** 3 Jun (ph, J. Pogacnik), one at **Sheldon Marsh** 23-24 Jun (C. Coffman *fide* S. Young), two at **Mogadore Res** 25-28 Jun (G. Bennett), possibly last year's bird returning to **Mill Creek Wildlife Sanctuary** in **Mahoning** 15 Jul (B. Jones); one near **Bloomville** 17 Jul was a first **Seneca** record (T. Bartlett). Strange things continue to happen with the population; at the continent's largest breeding colony, at Chase Lk, **South Dakota**, in excess of 16000 adults abandoned the site during the breeding season after over 8000 chicks died, mostly during June.

Double-crested cormorant: Nested at **West Sister Island**, **Turning Point Island**, **Grand Lake St Marys**, and **Lake Rockwell**. Reports overall, including those of non-breeders from many inland reservoirs, seemed down, without offering any real evidence of a downturn.

American Bittern: Detected at **Ottawa** 5 Jun (ONWRC) and at **Metzger Marsh** 14 Jun (C. Knoll).

Least bittern: A few more reports than usual, but we know relatively little about how many of these remain; we do know they are down, as accounts of a hundred years ago (see Jones's account in last winter's issue with 50 at **Buckeye Lk**, or counts of 14 nests at relatively tiny **Calumus Marsh** in the 1890s) show. Two were in **MWW** 19 Jun (A. Scruggs), one remained at **Metzger Marsh** 26 Jun (C. Spagnoli), the **ONWRC** had one 3 Jul, one called at **Possom Ck MP** in **Montgomery** 18 Jun (D. Dister), a juv was at **Conneaut** 12 Jul (C. Holt), and one at **Walnut Beach** in **Ashtabula** 18 Jul (S. Zadar).

Great blue heron: Normal numbers, though 75 in **Ottawa NWR** 16 Jun seemed a pretty good crowd away from a rookery (P. Rodewald).

Great egret: Large gatherings included 221 at **Ottawa NWR** 16 Jun (P. Rodewald), 100 in **Sandusky** 18 Jun (D. Overacker), and ~90 at **Medusa Marsh** 4 Jul (C. Caldwell). One at **SVWA** 16 Jun was odd (L. Gara), as were five at **Glacier Ridge MP** in **Union** 24 Jun (J. Watts). T. Fairweather reported 24 or more all summer long at **Sandy Ridge MP** in **Lorain**; 12 were of interest in **Mahoning** 12 Jul (B. Jones), as were 14 at the **Thomas wetlands** in **Paulding** 28 Jul (M&D Dunakin).

Snowy egret: Twelve found by the 3 Jul ONWRC were likely nesters from **West Sister Island**. Were numbers of up to eight at **Medusa Marsh** this summer (m obs), and even larger numbers last summer at **Pickerel Ck WA**, making a shorter commute from **Turning Point Isl** in **Sandusky**?

Little blue heron: Again, there were unconfirmed rumors of renewed breeding on **West Sister Isl**. Probably unrelated were immature wanderers at **Caesar Ck** 22 Jul (S. Egleston), **Dayton** 26 Jul (*fide* J. Arnold), and **Paulding's** first record 29 Jul (D&M Dunakin).

Tricolored heron: The Swedish Birding Team lucked into one at **Conneaut** on the Ohio leg of their North American tour on 5 Jun (ph). Not the first county record, as our only specimen was collected in **Ashtabula** in 1954.

Cattle egret: No reports were received this season, even from the vicinity of the only known breeding colony, in **Sandusky**.

Green heron: Seen in healthy wetlands statewide. Four downy young were at **Long Lk** in **Summit** on 12 Jul (S. Brown).

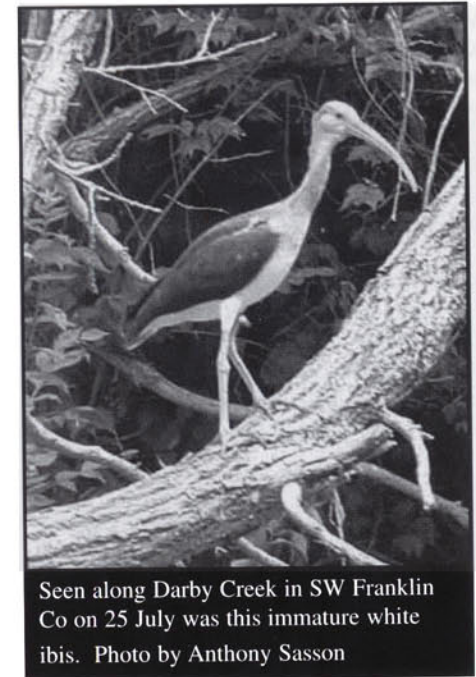
Black-crowned night-heron: Twenty-four were a good find at **CPNWR** on 18 Jun (E. Tramer), as was even a single adult in **Chillicothe** 20 Jun (D. Hess). Early to arrive was one at the **Shaker Lks** 29 Jun (L. Deininger). Present in the other usual spots, but the big news was eight pairs who newly constructed nests in a sycamore on an island in **Cincinnati's Spring Grove Cemetery** (m obs), where by 27 Jul thirteen young were counted (J. Hays). Among other things, this underlines the importance of large old cemeteries as refugia for birds in the urban landscape.

Yellow-crowned night-heron: The small **Columbus** colony consisted of two nests, one fledging five young (maximum for the species) by late Jun and the other three by mid-Jul; one of the parents of the latter was an immature bird (m obs). The last evidence of their presence was fresh guano in the roadway on 28 Jul (A. Paschall).

White ibis: A highlight of the season was four brief observations in July of this southern wader, doubling the number of Ohio sightings over the past quarter century. One immature was at Ira Rd. in the **CVNP** in **Summit** 9 Jul (ph), another along **Little Walnut Ck** in **Franklin** 19 Jul (ph), another along **Darby Ck** in **Franklin** 25 Jul (ph), and yet another in **Fairborn, Greene** the following day (m obs). The dates and locations do not rule out that a single bird was involved, however the photos seem to show some plumage differences between at least two of them. These records are with OBRC members, who deserve an ID breather like this.

Glossy ibis: Perhaps stragglers from the mini-invasion of *Plegadis* ibises of spring were three spied at **Ottawa NWR** 5 Jun by the census team. One was reported just across the border in **Pte Mouillee** on 1 Jul as well.

Black vulture: The most noteworthy sighting was of a roost of 75+ near **Chillicothe** 29 Jul (D. Hess).



Seen along Darby Creek in SW Franklin Co on 25 July was this immature white ibis. Photo by Anthony Sasson

Bald eagle: The high count was 18 at **Pickerel Ck WA** 23 Jun (C. Caldwell).

Northern harrier: Perhaps when the new Breeding Bird Atlas starts collecting data next year we will have a clearer idea of how many harriers nest in the state. For now we mostly have to infer their status. Sightings of single birds on the west side of **Ottawa** persisted through the period (m obs), and birds were repeatedly seen west of **Findlay** in good habitat (as on 19 Jul, B. Hardesty). G. Meszaros did confirm nesting at Mosquito near **Mosquito Lk** in **Trumbull**.

Red-shouldered hawk: A hint of their current abundance in appropriate habitat in the NE is provided by J. Pogacnik's count of 20 birds observed in 17 areas of the **Lake** park system.

King rail: Gratifying was the June discovery of three pairs sharing a marsh at **Ottawa NWR** (S. Cummings, ph), where the census team refound at least two on 3 Jul, for their first record since 1986. A pair was at **Pickerel Ck WA** 22 Jun (S. Zadar), m obs found a pair had returned to last year's **Pickaway** locale, and a bird at **Germantown MP** in **Dayton** found 7 Jul (S. Egleston) remained at least through 23 Jul (N. Cade).

Virginia rail: Some idea of this species' current abundance at **ONWR** comes from T. Kashmer's spring report of banding 138 there by 5 Jun (*vide* E. Pierce). A breeding bird survey at **Pickerington Ponds** in **Fairfield** yielded four (M. Albin), and a wetland survey at **Killbuck WA** five (S. Snyder).

Common moorhen: Skimpily reported—the **ONWRC** of 3 Jul had but two—with a high count of 4 ad, two imm, and two very young birds in NW **Holmes** 23 Jul (S. Snyder).

Sandhill crane: Present near the traditional **Killbuck WA** nesting area through the period (m obs), with a pair near **La Su An WA** in **Williams** on 28 Jul (T. Kemp) where a nest is often found. A pair from the spring was seen and heard into Jul at **SVWA** in **Warren/Greene** (m obs), but no confirmation of nesting was reported. Two cranes nested within sight of a busy pathway at **Sandy Ridge MP** in **Lorain**; the nest, the third in the past three years there, failed like its predecessors.

Black-bellied plover: With northbound migrants last reported 5 Jun by the **ONWRC**, this species was as usual quite scarce through the period.

Semipalmated plover: Reports pretty much spanned the period, with birds seen in **Lorain**, **Butler**, **Ashtabula**, **Lucas**, and **Ottawa** counties in June, staying as late as the 18th at **CPNWR** (E. Tramer). Presumably returnees were four at **Pickerel Ck** 4 Jul, one at **Conneaut** 11 Jul (C. Holt), and two there 16 Jul (P. Lozano).

Killdeer: Fifty migrants at **Conneaut** 16 Jul was the first report of a large gathering (P. Lozano), with later counts of 600+ in **Hardin** 27 Jul (R. Counts) and 541 at **Englewood Pk** near **Dayton** 30 Jul (D. Dister).

American avocet: Twenty-three reported, the earliest one at a **Findlay** reservoir 30 Jun (B. Hardesty). High counts were ten at **Conneaut** 17 Jul (J. Pogacnik) and six at **Hoover Res** in **Delaware** 29 Jul (J. Sauter).

Greater yellowlegs: The first three returnees reported 4 Jul at **Pickerel Ck WA** (C. Caldwell); the high count was 50+ there on 24 Jul (M. Busam).

Lesser yellowlegs: A southbound adult touched down as early as 24 Jun at **Conneaut** (B. Coulter), and juveniles prevailed by the end of the period.

Solitary sandpiper: Curious was one at **ONWR** 16 Jun (P. Rodewald); this sort of occurrence contributed to the former perception that this species bred in the state. Modern authorities deny this, as its breeding range lies several hundred miles to our north, where solitaires lay eggs in the discarded tree nests of other species. It is still hard to explain the testimony of so solid a reporter as J. M. Wheaton (1882) of Columbus, who wrote: "I have seen the Solitary Sandpiper here during all the summer months, and once found the young in the care of their parents, on the borders of a small pond, in a pasture surrounded by woodland, four or five miles south of this city." This season, the high count belied the species' name when D. Dister found 59 at **Englewood Pk** near **Dayton** on 30 Jul.

Willet: Twenty-six reported, with one a flyby at **HBSNP** 13 Jul (K. Metcalf), and four inland at a flooded field in **Hardin** 27 Jul (R. Counts); the other 21 were seen on eight occasions at **Conneaut**, beginning with an adult 24 Jun (B. Coulter), and the high count of eight seen 18 Jul (L. Hays).

Spotted sandpiper:

Hatchlings were noted 12 Jun in **Mahoning** (B. Jones) and 13 Jun in **Lorain** (P. Lozano).

Upland sandpiper: Went unreported from some traditional nesting sites, and reported from others, as two at the **Springfield** Airport 6 Jun (D. Overacker) and three in **Denmark Twp** in **Ashtabula** 17 Jul (J. Heflich).

Whimbrel: A single report, a single bird, at **Conneaut** 18 Jul (ph, L. Hays).

Hudsonian godwit: Not a bird we expect in summer, but Ohio's fourth June record came on the 14th and 16th for OSU researchers at **ONWR** (P. Rodewald).

Marbled godwit: Good and early at **Conneaut** on 24 Jun was an adult (B. Coulter).

Ruddy turnstone: Late migrants were five on 5 Jun for the **ONWRC**.



Like all shorebirds' nests, the spotted sandpiper's holds four eggs. Paula Lozano photographed this one in Avon on 14 June, then tiptoed away to let the male return to incubating.

Red knot: An individual in basic plumage was seen on 6 Jun at **ONWR** (K. Kaufman), and five there on 9 Jul completed the summer book on this species (M. Bolton).

Sanderling: All reports came from **Conneaut Harbor** in July, with five there the 18th and six the 19th (both L. Hays), six on the 23rd (M. Vass) and 22 the 26th (W. Shaffer).

Semipalmated sandpiper: Northbound birds lasted until 14 Jun, with a singleton at **ONWR** (P. Rodewald), and nine were still down in **Tuscarawas** on the 6th (E. Schlabach). No sign of returning birds till 12 Jul, with two at **Conneaut** (C. Holt).

Least sandpiper: Two lingered as late as 4 Jun, at **Sandy Ridge MP** in **Lorain** (J. Brumfield). Returnees showed up in the form of five on 2 Jul at **Hinckley Lk** (*vide* Brumfield), and were soon general, with 30 at **Pickrel Ck WA** by the 4th (C. Caldwell).

White-rumped sandpiper: Usually the last peep to pass through, dozens were seen inland in June, culminating in two seen 18 Jun near Lake Erie at **ONWR** (C. Pierce). One at **Conneaut** 25 Jun could have been headed either way (B. Coulter).

Baird's sandpiper: Did not show up until late, but three adults at **MWW** 24 Jul were a nice find (J. Stenger). One was at **Conneaut** 28 Jul for G. Meszaros.

Pectoral sandpiper: Bringing up the rear was a "drab-looking" individual in **Butler** quite late on 5 Jun (M. Busam).

Dunlin: Laggards sighted at **ONWR** included two for the 5 Jun **ONWRC** and another 14 Jun (P. Rodewald); every year recently, **Ottawa** has hosted one or two alternate-plumaged birds apparently lacking the oomph to go farther.

Stilt sandpiper: First arrivals included one at **West Branch SP** 14 Jul (L. Rosche), one at **Conneaut** 16 Jul (P. Lozano), and one at **Huron** 26 Jul (S. Zadar).

Short-billed dowitcher: Arrived in numbers only in mid-Jul, with 31 at **West Branch** 13 Jul (G. Bennett); the high count was ~200 at **ONWR** on the 16th (P. Gardner)

Long-billed dowitcher: Earlyish were ~10 at **ONWR** 16 Jul, all adults visibly in molt (P. Gardner).

Wilson's snipe: Quite possibly a local breeder was one in **Ashtabula** 18 Jul (J. Heflich). Likely the first migrant was one at **MWW** the 27th (F. Frick) through the 31st (J. Lehman). One was reported on the **Summit** summer count of 10-19 June.

Wilson's phalarope: Singles were reported at **ONWR** 29 Jul (B. Whan) and at **Sandy Ridge MP** 31 Jul (P. Lozano).

Red-necked phalarope: An early arrival was an alternate-plumaged female at **West Branch SP** 13 July (G. Bennett).

Parasitic jaeger: A worn subadult bird was observed at **Conneaut** 17 Jul, the same day one was reported just to the east in Pennsylvania's Erie Co. This bird's presence, which would be among Ohio's earliest fall migrant records, may have been influenced by the passage of the remnants of Hurricane Dennis.

Laughing gull: **Conneaut** hosted two first-summer birds 24 Jun, one alive and one dead (B. Coulter). Also along the Lake were an adult at **Catawba** 13 Jul (N. Bixler), a juv at **Conneaut** 17 Jul (J. Pogacnik), and a first-year bird near **Kelleys Island** 27 Jul (D. Horn). Inland, J. Fry found another at **Lake Logan** in **Hocking** 19 Jul.

Bonaparte's gull: Seven second-year birds were at **ONWR** 16 Jun (P. Rodewald). Returning in force, ~2200 were headed east along the shore there on 29 Jul (J. Sauter).

Herring gull: In a reprise of last summer's first record, up to five nests were constructed in Gallia, with three hatch-year birds noted the first week of Jun, but all nests failed about that time, probably due to predation (H. Slack).

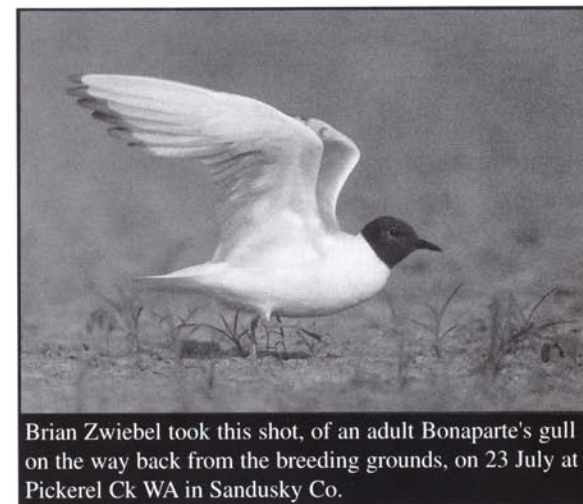
Newspaper reports of a large nesting colony atop a factory in **Shelby, Richland**, could not be verified, but are being followed up.

Great black-backed gull: Single-digit numbers were reported by m obs at **Conneaut** throughout the period.

Caspian tern: Unusually early presumed migrants were two at **Mogadore Res** 25 Jun (G. Bennett) and one far to the south at **Winton Woods** in **Cincinnati** 3 Jul (J. Stenger). C. Holt noted the first juvenile, at **Conneaut** on 12 Jul, after which they became common along the lakefront.

Common tern: With the placement of ten nesting platforms at **ONWR**, the census team found 84 present on 5 Jun. Augmented by juveniles and arriving migrants from elsewhere, the high summer count of 200+ came on 29 Jul at **ONWR** (B. Whan).

Forster's tern: Not often seen during the breeding month of June, one was feeding over Lake Erie near **CPNWR** on 18 Jun (E. Tramer), and another was reported from a **Fostoria** reservoir 21 Jun (B. Hardesty).



Brian Zwiebel took this shot, of an adult Bonaparte's gull on the way back from the breeding grounds, on 23 July at Pickrel Ck WA in Sandusky Co.

Sooty tern: The passage of Hurricane Dennis, degraded to a tropical disturbance, in mid-July offered hope of pelagic birds as waifs. On 12 Jul, D. Morse went out looking, and saw an adult of this species over the Ohio River—hence in Kentucky—from **Clermont County**, and the following day found it or another adult soaring over **East Fork Lake**. This bird, never seen to alight except to take a few brief splashes as if bathing, engaged in quite stereotyped and predictable behaviors there from 13 to 19 Jul for m obs. A long-overdue first state record. See report in this issue.

Black tern: Difficult to cover this summer. Interesting were reports of a juv 2 Jun (R. Asamoto) and a basic-plumaged bird 11 Jun (D. Dister) at **Englewood MP** near **Dayton**. Reports of 63 other birds 5 Jun-29 Jul came from the western Lk Erie marshes. ONWR staff offered second-hand reports that this species had bred in both **CPNWR** and **ONWR** this year, but **CPNWR** census team members could find none in 5 hours spent looking 18 June. P. Rodewald did have a single bird there 14 Jun. Seven other Jun reports came from **Metzger Marsh** and **ONWR**, as well as three the first week of Jul at the latter location. On 17 Jul, the **CPNWR** census team found the seasonal high count of 37 there, but these were all adults. Based on our information, breeding in the area is unconfirmed, though certainly possible and even suspected. On 29 Jul, 12+ birds, adults and birds of the year, were seen in **ONWR** (B. Whan), but all but one were moving with migrating Bonaparte's gulls.



This pair of nesting herring gulls, photographed 26 May at their nest by Jim McCormac, was part of the second consecutive known small colony of this species at the Gavin power plant along the Ohio River in Gallia County.

Black-billed Cuckoo: By most accounts good numbers were present, with a high count from single site of three at **Sandy Ridge MP** 4 Jun (J. Brumfield). Observers also noted them in areas where are generally absent, such as in a **Columbus** suburb 22 Jun (R. Thorn).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: Noticeably up in numbers, though apparently not everywhere. R. Thorn said of his Columbus-area territory that the species was "literally everywhere this year, in any possible appropriate habitat," but also reported none in a day at **CCMP** in **Hocking**, where the species regularly breeds (the MP breeding bird survey did report both cuckoo species there eventually). Good numbers included 12 seen—not just heard—around upper **Hoover Res** on 13 Jun (C. Bombaci), and 10 on the **Kelleys Isl** census of the 18th (T. Bartlett). E. Pierce regarded the ONWRC's numbers of 16 on 5 Jun and 21 on 3 Jul as only about average. An observer of the **Youngstown** peregrine nest reported 14+ cuckoos taken by the falcons by the second week of Jul (J. Lucas *vide* C. Babyak); it is possible that cuckoos are a favorite prey of falcons, being rather slow and clumsy fliers like their cousins the anis and roadrunners.

Ruby-throated hummingbird: After widespread dismay about low numbers early in the period, by the end those who feed hummingbirds were elated to find high ones.

Yellow-bellied sapsucker: Nesters are under-reported, but J. Pogacnik did report a breeding bird survey of the **Lake** metroparks, where 8 were observed at seven different locations, with three nests confirmed.

Pileated woodpecker: E. Tramer confirmed breeding in **Oak Openings MP** in **Toledo** on 19 July when he observed an adult pair with a recently-fledged female begging for food, commenting, "[a]lthough pileateds have been seen occasionally in Lucas Co. on and off for years, there seem to be no confirmed nesting records for more than a century—perhaps going all the way back to the clearing of the Black Swamp in the 1870s!" Rare elsewhere in the NW counties, single birds were seen in two different spots in **Hancock** this season (*vide* B. Hardesty).

Olive-sided flycatcher: The latest reported of this late migrant appeared 4 Jun in **Columbus** (R. Thorn).

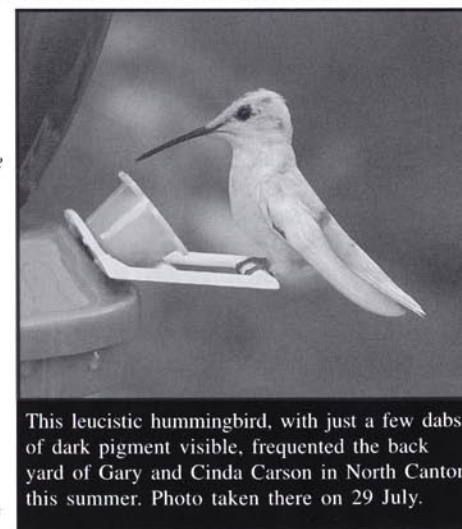
Yellow-bellied flycatcher: Later reports included one 1 Jun at **LSR** (J. Pogacnik), one on the 5 Jun **ONWRC**, and one 7 Jun in **Hancock** (B. Sams *vide* B. Hardesty).

Acadian flycatcher: Three eggs were being incubated 9 Jun in **Geauga** (K. Metcalf). Five were still vocalizing 30 Jul at **Alum Creek SP** (R. Thorn).

Alder flycatcher: This species needs more attention. It can easily go undetected, and it seems its range in Ohio is not well understood. It breeds across the north, witness one at **Magee** 2 Jun (A. Boone), and had a number of territories in damp brushy spots in the **Oak Openings** (E. Tramer), one in **Springfield Twp** in **Summit** 25 Jun (R&S Harlan), five territories near **Mosquito Lk** in **Trumbull** 28 Jul (G. Meszaros), with eight pairs found in the summer survey of the **Lake** metroparks (J. Pogacnik). At **Cedar Bog** down in **Champaign**, two were singing and one calling on 8 Jun (J. McCormac), with one found there 10 Jul (D. Overacker), several were detected at a fen in **Logan** later that month (McCormac), and one at **CCMP** in **Hocking** 9 Jun was two by 26 Jun for a first park record.



Scott Wright took this photo of one of Cleveland's Terminal Tower falcons celebrating the acquisition of a yellow-billed cuckoo on 6 June.



This leucistic hummingbird, with just a few dabs of dark pigment visible, frequented the backyard of Gary and Cinda Carson in North Canton this summer. Photo taken there on 29 July.

Willow flycatcher: Said to be especially numerous, sometimes occurring in seemingly semi-colonial groups in habitat; the 5 Jun ONWRC found 17, and G. Bennett had 15 at **Berlin Lk WA** 22 Jun.

Least flycatcher: Mostly a northern nester, where J. Pogacnik found 11 in 10 areas during the breeding season at the **Lake** metroparks, and one on the **Kelleys Isl** census of 18 Jun (T. Bartlett). While one at **BCSP** in **Clark** may have been a late migrant (D. Overacker), four were singing in a single large field at **CCMP** in **Hocking** 6 Jun (J. Watts), where two remained 25 Jun (D. Sanders); one was vocalizing in **Columbus** 16 Jul (R. Thorn).

Eastern kingbird: Twenty-six for the ONWRC of 5 Jun became 35 for that of 3 Jul.

Scissor-tailed flycatcher: Pretty unmistakable adult birds were well but briefly seen in SW **Crawford** 18 Jun and NE **Knox** on 25 Jun. It is possible the same individual was involved in both sightings. Details are with the OBRC.

Bell's vireo: Apparently did not reappear by 5 Jun at the traditional **BCSP** site (D. Overacker). A pair at **Gilmore Ponds** in **Butler** 5 Jun (M. Busam) was last seen 11 Jun (B. Foppe), then a singing bird was found 25 Jun (J. Lehman), and 4 Jul (A. Oliver) until missed 17 Jul. N. Cade found one at **Twin Ck MP** in **Montgomery** 23 Jul.

Blue-headed vireo: On 18 Jun P. Coy found a territory in the **CVNP** in **Summit**, on 25 Jun M. Anderson an adult and fledgling in **Oak Openings MP** in **Lucas**, and R&S Harlan five males at **Hinckley MP** in **Medina** on 26 Jun. E. Tramer reported five territories in the **Oak Openings** during the period, J. Pogacnik 36 detected in 13 **Lake** MP areas during the season, and at the **CCMP** in **Hocking** J. Watts reported three summering pairs.

Warbling vireo: High count was 29 for the 3 Jul ONWRC.

Red-eyed vireo: Slower than usual to arrive in spring, numbers climbed steeply in June. A male was at the picturesque but hardly woodsy **Erie St. Cemetery** in downtown **Cleveland** on 4 Jul (S&R Harlan).

Blue jay: Like so many other species this year, seemed to move late. A. Boone noted some westbound along the Lakeshore at **Magee** as late as 2 Jun, and J. Pogacnik had 22 at his feeders along the shore in **Lake** on 4 Jun.

Northern rough-winged swallow: Early concentrations of this species included ~100 at **Sandy Ridge MP** 4 Jul (C. Caldwell) and 20 at **BCSP** on 9 Jul (D. Overacker).

Bank swallow: A flock at the **Conneaut** colony numbered 175 on 11 Jul (C. Holt).

Cliff swallow: The gate in the **Metzger** dike hosted a colony for the second year, now the largest in the **Toledo** area since 1949 with 90 birds, including 31 at 75 nests on 5 Jun for the ONWRC; for the 3 Jul census 52 were at the nests. The first migrants noted were up to 25 in **Mahoning** 25 Jul (C. Holt).

Red-breasted nuthatch: Suspected of nesting in many places: seen 4 Jun at **LSR** (J. Pogacnik), 5 Jun in **Hocking** (B. Placier), in **Berea** 21 Jun (N. Howell), three at **Hinckley MP** in **Medina** 26 Jun (R&S Harlan). A mated pair was spotted in **Oak Openings MP** in June (E. Tramer), and Pogacnik considered it a possible nester in the **Lake** MPs.

Brown creeper: In the north, J. Pogacnik found three in three areas of the **Lake** MPs during a breeding bird study, K. Metcalf had two singing 18 Jun in **Geauga**; G. Bennett had a pair at **Mogadore Res** 8 Jul. A pair nested at **Hoover Res** again this year, with copulation witnessed 2 Jun (R. Thorn) and young probably being fed 25 Jun (C. Bombaci).

House wren: The ONWRC found a healthy 51 on 3 Jul.

Sedge Wren: July sightings of this species probably involve second nestings, but are they by the same birds? The numbers seldom say so. This season, for example, a male was seen on territory in **Wyandot** 9 Jun (R. Counts), and three males found in **Lorain** 12 Jun (R&S Harlan); J. Pogacnik reported a nest in the **Lake** MPs at an unspecified date. Then 31 birds were reported in July, all but two in the second half of the month, with high counts of six singing males at **ONWR** 23 Jul (B. Whan) and a dozen or more at **KPWA** on the 30th (B. Sparks et al.). Other reports came from **Summit**, **Hamilton**, **Warren**, **Franklin**, **Fairfield**, and **Butler**.

Marsh wren: Good numbers included four at **Killbuck** 2 Jun (E. Snively) and 18 for the ONWRC 5 Jun.

Golden-crowned kinglet: R&S Harlan found three at **Hinckley MP** in **Medina** 26 Jun. The **Lake** MPs harbored one during the period (J. Pogacnik). T. Kemp discovered another in the **Maumee SF** 31 Jul.

Veery: Nested fairly widely as usual, as far south as **Hocking** (with several pairs in the **CCMP** 18 Jun, J. Watts). The GAAS reported 44 between 10-19 Jun in **Summit**.

Gray-cheeked thrush: Straggled as late as 3 Jun at **LSR** (J. Pogacnik).

Swainson's thrush: Tardy was one singing away in a **Columbus** suburb 8 June (R. Thorn).

Hermit thrush: **Hocking** hosted numerous nests as usual, with "many" at **Conkle's Hollow** 1 Jun (J. Grabmeier) and five territories found at **CCMP** during the month (J. Watts). Six nests were rated at least possible in the **Lake** metroparks during the season (J. Pogacnik).

Northern mockingbird: Just as white-throated sparrows are no longer regular summer residents of Ohio (see Lynds Jones's piece in this issue), this species has become so routine in the northern reaches of our state that observers no longer bother reporting it.

Blue-winged warbler: The GAAS of 10-19 Jun tallied 71 in **Summit**.

Northern parula: One just north of **Columbus** 10 Jun was an enigma (R. Thorn): pioneer or just lagging behind?

Hybrid parula X cerulean warbler: Reported as late as 15 Jun by original finder R. Nirschl in **Toledo**, this bird was probably last year's individual returned.

Yellow warbler: A measure of its abundance is the 211 counted on the census of ~four mi² **Kelleys Isl** on 18 Jun (T. Bartlett). J. Pogacnik noted the first migrant at **LSR** on 10 Jul. E. Schlabach found one inside a building in eastern **Holmes** 24 Jul.

Chestnut-sided warbler: Outside its established range, two territorial males sang at **Shawnee SF** 5 Jun (B. Sparks), one appeared for the **Slate Run MP (Pickaway)** breeding bird survey (A. Haslage), two were found 21 Jun in **Hancock** (D. Barker *vide* B. Hardesty), and singing males were at the **Kitty Todd preserve** in **Lucas** 10 Jun (E. Tramer) and in **Holmes** 12 Jun (L. Deininger).

Magnolia warbler: A number of late migrants passed through early in Jun, the latest a male the 9th at **HBSNP** (K. Metcalf). Four territories were found on the **CCMP** in **Hocking** (J. Watts), three males at **Hinckley MP** in **Medina** (R&S Harlan), and J. Pogacnik reported 21 in 11 areas for the breeding bird survey of the **Lake** metroparks.

Black-throated green warbler: In expected haunts, such as in hemlock gorges in **Lake**, J. Pogacnik located 33 during the breeding season, and the seven males R&S Harlan found at **Hinckley MP** were no great surprise. Some surprises of greater magnitudes included one in the **Oak Openings** 10 Jun (R. Nirschl), one singing in deciduous woods in **Scioto** 3 Jul (J. McCormac), a male on territory in deciduous woods in **Adams** 29 Jun (R. McCarty), a singing male in a **Columbus** suburb 17 Jun (J. Grabmeier), and L. Andrews's 10 Jun observation of surprising numbers "in **Perry County** within white pine stands and some mixed shortleaf/hardwood stands (no hemlock anywhere)."

Blackburnian warbler: Found at **Conkle's Hollow**, a known breeding locale, 5 Jun (J. Grabmeier), and at **Girdled Rd MP** in **Lake** during the period (J. Pogacnik); a male in the **Oak Openings** 5 Jul was interesting (P. Chad).

Yellow-throated warbler: Eight were located in eight areas of the **Lake** metroparks during the season's survey (J. Pogacnik). Interesting was a male found in pines 10 Jul at the **Beach City Dam** in **Tuscarawas** (R&S Harlan).

Pine warbler: Beyond its SE strongholds, an adult with young were in **Hamilton** 26 Jun (F. Renfrow), one was near **Dayton** 23 Jul (N. Cade), a singing male in **Coshocton** 1 Jun-16 Jul (L. Deininger), a male at **Hinckley MP** 26 Jun and three at **Nimisila Res** 10 Jul (R&S Harlan), and a survey of 20 coniferous plantings at **Oak Openings MP** revealed 18 singing males and one fledgling in Jun (E. Tramer).

[Kirtland's warbler]: A record 1415 singing males in Michigan were reported, including 18 in five upper peninsula counties. No Ohio records at this season of course.

Prairie warbler: One was singing in the **Oak Openings** through 13 Jun, but no nesting was proved (E. Tramer); R&S Harlan found a male at the **Dundee** grasslands in **Tuscarawas** 10 Jul, one was near **Dayton** 23 Jul (N. Cade), and the GAAS of 10-19 Jun reported two in **Summit**.

Blackpoll warbler: Very late was one in **Big Ck Res (Cuyahoga)** 14 Jun (S. Zadar).

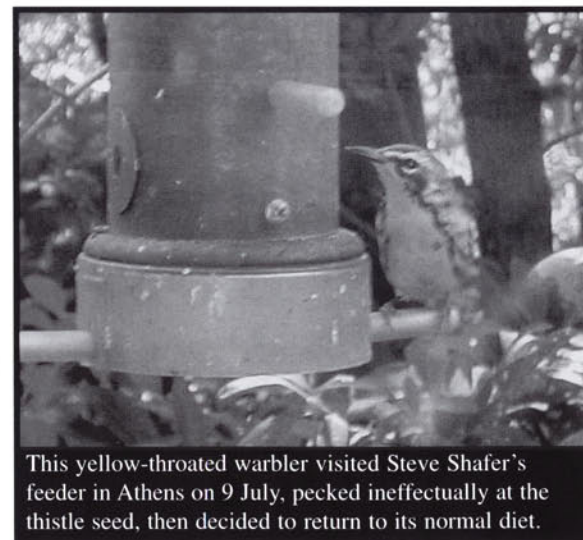
Cerulean warbler: Several observers, including J. Watts on behalf of the core range in **CCMP** in **Hocking**, remarked its numbers seemed up. J. Pogacnik found 50 in 20 areas of the **Lake** metroparks during a breeding bird survey.

Black-and-white warbler: Among unusual records were one in **Columbus** 26 Jun (R. Thorn) and one singing in **Englewood MP** near **Dayton** 10 Jul (D. Dister). A breeding bird survey in the **Lake** metroparks yielded 13 for J. Pogacnik.

American redstart: Rare in **Columbus** in summer, a male was at Griggs Dam 26 Jun (R. Thorn), and one was feeding a fledgling near the **OSU campus** 20 Jun (D. Shustack). On the downside, E. Tramer reported "a singing male in the **OOMP** through June was unusual; this has become a rare summer bird in the **Toledo** area, with few if any nesting pairs away from the **Maumee River corridor**."

Prothonotary warbler: C. Bombaci's **Hoover Res** project totaled 56 nests by 19 Jun, with some nests only 20 feet apart. The **ONWRC** had two birds on both 5 Jun and 3 Jul. J. McCormac reported four territories in **Mercer** 19 Jun. There was one possible nesting in the **Lake** metroparks during the period (J. Pogacnik).

Northern waterthrush: Evidently late, one was at **The Wilds** 5 Jun (T. Bartlett). Nesting was possible in one case, and probable in another, in the **Lake** metroparks this summer (J. Pogacnik); one was singing in the **Burton Wetlands** in **Geauga** 18 Jun (K. Metcalf).



This yellow-throated warbler visited Steve Shafer's feeder in Athens on 9 July, pecked ineffectually at the thistle seed, then decided to return to its normal diet.

Louisiana waterthrush: One was in **Columbus** 10 Jun (R. Thorn), and another in **Williams** 23 Jun (R. Nirschl). Another was in song as late as 28 Jul in **Hamilton** (F. Renfrow).

Kentucky warbler: T. Bartlett reported one found on the **Kelleys Isl** census of 17 Jul.

Connecticut warbler: The latest spring migrant reports came from **LSR** in *Lake*: a female on 1 Jun and a male on 3 Jun (J. Pogacnik).

Mourning warbler: Many reports in early Jun, the latest from the 5th at **BCSP** (D. Overacker), **MWF** (L. Peyton), and **Oak Openings MP** (E. Tramer). J. Pogacnik reported possible nesters during the period at **Erie Shores Golf Course** and **Girdled Road Res'n** in the *Lake* metroparks system.

Hooded warbler: The GAAS reported 126 in *Summit* 10-19 Jun. The first apparent migrant appeared at **LSR** on 10 Jul (J. Pogacnik).

Yellow-breasted chat: Three males were found on a BBS route in *Lorain/Huron* 12 Jun (R&S Harlan). High count 15 in *Adams* 25 Jun (D. Overacker).

Summer tanager: In the **Oak Openings MP**, R. Nirschl found birds at nine locations 9-10 Jun, and E. Tramer went so far as to remark that this species “may soon rival scarlet tanager in abundance” there. Another facultative advance by a southern species with climate change?

Clay-colored sparrow: Interestingly, R. Nirschl reported one in *Williams* 23 Jun.

Lark sparrow: The **Oak Openings** colony had four 12 Jun (C. Knoll), and M. Morgan reported one 19 Jun at the **Akron Sewage Plant** (fide L. Rosche).

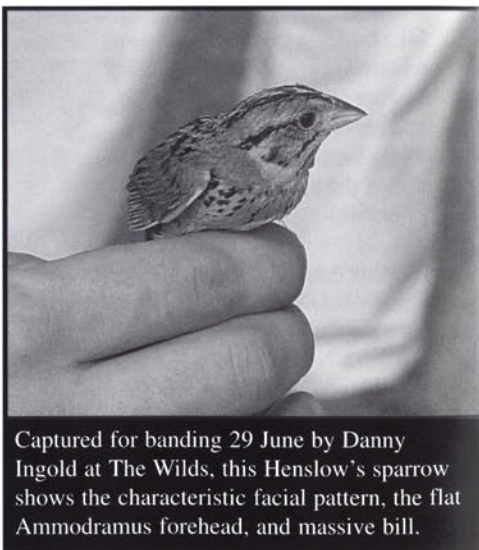
Grasshopper sparrow: R. Royle reported 100+ seen at **Tri-Valley WA** 4 Jul.

Henslow's sparrow: M. Busam reported eight at the **VOA** by 12 Jun, D. Patick had six at **Crown City WA** 19 Jun, and R. Royle 100+ at **Tri-Valley WA** 4 Jul.

White-throated sparrow: D. Horn reported one 11 Jun near **Ash Cave** in *Hocking*, in mesic forest with beech, maple, and hemlock, where one may have been present last summer). R&S Harlan witnessed a singing male in **Wadsworth 2** Jul.

White-crowned sparrow: A lingering migrant was singing at **HBSNP** 9 Jun (K. Metcalf).

Dark-eyed junco: An imm male was the last migrant at **LSR** 4 Jun (J. Pogacnik, who reported 102 at 22 *Lake* MP locations during the breeding season, including 34 at **Hell Hollow**). R&S Harlan had two males at **Hinckley MP** in *Medina* 26 Jun. K. Metcalf reported the first confirmed nest in **Munson Twp** in *Geauga* 7-9 Jun, in a hanging flower basket.



Captured for banding 29 June by Danny Ingold at The Wilds, this Henslow's sparrow shows the characteristic facial pattern, the flat Ammodramus forehead, and massive bill.

Rose-breasted grosbeak: The GAAS tallied 198 in *Summit* 10-19 Jun. One was singing in *Ross* 1 Jun (fide D. Hess), another was in *Hocking* 4 Jun (B. Placier) with a nesting pair at **CCMP** 6 Jun (J. Watts). Way down south, a pair found in **Athens** 6 Jun was on a nest by 9 Jun, which was found abandoned 23 Jun (D. Cohen, ph), and one was discovered in **Shawnee SF** in *Scioto* 3 Jul (J. McCormack).

Blue grosbeak: In *Lucas*, several were found in the **Oak Openings** and a singing male at **Kitty Todd preserve** throughout June (E. Tramer, R. Nirschl). Further south, a male was at the **VOA park** in *Butler* 10 Jun (J. Van Coney), a pair nested again in **Pickaway** (25 Jun, D. Sanders), five were found at **Crown City WA** 19 Jun (D. Patick), an imm at a **Dayton** park 23 Jul (N. Cade), a first-summer male was near the **Little Miami** 25 Jun (B. Lacker), a pair at **Twin Cks MP** in *Montgomery* 27 Jun (S. Egleston), two males 4 Jul and a female 7 Jul at **Tri-Valley WA** (B. Royle), and a pair in **Greene** 23 Jul (Egleston).

Dickcissel: A few arrived at overgrown weedy fields in *Wyandot* (R. Counts) and **Pickerington Ponds** (R. Thorn) as early as 4 Jun. Widespread later, with a high count of 20 in the **VOA park** 12 Jun (M. Busam). Mowing of fields—such as on 10 Jul in *Logan* noted by T. Shively—dispelled them. No systematic attempt to enumerate locations was possible, but even though dickcissels were reported missing from spots they'd occupied in recent years, reported from 26 counties, as far east as *Muskingum*, *Coshocton*, and *Summit*.

Bobolink: Reported in good numbers in the western unglaciated counties and at reclaimed strip mines (many at **The Wilds** in *Muskingum*) and isolated grasslands (e.g. **Denmark Twp** in *Ashtabula*) and fallow fields (e.g. in *Adams*) elsewhere.

Eastern meadowlark: Continues to flourish where it is allowed to, with 67 at the **VOA park** in *Butler* 12 Jun (M. Busam) and 46 in two MPs on **Columbus's** west side in Jul (C. Morrow). D. Overacker counted 20 in *Adams* on 25 Jun.

Western meadowlark: We received no reports of this species, which must often be missed.

Yellow-headed blackbird: A male was seen by the **ONWRC** 5 Jun where several birds of both sexes had been seen in May.

Rusty Blackbird: A male remained near **Sugarcreek** in *Tuscarawas* as late as 19 Jun, injured and apparently unable to fly (E. Schlabach).



Steve Shafer saw siskins at his thistle feeder in Athens well into June, and this one reappeared on 30 Jul for a photo and stayed into August.

Orchard oriole: S&R Harlan reported that on their BBS route in *Lorain/Huron* its numbers (nine) equaled those of Baltimore oriole on 12 Jun. Migrants were at **LSR** on 10 Jul (J. Pogacnik) and in *Tuscarawas* 30 Jul (E. Schlabach).

Baltimore oriole: The **Kelleys Isl** census found 51 on its four square miles on 18 Jun (T. Bartlett). First migrant showed up 10 Jul at **LSR** (J. Pogacnik).

Purple finch: Last seen at **LSR** 4 Jun (J. Pogacnik, who noted eight in seven areas of the *Lake* MPs during the period), with six recorded on the 10-19 Jun GAAS count in *Summit*, and a male in **Hinckley Twp** of *Medina* 26 Jun (R&S Harlan).

Pine siskin: Dilatory birds were in *Hancock* (W. Seiler *vide* B. Hardesty) 3 Jun and in *Lake* 4 Jun (J. Pogacnik). One to three sporadically visited an **Athens** feeder 22 Jun through the eop (S. Shafer).

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Further Afield

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*If you were a bird and you lived very high,
You'd lean on the wind as the breeze came by,
Say to the wind as it took you away,
"That's where I wanted to go today."*

The Ballad of You & Me & Pooneil
Jefferson Airplane (Paul Kantner), 1967

Sometimes, it's best to just go with the flow. Sit back, and enjoy the ride. Sooty terns and other hurricane-driven orphans live by this credo, and when they appear here in Ohio after a storm, they rather conveniently provide us with both the cause and the means of their vagrancy. But this isn't the case with most vagrants, whose dispersal patterns aren't so neatly gift-wrapped, and which don't offer us the tidy cause and effect that our logical brains desire.

Perhaps their orientation circuits are fried. Perhaps they stowed aboard a passing ocean liner, or hitched a last ride plastered to the grill of an eastbound eighteen-wheeler. For other vagrants, their arrivals just don't seem to make any sense at all. But do they *need* to make sense? Who are we to judge whether a rare bird's arrival in Ohio should or shouldn't be, or could or couldn't be?

As humans, we tend to search for understandable and predictable patterns. We're less comfortable with seemingly random occurrences. Sometimes, when a rarity seems too outlandish, or too inscrutable, or even too controversial, we shy away from it, and don't give it the attention it truly deserves. Let's attend to a certain red-naped sapsucker *Sphyrapicus nuchalis*, and let's do it now.

You know the one—near Mt. Hope in Holmes County, April 3rd through the 8th, 2005. And yes, I do believe that this bird was indeed a male red-naped sapsucker, not a yellow-bellied sapsucker *S. varius*, and not a hybrid. As such, it would represent a major record—a first for Ohio, and probably a first for eastern North America, north of the Gulf of Mexico. But this record has proven somewhat controversial, with some birders wondering if it might actually be an aberrant yellow-bellied, or a hybrid red-naped x yellow-bellied, or simply an unidentifiable sapsucker. All these views are worth examining.

After studying the bird for several hours on April 4 and 6, examining the many images of this individual on the internet, and perusing the available literature on the subject, I came to two Bold Conclusions: 1) that I would *allow* myself to come to a definite conclusion, despite the controversy, and despite what others might think; and that 2) if the bird looked like a red-naped sapsucker as the species is presently understood, then it *really is* a red-naped

sapsucker, even if its presence in Ohio doesn't seem to "make sense." Ohio's first apparent sooty tern makes sense on the heels of Hurricane Dennis; Ohio's first apparent green violet-ear makes some sense given the timing of their appearances in other nearby states; and I think Ohio's first apparent red-naped sapsucker will eventually make sense to us, but only if we let it.

Now, let me share with you an abbreviated and updated version of my thoughts on this individual; thoughts that I supplied to the Ohio Bird Records Committee (OBRC), the group which must be the ultimate arbiter of this record. Yes, I am presently a member of the Committee (one of seven members), but no, I do not pretend to be an expert on hybrid sapsucker DNA studies, or on DNA, or on hybrids, or on sapsuckers, or even on sap. If the truth must be known, I'm not really an expert on anything; most days, I can't even remember what I ate for lunch. Fish sticks, possibly. All right, I'll get to the point.

Our first step should be to examine the 300+ digital images, featuring a wide variety of angles, now available on the internet. Although a small percentage of the images preserved are of a female yellow-bellied (YB), the vast majority represent the male red-naped (RN). Greg Miller is thanked for the preservation of most of these, offering 239 images of his own, and 128 more images by Don Dravenstott, at: http://pg.photos.yahoo.com/ph/shouldhavebeenhere/my_photos. Casey Tucker also provides several other valuable shots at: http://caseybirdphotos.blogspot.com/2005_04_01_caseybirdphotos_archive.html. To see these images, scroll down the page to 6 April and 8 April.

I also found that perusing the internet search engine Google.com for images of "red-naped sapsucker", "yellow-bellied sapsucker", and "sapsucker hybrid" provided a virtual museum collection of sorts; not a perfect collection, where the specimens can be handled and examined in person, but still a useful tool to view the ranges of variability in the *Sphyrapicus* complex.

SOME BASIC INFORMATION

- 1) Three species of *Sphyrapicus* sapsuckers are presently recognized by the American Ornithologists' Union:
 - Yellow-bellied sapsucker (*S. varius*)—a generally uncommon nester in the transcontinental boreal and deciduous forests of Canada, and the northern and eastern U.S. A long-distance migrant.
 - Red-naped sapsucker (*S. nuchalis*)—a generally uncommon nester in montane forests of the Rocky Mountains and the Great Basin of the western U.S. and Canada. An intermediate-distance migrant.
 - Red-breasted sapsucker (*S. rubra*)—a generally uncommon nester in forests of the Pacific coastal areas of the U.S. and Canada. A short-distance migrant or resident.
- 2) These three forms have held species status since 1985, when the AOU accepted evidence that the three were genetically distinct, while also citing numerous other differences in plumage, molt, geography, and nesting behavior.

- 3) There is little absolute in the world of sapsuckers. No one field mark can definitively identify an out-of-range or unusual-appearing bird; rather, an entire suite of field marks must be considered to effectively account for variation within each species, and to account for possible hybrids or otherwise aberrant individuals.

- 4) Hybridization is known between pairings of all three species. Many studies have been undertaken in contact zones. RN x YB hybrids were poorly known and little studied until 1996 when Project Sapsucker was initiated in their zone of overlap in a narrow strip of southwestern Alberta (see: <http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/natural/birds/projects/sapsuck.htm>). Dr. Jocelyn Hudon, Curator of Ornithology at the Royal Alberta Museum, heads up this project.

- 5) Contrary to some public remarks, *Sphyrapicus* identification is not a "new" concern. This genus has long led a rather controversial taxonomic life. Spencer F. Baird first described *nuchalis* almost 150 years ago, in 1858. *Nuchalis* was subsequently treated as a race of *varius*, but in 1914 Robert Ridgway stated he believed *nuchalis* should be viewed as specifically distinct from *varius*. Ridgway cited the same field marks for differentiation from *varius* as we use today: less white on the back, forming two definite stripes; red nape; and red covering portions of the black malar frame. He also acknowledged the comparative rarity of intermediate specimens, a circumstance that persists to this day.

- 6) An understanding of genetics is hardly my strong suit. However, in genetics studies published in 1983 (*Auk* 100:871-884), Ned K. Johnson and Robert M. Zink found that "[u]nexpectedly, *S. nuchalis* is genetically more distinct from *S. varius*...the species it most closely resembles" than it is from *S. ruber*, "a form of very different appearance." Thus, red-naped is more closely related to red-breasted than it is to yellow-bellied, despite the very similar appearances of red-naped and yellow-bellied. Johnson and Zink also state that "[t]he genetic information strongly suggests that *ruber* and *nuchalis* are recently diverged, sister species", and that "[a]lthough infrequent hybridization between *ruber* and *nuchalis* occurs, there is no evidence of either a hybrid swarm or of the species losing their phenotypic 'identity'." If this is true between the sister species red-naped and red-breasted sapsuckers, then to my mind it is logical to assume that the same can be said, and if not more so, of the more distant relatives, red-naped and yellow-bellied sapsuckers.

- 7) Ned K. Johnson and Carla Bowman Johnson continued genetics work on sapsuckers with their article published in 1985 (*Auk* 102:1-15). Johnson and Johnson studied 145 nesting pairs of red-naped and red-breasted sapsuckers in their zones of overlap in Oregon, California, and Nevada. They found that "the overwhelming proportion of both specimens and sight records are of normal parental phenotypes...definite hybrids are relatively scarce." They also found that, presumably based on some selective disadvantages, that "survival, and thus fitness, of hybrids is reduced after 1 yr of age." Once again, if this is true between the sister species red-naped and red-breasted sapsuckers, then to my mind it is logical to assume that the same can be said, if not more so, of the more distant relatives, red-naped and yellow-bellied sapsuckers.

8) Variation within species is fundamental and expected. Concerns over possible hybridism based on variation are valid, but the fact that variation *always* naturally exists must not be forgotten. Variation exists even in common and familiar species, although it is frequently overlooked. For an example of the variation that can be found in the head patterns of downy and hairy woodpeckers, see the interesting article by Kevin McGowan at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/crows/woodhead.htm>. Concerns of hybridism need not apply to every example of variation, as is shown by this case.

FIELD MARKS

As stated earlier, no single field mark can definitively differentiate red-naped sapsucker from yellow-bellied sapsucker. A combination of characters must be used to make a confident decision; the more appropriate characters that can be assigned, the more confident the identification becomes.

A search of numerous sources has provided the following list of field marks appropriate for red-naped sapsucker as it is currently described. It is certainly not within the purview of the OBRC to decide on systematics, thereby judging the acceptability of the AOU's distinction of species; nor is it within reason to expect the OBRC to engage in theoretical discussions over what constitutes a "good species," especially when others are so much more qualified to do so. These arguments will only serve to confuse the issue before us, *which is to determine if the evidence supports the identification of the Holmes Co. bird as a red-naped Sapsucker, as it is presently described*. We can only make our decisions based on the current findings of the best authorities.

The following list of field marks does not include every known useful mark for RN or YB. It does, however, include those marks that I feel are of special interest and concern to us, which are generally "on/off" or "presence/absence" marks, as opposed to marks that necessitate a judgment call, such as comparative or relative dimensions.

NAPE—The Ohio bird has a red nape, which is appropriate for RN, and is generally inappropriate for YB. The red is intense and obvious, but it appears to cover a somewhat smaller area laterally than on some other RNs. Even so, based on comparisons of the Ohio bird to other images on the Internet, the extent of red on the nape on the Ohio bird seems to fall well within the normal range of variation of RN.

I have now seen several comments in print and online indicating that a red nape is not a good field mark for RN, since some YB can also show a red nape. It is true that some YB do have red napes, but it is also true that the vast majority don't, and that therefore a red nape is actually a *very good* field mark for separating RN from YB. Thus, while it is not a diagnostic field mark, it is a very useful one, and provides a good place to start.

As evidence, I am aware of four studies that examined series of YB specimens in U.S. museums. 1) Paul DeBenedictis found that 3 of 58 YB specimens (5%) in New York museums featured enough red on the nape to be

visible in the field; 2) Mark Robbins found 2 of 120 YB specimens (2%) in Pennsylvania, New York, and Kansas collections that showed significant red; 3) Bill Whan found significant red on 2 of 52 YB skins (4%) in Ohio; and 4) Steve Rottenborn found field-visible red on 4 of 64 YB specimens (6%) in California collections. In contrast, Rottenborn also found significant red on the napes of all 341 of 341 RN specimens he studied in California.

If we combine the results of the above four studies, we have 11 of 294 YB in museums that show enough red on the nape to be readily visible in the field. So, based on our sample, only 3.7% of YB showed significant red on the nape; this illustrates that while a red nape is not diagnostic of RN, it is at least strongly suggestive. *Even if the Ohio bird does exhibit a somewhat smaller area of red on the nape than many RN, it still falls within the normal range of variation; moreover, the red on the nape serves to eliminate the vast majority of YB.*

THROAT AND MALAR STRIPE—The Ohio bird (fig. 1) has a virtually entirely red throat and chin (plus a few stubby white feathers at the very base of the bill, presumably worn from use), which is appropriate for male RN and for male YB. In virtually all known cases, the red feathers from the throat of male RN "invade" (or cover) a portion of the black malar stripe, thus interrupting the black frame that the malars form around both sides of the throat and chin. The Ohio bird exhibits this mark, which is appropriate for RN. In virtually all YB, the thick black malar frame is not invaded by the red from the throat, and thus appears as an uninterrupted frame. All of the above favors the Ohio bird being a RN.

According to the classic 1952 study of the *Sphyrapicus* complex, Thomas Howell (*Condor* 54:237-282) states that "[a]nother unusual aspect of red coloration in sapsuckers is that it is largely superficial in position; the red is present only as an extensive tipping to the feathers." On sapsucker throats, the red is present only on the tips of the feathers, with the bases being white. Also, Howell states that the red feathers have a "loose, somewhat hairy texture", and are thus prone to frequent misplacement. This is evident when examining close-ups of sapsuckers, especially in our case, Red-naped. It seems to me that male RN have longer red throat feathers than male YB, which would account for the broken malar stripes on RN, as their longer red feather tips spill up over the black stripes. Alternately, the black malar feathers on male RN may themselves have red tips. I have not personally checked these features with study skins.

Close examination of the many images of the Ohio bird clearly indicates that depending on posture or feather placement, the amount of red overlying the black malar frame varies considerably, ranging from images where red entirely covers the posterior portion of the malar, to images where the entire upper border of the black frame is visible on either side. Reliance on any one or several images cannot show this variation clearly, but the large series of images available for the Ohio bird can and does illustrate this point. Thus, the amount of invading red on the black malar stripes may change as the bird itself moves, or as its long, red throat feathers move, exhibiting varying degrees of tidiness. Naturally, this would be true for both sides of the face, so any appearance that hinted at asymmetry could be mostly an artifact of movement and feather placement, rather than being truly asymmetrical, which some have taken as a possible indicator of hybridism.

One study that I have seen (Steve Rottenborn in his post to BIRDCHAT, Oct. 1995, week 3, #79) has specifically enumerated this character in YB; namely, 3 of 64 adult male YB specimens (4.6%) in California museums showed red on the black malar. *So, the presence of significant red on the black malar of the Ohio bird is indicative of RN, while simultaneously pointing away from the vast majority of YB.*

BACK PATTERN—The Ohio bird (fig. 2) has two neat vertical columns of white on the back, separated by a black vertical strip up the middle of the back. The vertical columns are crossed horizontally by black bars, forming a variable chain-like or ladder-like impression; this pattern is entirely appropriate for RN. Back patterns on YB generally appear messy, with light areas randomly splashed across the darker back in a vague checkerboard or marbled pattern. Although this back patterning is somewhat dependent on posture and feather tidiness, the many images of the Ohio bird certainly indicate that the neat pattern of two vertical ladder-like stripes on either side of a vertical black stripe is maintained and represents the true pattern of this bird.

Steve Rottenborn studied 64 male YB in California museums in 1995; he found only 1 of 64 specimens (1.5%) that exhibited a back pattern reminiscent of a typical RN. *Again, the pattern of the Ohio bird is appropriate for RN, while eliminating the vast majority of YB.*

BACK COLOR—The Ohio bird exhibits a bicolored back, with the dark portions appearing as black, and the light portions appearing as white, at least to my eye. This is appropriate for RN, and is not typical for YB. Typically, adult male RN have the most dark (and the least light) coloration on their backs, followed by adults of female RN, male YB, and female YB. Also, the dark areas on the backs of adult male RN are typically of a darker shade than the dark areas on the backs of YB; to my eye, the dark coloring on the Ohio bird was consistent with RN.

Pure white coloration on the light portions of sapsucker backs is typical of RN and not YB. Rottenborn's 1995 study of 341 RN with adult back feathering found that nearly half had pure white pale portions, while only 1 YB appeared white. Also, following the discovery of the Ohio bird, Bill Whan examined 52 YB specimens in Ohio, and found that 5 of 52 specimens (9.6%) appeared whitish rather than exhibiting the more typical yellowish or tannish tint. *Again, the shades of color on both the dark and light portions on the back of the Ohio bird are appropriate for RN, while eliminating the great majority of YB.*

OUTER TAIL FEATHERS—The Ohio bird has pure black outer tail feathers, a trait which is almost always true of RN. According to Howell, "about half" of YB have outer rectrices that are spotted with white. *Thus, the outer rectrices exhibited on the Ohio bird are entirely appropriate for RN, and inappropriate for roughly 50% of YB.*

OTHER MARKS—Typically, the long red feathers on the throats of male RN spill downward over the top of the black bib; more so than on YB, which typically have

a cleaner throat/bib margin. The Ohio bird exhibits this "spilling over" trait, appropriate for RN.

The relative width of facial lines is a variable feature, with the light postocular line of RN expected to be thinner than the postocular line of YB. In my opinion, the Ohio bird exhibits a postocular line within the expected range of both species, and I feel that it does not serve as useful a trait as the other field marks listed above, which are on/off marks, rather than relative measurements.

The belly on the Ohio bird is washed with very pale yellow in my opinion. Some comments on the Ohio Birds listserver (made by individuals who never observed the bird in person) have stated that the underparts were "bright yellowish" and "too intense" for a RN; however, these seem off the mark to me, since the underparts always appeared very pale yellowish in the lighting conditions I witnessed. I believe the paleness on the belly to be within the normal range of both RN and YB.

To sum up this portion of my commentary, I would like to present a very unscientific way of looking at the mathematical likelihood (or unlikelihood) of the Ohio bird being an aberrant (a very, very aberrant) yellow-bellied sapsucker. Studies of museum specimens over the years have given us percentages of likelihood on a rough scale (with admittedly small samples) as depicted above. To determine the odds of an aberrant YB exhibiting ALL the traits enumerated, we can multiply the odds of a YB showing a particular trait by the odds of it exhibiting another trait, and so on. This should theoretically give us an end product or a rough notion of the likelihood of a YB showing EVERY aberrant trait. This is unscientific to be sure, but it still brings the point home, to my way of thinking at least.

As stated earlier, 1) 3.7% of YB specimens studied show significant red on the nape; 2) 4.6% of YB specimens show red on the black malar stripe; 3) 1.5% of YB specimens show a neat, vertically striped back pattern; 4) 9.6% of YB specimens show a whitish rather than yellowish tint to the light areas of the back; and 5) about half (let's say 50%) of YB specimens show unmarked black outer tail feathers.

This gives us $0.037 \times 0.046 \times 0.015 \times 0.096 \times 0.5$, for a likelihood of 0.0000012; if I've done my math correctly, that places the odds of a YB exhibiting



Fig. 1 Photo of Holmes County sapsucker taken by Greg Miller on 4 Apr.

all of the above traits at *close to one in a million*. These seem very poor odds, indeed.

Even to accept, despite the long odds, the possibility that the Ohio bird still could be an aberrant YB, one must also be willing to accept that an individual bird could show ALL the appropriate field marks of ANOTHER species. I can't do this. How do we *know* that a bird appearing to be a chipping sparrow might not actually be a field sparrow; a field sparrow that just happens to show *every* field mark of a chipping sparrow? We know by common sense.

HYBRIDS

As stated earlier, Project Sapsucker has studied RN x YB hybrids in southwestern Alberta, Canada, since 1996. Dr. Jocelyn Hudon, director of the project, has devised a field chart to enable his citizen-scientist participants to gauge the "purity" of the nesting sapsuckers they encounter within the study area. The field card displays the variability of the sapsuckers in the area, ranging from pure YB, through various stages depicting presumed hybrids, to pure RN.

This study, and particularly this field card, would seem to be of great interest to us here in our attempts to judge the likelihood of hybridism in our Ohio bird. Fortunately, the field card is depicted in color in the May/June 2005 issue of *Birding* 37(3):291. This article does not specifically address the methodology needed to use the card as designed; however, Dr. Hudon has supplied this information elsewhere.

In a posting to ID Frontiers (January 2004, week 1, #39), Hudon states that in Project Sapsucker, male sapsuckers are judged based on three factors (this is also evident on the field card):

- The nape—a maximum of 3 points is given for maximum red (on the card, this scoring ranges from 0 points for no red, to ½, to 1, etc., up to 3 points for the vivid bird depicted on the right).
- The malar stripe—a maximum of 3 points is given for maximum red invading the black malar stripe (on the card, this again ranges from 0 points for no invasion to 3 points for maximum invasion).
- The upperparts—a maximum of 2 points is given for the back pattern (on the card, 0 points is given for a "peppered" look, up to 2 points for two narrow white lines separated by a black vertical stripe).

Thus, a given individual sapsucker can score a maximum of 8 points in this scale, all the way down to a minimum of 0 points. We know from the Project Sapsucker website (<http://www.pma.edmonton.ab.ca/natural/birds/projects/results.htm>) that Hudon equates scores of 2-6 with presumed hybrids (birds which display mixed or intermediate characteristics), birds scoring under 2 with YB, and birds scoring over 6 with RN.

If I were to conservatively rate the Ohio bird according to this scale, I would give it 2 (possibly 2.5) of 3 for the red on the nape; 3 of 3 for the invasion of red on the malar; and 2 of 2 for the back pattern. *Adding these scores gives us 7 of*

8 (if not 7.5 of 8), and indicates a "pure-blooded" red-naped sapsucker according to Project Sapsucker guidelines.

Recently, on behalf of the OBRC, Bill Whan requested an opinion from Dr. Hudon regarding the Ohio bird. Although he was not able to provide his opinion at the time, he did state that he had seen "over 125 sapsuckers (over a 10-year period) that I would qualify as hybrids" in the RN x YB contact zone in southwestern Alberta. My thought is this—if Hudon, the person in charge of the largest (only?) study currently investigating these hybrids—has seen an average of only 12.5 hybrids per year for 10 years, how numerous can these hybrids truly be? In the big picture, they must be very few indeed.

Logically, these hybrids must constitute only a minuscule proportion of all red-naped and yellow-bellied sapsuckers on Earth. Further, they are known to originate only in a comparatively small area of Alberta, where the two species come into contact. If the Ohio bird is a RN x YB hybrid, then it comes from this small contact zone, rather than anywhere else in the combined nesting ranges of both RN and YB; ranges which cover Canada from nearly the Atlantic to the Pacific, and most of the American west and northeast.

Surely, the odds of a hybrid RN x YB appearing in Ohio are necessarily much, much smaller than the odds of a pure RN appearing, even if no RN have ever been noted in the eastern US (north of the Gulf) previously. And, even if a hybrid somehow made its way to Ohio from the small contact zone, even stranger would be a hybrid that exhibited no obvious intermediate traits!

To sum, in my opinion, the chances of a pure red-naped sapsucker being found in Ohio are tiny, but even so, they are much better than the odds of a million-to-one grossly aberrant yellow-bellied sapsucker (one that happens to look just like a RN!) being found here; likewise, the odds of a pure RN being found here are much better than one of the few hybrid RN x YB finding its way here from the small contact zone in Alberta—a supposed hybrid that doesn't look like a hybrid, and one that passes the Project Sapsucker grade as a pure red-naped!

This is all too much for my logical brain. Logically, the Ohio sapsucker is indeed a red-naped sapsucker, at least in my opinion. We'll all just have to wait for the final decision of the OBRC. I hope they're reading this.....

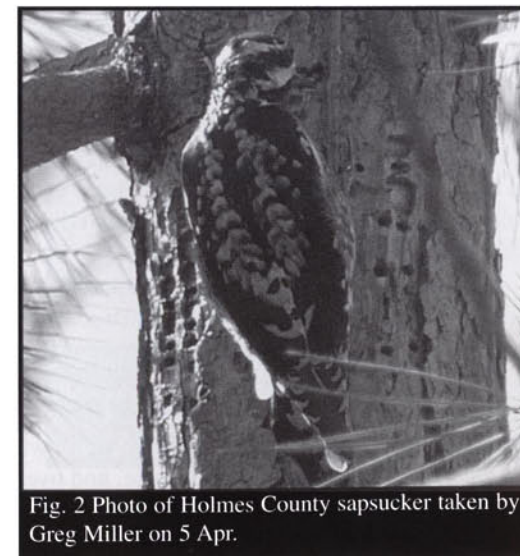


Fig. 2 Photo of Holmes County sapsucker taken by Greg Miller on 5 Apr.

Sooty Tern: a Potential First Ohio Record

by Donald Morse

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From 13-19 July 2005, East Fork Lake in southwestern Ohio's Clermont County played host to an adult sooty tern *Sterna fuscata*. This pelagic species, if accepted by the Ohio Bird Records Committee, would be a first state record.*

As local weather forecasts called for remnants of Hurricane Dennis to pass to our west and then eventually drift eastward, stalling out over southwestern Ohio, I began to keep track of this storm's movement in hopes it might deposit some rare birds in the area. I also checked internet birding lists for states where the eye of the hurricane had either passed or was currently dominating the weather. I noticed sooty terns were being discovered at reservoirs and rivers in the states previously crossed by the eye as well as on the eastern (inflowing, with southern winds) side of Dennis. As the hurricane's eye began moving closer to southwestern Ohio, I began regularly checking the Ohio River and the only large reservoir close to me, East Fork Lake.

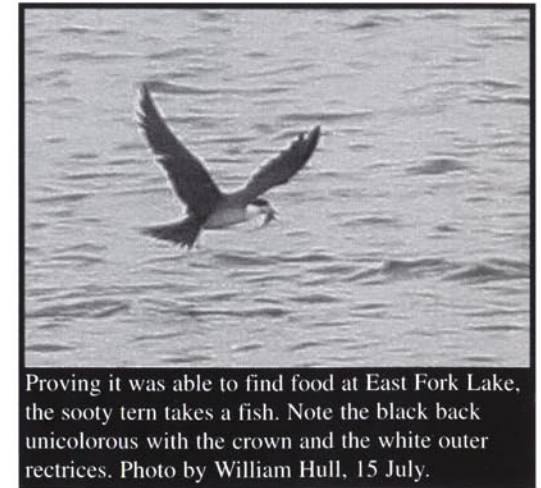
On 12 July, I spotted an adult sooty tern flying west down the Ohio River near New Richmond, in southern Clermont County. However, since most of the river actually lies within the Kentucky state line, the bird did not qualify as an Ohio record. Optimistic that there might be more sooty terns in the area, the next day I decided to venture out to check the reservoir at East Fork State Park periodically to search for any oddities that may have fallen out. When I checked the weather radars before departing, it was apparent that the remnants of the eyewall were over southwestern Ohio. On the afternoon of 13 July, while scanning the sky above the lake with my binoculars, a bird stood out from the numerous ring-billed gulls and turkey vultures circling above. I decided to keep watch on the bird; this proved very difficult as it at times soared out of sight.

While observing the bird over approximately ten minutes, I saw it make a spiraling dive, swooping down and just brushing the surface of the lake with its bill. It did not dive into the water like many of the terns I was familiar with. I quickly noted the shape and size of the bird, which appeared large for a local tern. The flight was very powerful and direct, again unlike most species of terns with which I was familiar. The bird's dark upperparts, whitish underparts, size, and overall jizz all led me to the conclusion it was definitely one of the two species of pelagic dark-backed terns.

I continued to observe the tern through my scope, looking for and recording field marks that could be used to distinguish whether I was observing a sooty or bridled tern. The bird lacked the white collar of the bridled tern between the black cap on the top of the head and the dark back. The dark primaries contrasting with the white underwing coverts made the wings appear to flash, constantly catching my eye. As the tern worked its way closer to the beach where I was standing, it appeared to feed. This opportunity allowed me to get a very good look at the tail while fanned out. I was able to make out very narrow white outer edges to the forked tail, set off by very dark central tail feathers. Adding it all up, I realized that I could be looking at Ohio's first record of sooty tern.

Fearing the bird would not stay long enough for others to observe it, I quickly had my friend Jaime, who was with me at the time, return home to report the sighting on the internet. I stayed behind to observe the tern, gathering details that could be used for documentation. Unsuccessful at obtaining photographs with my digital camera, I was hoping for the bird to stay long enough for other birders to get a chance at seeing it. As I was leaving the park, I met up with Bob Foppe. I supplied him with the details on the tern, and he was able to relocate it and point it out to other observers arriving at the park. Over the next six days, many birders were able to study and enjoy the tern, and documentary photographs were obtained.

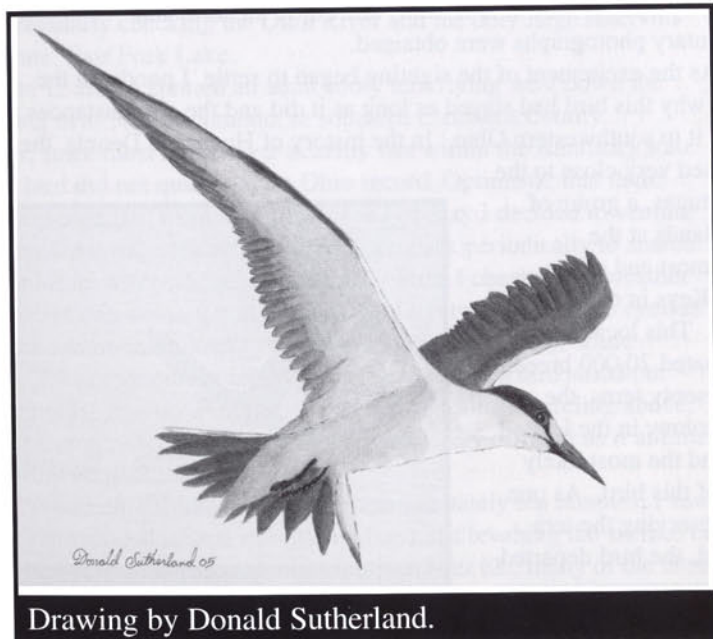
As the excitement of the sighting began to settle, I pondered the reasons why this bird had stayed as long as it did and the circumstances that brought it to southwestern Ohio. In the history of Hurricane Dennis, the eye passed very close to the Dry Tortugas, a group of small islands at the westernmost end of the Florida Keys in the Gulf of Mexico. This location hosts an estimated 20,000 breeding pairs of sooty terns, the largest colony in the United States and the most likely source of this bird. As one birder observing the tern predicted, the bird departed as the low pressure presence that remained from Hurricane Dennis had been pushed out of the area by a cold front.



Proving it was able to find food at East Fork Lake, the sooty tern takes a fish. Note the black back unicolorous with the crown and the white outer rectrices. Photo by William Hull, 15 July.

*There has previously been only one recorded report of a potential sooty tern for Ohio, in 1945. Bill Whan has provided me with the following information regarding that report and records from surrounding states:

“On 5 August 1945, several observers reported having observed a tern on Mogadore Reservoir in Portage Co. The bird was studied for an hour with scopes and binoculars, and a report published in Audubon magazine 47(5):48, where Ludlow Griscom remarked that it left “no room for reasonable doubt” that it was “one of the two tropical oceanic dark-backed terns” [i.e., sooty or bridled]. Ohio authorities, however, have been unable to locate the documentation, and while this bird was quite possibly a sooty tern, it might have been a bridled tern, and in any event better evidence would probably be required for a first state record. No hurricane is likely to have affected Ohio significantly on this date, according to Weather Service records. All adjacent states and provinces except Michigan already have records of this species; Indiana’s sole record is of a dead bird, while Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ontario, and Kentucky have multiple records.”



Drawing by Donald Sutherland.

How Common are Wintering Long-eared Owls in Ohio?

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How can we know if a bird species is genuinely rare, or just rarely seen? Ohio seems to lie in known migratory pathways for yellow rails and Le Conte’s sparrows, birds much sought after here, but we don’t have the faintest idea how many pass through the state. We benefit from many ways of estimating birds’ numbers: surveys, counts, and censuses, hawk-watches, reports from banding stations, and data from an army of other observers collected, compiled, and recorded in any number of other ways, including in this journal, but they only scratch the surface, and the local abundances of many secretive species are unknown. Near the top of anyone’s list of such birds are the owls, and among regularly-occurring Ohio ones the most difficult to detect are long-eared owls *Otus asio*.

Peterjohn & Rice (1991) estimated their statewide population in summer as “probably fewer than five pairs” if the very few nesters found during the *Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas* period accurately reflected their status, but noted that their true numbers could be larger. Many more are noticed in winter, when an influx of birds from the north presumably occupies the state. Peterjohn (2001) calls them “casual to rare and very locally distributed winter residents throughout Ohio,” but Wheaton (1882), writing when the deforestation of the state was more extensive than it is today, found it “at times [an] abundant visitor,” though he too called it “rare in summer.” Trautman (in preparation) reports finding 1-16 birds daily during many consecutive winters in a single stand of cedars in Ottawa County; while fewer were present in other seasons, he nevertheless regarded the long-eared owl as “an uncommon migrant and rather uncommon nesting species” in the western Lake Erie region since 1930. Published Ohio records of the long-eared owl involve 62 counties, the great majority of them coming from the northern third of the state December through March. Many forested counties in the unglaciated southeast lack records from any time of year. Setting aside breeding records, there are among more than 600 records only nine from October, fewer than 30 from November, and not many more than that from April. Studies near our latitude indicate northbound movements from mid-March to mid-April, and southbound in October and November, with 90% of birds moving between 16 October and 24 November at Cape May, N.J. (Marks et al. 1994). While most authorities agree in regarding it as a rare nester in Ohio, details are often difficult to come by. In the modern era the hobby of egg collecting, which often led collectors to seek out nests of rare

species, is no longer legal, and finders of nests are not always inclined to inspect or report them lest observers disturb the birds.

Many nocturnal species are most easily detected by ear during courting and nesting seasons. Long-eared owl vocalizations, however, are varied and infrequent, and probably the least-recognized owl sounds among local birders, even experienced ones. Learning from popular guides can be difficult. Bent (1937) devotes 62 lines of text to descriptions of various utterances of long-eared owls. Sibley has *wooop*, *sheoof*, *bwah-bwah-bwah*, and *wee-ee*; Peterson (1980) offers *hooooo*, and a “catlike whine”; Robbins et al. (1983) describe “a variety of low hoots, whistles, and shrieks”; the National Geographic guide (1999) has “one or more long *hooo*’s”; Farrand (1983) relates “soft, cooing, mellow low-pitched hoots; also shrieks, whines, meows, and *weck-weck-weck* alarm notes; at winter roosts, soft twitters before dawn.” Got that?

Vocalizing owls want to be heard, even though predators will be among the audience. Still, there must be aspects of the ecology of this species that make hooting less important than it is for more demonstrative owls. Having accepted this, most likely we’ll often have to use our eyes, poor as our vision is in comparison to that of nocturnal hunters. Unfortunately, long-eared owls don’t want to be seen. Our other owls also take care to hide of course, but they don’t seem to resent nearly so much being found. Long-eareds seem to hate being discovered, and eye contact with an observer is often the final signal to flee. In the winter of 2003-2004 a big roost of up to twenty birds was found along a busy trail in northwestern Ohio; they had persisted while joggers passed close by daylong, but when birders discovered them and actively observed them they grew more skittish and prone to retreat into the woods. Here perhaps is another argument for angled eyepieces on spotting scopes—the askance look. Long-eareds prefer dense dark cover, and in winter this means conifer stands, or deciduous trees like oaks that retain foliage. Unlike our other owls, they have a habit of furling themselves up umbrella-style to the dimensions of a wine bottle; the resulting stick-like profile makes them very overlookable.

In winter they frequently lurk communally (2-20 individuals), often in shorter trees 8-15 feet tall whose dense leafage makes eye-level views difficult. Marks et al. (1994) state that winter roosts vary from .5 to 5 m. above ground level, and that small groves, thickets, or shelterbelts seem to be preferred; roosts in large woodlots tend to be on their edges. Resident great horned owls are likelier to inhabit stands of taller trees with a more open understory, giving long-eareds another reason to avoid such spots. When flushed during the day in such situations, they generally leave cover as briefly as possible. A single observer looking for them will often miss a roost entirely, as they flush on silent wings, off on the far side of dense trees, quickly veering back into the most distant parts of the cover.

Many observers have seen most of their Ohio long-eared owls at one location: a pine plantation in Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area, where they have been reliable for around 30 years, and sought on the Christmas Bird Count there

since the late 80s. These observers may disagree with much of what is said in the previous paragraph. At Killdeer, they will say, these owls may be seen in relatively open stands of pines up to 40 feet tall. Perhaps because of the comparatively scant cover in the open understory, they seem accustomed to eye contact with visitors, and flush only with additional provocation. They can even be good photographic subjects. Attentive observers with the leisure to search for them often leave the “Owl Grove” in winter having had good looks at several of these birds. The Killdeer roost has been unique in the state recently, reliably allowing views of this species year after year for multitudes of owl-seekers, though there were signs in 2004-2005 that it may be in the process of abandonment.

While their presence was shared among only a few in the 1970s, over the years the number of observers has increased steadily. Despite concerns about pressure on the owls and even deterioration of the habitat caused by crowds, the numbers of owls reported at the site, while varying from year to year, fluctuated but did not diminish overall for decades. Importantly, it has not been merely the presence of owls in this publicly accessible area that has attracted the attention of so many birders from Ohio and neighboring states, but what appears to be their uncharacteristic equanimity.

It seems possible this population of wintering owls has, over a number of generations, learned to put up with the pressure of eager but otherwise non-threatening human observers. Alternatively or additionally, perhaps the more open grove itself makes a difference. In dense cover, initial eye contact with a potential predator can occur at arm’s length; when an interloper can be observed at a more comfortable distance, on the other hand, precipitate flight is not the owl’s only option. Whatever the cause, in a state where less disturbed grasslands have grown scarce, Killdeer’s rodents are a magnet for wintering raptors, and the cost of admission is being ogled by human visitors. Birders are tempted by the birds’ disinclination to flee to violate at times the ethics of their pastime, but they have probably never directly harmed an owl. Certainly flushing at the approach of every human would be an intolerable waste of energy, especially when humans are spread out daylong over the entire grove. Those, like the author, who made dire predictions that we’d eventually drive the owls off, have been proved wrong year after year. When in 2000 the roost began to pass the day in an isolated red cedar only a few feet off the closest roadway, sometimes allowing the approach of “cautious” birders within a few feet, it seemed an ultimate level of tolerance of humans had been reached. But later they continued to roost even after utility maintenance crews had hacked off the top third of the tree, reducing their cover still more. Interesting in this regard was a communication from Jason Larson, who wrote to the author as follows:

When the Brown Family Environmental Center Birding Club did a field trip to Killdeer Plains on February 02/22/04, Sherrell Campbell and I had 26 Long-eared Owls in the cedar tree along the road...yes...the one out in front of the barn without a top!...Normally, you can walk right under the tree

to get a look at the birds...as there are normally 2-5 or so birds in the tree and they normally stay put for a great close look. I spied one bird as I walked under the tree and as I turned to motion Sherrell over to take a look...and I heard a WHOOSH! Twelve birds went in the first flock and then another nine...I thought they were all gone, but another four flew out one by one over the next few minutes. To my amazement...one bird remained and refused to budge for the remainder of the afternoon. All of the birds headed for the barn and seemed to disappear into the brush behind the barn. We did not see any back in the pines, so they must have stopped in the heavy brush directly behind the barn. Anyway...pretty unusual...considering before they flew I only saw one!

Previously during this winter, in multiple reports the high count of this species at this spot in Killdeer never surpassed a dozen. Why 26 birds on this occasion? Peterjohn (2001), while conceding we know very little about local migration by this species, states that “[b]ased on the abandonment of their winter roosts, Long-eareds may initiate their northward migration during the last week of February.” Thus, it seems a reasonable surmise that in this case the Killdeer-wintering owls accustomed to human disturbance had been joined by migrants from elsewhere, and the Larson party was lucky enough to witness the overlapping presence of the winter roost and a migrating contingent, and their different reactions to close approach.

The winter of 2004-2005 at Killdeer produced very few owls in the traditional grove, but a roost of 4-8 wintered several hundred yards away in a patch of more typical long-eared habitat. Killdeer includes at least three more evergreen islands that have more or less regularly harbored long-eared owls in recent winters. It is possible the traditional “Owl Grove” has matured to a stage where taller trees and a more open aspect have attracted great horned owls, which have been known to make short work of a long-eared roost.

We do not know for sure how common these owls are in Ohio, but there are several reasons to regard them as more numerous than we once thought. Because of the relative ease with which they may be seen at Killdeer, fewer birders look for them elsewhere, or at least seldom report them when found. This may paradoxically make them seem all the more rare and local statewide. Observers are understandably reluctant to jeopardize other roosts by publicizing them when the Killdeer owls are so accommodating. An old rural tradition of shooting owls on sight has not died out, and birders and especially photographers tend to risk disturbing them for their own gratification.

The Killdeer phenomenon, while in a sense it enhances the privacy of long-eared owls elsewhere, also tends to diminish searching and reporting that might give us a clearer idea of this species’ abundance. While their numbers at any given location may fluctuate with the availability of prey, the most consistent factors influencing the number of observations reported are observer effort and skill at identifying potential habitat.

Evidence for the latter factor comes not from Ohio, where little systematic research has been undertaken, or at least published, but from

Minnesota, where Hertzell & Hertzell (2000) studied local roosts of the species over two winters. Long-eared owl winter roosts had previously seldom been reported in Minnesota (as in Ohio): reports averaged fewer than four per year, rating an abundance of “rare but regular” in the state. The authors first spent 34 hours searching 16 southern Minnesota counties during one winter season, finding 27 owls at 17 different roosts in 14 counties. Three of these counties had no previous published reports of long-eareds at all, and six had only one. The next winter they spent 30 hours searching just one of those counties, which had had a poor record of the species in previous years, and found 20 owls at eight roosts.

They concluded from these studies that wintering long-eareds deserved a change in abundance status all the way from “rare” to “common” in suitable habitat in the southern third of the state. Hertzell & Hertzell learned to search in stands of conifers immediately adjacent to open fields attractive to rodent prey. They found that dense pockets of eastern red cedar situated in otherwise semi-open habitat on sloping ground often produced roosts; additionally, remote plantings of spruces and long-needled pines close to hunting fields were just as productive if the trees were of intermediate height (10-20 feet) accompanied by little or no understory. They found enough fresh sign (whitewash, pellets) to induce them to conclude they had probably actually seen and counted only about 50% of the owls actually present in the sites inspected.

The researchers reported that nearly all the owls flew off upon being approached, and that a single observer would have missed many of them. A second witness standing outside the grove was able to see these more easily. Owls tolerated a closer approach in the somewhat more open pine habitats than among cedars. The authors concluded that these habitats are fragmented and often remote, situated far from roads and frequently on private property. Mid-winter conditions in Minnesota were also likely to discourage any but the most dedicated searches for owls by birders, especially in vegetation difficult to negotiate at any season because so dense and impenetrable.

It seems reasonable to speculate that many of these conditions and findings would hold true for Ohio. The first prerequisite must be food for the owls, especially open fields of sufficient size with vegetation inviting to lots of rodents, especially voles *Microtus* spp. Here such hunting grounds may be found in many places, especially in glaciated Ohio. Those in public areas are easier to visit, but many are on private land and often go unexplored, or at least unreported. The extensive grasslands of certain reclaimed strip mines in Ohio’s unglaciated region have proved inviting to long-eared owls in some instances. Also required seem to be dense clumps of red cedar or islands of the longer-leaved pines nearby for day roosts. Given the right conditions roosts can form in trees in the front yards of farmhouses.

A third factor is observers’ ability to distinguish long-eared owls from short-eared owls in flight, not always an easy task. Short-eareds only rarely roost in conifers, generally preferring to spend the night roosting in grassy terrain, something long-eareds apparently never do. Flushed from roosts, long-

eareds usually don't hide in grass, but return to trees. In flight, both owls are superficially alike, but their colorations—warm buff and brown for short-ears and darker, colder tones for long-ears—match their roost habitats. Flying long-eareds show barring on the underparts down through the belly, white highlight stripes on the upperwings, as well as bright orange on the face and on the leading edge of the wings; the “ears” are usually tucked in and invisible in flight. Because short-eareds are more often seen by day or at twilight, birders tend to regard them as more common than their nocturnal cousins, and misidentification tends to favor the more familiar species. Long-eared owls may well be more numerous in Ohio than short-eareds.

In the winter of 2003-2004 long-eared owl reports came to this publication from sixteen Ohio counties, and totaled more than 100 individuals. We have a unique situation: the Killdeer owls allow close scrutiny, and this allows reporters of other owl roosts to feel comfortable keeping their exact locations confidential. We hope this will encourage more reporting, and hence more accurate overall numbers. The chances seem good that further study will reveal that long-eared owls, at least as wintering birds, are considerably more common, and widespread, than the evidence has enabled us to conclude thus far.

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A mounted long-eared owl at the Ohio State University's Museum of Biological Diversity

Distribution and Ecology of Ohio Birds

By Lynds Jones

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A typed partial draft of this paper, containing emendations in Jones's hand, was found in a box of material bought at auction in 2002. From the date on an uncompleted letter on the back of one of the pages and some internal evidence, we can ascertain only that its composition took place on 28 September 1923 or not too long later that year.

Jones was then in his 60s, a distinguished faculty member at Oberlin and author of scores of ornithological publications, and while this paper is only a draft, and far from complete, it may be regarded as reflecting his maturer opinions; it is a pity we don't have more of it.

—Ed.

Before the advent of civilized Man Ohio was covered with deciduous forest, with a sprinkling of pine and cedar and hemlock in the rough eastern section that lies within the Transition Life Zone, and along the shore of Lake Erie and in the narrow deep valleys of the streams that flow into the lake. There was a small area of grassland in the north-western counties, and some of the larger peat bogs, like Big Spring Prairie¹, made openings in the forest. There were a few small lakes in the lake Erie water-shed. After more than a century of occupation by civilized Man the forest has been reduced to less than one fourth of its original area, and even what remains is in scattered groves, with no large bodies of standing timber. The water bodies have been added to by the creation of reservoirs, but these add very little to the water areas. Of course the forests have been replaced by cultivated fields and cleared pastures.

These profound changes in habitats of birds have been accompanied by changes in the bird life of the state in two directions. Of the forest birds the passenger pigeon, Carolina parakeet, and swallow-tailed kite are no longer found in the state, and the wild turkey, ruffed grouse, and northern pileated woodpecker seem doomed to go². Of the grassland habitants the prairie chicken has gone, and several of the shore-birds have become scarce. Of those preferring aquatic habitats the sandhill crane, whooping crane and trumpeter swan have gone, and most of the other species are greatly reduced in numbers. It is not possible to tell whether or not the smaller forest birds have decreased in numbers proportionately with the decrease of the forests, but it

¹ North and west of Carey in Wyandot County, extending largely into Seneca and Hancock counties, Big Spring Prairie may once have been a primordial lake that evolved into marsh, then prairie openings.

² Twenty-seven years later, Williams, in *Birds of the Cleveland Region*, reported that the woodpecker had rallied as new park systems protected forests. After 1914, woodpeckers could not be legally hunted.

seems likely that most of them have not. Virgin forests, especially beech forests, are comparatively poor in bird life. But the small groves that remain seem to be richer in bird life than the average, as though the birds were accommodating themselves to restricted [*sic*] quarters by more crowding. Nevertheless there can be little doubt that an actual reduction in numbers has taken place. About a score of species have so adapted themselves to man made conditions as to become familiar about our dwellings and in our parks, and the number is increasing.

As fast as the forests gave place to open spaces the birds of the open country came in, mainly from the west and south-west, and today they make up the largest part of our birdlife.

There is another shifting of the birdlife of the state that seems to be wholly independent of the changes wrought by Man. I called attention to this twenty years ago, in the ["Revised Catalogue of the Birds of Ohio" [1903:13-20]]. It was then based upon a comparison of my own findings with those of Dr. J. M. Wheaton, in his *Catalogue of the Birds of Ohio*, published in 1882. I have recently found published records of the work of Dr. J. P. Kirtland, 1859, which adds to the material upon which comparisons can be based. This movement might be called the continuing post-glacial northward movement. It is certain that very little if any of Ohio could have been occupied by birds at the time of the furthest [*sic*] southward extension of the great ice sheet, because most of the state lay under the ice, and the remainder of it seems to have been pretty well flooded. The only possible direction from which invasion could have taken place was from the southward and the southwestward. The invasion must have followed the north-eastward retreating ice. The evidence for believing that this movement has not yet ceased is that ten species known in Dr. Kirtland's time only as southern Ohio birds have by this time extended their range nearly or quite across the state, while three species, the painted bunting, blue grosbeak and Bachman's sparrow, have entered the state and are now regular summer residents in the southern counties.³ These have come in during the last twenty years. Along the northern border the black-throated green and chestnut-sided warblers and the purple finch and white-throated sparrow were reported as regular breeders by Dr. Kirtland, but now they are not found breeding except on rare occasions and in particular places. These are striking instances of a slow but persistent northward movement of the bird life of the state, but they do not constitute all of the evidence. Robins, bluebirds, towhees, bronzed grackles and belted kingfishers are now regularly found all winter long in the northern part of the state, and several other species occasionally remain all winter. They have extended their winter range northward since 1890. Others of similar [*one indecipherable word*] could be cited.

At least three hypotheses might be suggested to explain this northward shifting of the birds: The first is that the forces that brought about the retreat of the ice sheet have not yet ceased their action. But this postulates a progressively warmer climate, and there seems to be no good evidence that this is the case.

The second is that there is still the competition for room and for food, during the breeding season, that must have occurred in the south-east during the Glacial Epoch and later, thus forcing individuals to seek new regions if they were to survive and propagate in the struggle. And the third grows out of the last: the northward ranging individuals of the species, because of their daring in seeking unfamiliar breeding grounds, possess characters that make them more efficient and more resistant to the colder climate of the north. It seems to be a general rule that the north-ranging individuals of a species are larger and longer of wing than are the southern ranging individuals. [*The MS ends here.*]

³ This is an intriguing trio of species to mention for this purpose. Lawrence Hicks (*Distribution of the Breeding Birds of Ohio*, 1935:178) does remark of the sparrow that "it seems reasonably certain that this species has invaded the state from the south and southwest during the last half-century." He treats the grosbeak only in a table that shows it as a possible breeder in West Virginia. Only in 1940 did Hicks announce the first blue grosbeak breeding record, in Adams County (*Auk* 62(2):314), where he says "...Jones...did not list the Blue Grosbeak as an Ohio bird," but see Jones (1903:227). Of the bunting Hicks has nothing to say. Jones, in *The Birds of Ohio: A Revised Catalogue* (1903), in the context of saying "...there has been a very perceptible movement of many species northward or north-eastward during the past two decades," asserted "[t]here is some indication of an invasion of the Blue Grosbeak and Nonparail [another common name for *Passerina ciris*] soon [15]." Later in the same work [227] he mentions that E. L. Moseley had reported a painted bunting from Sandusky but it was likely an escaped cage bird (apparently it was another that appeared in Moseley's USDA bird reports for 18 May 1907, "1/4 mi. n. of Mill Hollow, e. bank of Vermilion River"). Where Jones found his evidence that painted buntings were regular summer residents of southern Ohio is a mystery.

Short Note: The Percentage of Adult American Herring Gulls in Cleveland having one vs. two Subapical Spots

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The number and size of subapical spots on the wingtips of large gulls is often used as an aid for separating species, subspecies, and age classes. Field guides to North American birds have consistently depicted adult American herring gulls *Larus argentatus smithsonianus** with two subapical spots - one on the longest, outermost primary (P-10) and another, usually smaller, on the adjacent second-longest primary (P-9). These spots are usually surrounded by black, and are often called "mirrors" by birders.

As recently as Sibley's 2000 guide, there has been no mention of variability in the number of subapical spots in adult American herring gulls. In 2001 Bruce MacTavish and Lars Jonsson noted that 90% of adult-plumaged herring gulls in the Niagara region lacked a subapical spot on P-9. This is unlike herring gulls found in Newfoundland, where <15% lack a P-9 mirror (Adriaens and Mactavish, 2004) and along the East Coast from Massachusetts to Virginia, where 20-30% are estimated to lack this mirror (Olsen and Larsson, 2003).

I was unaware of these observations when I began to notice that a high percentage of otherwise adult-plumaged herring gulls in Cleveland displayed only one subapical spot. Beginning in 2003, I often spent several hours a day between January and March studying adult herring gull wingtip patterns, mostly at E. 72nd Street on the Cleveland lakefront. In many cases I videotaped the gulls and later reviewed the video to determine the wingtip patterns. I also examined specimens in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. From my sample of 114 adult-plumaged herring gulls, 82 (71.9%) had only one subapical spot. I took care to make sure that the birds I studied were in fully adult plumage, with pure white tails and clear adult gray mantles.

Percentage of adult-plumaged herring gulls in Cleveland (winter and early spring) lacking a subapical spot on P-9 ("one-spotters")

2003: 8 of 11 (72.7%)

2004: 11 of 17 (64.7%)

2005: 60 of 82 (73.17%)

CMNH collection: three of four adults from Cuyahoga. and Lake Counties. (75%) (Four additional local specimens in CMNH were molting the primaries when collected, so the presence of subapical on P-9 was not determined.)

More observations of variation in wingtip pattern on the breeding grounds might help us determine the origins of herring gulls wintering in Cleveland. "One-spotters" might dominate in either the Midwest or Western Arctic breeding populations. These observations also demonstrate the pitfalls of applying European-based identification literature to North American gulls. Since 1982, Peter J. Grant's work on gull identification has been the standard reference for American gull watchers.

However, this has led to many misconceptions in techniques for aging third-winter and adult herring gulls based on primary pattern and other features. Even with a common species like herring gull, we still have a lot to learn.

*American herring gull has been split from the European herring gull by European ornithologists, with the scientific name *Larus smithsonianus*. There is no word whether this split may be accepted by ornithologists on this side of the pond sometime in the future.

Acknowledgment

Special thanks to Dr. Timothy Matson for allowing me to view the study skins of herring gulls in the Cleveland Museum of Natural History's collection. *Thanks to the Cleveland Bird Calendar for permission to reproduce this article.*

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This is a "typical" wingtip pattern of an American herring gull *Larus argentatus smithsonianus* from the Cleveland Lakefront, in January 2005. Note the large subapical spot on P-10 and the lack of a spot on P-9. This bird had a pure white tail and unmarked, adult gray mantle. Photo by Kevin Metcalf.

Short Note: Banded Henslow's Sparrow in Butler County

by William Hull

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On June 16, 2005, I photographed a Henslow's Sparrow at the Voice of America Park, Butler County, Ohio. I did not notice the bird was banded until reviewing my photographs later in the day. Unfortunately the metal band on the bird cannot be read in the photos. This bird has been found singing at the same perch on a number of occasions. I personally observed it singing from a perch about 50 feet away 4 days later. It had been displaced from its normal spot by a group flying radio-controlled gliders. The bird appears to be a member of a breeding colony. Up to eight individuals have been seen by observers during the months of May and June. Henslow's Sparrows have been confirmed at this site every year since 2002 according to Ned Keller's database of Cincinnati bird sightings (<http://cincinnatibirds.com/database/select.php>). The species may have been found at the site previously but it was a Voice of America site from 1944 to 1994 (http://www.ohiobirds.org/news.php?News_ID=79).

No one has been banding this species at the site and the two closest banding programs of which I am aware are at the Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Indiana and The Wilds in southeastern Ohio. Both of these sites have been contacted with assistance from Mike Busam and Bob Foppe and both indicated that the bird was not banded as part of their programs. I have sent an email to the Bird Banding Lab at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center describing the bird and bands but have received no reply as yet. When viewed from the front the bird has a single metal band on the left leg along with a single orange band above it and two orange bands on the right leg. The photo shows details of the bands.

The bird was still present as of 8/8/2005. In addition a juvenile was in the same area (within 20 ft). My attempts to track down the bander resulted in the following e-mails from Brian Davidson.

Email 1: "I have a bird that MIGHT match that description. On 05/09/2005 we banded an ASY male Henslow on the Turner (Gritton) property with the color combination O/Aluminum (R) - O/O (L). Its USFW Band # was 1771-19392. The color combination (although not the order) is correct. When we viewed the photos, my wife and I could make out 39 under the 1771 portion of the aluminum band. From our data and the available photos we can't conclusively say that we banded that bird."

Email 2: "The property is southwest of Lawrenceburg in Anderson County, Kentucky. GPS coordinates for the capture site are 37 57' 04.0" N, 85 02' 23.0" W. It'll be really hard to see in the field, but the outer two rectrices were plucked for a title chronology study."



A banded Henslow's sparrow *Ammodramus henslowii*, photographed at the VOA Park in Butler County 16 June 2005 by William Hull.



The polyandrous female spotted sandpiper lays up to five clutches of eggs for her mates to care for. This result, photographed 16 July by Brian Zwiebel at Pickerel Ck WA, is later than most.